



Episode 062: How Your Church Can Identify New Mission Workers

Our guest is Paul Seger, who grew up in Nigeria as a missionary kid. Paul and his wife Joan, who also grew up on the mission field in Africa, now live in Atlanta Georgia. They began their ministry with [Biblical Ministries Worldwide](#) in 1975, and have served as church planters, including discipleship roles and leadership training. Paul now serves as a general director of Biblical Ministries Worldwide and he's committed to helping local churches mobilize and support workers around the world.

Please tell us just a little bit about your role at Biblical Ministries Worldwide.

- I'm the CEO of the organization. We help missionaries to get to the field from North America. My role is to provide the overall vision and direction and leadership for this family of missionaries.
- Everything we do revolves around establishing local churches. That could include starting from scratch or enhancing existing churches. It's all local church oriented.

At the beginning of your book you talk about a company called "Coca-Cola." You said, "They beat us. They did it first." What do you mean? What did Coke do that the church hasn't done?

- They set a vision that everybody in the world taste a Coke, and to a large part they've succeeded. A secular company actually got out there and reached everyone before we did.

This book that you've written is "[Senders: How your Church Can Identify, Train and Deploy Missionaries.](#)" You referred to local churches as "ground zero." Tell us what you mean by "ground zero".

- This term was coined way back in World War II. It's called the Manhattan Project. They created the first atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The spot where it was dropped was labeled "ground zero." Waves rolled out from that one spot. I use that as an illustration or a visual of what the local church could and should be.



HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN IDENTIFY NEW MISSION WORKERS | PAUL SEGER

- From the local church there needs to be waves of reaching outwards. That is the core of the great commission. The local church is really the way God designed things to happen.
- If every mission agency, Bible college and seminary went out of existence the local church still has that responsibility for the great commission.

You go on to say that “Missionaries should be considered as draftees and not volunteers.” What is the difference between a draftee and a volunteer?

- We take this idea from Acts 13 where Paul and Barnabas were sent out from the church in Antioch. The spirit of God was communicating to somebody, but it wasn't Paul and Barnabas. It was somebody in the church or maybe the leadership team. It seemed like in that early church, the spirit was communicating to the other members of that body. We see this elsewhere in scripture.
- Maybe the church could be more proactive in drafting some people into missions.

Do you think either can be true? Can someone feel a personal call first and bring that to the church?

- It needs to be a combination - whether which one is first. Someone may draft me but if I'm not willing to go I'm not going. On the flip side, I may be saying I'm ready to go, but the congregation or the church may say that I'm not ready to go. It needs to be a combination of both.

The mission agency that you serve with actually won't give out an application until the church has been involved in the process.

- Yes. Mission agencies often send reps to college campuses or seminaries. People sign up, and join the agency, decide where they're going to go, and then they go back to the church and say, “Hey, would you mind giving me some money?” We're saying that's really the wrong way around. We need to start with the local church. The local church knows that individual.

In the book you talk about the difference between eating a homegrown tomato and eating a tomato from your home garden. Talk to us about that illustration and how that relates to churches.

- It just tastes so much better eating a tomato from the vine than one bought from a grocery store. Every church I go to supports missionaries financially, but the vast majority have never produced their own. It's wonderful to support a missionary from another church, but there's nothing like having a missionary from your own church go into the field. It's just like homegrown tomatoes. There's a great synergy and dynamic and excitement that comes from actually seeing one of your own go to the mission field.

As our churches seek to deliberately identify workers, what are some of the characteristics that we should begin looking for in people?



- The primary qualifier has to be faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4). If a person isn't faithful there's really no need proceeding beyond that. If they're not faithful here they're not going to be faithful there.

Are there other points of character that you think would be next steps after faithfulness?

- Anybody in leadership has to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3. All of those are character qualities that need to be true of a person that's going to be a missionary. We would view a missionary as being a leader in the church.

If the foundation is Christlike character, what are some of the skill sets that should be observed in someone who might serve as a mission worker?

- We've identified 16 different skill sets that we think a missionary needs to have in today's world. Those are listed in the book and they're all related to things like the ability to decide, the ability to communicate, the ability to manage your time, the ability to relate well with people, practical things (like computer skills), strategic thinking, writing, functioning as a team, exegetical skills, language aptitude, personal skills.
- Character obviously is the beginning, but then these skills need to be developed. The local church is a wonderful place to develop these skills.

I think we'll agree that the local church is the best laboratory in which to be testing and growing in these things prior to serving in missions.

- That's for sure. The local church is a kind of laboratory or an educational entity in which we can develop and train people in these skills. Before sending them overseas we can establish whether or not they have those abilities.

You've mentioned in your book that it's important to have a proactive and strategic plan for training leaders who could potentially become mission workers. You talked about the idea of farm teams. What do you mean by the farm team?

- Professional baseball teams have farm teams. That is basically a way for them to keep in reserve and to develop players. In the local church we need to have systems for developing our future players, our future missionaries, our future leaders. If we don't have that system in place, when we lose a leader we're without a resource.

What are some of the steps that pastors or church leaders can take to start developing a farm team for global missions?

- Well, I think you have to strategize from the nursery on up. The three big components or building blocks to any farm team training system are the head, hands, and heart. There are certain things you have to know, there are certain things you have to be able to do and there are certain things that you have to be.



"Hands" would be like ministry skills?

- All the skill sets can be developed and should be developed here in the church rather than getting off the airplane and assuming that you can just do them.

"The heart" means attitude and character, right?

- Ultimately it doesn't matter how well you can do something, or how much you know, if we are not living Godly lives we're disqualified. You don't have to have good character to maybe do some of the other jobs in the world, but if you're going to be in ministry it's demanded that we have Godly character.

Please give us an example of where you've seen a local church really do a good job of this. Wow did they go about it and what did it look like?

- We were generating and developing leaders on the mission field. Many of them are now missionaries or pastors of churches. We chose to do this all within the local church. For instance, I would find a man who had already demonstrated himself to be faithful. We used a non-formal church based training program. We would meet with him and go through a typical Bible college or seminary academic education. I would spend time with this individual every week doing ministry together. I would mentor him and coach him in developing the skills needed.
- I would also meet another time during the week to just talk about how his walk with God is going. It's really not complicated. It's a commitment to say, "I'm going to spend time with this individual working in all three of these things every week; the heads, the hand and the heart."
- We produced leaders in the churches simply by doing this, and we were able to do this within the context of our local church.

Perhaps there's going to be some listeners who realize their church could do more to identify and help train mission workers. Supposing you had the opportunity to speak to them directly, what advice would you have for them? For those who want to take first steps towards this, what should we do first?

- I think the first step is to really connect with the leadership in your church and establish a mentoring relationship. If you're talking about the leadership of the church moving forward with this, they really need to settle on a strategy of how to make this happen in their local church. You've got to think through all of your programming, all of your events, and everything you do to say, "How do we align that with what we want to accomplish?"
- So much of what we do in church can take us in different directions, but if we align all of our efforts, our time, our money, our training, then we end up with what we want. We have to bring our church calendar into alignment with producing missionaries or probably it's not going to happen very frequently.



Are there resources that you would recommend for people who would like to learn more?

- There is a [study guide](#) that goes along with the book. It basically asks a whole bunch of questions of the leadership team of a church. If you just answer the questions you'll come up with your strategy to make this happen. That would be of assistance to you if you want to really put pen to paper and start thinking through some of these issues.
- We also have a blog [apoluo.org](#), which talks about these topics that we've been discussing today. There's multiple articles giving ideas, resources, input, and motivation on how to be a sending church.

If our listeners would like to follow or reach you, how might they do that?

- Feel free to contact me by email at pseger@biblicalministries.org.

