



Faith Organization Partnerships

Executive Summary

1. Missions are the imperative of the church: “Go and make disciples of all nations”.
2. True discipleship requires engagement and a consideration of the entire well-being of a person, a family, and a community. It is not enough to preach the gospel and say “Go in peace, be warm and be filled.”
3. Hand outs do not work. Cheetah Development is using a model of investing in people.
4. Cheetah is creating an engagement approach that links people of faith in the developing world to those in the developed world. We structure our engagements to bring out the strengths on both sides. We believe that both sides receive more than they give.
5. Engaging in missions brings vibrancy and energy to a church.
6. We create opportunities for people to use their ‘worldly’ gifts for the advancement of the poor. We help to end the dichotomous philosophy separating spirituality and life by giving people a safe place to be a whole person.
7. Studies show that when churches raise money for missions, their giving for the general budget grows, too.
8. Since Cheetah is using an investment model, most of the money we receive is designed to be repaid. Studies show that every year the median American family has \$1000 available for donations and \$50,000 available for investment. We tap this second pool of money, which is generally out of reach of the church. Therefore, we are not competing for the same source.
9. We require a non-denominational engagement with partner churches. “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”
10. We would like our relationship to be represented by a core of committed people within the partner church.
11. We will join with our partner churches to help translate the transformative impact of mission experiences into long-term discipling within their churches.
12. “The poor are rich in faith.” We expect to learn from them. We engage as partners and let them lead. We only bring resources. We get more than we give.

Introduction

Sitting in the pastor's house in the poor village of Ilambilole, Tanzania, I was meeting with a group of about 20 leaders from the church, including the elders and evangelists from nearby villages. We were doing planning for how the village might increase the income of its residents.

Two moments from this meeting stand out. The first was when I came to know three women evangelists who were widows. As they shared their crop production numbers reluctantly and with some shame, I calculated that they made as little as a tenth of the average in the village – only 20 cents per day. I hurt still when I think of it and remember their faces. This is the face of the poorest people on earth – faithful believers.



The second moment was more happy at first. There were a series of speeches at the end of the meeting. The district pastor praised me as the only white person to ever sit with villagers for a meeting that lasted more than one hour (we were over five). And as the only person to ever ask the opinion of poor villagers. At first I felt good. Then it sunk in how sad this truth is. Nobody listens. Nobody engages.

Great Commission

"Go and make disciples of all nations"

Jesus' prime directive is well known. However, statistics show that 85 cents of the average church budget goes to serving themselves and that allocation to missions has been shrinking for at least 40 years. The needs of people beyond our borders are clearly greater than within even while the travel distance between us is also shrinking. In the western hemisphere, only Haiti is in the bottom half of the national wealth list. East Africa is the poorest region on the poorest continent, including nations such as Malawi, Zambia, Mali, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Mozambique. Cheetah is working right in the heart of this region in Tanzania. Unfortunately, believers often separate preaching the gospel as worthy of their resources but feeding the poor as not. When missionaries are sent, their resources are often restricted to a purely "spiritual" objective.

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (James 2:15-17)

When you are among the poor, it is impossible to be self-satisfied with “be warmed and filled.” You become ready to act. To be from a wealthy nation and unable or unwilling to act can cut the legs out of the credibility of the gospel message you may carry. Moreover, you find the local churches to be working hard to help their own poor and understand it to be directly related to discipling though they lack the resources to really engage. More frustrating is to see the difference between the approaches of Christians and Muslims when it comes to discipling. Muslims move into communities, invest, create jobs, build schools and win the next generation. Christians tend to come, hold evangelism meetings, provide hand outs, splash money around irresponsibly and leave. If you were a local person how would you see this?



Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? James 2:5

Being among the poor is an enriching experience. God did choose them to be rich in faith! Some have speculated that this is why we will always have the poor among us – we need them. So why do we shy from this work?

"For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." John 12:8

Sometimes the work seems overwhelming or far away or beyond our resources...so we don't even start. It's almost as if we take Jesus words and apply them to ourselves – we will not always have our own life so we must enjoy ourselves now. But even science has demonstrated that real happiness – deep biblical joy – comes from service to others.

Actually, the time to act is now. People are dying today. If it was your child you would not wait.



We need to shift our love – our charity – to discipling through partnerships rather than hand-outs and paternalism. To really disciple someone in deep poverty takes more than preaching. It takes providing hope. How do you tell a man who has no hope of providing for his family to be a better father? How can you tell a woman to raise her children in the faith when her every minute struggle is to have them survive?

And discipling always requires engaging. When did changing lives become not worthy of our time? When will we stop trying to be Superman saving a planeload in a minute? We need to be ready to commit not just money but time.

So what would we do? For a long time it has been known that local people are far more effective at preaching the gospel – and can do the work at a tiny fraction of the cost. Sending missionaries from the first world is only nominally effective. Think of the three widows we already mentioned working as unpaid evangelists while they do their best to support themselves. For less than a \$1000 per year they could be fully and well supported. No western missionaries work so effectively at such a low cost. This needs to be the work of local churches. They know the message, how to deliver it in their culture and who should be the messenger.



Cheetah’s model is to join with churches in both worlds. Local churches lead the way on preaching and our partnership with them creates hope and economic growth in their community. This is the full work of discipling. We need the local church because they are the primary social structure in a poor village. As local churches grow in resources they send evangelists to the next village. On the other side, American churches join with us to catalyze the resources necessary for this work to proceed holistically: the full job of discipling. We take on the part of the task that is efficiently and effectively done by a westerner – helping to create economic hope for the poor. Truly we are linking believers together from both sides of the world so that we might walk in the will of Jesus prayer for us:

“...that they may all be one...that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” John 17:21ff

Engaging in Mission

When Cheetah Development partners with American faith-based organizations, a lot happens.

We are not using an approach focused on mass fundraising. Instead, we are trying to engage networks of people in service to each other. We believe that the experience of life in the body of Christ is one of mutual redemption. We create opportunities for people to exercise their gifts in a new way where work and faith are intertwined. We can engage business people, engineers, accountants, etc. to directly use their skills in service of others. This allows people a safe place to stop living the “separation of church and state” dichotomous life philosophy and find purpose in their everyday life in service to the kingdom.

This model benefits the local church by creating new opportunities of service that brings joy and purpose to their members. Mission oriented churches have a sense of dynamism and fulfillment that cannot be achieved when members are only focused on serving themselves. People who work in missions nearly always report that they get more than give.

Giving

It's widely understood and demonstrated that when mission giving grows, so does regular church budget giving. Therefore, American churches generally experience a growth in giving to their base budget at the same time as they grow their mission spending. Some denominations even use mission support as a giving strategy.

Moreover, most of Cheetah's support budget is investment not donation. According to a 2007 US census bureau study, the median US household has **\$1,000** to donate but **\$50,000** to invest. Cheetah taps this second pool of funds, which is generally out of reach of the local church.

This means that not only are we helping churches to grow their giving, we are generally not competing for the same dollars.

We allow people to dedicate their investments more directly to the work of the kingdom. Moreover, since we are working to repay these investments, they can continue to do this work over and over. It's not a one-time gift. Besides, there is a good return on investment. People who work in missions nearly always report that they get more than give.

Organizational Ethics

We practice a different missional model: rather than preaching at people we engage with them and experience mutual redemption. Our work is around creating teams, fostering ecumenism, and being a unified body of Christ. This is true in the USA and in the countries where we are working. We endeavor to follow Paul in his dealing with a divided church:

*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- 1 Corinthians 2:2*

We require a non-denominational engagement with our partner churches. The relationship with local churches is to provide support, not direct their actions, not engage in doctrinal arguments and not to found new competitive churches. More than one church partner may be working in a village from different denominations. We want to be an example of the unity that Christ calls us all to have.

We do not exclude anyone from benefitting from our work. If someone is a Muslim they may still receive assistance or even participate in a leadership role in a village. This is how we engage and bring change.

We want people who join us in the third world to avoid giving handouts. We ask that giving be coordinated through us through the local churches.

We expect to learn from locals. The poor are rich in faith. We engage with them by listening with expectancy – even if it takes much time to gain their trust to speak. We act as partners not leaders. We expect them to lead. We are only their resource. Besides, people who work in missions nearly always report that they get more than give.

Getting Engaged

So what are the practical steps to creating a partnership with Cheetah?

1. Engagement Team

- a. We are not about mass marketing and so we don't think the place to start is by presenting within services. We believe that we need to have a network of people within a congregation that is led by people who have a heart for this mission. Therefore, we would like to create a team of people who get excited about this work. Some of these people will go to Tanzania and see it for themselves so that they can report what they saw with their own eyes.
- b. This is the group that promotes the work to leadership teams within the church. We think it is indispensable that the partnership is endorsed by church leadership.
- c. This team should include congregation leaders, business leaders, people with a heart for mission, and people open to new models of engagement.

2. Relationship to a Village or Project

- a. We will help your team find a village or project that creates energy in your organization.
- b. Villages are great places to engage because they tend to be very safe and a great place to create relationships. But the same can be true of many projects in our portfolio.

3. Encourage Engagement

- a. Make it part of your church mission, give it advertising, speak of it openly and frequently
- b. Become an official partner of Cheetah and share website links, encourage newsletter subscriptions, etc.

4. Short Term Mission Trips

- a. Short Term Missions (STM) can be life changing experiences. However, they can also be bewildering to the traveler and offending to the one receiving them. Going on trips requires preparation and thought. Cheetah is ready to help.
- b. Studies show that STM don't have the expected long-term effects in giving to and engagement with missions. Although the experience can be moving at the moment, people often don't know how to interpret their experience, apply their new found energy, or experience a long-term life change. Taking advantage of the opportunity for life change requires sending churches to be intentional in follow-up.

People who work in missions nearly always report that they get more than give. We have to help them take it beyond the most memorable vacation of their life. This is the mutual redemption of living in the body of Christ. It can be life changing for all. This is the work of the church. *Go and make disciples!*