



Statement on Tentmaking and BAM

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Introduction

In recognition of the biblical basis for tentmaking/business as mission, Biblical Ministries Worldwide affirms this method as a viable strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission. While great care must be exercised in the examination of a biblical basis for this strategy, entrepreneurial activity is clearly demonstrated and modeled in the lives of prominent men and women of God in the Scriptures.

Biblical Basis

The Apostle Paul supported himself and his colleagues through his tentmaking skills. A native of Tarsus, known for its unique and high quality tents, Paul's tentmaking skills provided immediate credibility and employment wherever he went. His educational credentials combined with a cross-cultural background also provided him with strategic opportunities to spread the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul stated three reasons for supplementing his support from churches through tentmaking:

1. To offer the Gospel without charge (2 Corinthians 11:7-9)
2. To relieve the burden upon churches, and (2 Corinthians 12:14-16)
3. To be an example to others (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 9, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9)

A fourth possible unstated reason for tentmaking was for Paul to be able to have extended contact with the lost. Tentmakers had homes that provided an ideal setting for starting churches. Paul's letters are filled with guidelines for the development of a work ethic and the proper stewardship of property and finances.

A prime example of tentmaking (using non-ministry skills for advancing the Gospel) is found in the experience of Priscilla and Aquila. They were skilled craftsmen who:

1. Gave Paul a job (Acts 18:2-3).
2. Provided Christ-centered discipleship to a Jewish scholar (Acts 18:24-26).
3. Moved with Paul to his next ministry location (Acts 19:1-3).
4. Hosted a local church in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19).
5. Returned home and continued to be part of the local ministry (Romans 16:3-4).

Historical Examples

An examination of post-biblical models of missions demonstrates that tentmaking/business as mission has been practiced for centuries. A few examples include:

- The Nestorians (3rd-5th Century) supported themselves through skilled labor, medicine, or serving as secretaries or stewards in the homes of nobility.
- The Moravians (17th Century) went as tradesmen to the West Indies, Labrador, Suriname, Africa, and America often packing their tools and personal items in caskets.
- Heroes of the Missionary Movement:
 - William Carey (18th Century), the "father of modern missions," used multiple professional skills as a botanist, educator, printer, and linguist to impact the land of India.

- Hudson Taylor used medicine in China.
- Adoniram Judson served as a tutor and advisor to the king of Burma.

Contemporary Motivations

- **Strategic Access:** The rapidly changing political, religious landscape of the world in which we live provides a compelling reason to consider the most effective strategies to fulfill the Great Commission. Tentmaking/business as mission often provides the only means of entering restricted access nations. By not only meeting the technological, medical, agricultural, educational and economic needs of a country, but training nationals to meet these needs, this strategy opens the door for entry-level and permanent ministry in restricted access nations. But tentmaking/business as mission also provides missionaries in open countries with extended, systematic opportunities to have contact with the lost.
- **Economic Restraints:** Global economic circumstances with their resulting impact upon those who try to raise support may compel missionaries to consider the possibility of supplementing or providing all of their support through tentmaking/business as mission. The traditional method for support raising is a model that has no biblical mandate. It is difficult for nationals in many countries to raise their entire support from their homelands because of the small number of Christians and churches to sustain missionaries living overseas. Tentmaking/business as mission can provide strategic opportunities for missionaries to supplement their support, provide employment for nationals, and create financial resources for the ministry.

Implementation

- **Accountability:** Recognizing the unique temptations that often sidetrack and derail missionaries from their God-given task of evangelism, discipleship and church planting, BMW will make every effort to train and hold tentmaking/ business as mission missionaries accountable for the stewardship of their time and income. Great care must also be exercised to ensure that tentmaking/business as mission will be carried out ethically in entering and ministering in restricted and open countries. As in all of the endeavors connected with BMW, each member of the mission family, including tentmakers/business as mission missionaries, is ultimately accountable to the local church with whom BMW will partner.
- **Continuity:** The Gospel message is of first importance when engaging nonbelievers: it was Jesus' primary reason for coming to earth (Mark 1:38), it was the center of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), it was the focus of the Apostles' message (1 Corinthians 9:16-23), and it is the power of God in changing the eternal destiny of a human being (Romans 1:16-17). BMW affirms the centrality of the gospel in all of its ministry.
- **Compatibility:** The Gospel ministry includes the message but also involves practical, relational, interactive and culturally sensitive labor and teaching directed at the whole person to help restore and transform the four broken human relationships with God, self, others, and the creation (General 3:6-24; Luke 4:18-21).

Conclusion

BMW missionaries desiring a tentmaking/business as mission ministry should educate themselves about BMW and maintain a strong affiliation with members of the mission family for the purpose of helping to

strengthen the work of the mission as a whole. Those who engage in tentmaking/business as mission (whether part-time or full time) should participate in the missionary preparation activities required by the mission so that they understand missionary goals and principles on the same level with their donor supported counterparts.