

Different Contributions Needed for the Advance of the Gospel

Over the last two years we have talked increasingly, within our Navigator International Leadership Community about four contributions that are needed in every context for the Gospel to advance through spiritual generations of labourers. They are:

- **Pioneering teams:** or pioneering labourers and leaders. Those who move into new places or new contexts to plant the Gospel and to lay the foundations of a generational ministry.
- **Local labourers:** we often use the term “insiders” or “insider labourers” to describe this contribution, though in missiological circles the term “insider” is beginning to have particular connotations which might affect our use of the word.
- **Local leaders:** those who care for, lead, and build community among labourers, advancing the Gospel in a local context.
- **Mobile alongsiders:** leaders (both national and international) who are available and committed to travel to come alongside local labourers, leaders, and pioneering teams in order to encourage and strengthen them in their lives and ministry. (The concept of the “alongsider” comes from the Greek word for encouragement *parakleesis*, which has the sense of “calling from alongside” or “being called alongside.” The alongsider is the person who comes alongside insiders. Insiders need alongsiders! As Lorne Sanny used to say “labourers need encouragement all their lives.”)

Our Vision Statement describes these contributions that different people make within our Navigator movement in these ways:

*Ordinary people, in many walks of life, are joyfully leading integrated lives. They live as **fruitful insiders** among the lost. ...The Gospel spreads naturally and powerfully, as believers share Christ ... life upon life ... family to family.*

*Crossing cultures into new cities and nations, **teams of mobile pioneers** intentionally proclaim and embody the good news of Jesus Christ....*

*The **leaders** of this movement, developed and empowered for God’s service, live out a growing commitment to Christlikeness. They are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. New generations of **leaders** are emerging, rooted incarnationally in their **local and national** contexts. An **international** leadership community brings focus, alignment and energy to their movement. These leaders are clearly committed to long-term impact in generational ministry.*

In 1 Thessalonians each of these different contributions to the advance of the Gospel are clearly visible.

- Paul, Silas, and Timothy came as “**pioneers**” to Thessalonica with the Gospel, committed to planting the Gospel among local people.
- As people in Thessalonica became believers they began to reach out with the Gospel as **local “insiders.”**
- By the time the letter was written there were already **local leaders** to whom Paul can refer to as “*those who work hard among you and are over you in the Lord.*”

- Paul also refers to Timothy’s visits to “*strengthen and encourage*” them in their faith. Timothy’s contribution was to provide **mobile leadership**. We know from Acts and Paul’s other letters that Paul and Timothy (as well as others like Titus and Tychicus) exercised an international leadership function to support and encourage the local ministries that had been planted. We sometimes refer to their contribution as “**mobile alongsiders**” (from the Greek word for *encourage* which has the sense of being *called alongside*).

The same mix of contributions can be studied in the planting and growth of the Gospel in:

Galatia (see Acts 13-15 and Galatians)

Philippi (see Acts 16 and Philippians)

The Roman province of Asia (Ephesus and the surrounding area, including, among other towns, Colossae: see Acts 19-20, Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy)

The Vital Contributions of Pioneering Teams

In the New Testament we see pioneering teams of at least two sorts:

- **Unplanned Initiatives:** Those who, without any special commissioning, find themselves in a new context and take initiatives with the Gospel. A good example of this is the way the Gospel was planted in Antioch (Acts 11:20-21: *certain men of Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus*. Notice that this initiative was intentionally followed up and built on by Barnabas and Paul.
- **Planned Initiatives:** Teams specifically commissioned and sent out to pioneer a new ministry. An example of that would be Paul and Barnabas being commissioned and sent from Antioch to Cyprus Acts 13:1-4.

We should be encouraging both sorts of pioneering initiatives.

Effective pioneering (Some observations from Paul’s ministry in Acts and the Epistles)

Notice that Paul was imprisoned and thrown out of Philippi after a few days, was only in Thessalonica a few weeks before he was forced to leave, was in Corinth just 18 months and in Ephesus for 3 years yet in all these places 10 years later there were growing communities of labourers and the Gospel was continuing to advance. Because Paul was very clear what he was aiming at and didn’t let setbacks and difficulties distract or stop him. He kept after it until he had accomplished his purpose, to lay the foundations of a generational ministry.

Some observable elements of Paul’s pioneering efforts

- Good initiating: planting the Gospel
 - Living among, authenticity, humility, love
 - Broad sowing of the Gospel, repentance, faith
 - Much prayer
- Good development: laying foundations for generations

- Focus on local labourers, good seed, people like Epaphras (Col 1:6,7 & 4:12,13)
- Disciple in depth (convictions, character, life, etc)
- Develop local leaders
- To ensure the ministry grows to maturity and long term partnership in the ongoing advance of the Gospel
 - Recruit and develop mobile alongsiders who connect, strengthen and encourage.

We need much better clarity about what we are aiming at in our pioneering initiatives and much greater intentionality in making sure these pioneering efforts follow “best practices.”

The Vital Contributions of Local Labourers

Paul’s vision for local labourers

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

Philippians 1:27-28

That you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

Philippians 2:15-16

These passages, in which Paul articulates his longing for his friends in Philippi, are typical of what we see in all Paul’s letters: Paul’s vision for local labourers who carry the Gospel into the normal pathways of life, touching the lives of friends, family, and all those with whom they come into contact with the love of Christ, so that the Gospel continues to advance.

Paul had a passionate commitment to the fruit of his ministry to see them deeply grounded in Christ (Colossians 2:1-3), growing to maturity (Philippians 3:15-17), and overflowing with love to those around them (1 Thessalonians 3:12). His prayers reveal the longing of his heart for the ordinary believers in the towns where he planted the Gospel. The example of Epaphras, the Colossian who carried the Gospel into the community in his native Colossae and nearby Laodicea, is a beautiful example of how the Gospel spread through the Province of Asia (Acts 19:10) as a result of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus.

For us as Navigators, the focus and end result of all our efforts is this: to see the Gospel advancing through spiritual generations of labourers living and discipling among the lost. Compelled by the compassion of Jesus, we pray and work toward seeing labourers, workers for the Kingdom, next door to everywhere (Matthew 9:36-38).

As we have studied the New Testament and learned from our experiences around the world, we see that communities of likeminded labourers that are committed to advancing the Gospel are critically important for labourers to flourish and labour over a lifetime.

The Vital Contributions of Local Leaders

Paul focused on developing labourers (*fellow workers, partners in the Gospel*), and he intentionally built communities of such people under the care of local leaders. Labourers need community and community needs leadership.

In each place where the Gospel was planted, Paul and his teammates were diligent about developing, appointing, and overseeing local leaders. In Paul's ministries this seems to have been done as early as possible, generating local ownership, calling for greater commitment, and enabling local community.

No single Greek word is used consistently to describe how leaders were developed or appointed, which indicates that no one practice was used in every situation.

Mark 3:14	<i>He appointed</i> (Greek <i>poieo</i> , literally "He made") <i>twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach</i>
Luke 10:1	<i>After this the Lord appointed</i> (Greek <i>anadeiknumi</i> , literally "showed" as in Acts 1:24) <i>seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.</i>
Acts 6:3-6	<i>Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over</i> (Greek <i>kathisteemi</i> , as in Titus 1:5) <i>to them.</i>
Acts 14:2	<i>Paul and Barnabas appointed</i> (Greek <i>cheirotoneo</i> , literally "chose." This word has associations of voting by a show of hands.) <i>elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.</i>
1 Corinthians 12:28	<i>And in the church God has appointed</i> (Greek <i>titheemi</i> , literally "placed," as in John 15:16) <i>first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.</i>
Ephesians 4:11	<i>It was he who gave</i> (Greek <i>didomi</i>) <i>some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,</i>
1 Timothy 5:22	<i>Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands</i> (Greek <i>epitithemi cheir</i>), <i>and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.</i>
Titus 1:5	<i>The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint</i> (Greek <i>kathisteemi</i> , literally "make to stand up" or "firmly place") <i>elders in every town, as I directed you.</i>

Acts 20:25-37 describes Paul's commissioning of the Ephesian elders, stressing their responsibilities and giving insight into how Paul developed them. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe qualities Paul looked for in local leaders and 1 Timothy 5:17-22 addresses oversight issues.

Some important observations:

- local leadership was plural with a mix of gifting
- intentionality and clarity about developing and appointing
- a combination of God's gifting and of human evaluation and recognition
- character is more prominent than gifting

- commitment to the Scriptures and the Gospel and ability and faithfulness in teaching
- Paul made a point in Ephesus of modelling supporting himself and giving (to support Timothy, Titus, etc.) as an example to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:34-35). This indicates that in most cases, local leaders were not fully supported by gifts. However 1 Timothy 5:17-18 seems to indicate that it is appropriate for some local leaders to be supported financially, *especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

This whole matter of developing and appointing local leaders especially, including many who are not full-time “staff,” is a critical issue for us in helping local labourers continue to live out our Calling and in building communities of such labourers.

The Vital Contributions of Mobile Alongsiders

Paul and his team of mobile alongside included, among others:

- Timothy (part Jewish from Lystra, Acts 16:1-3)
- Titus (a Greek from Antioch, Galatians 2:1-3)
- Tychicus (from the Province of Asia, Acts 20:4)

From Acts and the Epistles we see that these mobile alongside acted something like a “Regional Team” for the ministries in Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, Galatia, and Crete.

Examples of Timothy’s contributions:

- *We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.* (1 Thessalonians 3:2)
- *I sent (Timothy) to find out about your faith.* (1 Thessalonians 3:5)
- *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.* (Philippians 2:19-20)
- *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.* (1 Timothy 1:3)
- *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.* (1 Timothy 5:17-20)
- *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth ... Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* (1 Timothy 6:17-18)
- *Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* (2 Timothy 2:2)

Examples of Titus’ contributions:

- *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.* (Titus 1:5)

- *You must teach...teach...teach...In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed...These then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. (Titus 2:1-3,7-8,15)*
- *Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives. (Titus 3:13-14)*
- See also Titus' role in Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:6,7; 2 Corinthians 8:6,16-17; 2 Corinthians 12:18)

Examples of Tychicus' contribution:

- *Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. (Ephesians 6:21-22)*
- *Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. (Colossians 4:7-8)*

A summary of some of the contributions we see being made by these mobile alongsiders:

- Strengthen and encourage
- Connect relationally and bring news
- Assess progress
- Complete what is left unfinished
- Appoint and oversee local leaders
- Teach and correct error
- Teach giving and raise and administer finances
- Lead with a generational mindset (identifying and developing the next generation)

We clearly see the need for mobile alongsiders in our Navigator movement, fulfilling the purposes described above. We believe the Navigator movement is best led by leaders who function in this way. We recognize the important contribution of meetings, administration, and legal governance structures in supporting leadership but we believe leadership should primarily be provided by alongsiders who lead by entering the worlds of those they lead to help, support, guide, and encourage following the pattern we have observed in the New Testament.

International mobile alongsiders (regional teams)

We need dedicated and gifted mobile alongsiders who function internationally, are able to go into countries to encourage and support national ministries, and perform the functions we see in the ministries of Timothy, Titus, and Tychicus. This requires not only availability to travel internationally, but also a high degree of cross-cultural sensitivity to enter different cultures with discernment. We especially value the example of Barnabas in his coming to Antioch (Acts 11:22-24) describing the spirit, attitude and perspective needed by such international mobile

alongsiders. Every national work in our movement should welcome and support the involvement of such international leaders.

Mobile alongsiders within countries (country teams)

In most parts of our movement we have chosen to organize by countries since this fits the legal and administrative realities of our world, though we recognize the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that exists in most countries. We are committed to building teams of mobile alongsiders within countries who can provide leadership in the way we have described above—encouraging, connecting, guiding, and supporting local ministries.