

# Raising LOCAL Resources

by Glenn Schwartz

## Gathering Recruits: The Challenge of Growth in the Christian Movement

The Church of Jesus Christ is a vast voluntary society spread across the world. It consists of several billion people who come together for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission. In John 17, Jesus prayed for those who would become believers in generations to come. How did this globally expanding band of believers come into being? In some ways it is like a vast volunteer army of committed individuals, families, clans, extended families, congregations and denominations resulting from the work being done by zealous “evangelists.” They travel the world looking for recruits to voluntarily join the cause of Christ. Unfortunately, a few times in history, people were forced to declare their allegiance to the church, but that is not the way Jesus intended it to be.

Sometimes they joined voluntarily as individuals or as families; and sometimes they came in very large numbers as nearly whole ethnic groups joined in what are sometimes called “people movements.” When this process happens as it should, these new recruits not only become rightly related to God, but they join in giving their time, energy and resources to help further the cause.

But sometimes the process has not worked the way it should. Instead of gathering those who can help further the cause, some recruits actually slow down the process. Rather than becoming contributors to the movement, some turn out to be a burden, consuming resources much-needed for ongoing expansion. Admittedly, the expanding Christian movement will find some along the way in need of assistance who may not be capable of contributing a great deal to the movement. However, unhealthy dependency arises when able-



*Glenn Schwartz is Executive Director of World Mission Associates, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The author welcomes interaction by e-mail at [glennschwartz@msn.com](mailto:glennschwartz@msn.com).*

bodied potential recruits are assumed to have nothing to give and are allowed to become dependent on those on the frontlines of service.

The ideal is that believers join the Christian movement for what they can give, not for what they can get. They should be told that joining the movement means doing their part to further the cause. It might be as simple as reminding them that we all have something to give back to God in gratitude for the salvation we receive. (The Macedonians in II Corinthians 8:2 gave out of severe trial and extreme poverty.) When that sinks in, it goes a long way to help avoid unhealthy dependency in the Christian movement.

As I write this, I am reminded of my own part in helping to further the cause. Among other things, I must guard against being only professionally religious. I am to be a recruiter encouraging others to join the cause. Perhaps you feel that you are not a zealous frontline evangelist like the ones I referred to above. The matter of spiritual gifts helps us to understand our part in a movement like this. Some are evangelists. Some are preachers. Some are administrators. Some have the gift of admonition, and some have the gift of hospitality. In short, there are many ways for us to make our contribution. The problem arises when we sit back, allowing others to do the work (or the giving) and simply go along for the ride. It was not intended to be like that in God's kingdom.

**Unhealthy dependency arises when able-bodied potential recruits are assumed to have nothing to give and are allowed to become dependent on those on the frontlines of service.**

Whether Christian recruits arise out of poverty or wealth, all need to be reminded that they have something to bring to the Kingdom of God. II Corinthians 8:12 reminds us: *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.* When we turn over to God what we have, it can be multiplied for God's purposes in His kingdom. And if we do not give from what we have, as a woman church leader in Kenya said, “If we give zero to God, He can multiply it, but it is still zero”!

As I have often said elsewhere in my writings, those sincerely in need should be helped. But many who have become dependent on resources in the Christian movement are capable of giving something back to God in gratitude for their salvation (as the Macedonians did). These are the ones who should be challenged to become active participants in the work of God's kingdom. 🌐