



Episode 003: Business as Mission Show Notes

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What brought you to be passionate about missions?

- Larry was born in Vancouver and grew up in BC and Alberta. He attended Prairie Bible College and the University of Calgary where he studied Business. A big influence in his life was his father, who was very missional in his understanding of the gospel. Larry joined Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM), now Crossworld, in 1970.
- The message from the pulpit in the 1960s was “Why don’t you give it up for Jesus?” It was a push to give up your profession for the higher calling of missions. Today, Larry prefers to ask the question, “Why don’t you use it all for Jesus?” Whatever your profession, use it to proclaim the Good News.

Business as Mission or BAM is a bit of a buzzword. What is it and why is it so important?

- Business as mission became a buzzword in the 1990s but it is not just a buzzword. It is a return to living out your faith in the marketplace – a rediscovery of the priesthood of believers. When you look at the church in Acts, you see the early Christians living out their faith in the marketplace.

“Be in the marketplace. Be in business. Be there where the people are and live out the mission of God.”

- It is important for everyone to focus on the Great Commission – it was given to all of us. Instead we have outsourced the missions industry to missionaries. The whole body of Christ should be involved in missions.

- In terms of cross cultural ministry, BAM brings the Great Commandment back into the gospel. As we take the gospel to countries where there is so much unemployment, poverty and injustice, we need to tie the human condition into the spiritual condition.

“What does it look like to love your neighbour? Job creation is a practical way to love your neighbour.”

- 4 billion people live in countries that do not allow missionaries to enter. BAM is a legitimate way of entering these countries. Most of the people in the world are oral learners and they learn by seeing and doing. BAM lets us live out our Christian faith in the marketplace and allows people learn what it means to follow Jesus by observing Christian business people in their daily lives.

What are some terms used in reference to BAM?

- Tentmaking is an older term that refers to people who go abroad with their profession and take a job overseas. While doing this job, the person is a light in a dark place.
- Business-as-Mission focuses on taking your business overseas or starting a business overseas.
- Business for Transformation, or B4T for short, is synonymous with BAM.

“Tentmaking is taking a job overseas for missional purposes and BAM is creating a job overseas for missional purposes.”

Where have you seen BAM at work overseas?

- One example of BAM at work overseas is the story of a couple who live in a closed state of India on a business visa. The state wanted to attract tourists and so this couple started a very profitable tourism business. At the same time, this couple lives among a predominantly Muslim community, being salt and light and ministering to these people and have seen many of these people come to Christ.
- This couple was supported by the church and business people in North America who helped supply start-up capital. Four different business coaches and consultants in North America helped them navigate technical aspects of the business such as taxes and legal paperwork.

Have you found a negative response to BAM from the church because of the inclusion of profit?

- BAM focuses on the triple bottom line:
 - It must be profitable and sustainable
 - It must create value, most often in the form of jobs
 - It must create spiritual capital, or said another way, the making of disciples for Christ

- If you don't have a profitable business in these closed countries, you won't last very long. You have to be profitable to stay and to demonstrate the Gospel in the way that you run your business.
- The greatest tension is often with the ministerial class and missions committees. It is hard to walk away from the idea that profit is evil. But really profit is good. We should only attack the abuse of profit.

If any of our listeners have business experience and are now connecting business with mission, what are characteristics that organizations doing BAM are looking for? Who are they looking to recruit?

- BAM is looking to recruit two different types of people:
 - 1.) People who will go overseas – You don't have to be an entrepreneur to do BAM but you do need to have a clear understanding of the Great Commission and your part in it. One question that BAM recruiters will be asking is, "How is God using you in your business here in Canada already?" Your faith should already be lived out in your marketplace here in North America.
 - 2.) People who will support the go-ers – BAM recruiters are looking for business people who are willing to give their time to coach businesses overseas. They are also looking for investors. These BAM initiatives need start-up capital.
- BAM recruiters are also looking for business people and church leaders to be advocates for BAM. Advocates ask, "How has God wired you?" and then encourage them to be the best they can be at what they love to do. For example, if they are an accountant, encourage them to be the best accountant they can be, to be a "kingdom accountant."

"When you do BAM, you have a business plan and a ministry plan, and these two plans work together."

Are there certain common mistakes you've seen in BAM?

- The biggest mistake is thinking that anybody can do BAM. Sometimes, when a country is threatening to close its doors to missionaries, they have tried to start a business to stay in the country. However, not everyone can start and run a business – it's not just a way to get a visa.

"To be in business is a high and holy calling in and of itself."

- Business is a lot of hard work and it is time consuming. Many people come into it with unrealistic expectations. A lot of things have to come together – are you the right person at the right time in the right place with the right product at the right price with a market that will buy your product?

“In Canada, 8 or 9 start up entrepreneurs out of 10 will fail once or twice.”

Do you find that classical mission agencies are helpful in BAM endeavours? Are they engaging BAM?

- No. We have consulted with 30 different agencies and two thirds are still only dabbling in BAM and the other third are beginning to take steps in the BAM direction.
- Mission organizations haven't recruited for business people – they've recruited for professional missionaries. In order to do BAM, mission agencies need to start recruiting business people or partner with business focused organizations.

What are the first steps a church should take to learn more about BAM?

- They should read and understand more about BAM – learn about the challenges and understand the playing field. There are a lot of helpful books, websites and seminars available.
- IBEC offers help to churches as well. Larry consulted with a missions committee at a large church that was struggling with making their short term missions trips viable. They decided to abandon the term “mission trip” and instead labelled the trip by skill needed – medical trip, business trip, etc. This helped the congregation connect their skills to the needs overseas and increased participation in these trips.

How can listeners learn more about BAM from you?

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