



Stewardship of Those Called – by Dr. Kenneth Harder



Introduction: For years, missionary leaders have realized that they face different management challenges than those who supervise people in office settings. They have assumed this was especially true for those who had raised their own financial resources. While this may be a factor, perhaps another issue needs consideration: the missionary's sense of calling and how it relates to one's daily work. Read on to see how a calling or a sense of purpose can be more effectively stimulated for eternal purposes.

Last night Bill, along with his wife Lisa and co-workers, Mario and Ruth, had enjoyed a delightful Friday dinner with Emily, a new missionary. Mario and Ruth had been invited since Emily would be joining the team Mario led when she had finished her orientation program.

While Mario and he had the assigned leadership roles, they both found the presence of their wives for such social events comforting and refreshing. The perceptions of their wives also gave them an added dimension of insight and wisdom. Of course, they both were careful to maintain confidentiality to protect both the missionaries and their wives. Bill had the same practice with Nancy, the other team leader.

The evening had been superb and Bill found himself reflecting on Emily's newcomer-enthusiasm with a touch of nostalgia. After Emily had left, the two couples had talked about Emily's enthusiasm and how it would lessen in the days ahead as language and culture study struggles set in. Then, of course the inevitable ministry failures would occur, and with them, the development of a more somber mindset. Emily reminded him of Lisa and himself when they arrived in Matolia over 14 years ago.

Now as he sat his office, he wasn't so sure he agreed with their offhand conclusions last night. Yes, language and culture study was difficult. He remembered that he had almost given up in the third year in Matolia. He also agreed that ministry failures were tough. Yet, he didn't believe those realities were the cause of his past or current doldrums.

In fact, others would say he should be encouraged at the present. The ministries in the country he led seemed to be moving ahead effectively. New churches were being planted. Youth camps were jam-packed and the youth responsive. The missionaries had good relationships with the local church leaders, and new missionaries were coming. But in his leadership role, he felt as though he was merely jumping through hoops, filling out forms, answering emails, and not always sure whether his leadership was helping or hindering the missionaries in his country. From a distance, all the externals looked positive, and yet he was struggling as the country leader. This struggle seemed to affect his relationship with Christ, which felt like it was living on fumes.

And he asked himself, "Does anyone even care how I am really doing?" While his area leader came for a visit twice a year, the main topics of their discussions revolved around ministry strategy and personnel issues. Not once in his 5 years as a country leader had they had a conversation about how he was personally doing as a leader, husband or father. Not once had there been an inquiry about his relationship with God. It seemed to him, that the only concern was about the ministry going well.

Today he needed to talk with someone in order to sort through the myriad of thoughts racing through his mind. The only safe person he could think of was Howard, his supporter, but also a professor of leadership. Maybe he could write an honest and transparent email to Howard, something he had never done. Could he trust Howard to know his heart as he cried out for help? But his heart was hurting so much this weekend that he knew he had to write.

To his surprise, he received a quick email reply, with an attachment, from Howard on Wednesday morning. Howard wrote an understanding note, thanking Bill for trusting him enough to share his soul. God had been urging Howard to pray in personal ways for Bill as a husband, father and leader. He actually had thought that this nudge from God was strange since all of Bill and Lisa's prayer letters had been so positive. Yet, Howard had learned in recent years to listen to God's urgings, even when they didn't make obvious sense.

In addition to the attachment, Howard asked a question, "How many hours do you give to your country leader responsibilities in a week? Is it a part-time or a full time job?" Howard said he asked this because Bill and Laura's letters only mentioned working with their local national church. Howard said there were special issues related to part time leaders, like Bill, and he would be glad to discuss them.¹

The attachment was a short textbook excerpt on intrinsic motivation, based on a book by Dr. Ken Thomas.² Although it was written from a business perspective; Bill found an immediate connection with the author's ideas. Bill realized that his intrinsic motivation came from his sense of calling by God. While younger missionaries might use different terms, they too had a sense of God's direction to the mission field.

Three insights immediately came to Bill as he read the excerpt:

1. He was intrinsically motivated. He didn't depend on external incentives to fulfill his roles or responsibilities. The sense of being part of an eternally meaningful purpose kept him going on the toughest days. And seeing progress toward this purpose gave Bill a sense of significance.
2. A new insight was that a person's manager or supervisor could make a big difference. The manager didn't need to be a controller, but rather one who empowered a person to become a more disciplined, self-managed person through intentional coaching or facilitation.
3. While a manager could not supply intrinsic motivation, he/she could diminish its power, thus reducing the incentive to continue. Likewise, a manager could nurture another person's motivation, thus empowering the individual to live out that sense of calling or meaningful purpose. Yet as he reflected, he knew this was true because both his and Lisa's sense of purpose had wavered or strengthened due to mission leadership over them.

Bill had never considered that idea before for his own leadership practice. He immediately set a goal to be a true "manager" for Emily—one who would nurture her obvious sense of motivation, and not be one who would diminish it.

Bill realized he needed to read the entire book to get a deeper understanding. He was eager to receive a copy of the book that Howard had agreed to send.

In the meantime Bill and Lisa decided to invite Emily for dinner in the next two weeks. They wanted to discover her personal history and sense of "calling". Hopefully this would give them a deeper understanding of her sense of purpose and how it related to her journey to Matolia.

Bill was amazed at Emily's positive response to the evening. He was also surprised at what Lisa and he learned about Emily's life, strengths, and relationship with Christ. Sprinkled throughout the conversation was a transparency about some of her tough times spiritually and relationally. These

¹ Delong, Thomas, John Gabarro and Robert Lees. When Professionals Have to Lead, Harvard Business School, 2007. Chapter 3 provides the most relevant information for application

² Kreitner, Robert and Angelo Kinicki, Organizational Behavior, 1999. This short section is found in pages 276-281.

insights would be invaluable to him as her supervisor during her language and culture phase. Although she had committed only to a two-year term of service, he could sense a blossoming of a long-term commitment. His challenge was to nurture that commitment so that she would yearn to stay.

With such positive results coming from the time with Emily, he began to think of Steve and Rebecca, who had recently completed their language and culture program. He had to confess that he didn't know them very well in spite of numerous meetings. Lisa and he would invite them for the same kind of conversation over dinner.

To Bill's surprise, the very questions to which Emily responded with delight, were met with suspicion by Steve and Rebecca. They wanted to know why the questions were being asked. Had something gone wrong? Once Bill openly shared about his learning from Howard's article, they relaxed and admitted to their fear. They had wanted such a relationship earlier, but since it hadn't happen, they assumed they would have to make their way alone. In fact, they confessed that they were considering returning to the US when their two-year term ended in four months. Bill didn't explore that issue, but just asked them to share their vision of what their future investment in Motolia might look like. Their sharing was tentative but Bill and Lisa realized that they could have been of greater help to this couple had they known these bits of Steve and Rebecca's story and vision.

The next day Bill took a few minutes to write another email to Howard so that he could share what was happening. Bill realized that he had broken trust with Steve and Rebecca through his lack of personalized attention and nurture. He remembered his own painful experience during his first few years in Matolia. A mission leader's lack of personal interest in Lisa and him, apart from their designated work, had been discouraging. He too had considered returning to USA until his coworker Mario and he had built a deep, transparent friendship.

The book, Intrinsic Motivation³ by Dr. Thomas, finally arrived. Howard also sent an intrinsic motivation instrument/booklet⁴ for individuals to evaluate their own level of intrinsic motivation.

Bill read that people intrinsically motivated are those highly engaged in their work. They put thought and energy into their work. They own their responsibilities and the results. They are in effect self-managed. Bill immediately recognized that the importance and applicability of this concept for himself and all the missionaries in his country. It would help him lead between the two common extremes in management: micro-managing and benign neglect. Micro-management would not work because of the distance between him and the missionaries, and the infrequency of visits. This meant it was virtually impossible for him to direct them on a day-to-day basis. Yet leaving them to their own routines meant he was neglecting them as they worked through the practical application of their calling in the midst of a complex intercultural world. They did not desire that either. They desired vital roles with commensurate authority. They also desired wise, attentive service from their leaders.

In his book, Dr. Thomas identifies four steps that lead to self-management for engaged individuals:

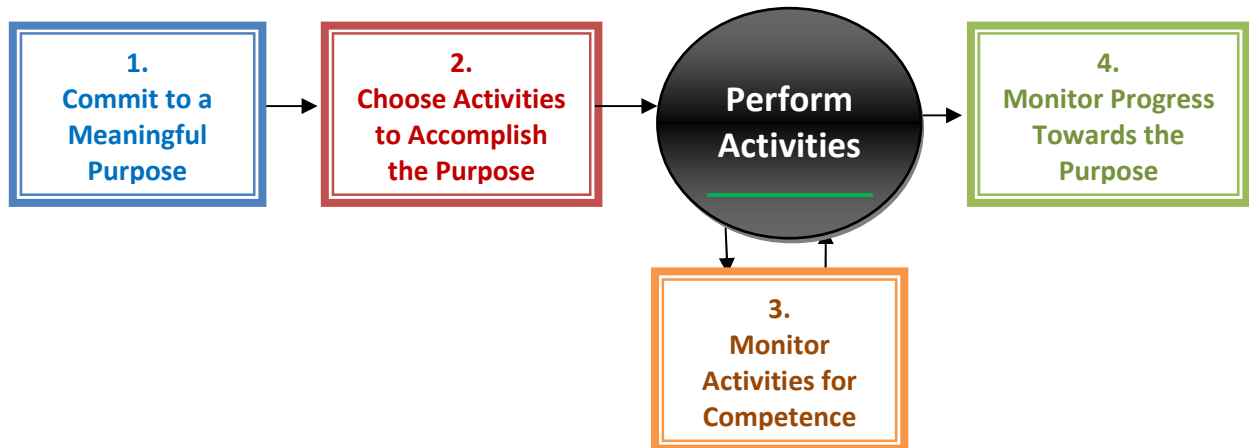
1. They are committed to a meaningful work purpose – one that is worthy of their effort. This is called a “sense of meaningfulness.”
2. They choose activities that they believe will best accomplish the purpose. This is called a “sense of choice.”
3. They make sure that they are performing those activities with excellence and skill. This is called a “sense of competence.”

³ Thomas, Kenneth. *Intrinsic Motivation at Work*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002.

⁴ Thomas, Kenneth and Walter Tymon, Jr. *Work Engagement Profile*, CPP, 2009.

4. They want the selected activities to make progress towards their own purpose and they work hard to ensure that this happens. This is called a “sense of progress.”

When done in developmental sequence, these four steps work together. The diagram below illustrates how they interact together. Bill could see real practical logic in this sequence, confirmed by his recent discussions with Emily, Steve and Rebecca.



Sense of Meaningfulness:

Bill was grateful that he had started at the right place, but he wanted to understand in greater depth what managers could do to encourage a “sense of meaningfulness” that was based on a purpose. He reviewed the building blocks for developing a sense of purpose and found the first three very helpful:

1. **Non-cynical Climate:** He admitted to a skeptical spirit during the first evening with Emily. Mario, Ruth, Lisa and he had all been skeptical of Emily’s enthusiasm. They weren’t listening; they were judging her perceived naivety. They weren’t encouraging or helpful.
As he reflected further, he remembered a devastating personal incident. As a new missionary, he had shared his dreams and sense of call with a very senior missionary. The missionary had cut him off and told him to leave his philosophizing because there were too many people to be reached for Christ. They didn’t have time to dream as there was too much work to do. Only his friendship with Mario had given him an outlet to dream, a vital relationship to nurture his sense of well-being as he struggled with learning the local language. So for years he voiced many of his dreams only to Mario, afraid they would be trampled again by mission leaders.
2. **An Exciting Vision:** This one was easy. The mission had an exciting vision that was being fulfilled. No one doubted this. The question was how it connected with each missionary’s sense of purpose. With Emily the connection seemed clear. In the case of Steve and Rebecca, their vision had been dulled by the realities of a new culture and the lack of nurture.
3. **Clear, Shared Values:** Again it was the challenge of learning about each missionary’s values and making the connection to the ministry’s values. He had to admit, he didn’t know the current condition of each missionary’s sense of calling and the things they felt most passionate about.
4. **Relevant Work:** While the missionary’s work might be intrinsically motivating, the alignment of personal vision and ministry required further examination.
5. **Whole Tasks:** Most missionaries’ responsibilities covered a complete task, so if their work was effective, they should have a sense of contribution. But was this true in reality?

Bill realized that he, with the two team leaders, would have a major task to understand each of the fourteen Matolian missionaries' sense of calling and purpose. He would need to begin with the two team leaders, Mario and Nancy, so they would have a sense of purpose in the team leader role. With this experience and some informal training, they could lead these discussions with each of their team members. His role would be strengthening Mario and Nancy in this effort. This would require frequent feedback times. Eventually he, through the team leaders, would understand each missionary's sense of purpose. They would need to work as a leadership team to make the time demands realistic as all of them had ongoing ministry responsibilities.

Bill realized that if he could accomplish a sense of alignment between the mission, the national church and the missionaries' personal visions, it would bring a greater sense of unity and excitement. This challenge was energizing, yet daunting for Bill. It would require intentional action on both his and the team leaders' parts. Bill realized that this would require a greater use of coaching, a new skill for him.

As Bill thought of Emily, he knew the challenge was to connect the importance of language and culture learning to her long-term vision. If Emily was like most missionaries, this would be a trying time, so he and Lisa would need to systematically encourage her, as well as give her a view of how her hard work would pay off in the near future. Chu and Charlene were just beginning to experience this "pay-off" for their hard work. Bill and Lisa would invite them over with Emily in two weeks when they came into the country office for a scheduled visit. If they could share both the tough times as well as rewards, it might increase Emily's sense of meaningfulness as she slogged through language and culture study.

Sense of Choice:

The next step or phase in encouraging the missionaries in his country to become engaged and self-managed was to develop their "sense of choice." As he read further in Dr. Thomas' book, Bill realized that the missionaries needed both the freedom and the ability to make decisions regarding their ministry tasks that they believed would move them forward in accomplishing their ministry purpose. They needed to be able to put their individual stamp on the ministry, using the intelligence, creativity and style that God had given them.

In reflecting about how to nurture this sense of choice, Bill realized that he, with Mario and Nancy, would need to reflect on the following areas for each of the Matolian missionaries if they were to fan the flame of each one's calling in their present ministry:

1. Authority: Bill agreed that being able to make one's own ministry decisions was empowering. This was a personal leadership value. But in a cross-cultural setting the other authority partner for most missionaries was the national church. This was a positive and good reality in the 21st century. But it did cause some missionaries to feel disempowered. This occurred less when they began to figure out the Matolian patterns for communication and decision-making. An open discussion among missionaries could provide an opportunity for all to gain a deeper understanding of Matolian cultural patterns. And Bill realized that he would have to initiate a similar set of sensitive discussions with church leaders as well.
2. Trust: While Bill thought he had the missionaries' trust, he realized that this was only his own perception. He would need to check with Mario and Nancy, team leaders. He needed to understand their perceptions and what they heard from the missionaries.

When he was honest, he realized that he did not give trust easily. So if others were like him, they would not give it easily. It would have to be earned. How could he become more intentional in letting missionaries build a trust bond with him? How could he help the new

missionaries self-manage so that they could demonstrate their ability to work with the church? He would need to explore this more with Howard in future emails.

In addition, there was continuing fallout from an incident that had occurred about 5 years ago as Bill began his country leadership role. An experienced missionary couple, Eric and Jane, had been sent home due to a lack of fit with the emerging Matolian church leaders. Eric had been a terrific church planting pioneer, but had difficulty mentoring new leaders and giving them the needed authority and autonomy as the national church matured. The church leaders had finally come to Bill to request some changes in Eric's approach. Eric did not take the resulting discussion kindly and abruptly quit. Since Eric and Jane were well liked by the other missionaries, this had been a time of crisis. And since not all of the details could be shared, Bill took his lumps.

So he wondered if he had rebuilt enough trust in the last 4 1/2 years so the missionaries could discuss sticky situations without fear or rancor. He realized that this incident had been one reason he avoided significant conversations with some missionaries. His practice would need to change as the leadership team implemented the intrinsic motivation, self-management process.

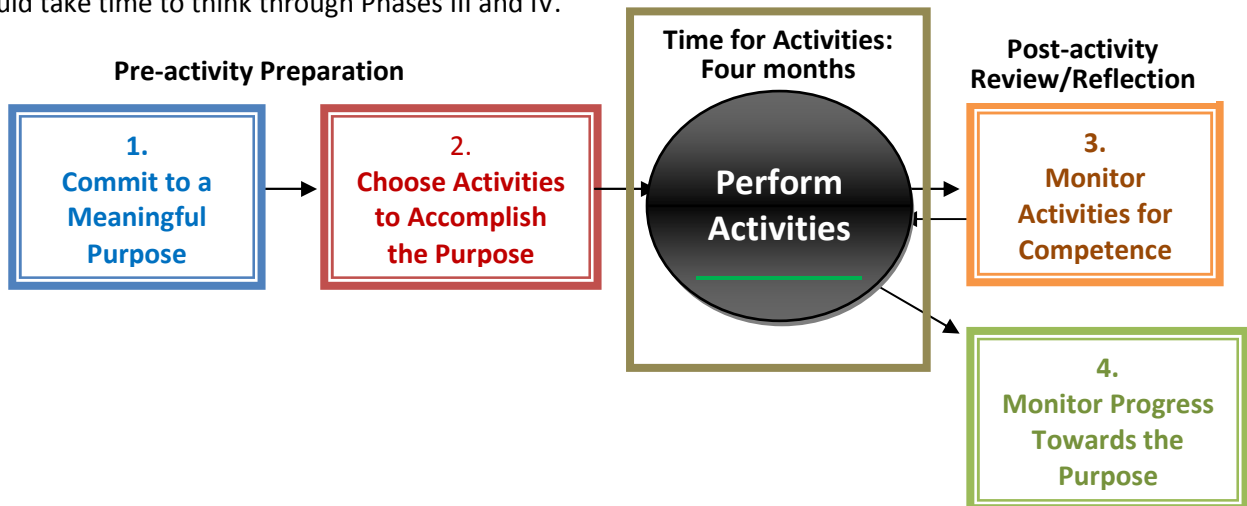
3. **Security/Safety:** Making mistakes was a part of every missionary's life. Yet this reality was not part of the missionaries' discussions. Had he prepared an environment that encouraged constructive learning from honest cultural and ministry mistakes? He recognized one thing he could do to model such vulnerability: his next devotional could be built around the top 5 mistakes he had made as a missionary. The thought scared him since such disclosure was not one of his key strengths, but he knew he had to change.
4. **Clarity of Purpose:** Bill realized that his sense of purpose or calling needed revitalizing. He suspected that Lisa needed this as well. As he thought of Eric and Jane (the couple who resigned), he realized that they had not renewed their ministry vision to reflect the changing church situation. He recognized that this revitalization would be a challenge, but perhaps a welcomed one by most of the experienced missionaries, especially if he and Lisa modeled it.
5. **Information:** If informed choice required adequate information, the missionaries were in good fortune. They knew more about their situation than anyone else in the mission. Yet, he had a nagging feeling that sometimes this information was filtered by their biases. How could he develop a process that would affirm their knowledge while challenging them to think more deeply and strategically?

As Bill reviewed these first two major areas, a sense of meaningfulness and a sense of choice, he realized he had two major tasks:

- First, he had to check out the level of trust among the Matolian missionaries.
- Second, he with the team leaders, Mario and Nancy, had to develop a strategy in which they would hear each missionary's vision and connect that vision to their daily ministry realities. It would be good to put into writing the results of these discussions with identified responsibilities and goals for each missionary.

Implementing these tasks would take time, especially in the initial phase as the three of them were learning. Such a process would help build a foundation for a positive self-management that would encourage each missionary to be a more effective steward. And in the long run, it would reduce time demands for them as leaders.

Bill went back to the four phase process identifying the steps to enhance a person's intrinsic motivation. He realized that after Phase II, Sense of Choice, there would be a time for the team leaders and each missionary to implement their plans. This meant he could focus his and the team leaders' energy on implementing Phase I and II. While everyone was carrying out their chosen activities, he would take time to think through Phases III and IV.



Bill knew it would be a major accomplishment to understand each missionary's passion/purpose and to have each missionary gain a personal connection with the mission vision. If these discussions could be documented into a set of short-term goals and work activities to accomplish those goals, it would be a worthwhile exercise for all involved.

First, he would read the rest of the book for general understanding. Later at the appropriate time, he would re-study these next two phases for in-depth understanding. This would keep him from getting overwhelmed with too many new ideas.

Sense of Competence:

As Bill kept on reading, he came to the third major component of intrinsic motivation, a sense of competence. When a person does a task well, and realizes that he or she is skilled in this area, the performance of the task is intrinsically rewarding and fulfilling. Bill began to understand that this sense of competence is developed through a reflective evaluation of the selected activities and how those activities were carried out. Were the activities completed in an effective manner? In what ways could the person improve so that the local people could grow and God could bless?

Bill scanned the five building blocks listed in the book that were said to increase a person's sense of competence. As he reflected on them, he realized that only one of the five building blocks was really part of the current mission culture.

1. Positive Feedback: Bill realized his leadership posture was built around the idea that if he didn't hear bad news about the Matolian missionaries, he assumed things were OK. When he took action, it emphasized the 5% that went wrong verses the 95% that was going well. He even did this with Mario and Nancy, the team leaders. Lisa had noticed this behavior and had challenged him. He would need their help so that he could begin to give them "true and real" appreciative feedback.
2. Skill Recognition: Bill knew that effective missionaries were skilled individuals; yet they as a group didn't talk much about skills or competencies. Granted, they needed to always give God

the glory as they saw God's blessings on their work. But they also needed to recognize the gifts and skills of each missionary. This would need further thought.

3. Knowledge and Training: They did have a plan for providing orientation to new missionaries who had just arrived on the field. But after this initial orientation time, further growth was up to each missionary. Matua and Margret plus LeAnn had just come back from home leave where each had taken some graduate courses. The leadership team should talk with them about what they had learned. They might even have ideas on this topic and how the Matolian missionaries could learn and develop their skills more intentionally and systematically.
4. High, Noncomparative Standards: While the Matolian missionaries were not in a competitive setting, the lack of competition was partly due to their distance from one another. Yet they did compare themselves with each other. Studying Galatians 6: 4-5 could be a starting point:
"Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself with somebody else." NIV
This building block would take time to implement as it was a team culture issue and could be connected with #3 above.
5. Challenge: The reality of challenge in missionary work had been a plus for Bill. He liked to be stretched, to use new skills and gain understanding. He also knew that not everyone was naturally inclined this way. Lisa, his wife, preferred a more secure and steady learning process. He would need to take more time and thought to integrate learning style and challenge into his leadership practice.

In reviewing the five building blocks, Bill realized the leadership team had some areas in which they needed to grow. But he looked forward to these learning opportunities when the time was right.

Sense of Progress:

Finally, Bill came to the last section, "having a sense of progress". A sense of progress comes when one recognizes that his/her work is moving forward to one's purpose and that the selected activities are actually working toward an intended goal. This highlighted the importance of Phases I and II in building a solid foundation. The following building blocks would encourage this sense of progress:

1. Milestones: A milestone is an intentional, short-term goal whose accomplishment indicates that one is effectively working towards a long-term goal. In reality, the short term goals set in Phase II would be reviewed for two things: Did the missionary accomplish the short term goal? Did the goal move them forward in reaching the long-term significant purpose? If the answers to both questions were a "yes", it would indicate progress. A "no" would indicate the need for change and growth. Each missionary needed to have their own milestones within the larger church plans. Thus each missionary could identify their own contribution to a larger set of goals and assess their own impact.
2. Celebrations: While reaching ministry goals would allow a sense of personal accomplishment, it would have greater benefit if the missionaries would celebrate them together, affirming each others' accomplishments. This could be an important team activity. In the midst of the celebration, they could praise their Lord for His work. Yes, a culture of celebration would affirm effective service and each person's importance to the Kingdom.
3. Access to Customers: Missionaries had no difficulty here. Their daily activities were intertwined with the recipients of their service.
4. Measures of Improvement: Measuring the results of the work would be resisted by some Matolian missionaries. This would necessitate a Biblical foundation to gain their support and

active ownership. Bill knew that developing some type of metrics would be essential to build a solid base for the missionaries' sense of progress. The measurements would require soliciting feedback from all who were served by each missionary's work. Each missionary would develop a feedback group of colleagues from the Matolian church and mission. This could enhance authentic cross-cultural relationships, so important in the 21st century.

5. Collaborative Relationships: Missionaries prayed for each other and would help each other during personal or situational emergencies, but they often didn't collaborate with each other on ministry projects because they didn't know each other's goals and activities. Of course if they did, they could also inform their national co-workers, the church leaders, and include them in the discussions. Common problems in the churches could be addressed with a unified approach. This would take more thinking of how to make collaboration a part of everyone's life in the team and with church leaders.

Conclusion:

A strategy was beginning to form in Bill's mind. It was exciting because if done right, the missionary leadership could bring in suitable church leadership for each missionary's discussions. Such discussions could clarify each missionary's sense of purpose and how it related to the Matolian church, thus enhancing the missionary's sense of energy and engagement. These synergistic discussions could also reduce miscommunication. He knew these actions could require change for those involved. This strategy would involve conflict in some cases, but that could lead to new understanding and more engaged service. It would have to be done one step at a time.

Since Dr. Thomas' book was written for the USA work place, Bill thought some additions would be needed to help missionaries have holistic health (e.g. spiritual, emotional, social and intellectual) in the midst of intercultural pressures of life. When they talked about the connection between a missionary's sense of purpose and his work, this discussion would need to include family, personal and spiritual health issues. It would need to be a holistic discussion.

Here is the strategy that he developed:

1. **Start:** Begin with the team leaders. He would introduce the intrinsic motivation process to Mario and Nancy, the two team leaders, and begin the process with them for the next four months. During this time they could complete Phase I and II. For Phase I, Bill would begin with each of them sharing their own personal sense of calling which gave them a sense of meaningfulness. This would be a good review activity. Then they would share how their current ministry and field leadership responsibilities were aligned with their own sense of calling. Based on this, they would evaluate whether each of their roles was a good fit. If it wasn't, there would need to be changes. If there was a good fit, they would develop plans for both the field leadership role and ministry that included holistic issues.

In Phase II, each of them would identify key actions and develop a written plan with goals. They would need to study each building block for themselves. For Bill, this meant digging into the issue of trust of him by Mario and Nancy, and maybe even discusses how this issue impacted his leadership of the Matolia missionaries. The result of this phase would be the development of holistic goals by each of them. These than could be shared, discussed and developed into holistic action plans.

Based on the plans, each of them would develop an action plan for the next four months with monthly milestones. Bill thought this process would change his present leadership practices in relation to the new missionaries for whom he had oversight. Some other changes might need to wait for implementation until he discussed them with his supervisor. The need for changes would

probably also occur for Mario and Nancy. That would be OK if it made each of them a more effective field leader, a more relevant missionary and a more holistically balanced person.

2. **Implement:** In three months Nancy, Mario and he would meet for a rollout strategy meeting for implementing Phase I and II with the missionaries. He knew that Mario and Nancy would need to take the lead role with their respective teams. He would need to play a supportive, coaching role that would include individual monthly meetings, in person or by Skype, with Mario and Nancy. Depending how things were working out, they might need another face-to-face meeting to discuss successes and challenges. This could be a time to affirm their ministry and leader practices and discuss the work-life balance concerns with family, spouse and personal holistic health.

During this time, he would also begin the process with the two new missionaries in orientation as they were under his supervision. This would help him gain a deeper understanding of the process and how to incorporate the personal, family, spiritual and ministry needs of missionaries.

3. **Evaluate:** At the end of four months, they would have a day-long retreat to evaluate the process and how he, as their leader, had implemented it. The thought of this evaluation was a bit intimidating for Bill, but at the same time provided a challenge for him.

Based on what they learned, they would develop a plan of how the team leaders would implement the process with their own teams. He would be willing to come to a team meeting to discuss the process and talk about implementation issues.

4. **Rollout to Missionaries:** Bill knew his role would change with Mario and Nancy. He would need to listen more and be more supportive. He would need to practice appreciative feedback and be ready to help them grow. Mistakes would be made, but they could become building blocks for learning as well.

The local church leaders would also need to become part of this process as some of the present ministry assignments were their initiative. So if some missionaries wanted some change of activities that would need to be negotiated over a period of time. But such discussion might have an additional benefit to see if some of the present missionary's assignments were just maintaining the status quo.

He also realized that changing his own leadership posture would take him time, perhaps years. He was glad that he had 3 years before his next home leave as he would need that much time to build a solid start. And he knew that there were additional concepts he needed to explore to become an effective steward as the country leader.

Tomorrow he would take time to write Howard a thank-you note, as well as ask some questions and seek advice. He would share the four-step strategy and ask Howard for advice.

Bill knew he needed coaching for this process. As a minimum, he needed to experience the same process he was planning for the missionaries. Although Bill's relationship with the Regional Director was cordial, it wasn't personal or transparent. It was focused on getting the job done. He would ask Howard for some ideas on how to proceed with his supervisor.

Howard had also mentioned a research project on field leaders.⁵ Bill needed to find out if the project had a website so he could read the results. One thing he knew, he needed to personally grow in order to be a better steward of the Matolian missionaries. And how would this initiative change the time he allocated for the country director role? Right now it was only 25 hours per week so he and Lisa could continue their church assignment. He thought he would need to add some hours for his new leadership plan.

Howard answered his email the next day, including the following points:

1. He greatly encouraged Bill in his strategy. He affirmed the need to start small with the team leaders and new missionaries.
2. He affirmed Bill's desire to start now. Howard said that he thought that Bill knew enough to begin. He said that Bill, Mario and Nancy would make mistakes, but that was part of implementing such a development process. By having periodic evaluations, each participant could affirm the positives of the process and identify areas for improvement. This would increase the missionaries' ownership.
3. He affirmed the holistic nature of the discussions and plans that Bill wanted to add. He agreed that the missionary life was different from corporate America.
4. He counseled that this process would increase Bill's time demands. In these initial stages, he suggested adding 5-10 hours per week. He said that maybe the time demands would be reduced once everyone understood this new process
5. He offered to come out next year to facilitate a review time for all. Based on this, the leadership team could identify growth areas. Furthermore, if desired, he could introduce a participatory strategic thinking/planning process⁵ for missionaries and church leaders.

Addition: The 5th Phase or Forgotten Phase

As Bill was writing the above strategy, another email arrived from Howard with an attachment from Ken Blanchard⁶ on helping staff stay engaged. As Bill read the article, he realized that he hadn't addressed the issue of developing a sense of connectedness with his team and the missionaries. Nancy seemed to do this well, but Mario and he could improve. And Bill saw an opportunity to nurture this sense of connectedness that would begin in embryonic state in Phase 1 and 3. If he focused communication during the time the Team Leaders carried out their agreed upon plans/activities, he could demonstrate his concern for their well-being and ministry.

Each month, while at meetings, or through email, he could ask a specific question about one of their plans that had special meaning or concern. He would have to be sure they didn't feel that he was "checking up" on them, but rather just showing that his concern for their well-being or encouragement. He would have each of their plans, so he would just have to set aside time to write a brief note and take a few moments from business to show a personal interest. The questions could also be about the spouse or children.

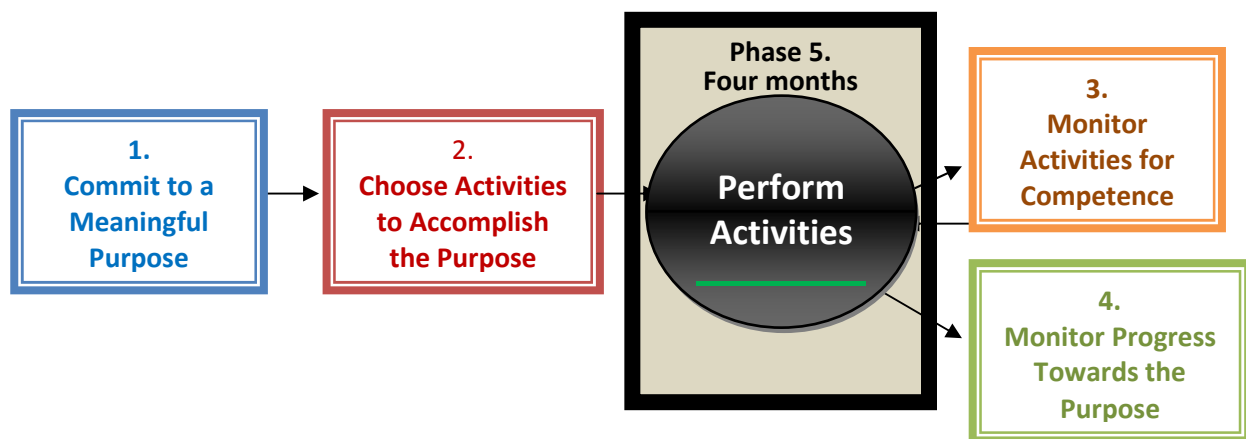
He was already praying for them. Now we would just personally communicate his concern, something he hadn't done consistently before. He would need to be careful not to take an evaluation posture, but rather one of affirmation and encouragement. They could even talk about this as a team as they initiated this process.

The End/ The Beginning:

Bill was excited. Now his country leader role began to feel like people ministry. Yes, administrative issues still needed to be handled, but they no longer defined his role and his relationship to the missionaries. Helping each of them understand and reach their individual godly purpose in Matolia gave him a renewed sense of purpose, even if it required significant growth on his part. And he thought it would energize Nancy and Mario as well.

⁵ For details of a participatory strategic thinking/planning process send an email to ken@gmi.org

⁶ <http://www.kenblanchard.com/img/pub/Blanchard-Employee-Passion.pdf>



Note: The vast majority of field leaders have come to their assigned country to do mission work, not to lead other missionaries. So they often struggle with the change of work and how it relates to their original sense of purpose or “calling”. They too need the connection between vision and their daily work. They too need to clarify their own calling.

While the skill set for being an effective field missionary is a good starting point for field leadership competencies, there are important additional skills, including the ability to handle unique stressors. And with new stress comes the added need for holistic balance.

Developing effective, healthy field leaders takes intentional planning and action by the mission organization. It takes nurture that prizes openness, especially in home, family and spiritual areas. The stress of the job can hinder any one of numerous areas. Temptations are lurking.

For some mission agencies, the first step can be listening to their own field leaders at the team, country and regional levels through a secure, confidential survey⁷. This allows each agency to explore the positives and growth areas built on its history, culture and challenges. It allows them to develop unique responses so that the individuals who have accepted the field leader role can be effective and healthy. This allows the field leaders to give empowering oversight to the intercultural sojourners whom they serve.

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His delight is to be a catalyst so others can use their God-given passions and gifts in practical ways to further the Kingdom. He has served with his wife for over 46 years. They have two adult TCKs and three grandchildren.

In the last five years he has used research as a confidential listening tool for mission organizations. The use of systematic listening has allowed mission leaders to better understand the needs of their own people.

⁷ IMPACT Study is a research and coaching project partnered by Barnabas International and Global Mapping International. Website: www.impactleader.org; email: ken@gmi.org