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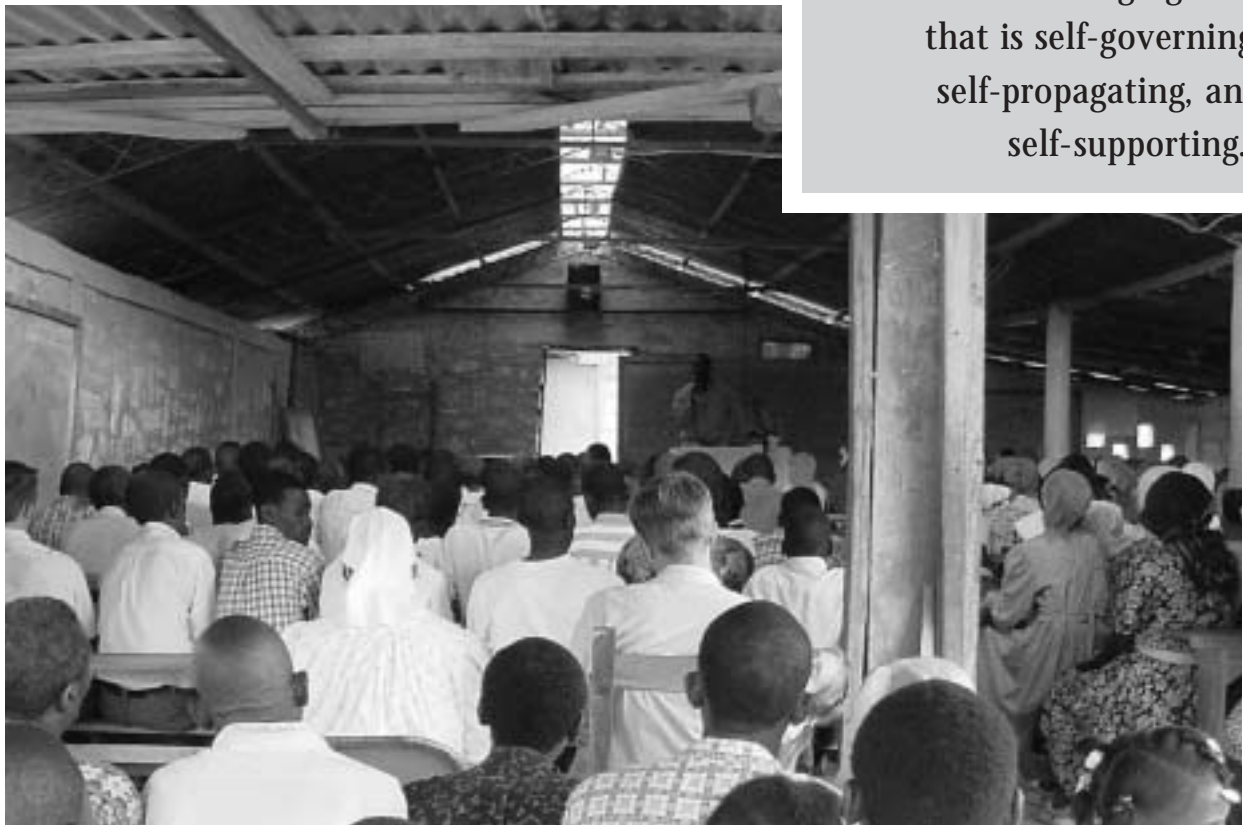
Newsletter

February 2001
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This issue featuring articles on The Indigenous Church and Dependance

“The word indigenous means *native or local, or belonging to a place originally* . . . When you put the word *indigenous* with the word *church*, we are talking about a church that is a local congregation that is self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting.”

Church service at Ailigue, Haiti



See page 12 for an update on God's work in Ghana—including the churches and the stirrings among the Konkombas & Dagombas in the North



Charity Christian Missions

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles . . . for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."

Malachi 1:11

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Mission Addresses

Dear Supporters,

We thank God for all of your interest and support, in finances, letters of encouragement, and prayers.

We as a mission operate by faith in the Lord of the Harvest. We believe that HIS work done HIS way will not lack in HIS blessing. All of the missionaries are fully supported by Charity Christian Missions. We do not ask them to raise a certain amount of funds before sending them to the field. We simply send them by faith and trust God to meet the financial needs.

Again, may God richly bless you for your faithfulness in serving the Lord with your gifts of love.

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Is There a Cure for Dependency Among Mission- Established Churches?

by Glenn Schwartz

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult problems facing the Christian movement at the beginning of the 21st century is the dependency on outside funding that has developed in many mission-established churches. Church and mission leaders have several different reactions to this problem.

First, sometimes both mission leaders and church leaders are embarrassed about the dependency syndrome and would like to see the situation change. Not all of them fully understand what caused the problem or what to do about it, but they know that the situation is not healthy for the church or mission. As you will see

later on, dependency among mission-established churches is not necessary; and where it exists, it can be eliminated.

Second, there are some who believe that dependent churches are a fact of life and nothing is likely to change that. They rationalize that we are all dependent on someone; therefore, they don't think there is anything wrong with Western Christians supporting non-western churches the way they do. Some in this category are westerners who feel guilty about their wealth and are actively looking for those with whom they can "partner" in the Gospel. They feel that the concept of self-supporting churches doesn't make much sense as long as some Christians are wealthier than others.

Third, there are some who are committed to planting new churches which are self-supporting from the very beginning. They know instinctively that the Gospel can be shared and people can come into a right relationship with God without developing an unhealthy dependence on outside funding. We now have many examples of how churches can be planted and grow without developing dependency.

Fourth, there is a group of older missionaries and church leaders who lived for many years with the ideal of an indigenous self-supporting church. They believed in the principle that mission-established churches should be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. When the churches they planted did not develop that way, they resigned themselves to providing and continuing to provide outside support. Sometimes those missionaries are reluctant to see the outside support stopped because the projects they started might be closed down or fail to operate. Some missionaries may never live to see their work become self-supporting.

A **fifth** group includes local church leaders who were converted and disciplined by missionaries and now receive their salary from outside support. They have concluded that their people are too poor to support their own churches—and especially their own development projects—so they might as well let the situation continue. Unfortunately, such churches are unlikely to learn the joy of sending out their own missionaries. Some of them feel they cannot support their own pastors, let alone help to plant new churches

beyond their borders. But, let's not forget, there is a cure for this kind of dependency.

The **sixth** group is represented by newly planted churches where the people are actively seeking to attach themselves to individuals, churches or mission agencies willing to support them with foreign funds. This is the case in many parts of the former Soviet Union where western Christians are finding small groups of believers and adopting them as their "partners in the Gospel". In some

on in this article I will give several examples of churches like that.

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS?

Look at the spread of the Gospel in the time of the New Testament, and you will find that the Apostle Paul did not use outside funds to plant churches. In fact, one transfer of funds we find in the New Testament is from mission field churches back to the mother church when there was a famine in Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8). Another is when mission field churches contributed to the support of their missionary, the Apostle Paul (Philippians 4:15).

"Look at the spread of the Gospel in the time of the New Testament, and you will find that the Apostle Paul did not use outside funds to plant churches. In fact, one transfer of funds we find in the New Testament is **from mission field churches back to the mother church** when there was a famine in Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8). Another is when mission field churches contributed to the support of their missionary, the Apostle Paul (Philippians 4:15)."

In our day, there is evidence that outside support is not essential to the growth and development of the Christian movement. Consider the rapid growth of a church in Ethiopia from 1938 to 1943. During this five-year period, membership

cases, the outsiders visit for as little as two weeks and leave behind a church which they have "planted". That church may have a pastor dependent on salary from the outsiders, and the building in which they will eventually meet could well be provided through the good intentions of their new-found friends from England or North America. When this happens, the dependency syndrome is developed within a very short period of time. The westerners who create this kind of dependent church planting have probably never heard about indigenous principles of self-support. Sadly, some do not want to hear about such things because it would spoil the good time they are having planting dependent churches.

increased from 100 to 10,000 believers with no missionaries and no outside funding present. The church in China increased from one million to perhaps as many as fifty million believers following 1951 when all missionaries and outside funding were removed.

Fortunately, there is also a **seventh** group. This includes those who used to be dependent but have made the transition to supporting their ministries with local resources. Such churches exhibit joy, pride and dignity as they experience God's blessing for taking this step of faith. Later

There are many articles on dependency and self-reliance available. One article in particular speaks to the point which I am making. It is the story written by Rev. Gerald Bustin regarding the planting of churches in Papua New Guinea and also the former Soviet Union. That mission society started about 200 churches in New Guinea. Upon the occasion of the 20-year celebration, the people in New Guinea sent air tickets to the missionaries in America, inviting them to return for the celebration. In the Ukraine (part of the former Soviet Union), after several years of church planting, the local believers asked for the privilege of repaying the missionaries for the expenses they had in bringing the Gospel to them. All of this is

to say that planting dependent churches may often happen, but it does not need to happen. That is good news for those involved in cross-cultural church planting.

HOW DOES DEPENDENCY AFFECT THE MEANING OF THE GOSPEL?

When outside money and other material things accompany the spread of the Christian Gospel, sometimes people get the wrong impression about the Gospel itself. For example, if those to whom the Gospel is preached begin to receive material things that come with the Gospel, they may become more interested in those things than in the Gospel itself. Sometime ago I met two missionaries working in western Tanzania. When they arrived, one of the first questions the local people asked was, "Where are your shipping containers?" When they said they did not have any shipping containers, the people said, "What kind of missionaries are you—no shipping containers?" Clearly the people were thinking about what they might get when servants of the Lord arrived from the outside.

What is wrong with the spread of the Gospel in this way? Is it not precisely that the Gospel itself is being distorted? Think for a moment about what the Good News of the Gospel is. **First**, people will learn about the broken relationship between God and mankind and that there is one who repairs that relationship—Jesus Christ? **Second**, when that Gospel comes, one is freed from the burden of past sin. **Third**, one is introduced to the Holy Spirit—a Power greater than all the powers which caused so many problems in the past. **Fourth**, one learns that if godly principles are followed, many other problems in life can be resolved. **Fifth**, there is the most important benefit of all, **eternal life for all who believe**. All of these things come with the Gospel.

Is there any price to be paid for this salvation? It is free, with one exception. The exception is that for the rest of our lives, believers are obligated to give back to God some of what He has given to us. In other words, such things as tithing—giving back a portion of one's income—become a part of the privilege and responsibility we have as believers.

When people come into the Christian faith for the material possessions they get, something goes terribly wrong in the spread of the Gospel. That might be the single most important reason why the dependency problem so often cripples the Christian movement and why it is so urgent that it be avoided or dealt with where it exists.

WHAT CAN BE DONE WHERE THE PROBLEM EXISTS?

No one should look for quick and easy solutions to the problem of dependency, especially where it has been in place for many years. Old

"If you want to see joy and a sense of satisfaction on the faces and in the hearts of believers, don't look for it among those who are dependent on foreign funds. Rather look for it among those who have discovered the joy of giving back to God something of what He has given to them—from the resources which He has put close at hand."

habits are hard to break, especially when changing them means learning a whole new way of getting support for the Church. Those receiving salary from overseas funds may be reluctant to see the system change. Those responsible for creating dependency in the first place (like missionaries) may hesitate to see it change because they have been getting a good feeling from giving, even if it

“...it is important to realize that the need for **spiritual renewal** is at the root of this problem. Do not expect people who do not know the Lord to joyfully support their own churches. Do not expect believers whose faith has grown cold to willingly pay their tithes and offerings to the Lord. Spiritual life must precede an emphasis on stewardship teaching.”

has created dependency and left others unable to stand on their own two feet.

There are things which can be done to either avoid or resolve the problem of dependency. The following are a few suggestions for both church leaders and missionaries.

First, we should all recognize that the healthiest churches are not those in which leaders or members constantly look to outsiders for financial support. If you want to see joy and a sense of satisfaction on the faces and in the hearts of believers, don't look for it among those who are dependent on foreign funds. Rather look for it among those who have discovered the joy of giving back to God something of what He has given to them—from the resources which He has put close at hand.

Second, begin to recognize the kind of things which cause dependency and seek to overcome the temptation to establish or continue such practices. It will take serious determination not to think of solving problems with outside funds. And remember, the problem cannot be solved if the concept of stewardship is not first built into the Christian message.

I will give an example. In South Africa there is a church which was very poor. Thirty years ago only unemployed women and children were in that church. Leaders regularly went overseas to find funding for their church members. Then something dramatic occurred. The church was turned around. Men began coming to church, women became self-employed and soon the church was no longer depending on funds from overseas. When one asks what change took place, the women will say that they were taught how to make a living—

like making and selling dresses, grass mats, or baskets. They were also taught that of everything they made and sold, ten percent (the tithe) belonged to the Lord. In fact, they were taught that giving (tithing) was to be built into the earning process. God honored that kind of teaching, and today that church is well able to stand on its own two feet. At a recent weekend conference, those present put into the collection the equivalent of over one million US dollars. All of

that was from a church which not so long ago included only unemployed women and children.

Third, it is important to realize that the need for **spiritual renewal** is at the root of this problem. Do not expect people who do not know the Lord to joyfully support their own churches. Do not expect believers whose faith has grown cold to willingly pay their tithes and offerings to the Lord. Spiritual life must precede an emphasis on stewardship teaching.

Fourth, there is something else which must precede stewardship teaching. This is what I call a feeling of true **personal ownership**. Without this, people in dependent churches will often look to someone else to build their buildings, pay their pastors, buy their vehicles or support their development projects. Imagine what could happen, however, if people were to take full personal ownership for their own churches. Things which previously were thought to be impossible would all of a sudden become possible. Resources would be discovered which prior to this no one could see. These would be resources which were close at hand all along. Only when local ownership is fully in place will people begin to discover the joy of supporting their own church and the work of God's kingdom.

Fifth, there is sometimes a high price to be paid for moving from dependency toward self-reliance. Some local church leaders may need to say “no, thank you” to the outside funding which has been supporting them and their families. This happened in East Africa about thirty years ago when local leaders asked the people overseas to stop supporting them financially. They were actu-

ally declining the funds used to pay their own salaries. What followed, however, was dramatic. The leaders soon learned that local believers were not only capable of paying their salaries, but also able to pay for their own church buildings and vehicles. They also planted new churches

FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

“Only when local ownership is fully in place will people begin to discover the joy of supporting their own church and the work of God’s kingdom.”

from their own resources. They started a pension fund for retired pastors, something no one until that time thought could be done with local resources. Then those believers in East Africa heard about homeless children overseas and took a collection in Kenya shillings equal to about US\$30,000 to help with that need. All of these things happened after they paid the price to stop the outside funding.

Sixth, one might ask why it is so important to resolve the problem of dependency among mission-established churches. Think for a moment about how many funds are being raised for evangelism yet are actually being used to support churches where people are already evangelized. Is it right to keep on supporting those who have heard the Gospel many times when there are millions of people elsewhere who are still waiting to hear it for the very first time? In some places the Gospel has been preached for a hundred years or more and yet the people are still looking to others to support their pastors or build their buildings. For those who have not yet heard the Gospel even once, that is just not fair.

It is my desire to see those who feel trapped in dependent churches learn how to discover the joy and freedom which results from overcoming dependency. I dedicate my time and energy to helping those who want to discover the joy of standing on their own two feet. If we all learn to work together and discover how to depend on the Holy Spirit, progress can be made in overcoming dependency.

Remember the Macedonian Church which the Apostle Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:3. Of these people Paul wrote, “...out of severe trial and extreme poverty they pleaded for the privilege of giving.” Notice also that he mentions that “they gave themselves first to the Lord.” Without spiritual renewal, churches will not overcome the dependency syndrome.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,

*Glenn J. Schwartz
Executive Director
World Mission Associates* □

“...there is sometimes a high price to be paid for moving from dependency toward self-reliance. Some local church leaders may need to say ‘no, thank you’ to the outside funding which has been supporting them and their families.”

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When Two Bikes Split a Church

Partnering Through Local Resources

by Christopher Little

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When my wife and I entered Mozambique in 1993, it was the poorest country in the world according to the United Nations. Although we had been exposed to poverty before, nothing prepared us, not even seminary, for what we were to experience. The first night spent inside the borders was basically sleepless because of the stifling humidity and noise caused by roaming dogs outside looking for something to devour. Within two weeks I lost more than ten pounds, and at the time, I didn't have that much to spare!

We went to work among the five million people of the unreached Makhuwa tribe in the northern part of the country, whom we had read about in Patrick Johnstone's book, *Operation World*. Our mission agency had temporarily stationed us in the central part of the country to get acclimatized and begin ministry. We were assigned to an indigenous church which already had a Bible school up and running of its own. I was asked to teach in this school, to which I wholeheartedly agreed.

As I began to get to know the students and the other professors in the school over the next few months, I soon discovered the incredible disparity between their lives and mine. I had a car to travel to school in while they, having further to travel, had their feet. I felt it was only appropriate to offer to purchase bicycles for the other two professors in the school since I had the resources to do so. After mentioning it to them, they were thrilled with the thought! So without delay I managed to get the bicycles in their hands and felt very pleased when they showed up to class riding their bikes. Yet, I had no idea what was to transpire thereafter.

One pleasant afternoon we received a visit by the provincial

pastor along with the church's treasurer. They very politely and respectfully sat down and started to explain to me what I had unknowingly done. They informed me that because I did not go through the proper chan-

“I felt it was only appropriate to offer to purchase bicycles for the other two professors in the school since I had the resources to do so. After mentioning it to them, they were thrilled with the thought! So without delay I managed to get the bicycles in their hands and felt very pleased when they showed up to class riding their bikes. Yet, I had no idea what was to transpire thereafter.”

nels, that is, because I did not obtain their approval before giving the bikes, I had made a grave mistake. They were not so much concerned about the bikes themselves as much as the fact that the church had experienced seri-

ous problems in the past with missionaries who handed out gifts. I quickly apologized and asked for forgiveness. They were very understanding but insisted I come to them in the future if I wanted to demonstrate my generosity in one way or another.

At the time, I thought that the problem was solved, but little did I realize it had only begun. I heard from the two professors that the two individuals who visited me that afternoon told them to hand the bikes over. When they resisted, saying that the missionary “gave them to us,” the leadership accused them of being stubborn, greedy and disobedient. Before long, they were sidelined from teaching in the Bible school.

My two friends were very hurt by this incident, and essentially all fellowship between them and the leadership was shattered. One of them eventually left the church and started his own denomination along with some other disgruntled individuals. It is said the road to hell is paved with good intentions; well, I can testify from firsthand experience that the road to church splits is sometimes paved with the good intentions of missionaries! Out of my desire to be compassionate and unselfish, I had caused more damage than good.

An Unexpected Orientation

Subsequently, we were transferred to the northern part of Mozambique to a city called Nampula to begin working with the Makuwa people. The Lord

in His providence led us to another indigenous church that was less than a decade old. The founding and directing pastor of the church requested that we initiate a Bible teaching and leadership training program for the pastors in his church who previously never had the benefit of such ministries.

Very early on in our relationship with this particular pastor he called me aside to orient me on how to work among his people. He very directly informed me that he did not want me to bring any outside resources into his church in one form or another. When I saw the incredibly desperate living conditions his church members experienced day in and day out and knowing that people would be requesting my assistance in different areas, I couldn't help but respond, “But what about Jesus' words, ‘whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back?’” (Luke 6:29-30). I will never forget his reaction. “Those verses don't apply here!” he blurted. Of course, we know they apply there just as they do wherever the church exists. But his reason for saying so came as a consequence of the disasters he had personally witnessed when missionaries intro-

duce foreign items, monetary or otherwise, into the local church. He wanted to avoid as much as possible the corruption, jealousy among leaders, and the lack of

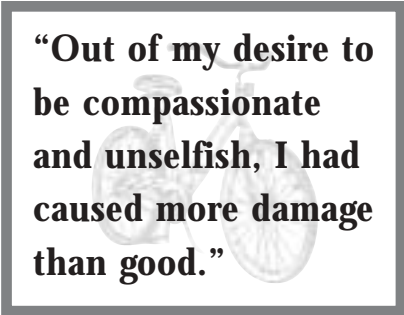
motivation for giving from within the church when it came to my ministry. To consider any other option was just not worth the risk for him. So I considered myself oriented

and launched into ministry.

The Gospels Of Goods

As I began to get to know some of the leaders in the church my wife and I quickly bonded with a particular brother. His name was Bolacha (“Cookie” in Portuguese). Bolacha had an incredible testimony of what it meant to be faithful to Christ in the midst of adversity. He had four children, all of which had died. That alone would have discouraged most people from being a follower of Christ. In addition, his wife suffered from physical ailments which he associated with demonic activity. It was extremely hard on him to say the least, but he persevered with her and prayed for her as a faithful Christian husband should do.

One day Bolacha explained to me that there are two kinds of gospels in this world. The first one, the gospel of Christ, provides for forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and sets people free



“Out of my desire to be compassionate and unselfish, I had caused more damage than good.”

from the power of the devil. He emphasized the reality that this gospel involves suffering since Christ commanded us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). The second gospel, the gospel of goods (“o evangelho dos bens” in Portuguese), is the counterfeit gospel which offers material wealth alongside the true gospel in order to entice people to become Christians. In his opinion, the fundamental problem with the gospel of goods is that when the goods run out the people run away. He elaborated that he had seen denomination after denomination import shipping containers of food, clothes, etc., during times of drought and famine and attracted thousands of people. But when the shipping containers stopped coming they were nowhere to be found. He concluded our conversation by stating that the church we were associated with was interested in presenting the gospel of Christ so that people would not be confused about the way of salvation and what it means to be a committed disciple of Christ.

I didn't realize it at the time but what Bolacha had experienced was very similar to what Jesus encountered in His own ministry. After feeding the 5,000 in Tiberias (John 6), the multitude began to follow Him as Jesus said, “not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you” (John 6:26-27). Hence, the people were interested in the

goods of the kingdom without submitting to the King. Jesus would have none of it and as a result of His strong teaching, many of His “would be” disciples left Him (John 6:66).

Building Churches with Local Resources

Every year the country undergoes the long rainy season. During this period, it is normal for many houses and churches that are built out of mud and straw to collapse. In the middle of one particular heavy rainy season our local church building became a casualty. The church leadership soon began to strategize about how to rebuild. Wanting to rebuild their church with cement blocks and not having the finances to do it, the local pastor came to our home and entreated our assistance. Since other missionaries in town were building churches with outside resources, he wondered if I might be able to contact some people overseas to do likewise. Having learned my lesson from the incident with the bikes and recalling the head pastor's orientation, I had to decline to help in this way. At the same time, however, I offered my assistance in any other possible way in order to rebuild our place of worship.

Another factor that was a part of my refusal to solicit funds from outside had to do with what I had learned about the historical and cultural context of the Mozambican people

themselves. They had been colonized by the Portuguese for 500 years and taught in various ways that they were inferior and incapable of taking care of themselves. This is difficult for most Westerners to relate to simply because we have never experienced these types of societal and racial pressures. Like so many other places in Africa, Mozambique went through a long, bitter war of independence where they threw out their oppressors in 1975. Thereafter, the forces related to the cold war butted heads on Mozambican soil until the first democratic elections ever held in the country were organized by the United Nations in 1994. Since that time, Mozambique has opened up its doors to all kinds of foreign investors, development agencies, and missionary organizations, which some argue have brought a period of exploitative neo-colonialism upon the country itself.

In view of the past and in hopes of a better future, I felt it was necessary to promote the initiative and creativity of the people I had come to know in our church in order that they would have the opportunity to reach their full potential for the Lord. If not, they would continue to feel inferior, unable to do what God has called them to do unless someone from outside, like a missionary, came to their rescue. At stake was their dignity as humans and I was going to do all I could to maintain it even if it meant saying no to outside funding. Some may see this as paternalistic, but such criticisms fall by the wayside

when the spiritual growth of God's people is on the line.

So the church began its building project. Every member was designated to give a certain amount to the building fund. As a member of the church I was convinced that I should be given the opportunity to contribute like anyone else. So I gave my portion along with the rest of the membership.

About this time a pastor from the States showed up at our doorstep. After introducing himself, he informed me that his church had taken up an offering to help their poor brethren in Mozambique. He had heard about our church building project and offered essentially to pay for the remaining needs. It was a very difficult thing for me to do at the time, but I had to relate to this pastor that I was not able to accept his money because of the strict orientation the head pastor had previously given me. To say the least, he was shocked. He had never experienced anything like that before! He recounted how the Lord led his church to raise the money, how the Lord brought him to Mozambique, how the Lord brought him to me, and now I was obviously standing in the way of the Lord's will by declining to accept the money. In response, I attempted to explain that we were trying to encourage local believers to rise to the challenge of standing on their own two feet by trusting God to provide for their needs through *local resources*. He never really grasped the idea and left, both a bit speechless and disgruntled. Needless to say, he and his

church had a need to give but that gift would have done more harm than good.

The church building project went forward and at times was very slow. One thing that I learned from the church leadership was that whenever there was a barrier to the furtherance of the project, they called for an all-night prayer meeting for the Lord to act. I had been taught in church growth courses that in order for the church to grow in one form or another, a particular principle had to be put in place and adhered to. Yet I learned from my Mozambican brothers that the one unfailing principle God honors is the principle of persevering prayer.

As believers in the church sacrificed to one extent or another (Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37), they were able to buy a bag of cement here and another there. My truck was used to haul sand from the bush back to the building site. We worked side by side, hand in hand, and slowly but surely by the grace of the Lord the church was rebuilt. And this time it was built stronger than ever before. It was not only built of cement blocks, it was built as local Christians and an outsider partnered together by using *local resources* to accomplish what God had laid upon the hearts of His people. And by way of affirmation, I have the utmost confidence there is very little that this church cannot do in the future as they have begun to realize their potential for building the kingdom of God in this world. May their breed increase!

A Pertinent Plea

This is the story of one missionary's journey toward God-centered reliance in missions work. Far too often we in the West assume that national churches and their pastors overseas require our resources in order to accomplish what God has called them to do. Yet in assuming so we forget at least the following critical issues: 1) this type of attitude leads to an unhealthy dependence upon foreign funds, structures, and models of ministry; 2) our giving, whether we are aware of it or not, promotes a certain agenda and therefore comes with strings attached; and 3) it undermines the maturing process through which Jesus Christ makes strong disciples.

Far too often we have acted without first reflecting upon the consequences of our actions. We have come too far and learned too much to continue repeating the mistakes of the past. In the midst of the present-day impetus for international partnerships in mission work, may we as an evangelical community begin to see and affirm the ingenuity and giftedness of the people with whom we serve overseas and the power of the Holy Spirit to work in and through us as we join hands using *local resources* to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that will not distract but draw all people to Him! (John 12:32)

