

Sacred Business: Outlining Business as Mission for the Fulfillment of the Great Commission

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Abstract

Business as Mission (BAM) is the operation of a for-profit business located in a cross-cultural setting and aimed toward the fulfillment of the great commission. This definition reveals four key success factors for BAM: support, financial and otherwise, for both the business and the missionaries; the ability to gain access to cross-cultural settings; the opportunity to advance the gospel; and the requirement of managing both missional and business goals. Examining each of these areas, along with the historical effectiveness of BAM, reveals that BAM is an efficient and effective missional strategy, which should be used to see the Great Commission fulfilled by current generations.

Sacred Business

For anyone who has attended church for some time, the Great Commission is a familiar verse. Matthew 28:19-20 lays out God's global plan for the world: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." For the nearly 2,000 years since that Commission was given, the church has worked to see it met. Only in the modern day has the church been able to quantify the size of the work and understand the number of unreached people remaining.

Anthropologists divide the nearly 7.9 billion people alive today into 11,946 ethnolinguistic people groups. The groups are split along culture, language, and geographic lines to quantify the unique cultures in the world. Out of these people groups, 7,318 are considered unreached, meaning less than 2% of the population is evangelical Christian, totaling over 4.5 billion unreached people. Out of these people groups, 2,138 with a total population of 1.99 billion are in areas actively hostile to the gospel (IMB, 2021). The task remaining to the church is enormous.

The church currently utilizes a broad range of platforms to attempt to move the gospel to the hardest-to-reach places, as well as care for missionaries while they are there. Sending missionaries as teachers, medical workers, for disaster relief, or need-meeting (e.g. clothing and clean water ministries) are all common tactics, often overseen by large U.S.-based organizations or mission boards. These methods have been successful in carrying the gospel to many areas, and in caring for missionaries as well. However, in some of the hardest places in the world to live and reach, missionaries sent under that name or in connection with large Christian organizations and mission boards may never be allowed to enter their target country, much less develop

relationships to see the spread of the gospel. As pastor David Platt (2015) is well known for saying of unreached peoples, “They’re hard, difficult, and dangerous to reach. All the easy ones are taken” (@plattdavid). Modern missions faces its largest difficulties in providing an adequate living for missionaries, generating opportunities to safely share the gospel, and providing access to the hardest to reach places. While God can be trusted to meet these needs for His Church, the Church needs a wise, informed, and effective approach to continue carrying the gospel to the nations.

Hypothesis

The fulfillment of the Great Commission is the Church’s principal work on earth. God’s heart since the beginning of time has been for all people to know and worship Him. Blessings for all nations is a key piece of the Abrahamic covenant: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3, ESV). God repeats this same promise in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14. In the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt (Exodus 7-12), the Lord tells Pharaoh through Moses 5 times that these plagues are so that he and the other Egyptians will know that the Lord is God. The Lord even tells Pharaoh that “for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth” (Exodus 9:16). In the same chapters, God says only once of the plagues and once of the Feast of Passover that they are so the Israelites will know He is God (ESV). In Joshua 4:24, Joshua says that the Red Sea and the Jordan River were both parted “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty.” Multiple times at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 and the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon prays that all peoples would worship God at the temple. David in 1 Chronicles 16 and throughout the Psalms commands all peoples to praise the Lord. God sent

Jonah to Gentiles and set up Daniel along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in both Babylonian and Assyrian courts (Daniel 2:48-49 and Daniel 6:1-2). The major prophets too declare the heart of God for all people “it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it (Isaiah 2:2). “At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 3:17).

Jesus further displays God’s heart for all people by visiting Samaria (John 4), ministering to Gentiles (Matthew 8:28-34), and in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Acts shows God’s heart for all nations too, via Peter’s vision and the move of the Holy Spirit on a whole group of Gentiles to which Peter preached (Acts 10). In the Revelation to John, he describes seeing “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9). God’s heart for all nations and all people is a thread running through the entirety of scripture.

Therefore, until the second coming of Christ, the Church must continue in research and formulation of specific mission models and methods for reaching the hardest places. The fulfillment of the Great Commission ought to be the central focus of the Church’s greatest minds and strategists. One such strategy that needs analysis for the future of the global spread of the gospel is Business as Mission (BAM). BAM is a model with a lengthy and distinguished history of service within the church, and one which has, through recent research and attention, continuously been modernized for effectiveness in the present day. Business as Mission is an effective and Biblical missions model for the funding and care of overseas missionaries, for gaining entry to hard-to-reach locations, and for providing opportunities to advance the gospel to

see the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation. The biblical significance and historical effectiveness of BAM, the care and funding that BAM can provide, and the access to difficult-to-enter countries available through BAM. In addition, the balance of evangelism and for-profit business will be described, and specific criticisms of BAM will be addressed.

Research Question One: How has Business as Mission been Biblically and Historically Effective?

To measure effectiveness of Biblical and historic examples, a definition of BAM must be constructed. This definition must highlight areas critical to the success of any BAM business and be applicable to any BAM business no matter the time or location.

The Definition of BAM

Business as Mission is a for-profit business. There is no room in BAM for “fake businesses that are not actually functioning businesses but exist solely to provide visas for missionaries to enter countries otherwise closed to them” (Lausanne, 2004, p.18). Apart from God’s miraculous intervention, carrying out ministry in a fallen world requires money, so BAM views profits not only as a necessity but also as “good, desired and beneficial to God and his purposes” (Lausanne, 2004, p.18).

Second, BAM cannot be conducted in one’s home culture. Rundle and Steffen (2011) clarified this by separating missions from ministry, “depending on whether geographical, linguistic, or cultural barriers are crossed. Outreach efforts among people of similar language and culture are usually referred to as ‘ministry,’ and the term missionary has traditionally been applied to those doing cross-cultural ministry, that is, ‘missions’” (p.33). While there is certainly a place and a need for Christian business in one’s home culture, only cross-cultural business addresses the missional aspect of BAM.

Finally, the location of the BAM business is selected to share the gospel with a specific community or people group. Lai (2005) wrote “as I tell my employees and friends... I do not live and work [here] because I make a lot of money, but because there is so little witness here” (p. 11). BAM intentionally chooses location because there is little witness there and meets them with real business and the gospel.

By combining these three pieces of BAM into a singular definition, the scope and boundaries of BAM can be highlighted and addressed. BAM is the operation of a for-profit business located in a cross-cultural setting intentionally aimed towards the fulfillment of the great commission in the business’ immediate community. This definition will serve as the baseline for the evaluation of BAM.

Biblical and Modern Tentmaking Ministries

BAM businesses are often also called Tentmaking ministries because the Apostle Paul was a tentmaker who utilized his trade to fund his own missionary journeys. BAM’s Biblical origins are found in Acts 18, where Luke describes Paul working alongside Aquila and Priscilla to earn a living while he was in Corinth. Paul probably “did this for one of two reasons. First, he sometimes worked to supplement his income so as not to burden those to whom he was ministering. Second, he worked to identify with people and make friendships through which he could share his faith” (Lai, 2005, p. 11). “Supporting himself also added credibility to his message and gave him ample opportunities to model a... Christ-centered lifestyle. It is highly likely that he saw his day job as a central part of his ministry, as an indispensable part of his church planting strategy, and as important to his witness as his preaching” (Johnson & Rundle, 2006, p. 22).

The modern church often misses this last tenet of Paul's ministry, viewing the business portion of modern Tentmaking efforts as "a necessary evil rather than an indispensable part of a healthy church planting strategy" (Johnson & Rundle, 2006, p. 22). Lai (2005) combatted this idea by emphasizing that the vocation itself is a means of serving God. Lai (2005) wrote, "there is no dichotomy between work and ministry. Work and ministry are to be one" (p. 10). While Lai recognizes that there will be inevitable time constraints and conflicts between work and ministry, work is ultimately a boon for ministry, rather than a bane. Paul's tentmaking ministry is the great Biblical example of BAM in action and can serve as a baseline for combining work and ministry to modernize BAM for today's world.

The Foundation for BAM Laid by William Carey

BAM has its modern foundations in India with William Carey. Carey is considered the father of modern missions, being the first in a new wave of missionaries that has continued until the present day. He also began the process of modernizing BAM. Carey moved to India in 1793 and he supported his mission efforts and his family through farming and a print shop in the Bengal province (Smith, 1990). He especially used his print shop as an opportunity to share the gospel, even fitting the schedule of the day around opportunities to meet others and share the good news.

Carey was also a writer and established Tentmaking strategies for future missionaries. He estimated that a team of four male missionaries, together with their wives and children, would be able to support themselves and conduct ministry anywhere. The necessary equipment would be "a little spot of ground... a cow or two, and a bull, a few other cattle of both sexes, a very few utensils of husbandry, and some corn to sow their land, would be sufficient... Indeed, a variety

of methods [to support ourselves] may be thought of... many things will suggest themselves to us, of which at present we can form no idea” (Carey, 1792/2004, p. 22).

Carey was also the first to suggest thinking about missions like a business. “When a trading company have obtained their charter they usually go to its utmost limits; and their stocks, their ships, their officers, and men are so chosen, and regulate, as to be likely to answer their purpose” (Carey, 1792/2004, p. 25). These trading companies similarly brave dangerous seas, countries, peoples, projects, and endure the most difficult of hardships, all for profit. Yet, “Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah’s kingdom. Their charter is very extensive, their encouragements exceeding great, and the returns promised infinitely superior to all the gains of the most lucrative fellowship. Let then everyone in his station consider himself as bound to act with all his might and in every possible way for God.” (Carey, 1792/2004, p. 25). Carey through his authorship and example began the modern movement of self-supported missionary teams that would become BAM.

BAM really came into prominence after the fall of colonialism. “Despite its faults, one clear advantage of colonialism was the unrestrained access it gave missionaries to less Christianized countries. Today... missionaries are finding it all but impossible to get into those countries” (Rundle & Steffen, 2011, p. 27). However, these same countries “are aggressively trying to attract entrepreneurship and capital from abroad” (Rundle & Steffen 2011, p. 27). So, businessmen and businesswomen find themselves called by God to become the next generation of missionaries, called to restricted access nations (RANs) via legitimate business, and modern BAM was born.

The Sanctity of Business

A Biblical foundation for BAM can also be found implicitly through the commands and character of God. Grudem (2003) in *Business for the Glory of God*, demonstrated that business activity, and work at large, is not morally wrong or even neutral, as work was created by God, and He declared it good. First and foremost, God is glorified by the recognition and gratitude of His creative acts that allow mankind to generate new products. In a perfect world, this would be the natural state of affairs. Without sin, human nature would immediately recognize how the actions of God are the origin of anything people can make. Grudem (2003) explained it this way, “if we were able somehow to transport Adam and Eve into a twenty-first-century American home... we would turn on the faucet to offer them a glass of water, and they would exclaim... “praise God for giving us such a great earth! And praise him for giving us the knowledge and skill to be able to make that water system!” (p. 19). Adam and Eve, before they sinned, would have instinctively understood that God is the creator of all the material we can use and the creator of the intellect that was used to design any product we can purchase.

Grudem also argued that the creativity and knowledge in the mind of man, is more than an opportunity for others to see and glorify God; the act of creating or designing is displaying the image of God that He has placed inside each one of us. “When we work to produce (for example) pairs of shoes from the earth’s resources, God sees us imitating his attributes of wisdom, knowledge, skill, strength, creativity, appreciation of beauty, sovereignty, planning for the future, and the use of language to communicate” (p. 20). Mankind shows that he is created in the image of God when he uses these attributes to produce. By modeling the way his creator creates, man gives glory to God.

Explicitly, God tells mankind that work is good, as it is part of the reason he was put on the earth; “the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15, ESV). However, the fall caused work to be brought under the influence of God’s curse and sin (Gen 3:17-19). Notably, however, this curse does not remove work from man, it merely makes the work more difficult. Work, and by extension creation and business, are still remnants of the perfect world God created and all are good for mankind. This is not to say that business itself is a sacred ideal, but when business is intentionally aimed towards the glorification of the God who created all the necessary articles of business, it takes on sacred importance. Based on God’s nature as a creator, and his commands to imitate that as rulers and caretakers of the earth, carrying out BAM is a Biblical act of worship.

The Priestly Role of all Believers

1 Peter 2:9 teaches Christians that “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Because of the perpetual covering of the blood of Jesus, Christians have direct access to God the Father. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross does away with every division spiritual, physical, or ritual between God and man.

Yet the tradition and influence of the Roman Catholic church has left an unnatural division between clergy and laity that continues to influence the global Church, Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox. According to Hobbs (1990), the “Roman church developed an ecclesiastical system that centered power in the clergy... A complex hierarchical system of church orders emerged in which deacons, pastors, and bishops... assumed control... the priesthood of all believers gave way to the priestly order and functions” (pp. 12-13). Ogden (2003) insisted this avenue of thinking still plagues the church, especially with regards to

involvement in ministry. “The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers obliterates the caste distinction between clergy and laity. There is no qualitative difference between the two. Yet the gulf between clergy and laity remains” (p. 96). Ogden (2003) wrote that the solution is for church members (laity) to redefine the word ministry in their minds so that “when they hear that word they will think of themselves and not the professionals” (p. 98). Unless BAM missionaries and their sending churches can alike grasp the reality of their own priesthood and involvement in the ministerial affairs of the global Church, Business as Mission is impossible.

God’s pronouncement of priesthood for all believers supplies every single Christian (clergy or laity) with the necessary access to the Father and authority to proclaim the gospel. “Having unhindered access to God on the ground of the blood of Christ, the New Testament priest is thus privileged to minister in intercession” (Chafer, 1994, p. 67). A primary priestly role of believers is intercession between God and man as they seek to bring others into the knowledge of Him. In this way, all believers are participants in the ministry of Christ. “The believer is not only closely associated with Christ positionally, being in Him. But is closely associated in those activities which He is undertaking on the plane of infinity and which may be extended, by His grace, into the finite sphere” (Chafer, 1994, p. 67). The priestly role of every believer empowers BAM as lay Christians participate with God in His mission of all peoples coming to know Him.

Conclusion of Research Question One

BAM is the operation of a for-profit business in a cross-cultural setting intentionally aimed towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the business’ immediate community. BAM had great Biblical success in the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, and historical success with William Carey through the present day. BAM is additionally Biblically grounded as sacred business because it is focused on the glory of God and grounded in the priestly and

ambassadorial role of all believers. Business as Mission is not only a solidly Biblical concept but one that has practical significance and success for the church Biblically and historically.

Research Question Two: How Viable is the Business as Mission Model to Fund and Care for Overseas Missionaries?

Care for missionaries is a broad topic, and when placed in an intense, potentially hostile overseas situation each missionary must be concerned about holistic care. While BAM missionaries are traditionally self-sufficient financially, enlisting the help of sending organizations, additional team members, or stateside churches for mental, social, spiritual, logistical, or emotional support is a necessity. For a full consideration of missionary care, these two aspects of missionary well-being must be separated, and a specific plan to maintain access to each while the field is required.

Potential BAM Platforms

There are as many BAM platforms as there are businesses, though certain kinds are more effective than others at reaching target populations. In each potential area, both entrepreneurship and taking a position in an established business are possibilities. Entrepreneurship adds all the difficulties of owning a business, including funding, hiring, and meeting the bottom line. However, it also holds the benefit of allowing BAM missionaries to create a company that accurately addresses specific needs in their target people or region. In addition, entrepreneurial businesses can have a missional focus themselves, so the business and its influence and resources pair with the missionaries' aims to see the gospel spread. BAM missionaries who take a role in an established business have far less to consider on the business side, but they must find other ways to conduct ministry, as it is unlikely their business will pair with their Great Commission Vision.

When it comes to specific types of business, each holds its own strengths and areas of effectiveness. In less developed countries or areas, an agricultural model can serve extremely well, because of both land availability and relatively plentiful labor. There are many coffee companies in central America that engage in BAM this way, such as Commissionial Coffee and Great Commission Coffee, which come alongside local farmers in Peru and Nicaragua to provide capital, equipment, business support, and a market for their coffee (Commissionial Coffee, 2021; Great Commission Coffee, 2021).

Manufacturing is a great entry to developing countries, where labor is plentiful, resources can be acquired, and products can be produced cheaply. Manufacturing models often begin with overseas private equity (OPE). OPE is the purchase of or heavy investment in an existing business or factory, then the utilization of that business “as a ministry center and a mission outreach platform” (Johnson, 2011, p. 62).

There are also potential opportunities to start targeted need-meeting businesses through BAM. These types of organizations, such as Harvest India, can meet needs through well drilling, orphan care, education, disaster relief, or in other region-specific areas (Harvest India, 2021). By operating in such areas, the opportunity to share the gospel increases exponentially. However, such organizations are typically non-profits or rely heavily on donations because it can be difficult or even against the company’s mission to charge for such actions. This type of mission outreach, in a BAM context, can be achieved by operating through non-profits and non-government organizations (NGOs) separate from the business. Bronkema and Brown (2009) wrote that meeting the social development aspect of BAM can be the most difficult part. Therefore, they suggest using the money, status, and influence generated by business to pair with outside organizations to meet needs in the business’ immediate community.

The Financial Needs and Provision of a BAM Business

There is a tendency, especially in western culture, to attempt to separate the sacred and the secular, that is, to keep religion out of everyday life. Even in the Christian church, this thinking is prevalent. Ledstam and Afdal (2020), both of whom are students at the Norwegian School of Theology, brought this charge against BAM. They argue that BAM is a “quasi-object” a weak attempt to unite economy and religion that is “stitched together using theological language” (p. 9). They continue their argument, suggesting that in BAM, “to a large degree, religion and economy are constructed as separate and pure entities” (p. 9).

However, BAM missionaries do not have the luxury of keeping their lives partitioned. Based on interviews with current missionaries, Nur (2009) wrote that with missionaries “there is no differentiation between how they conduct themselves in their private lives and in their business lives” (p.47). He also writes that for the interviewees, being a BAM missionary means running a business entirely by Christian principles, “even when that is not profitable.” (p. 55). Perhaps BAM is not a perfect union of economy and religion, because when the two collide, “the bottom-line is never the ultimate motivation,” and Biblical principles serve as the deciding factor (Nur, 2009, p. 50).

To run a business submitted to God’s Word above all else requires that all business dealings must be above reproach. In addition, such a business deals with financial considerations not faced by other firms. The initial investment in the business is a difficult part of BAM. According to Johnson (2011), a BAM missionary has three possible sources of initial capitalization available to them: debt, equity, and donation (p. 384). The first two sources carry a large issue with them; they leave the business beholden to someone. Whether a financial institution or a stockholder, there is a new influencer of the business operations, so the business must be careful

where the sources of funds come from. If at all possible, missionaries should fund their businesses out of pocket. This may require adding additional members to the team who have the resources to do so, but all stakeholders with controlling interests must be aligned with the mission of the BAM business. For many BAM businesses, the BAM team itself is the best and safest source of funds to ensure that the mission of the business will be carried out.

A BAM business does have some advantages over a traditional firm. For some BAM businesses, a possible source of cash is not paying the missionaries (who typically serve as high-level officers or managers) a salary. This line of thought opens up two additional sources of funds for a BAM business: support and seconding (Johnson 2011). Support involves the missionaries individually seeking funds from friends, family members, and churches to support their living while working for the BAM business. Seconding occurs when a church, non-profit, or sending organization hires the missionary and loans them full-time to the business. This allows the missionary to be fully supported while engaging in BAM at no cost to the business.

The compensation of national (or non-missionary) employees, however, is an entirely different matter. According to one of Nur's (2009) interviewees, "the eminence of what is best for the employee" is a fundamental part of any BAM business (p. 55.). This is because, according to the previously stated definition of BAM, while the business is for-profit, profit is not the primary goal, the Great Commission is. For that mission to be fulfilled, BAM businesses must stand out from those around them by demonstrating God's love for every individual, first to their employees, then to the community around them. And though human attempts at displaying the love of God are not enough to bring someone to salvation, when the gospel is shared, it cannot be rejected because someone has not experienced God's love for them through the missionaries. In the sense of compensation, this means paying an extremely high wage "even

when that is not profitable” (Nur, 2009, p. 55). That being said, BAM businesses must remain in business, but the people the mission is for must always be considered before profit.

Legal and Geographical Considerations

The location of a BAM business is a huge hurdle to its success. Because of the missional nature of the business, which requires a slight aversion to both debt and traditional stock offerings, it might be the case that some partners and investors live in the United States while the business is located abroad. In addition, someone knowledgeable in business operations in the United States might find that their experience hardly applies in some areas because of the vast difference in the economic system or government structure. Both logistics of international partners and the legal considerations of operating in another country are crucial considerations.

Regulation and compliance can be significantly more difficult and time-consuming overseas than it is at home, and so significantly more costly. The tax system and body of business law in other countries are exceptionally difficult to navigate, especially when familiarity with U.S. business law may lead to incorrect assumptions about other countries’ laws.

The economic system too may be difficult to navigate. Johnson (2011) recalled working in Kazakhstan during a shift from communism to capitalism. Under communism, business operations were extremely different for the Kazakhstani businesspeople. “Under the communist command economic system, if they needed something, they requisitioned it from the government. There was no “cost of goods sold” and no real “operating expenses” as Western business understands them” (p. 383). In this instance, Johnson had the expertise to navigate a capitalist economy, but a missionary might just as easily find the situation flipped and themselves be in a foreign economic system. Missionaries in these conditions may need a great deal more time, effort, and money to navigate their new business environment.

Communication across time zones may add extra stress to a BAM business as well, especially if the business has team members spread throughout the world. While a dispersion of team members may be totally necessary for the business, it remains an important consideration that could add costs if communication is weak. BAM businesses need to establish reliable methods of communication and be intentional about scheduling times to communicate well.

The Support Provided by BAM Teams

Bronkema and Brown (2009) listed 15 major best practices for BAM. Three of the top four best practices are team-oriented, “working with a sending agency is a recommended practice for BAM... BAM practitioners should work in teams... teams should be multicultural” (pp. 85-86). Johnson (2011) similarly stresses the importance of teams within BAM “Many BAMers try to be ‘Lone rangers,’ ... under no external authority and with no structured accountability. That is decidedly neither scriptural nor wise. Neither is it the way to secure the greatest blessings from the Lord or to maximize the company’s opportunities for... kingdom impact” (p. 369). Scripturally, the book of Proverbs continuously stresses the need for wise godly counsel (Proverbs 12:15, 15:22, 16:3, 16:9, 20:1).

In the initial planning stages of BAM, a sending agency can serve as the first BAM team, providing far more people, resources, access, and expertise than the missionary would have otherwise, as well as providing a degree of external authority. When selecting members for the on-site BAM team, balance is important. According to Johnson and Rundle (2006) “at present, most businesspeople lack any meaningful training in cross-cultural ministry, and most missionaries are inadequately trained in the ways of business” (p. 32). Identifying the specific needs of the business is crucial to creating a well-rounded team that may consist of any number of missionaries, nationals, state-side partners, or even members of the sending organization.

Because each person brings a unique set of skills, it is unnecessary for every member to be involved in every portion of the BAM business. If a team includes a state-side CPA, his location and skills are not geared towards local evangelism. Johnson and Rundle (2006) asserted that “somewhere between 10 and 40 percent of American business professionals return early from extended assignments abroad because of difficulties associated with adjusting to a foreign country” (p. 32). It may not be effective or possible for all team members to live in the same country, so BAM teams must be prepared to communicate and provide support around the world to meet

The key qualifier for all team members is that they are believers. While non-believers will inevitably be (and should be) hired by the BAM business, non-believers should not be a part of core leadership. BAM team members can have “no differentiation between how they conduct themselves in their private lives and in their business lives” (Nur, 2008, p. 47). Each BAM team member must be prepared to live above reproach via total integration, that is “to bring to the fore the same principles, values, and behaviors at work, at home, and in church” (Nur, 2008, p. 51).

The support the BAM team provides to one another is crucial to the success of a BAM business. The primary support mechanism is organized intercessory prayer. While connections to home and state-side prayer are important, the prayer of other missionaries sharing day-to-day life is crucial. “The power of prayer is often the only thing that keeps those on the mission field from the clutches of the evil one” (Johnson, 2011, p. 377). The sending organization can be considered an extremely important portion of the team as well, providing additional support through any number of in-country resources that would be impossible to access otherwise.

Holistic Support

While financial support is crucial, even missionaries with adequate funding leave the field. The daily exposure to stressors nearly unheard of stateside can often shock and discourage missionaries. The level of isolation and culture shock missionaries experience have led some studies to equate a missionary's experience to that of an FBI agent or a soldier in combat. (Schwandt & Moriarty, 2008). Strand et al. (2015), found that over 60% of missionaries experience moderate to high levels of anxiety and that around 50% of missionaries experience moderate to high levels of depression. On the Holmes/Rahe stress scale missionaries have been found to have stress levels two times over the danger zone for physical illness (Schwandt & Moriarty, 2008). These high levels of stress can be generated by “lack of opportunities for debriefing during terms on field and at home on furlough, failure to see progress in their work, isolation from colleagues and home support, age, and unexpected crises—robbery, rape, severe injury, natural or mass disasters, and the unexpected death of a loved one” (Schwandt & Moriarty, 2008, p. 321). These intense stressors leave missionaries with a need for personal care that can often be difficult to access on the mission field. Sending organizations often have extensive networks designed to supply missionaries with access to care.

The sending organization can serve as the primary means of support in many ways. First, prestigious organizations such as the International Mission Board (IMB) can add missionaries to many prayer lists through their wide reach and contacts. Sending organizations are often able to meet many other needs of missionaries, such as “sanctuaries and retreats... counselors on marital conflict, parenting issues and emotional needs...; competent advisors on personal, legal and financial business;... medical care; adequate safety and security; tolerable housing;...

educational facilities for children; language and cultural training;... and home leave” (Johnson 2011, p. 378).

In addition to establishing pathways for support, BAM missionaries must learn how to schedule priorities. Koteskey (2004), suggested that this is one of the most effective ways to prevent burnout. He writes that missionaries must first schedule personal time with the Lord, then with other people, and finally, for themselves. For a BAM missionary, a work schedule is often non-negotiable. For this reason, Koteskey (2004) wrote that prioritizing a schedule is a generator of stress, but scheduled priorities allow a missionary to pursue what is important to them. When priorities are scheduled, a missionary can maintain mental, physical, spiritual, relational, and emotional health in day-to-day life. With aid from a sending organization, BAM teams can also be prepared for the unusual and unexpected and be equipped with the necessary tools and support to weather the storms of spiritual living internationally.

Conclusion of Research Question Two

BAM provides missionaries with excellent financial support, whether through their business or an outside organization. The BAM team provides physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual support as God gives them gifts, and when paired with a sending organization, missionaries can be well equipped to handle the difficulties of cross-cultural business and missions. This level of support is not inherently a part of BAM, however. It is fully possible for a missionary to attempt an isolated style of approach to BAM. Because of the high levels of stress observed in missionaries, it is crucial for BAM practitioners to take advantage of all the resources available to them to gain the full scope of holistic support described above.

Research Question Three: How Can Business as Mission provide access to otherwise closed countries?

The necessity for Business as Mission becomes clear when the state of global missions is brought to light. According to the IMB (2021) over 4.5 billion people are still unreached with the gospel. The majority of these unreached peoples live in a narrow band between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude, and from North Africa to Asia known as the 10/40 window (Joshua Project, 2021). The Joshua Project (2021) stated that “The top 50 least evangelized megacities are all in the 10/40 Window” and that the total unreached population of the 10/40 window is 3.16 billion people, a vast majority of the unreached.

While the 10/40 window’s high population concentration is beneficial to missions, this region remains unreached because of its heavy and persistent persecution of Christians. According to Open Doors USA (2022), 43 of the 50 with the most severe persecution are in the 10/40 window. The governments of these countries actively attempt to prevent missionaries from entering the country and deport them if discovered. However, all Christians' lives can be at stake. According to Rundle and Steffen (2011), more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined (p. 75), and according to Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing (2021) continuing into the 21st century, there are well over 100,000 Christian martyrs every year. Christian missionaries are in desperate need of cover, access, and reasoning for being in country.

BAM Provides Missionaries with Legitimate Reasons

One of the most difficult portions of reaching the unreached can be obtaining a visa. According to Sharp (2021), there are over seventy countries in the world that do not grant missionary visas. Sixty percent of the world’s population is concentrated in these seventy countries, and consequently many of the largest unreached people groups can be found in them.

Missionaries often need legitimate reasons other than being a missionary to gain visas, reasons BAM excels at providing.

Conducting legitimate business provides Christian missionaries with reasons to be physically in a country, to have contact and build relationships with locals, and to support the community they are engaged in. While many countries will refuse to admit professional missionaries, international business is standard in a globalized world. Rundle and Steffen (2011) noted that it has never “been so easy—indeed necessary—to conduct business internationally, but so difficult to go as a professional missionary” (p. 80). Trained businesspeople are often welcomed into RANs regardless of their religious affiliations because they can bring wealth to deeply impoverished areas. According to the World Bank (2021) 711 million people live in extreme poverty today, and nearly half of those live in the 10/40 window (Mahler et al., 2021). By running businesses on Christian principles, BAM missionaries can help reduce this number, which is almost always welcomed by even countries hostile to Christians.

BAM missionaries have easy answers to difficult questions thanks to their positions. Neighbors are often curious about foreigners in their city and ask questions such as “why are you here? Why are you learning the language?... What is your job? What is your company’s name?... Who pays you?” (Lai 2006, p. 342). BAM missionaries with legitimate jobs in “secular” businesses have easy and truthful answers to these questions so long as they are “economical with the truth” (Lai 2006, p. 338).

Evangelism in Dangerous Areas

BAM missionaries serious about using the gifts and opportunities with which God has blessed them will inevitably find themselves in hazardous locations as they move to where the need is greatest. BAM missionaries have even more risk to consider than an average missionary,

as they have the success of a business to remember as well. Johnson (2011) listed “business, physical, emotional, health, safety, family, relational, political, economic, religious and spiritual” as potential risk categories to consider.

However, it is crucial that BAM missionaries not become secretive Christians. Russell (2010) emphasized that secrecy leads to low levels of conversion because secretive missionaries become isolated and fail to adapt culturally which creates unsatisfied employees and high levels of turnover, meaning nationals are not exposed to the gospel over long periods. Similarly, Lai (2006) named this idea “viability” and goes back one more step, explaining that some missionaries view their “secular” job only as a cover and not as a part of their calling from God. Missionaries like this “who have a paper-thin entry strategy often fear being discovered. That fear hinders our boldness in witnessing” (p. 333).

The risk is high, but the risk of being crippled by fear is higher. As Christian missionaries engage the lost in RANs it will pay to be wise with sharing information about oneself but the gospel must continue to go forward. In fact, Lai (2006) encouraged BAM missionaries to test the limits the government places on Christian living and evangelism. He writes “If we have a viable job, rarely are we deported for our first offense. But that offense tells us how far we can push and what we can openly do” (p. 340). God is the primary authority for all Christians and Lai further encourages missionaries to let government authorities know “that you fear God more than them” (p. 340). This is a great reminder of the power that goes with all missionaries submitted to the Lord’s will, one greater than all the governments of earth combined.

Conclusion to Research Question Three

With BAM, missionaries can enter RANs with much greater ease and safety than possible for traditional missionaries. The combination of additional purpose, strong answers to difficult

questions, and bringing wealth to impoverished areas allows missionaries access to both the country and community. When it comes to evangelism, strong relationships with nationals are important to evangelize safely.

Research Question Four: How Effective is BAM at Maintaining a Focus on Evangelism and Providing Opportunities to advance the Gospel?

A BAM business does not exist in a vacuum. Evangelism does not solely take place among employees, and the impacts of a business operated for the glory of God and the fulfillment of the great commission are not only felt within the walls of the workspace. BAM is engaged and active within its community, and the effects of Christian leadership are felt by all who come in contact with the business. Businesses successful in this role of BAM “recognize the vital role of business and the power of the marketplace in effecting city transformation” (Johnson 2011, p. 247).

Modeling Integrity

As aforementioned, missionaries cannot divide their private lives from their public interactions. As ambassadors of Christ, integrity must be modeled in both arenas. In the same manner, there can be no division in BAM missionaries’ reflection of Christ and their actions in the business realm. In Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) Paul writes that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” and in Matthew 5:16 (ESV) Jesus says “let your light shine before others, so that^[a] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” God has created and equipped every Christian for good works, and those good works are an indicator of the Father at work to a lost world. As Christians engage in Business, everything from treatment and payment of employees to attitude and approaches to ethical decisions must accurately reflect the

missionaries' private life with God. However, Bronkema and Brown (2009) wrote that limiting BAM to the “provision of jobs, modeling Christian principles in business management, and creating spiritual capital to transform cultural practices” ultimately sells “Business as Mission far short of what it can and should be” (p. 86). Business as Mission is capable of more than exemplifying Christianity.

Defining the Mission of BAM as Kingdom Objectives

BAM teams must have a united vision of the mission to which they are called and their specific avenues for getting there. Whether it is called fulfilling the great commission, community development, or meeting kingdom objectives with a united vision, the BAM team will lack clarity and effectiveness (Ward, 2021, p. 1). Ward (2021) chose to define the mission of BAM as kingdom objectives, echoing the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:10 (ESV) “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” This is the ultimate aim of BAM, to see God's Kingdom flourishing on earth. This is heavily agreed upon in the missional community. The Lausanne Movement, a leader in missions, in the Lausanne Occasional Paper #59 on BAM used the term kingdom 163 times, without ever settling on a solid definition (Ward, 2021). For BAM to proceed effectively, BAM practitioners need a solid definition of God's Kingdom on Earth.

Ward (2021) ultimately settled on the definition of “God's people in God's place under God's rule” (p. 5). He highlights that the three key pieces of this definition each equip Business as Mission separately. People are brought into a sense of belonging in the Kingdom of God. New Christians are born as the initial BAM team reaches out to the nationals with whom they develop relationships through the business. The close relationships naturally developed with employees and their families, suppliers, regular customers, and fellow business leaders offer a great avenue to share the gospel. Under God, there is a sense of unity. This leads to corporate gathering, or the

church, which this definition calls “God’s place.” It is important to note that this “definition sets a trajectory of focusing explicitly on church growth as the primary inaugurated location of the kingdom. However, this definition of church must be seen as organic following a trace of God’s people, not organizational following a trace of money or buildings” (Ward, 2021, p. 8). God’s place is wherever the people of God gather and subsequently scatter to as they move to share the gospel. Finally, under God’s rule means that Christians not only live in obedience to the Lord but seek to influence the culture to do the same. This definition of kingdom objectives empowers BAM missionaries by tying their missional success to the local church. This tie empowers the mission of BAM, expressed as Kingdom objectives, to be effective in not only the marketplace and economy but also in the homes and hearts of individuals.

The Third Bottom Line

According to Bronkema and Brown (2009) and Johnson (2011), BAM is subject to three bottom lines, two of which have already been discussed. The first and primary bottom line is that of evangelism, seeing the gospel take root in the immediate community. The second is the traditional bottom line, that of profitability. The third is the bottom line of development and social transformation.

Without key ties to the local church or at least local NGOs, this bottom line is practically impossible. Bronkema and Brown (2009) wrote that BAM has a totally unique opportunity to influence development for four key reasons. First, the creation of jobs is a crucial aspect of any development. Business as Mission offers high-quality jobs that the church or other organizations simply cannot offer. Second, business leaders are community leaders because of their control of jobs and resources. Depending on the size and nature of the business, this influence can extend to a national or international level and can be used to push for political change that allows for

greater development. Third, businesspeople have the opportunity to check the free-market advance towards materialism and consumerism by emphasizing people over goods. And finally, Business as Mission, when united in vision with local organizations (ideally the local church), can bring about holistic change by utilizing the influence and resources available to them to aid in the spread of the gospel and care for the poor.

Johnson (2011) took a slightly different approach to the third bottom line. To Johnson, the social aspect is directly tied to the BAM missionaries' identity as Christians. The social bottom line is not merely CSR or community development, "it is an acknowledgment that we Christians are called to use the resources that the Lord has placed in our hands for good, not evil, and to build up people, institutions, and cities..." (p. 274). When viewed through a scriptural lens the third bottom line is not only about being a good citizen or neighbor but about honoring the Lord through wise stewardship and actively living out "the peace and justice themes from the Bible" (Johnson, 2011, p. 272). BAM becomes a "call to liberate the oppressed. Its primary focus is in nations and with people groups that are hopelessly mired in poverty" (p. 274). Ultimately, the wages a legitimate BAM business can provide are incredibly uplifting for a whole community. Much like Jesus' method of meeting needs to prepare people to receive the gospel, the social bottom line of BAM can pair with the evangelistic bottom line to see lives totally transformed, spiritually and physically, by the love of Christ and the gospel.

Conclusion to Research Question Four

The Gospel shared through business relationships provides excellent opportunities to build or grow the local church. This is crucial to fulfilling Business as Mission because BAM is not capable of the holistic influence of people. BAM provides a wealth of opportunities and tools that might be lacking in the local church or local NGOs and so is crucial to the gospel reaching

the nations quickly. However, without those key partnerships, BAM itself is little more than a Christian influence, not a force accomplishing Kingdom objectives. Only in the uniting of the local people of God and the resources of BAM can kingdom objectives be fully realized.

Research Question Five: How do BAM Businesses Effectively Combine Kingdom Objectives, For-profit, and Non-Profit Business?

BAM faces a unique dilemma, in that profitability is essential for its survival, but not its primary motivation. BAM requires the maintenance of a triple bottom line and a clear plan to combine Christian ethics and the Great Commission with activity in the marketplace. Apart from a total unification and cooperation between all three bottom lines, BAM business cannot see its goal of transformed lives.

Is the Christian Ethic Compatible with the Marketplace?

For BAM to be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission, each of the varied components must fit together to form a functional model for long-term evangelism. The primary question becomes: can the triple bottom line really work? Tanner (2019) believes that it cannot. She argued, not against the concept of BAM but against the compatibility of the spirit of Christianity and the “spirit of capitalism.” Spirit means the “beliefs, values, and norms” that characterize the cultural incorporation of a system (p. 9).

Tanner (2019) made an excellent argument that just as much as Christianity has a spirit, capitalism has a spirit. She also argues that the adoption of this spirit is necessary for capitalism to be successful; the nature of the spirit demands it. The spirit of capitalism is cutthroat, competitive, driven by maximum available profits, materialistic, focused only on maximizing the present moment, and ignorant of social costs. Tanner argued that the fear created by this spirit (e.g., the fear of unemployment because of low productivity, the fear of falling behind

competitors) is not enough to maintain capitalism itself. Buy-in is necessary on every level. Each employee must be as devoted to maximum effort and efficiency as their employers to achieve the high levels of profitability demanded by capitalism.

Tanner (2019) then argued that this spirit is incompatible with that of Christianity. She writes that the Spirit of Christianity should result in “(1) breaking the link between a right to well-being and work; (2) breaking one’s identification with one’s ‘productive’ self; and (3) breaking the time continuity, the time collapse, that constrains imaginative possibility under the current configuration of capitalism” (p. 30). By the final point, she meant that the Christian spirit ought to work towards a better future, rather than the maximized present.

Ledstam and Afdal (2020) added to Tanner’s argument by emphasizing BAM as a non-transformative ideology. They write “In BAM, economy is deontologically restricted by religious principles, meaning that while religion regulates the boundaries, it does not transform the economy. The emphasis is placed on the religious motives and purposes of individual entrepreneurs and businesses” (p. 8). They emphasize that BAM is ineffective because it seeks to exist according to Christian ethics in a system contrary to those ethics, without working towards systemic change.

However, Tanner as well as Ledstam and Afdal are all guilty of ignoring crucial elements of the Holy Scriptures that guide the Christian in practical living. Goodchild notes that Tanner attempts to provide a “pure Christian conduct” or a system totally devoid of any influence or interaction with the current state of the world (p. 5). It is simple to see that remaining entirely divorced from the world is extraordinarily difficult, and in fact impossible for a Christian who seeks to fulfill the Great Commission. Interaction with a lost world is a necessity for anyone who desires to see it redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ. And Tanner’s suggestion for that

redemption is that “One prays and repents on a daily basis; yet one continues to go to work and borrow when necessary—at least now with a cleared conscience” (Goodchild, 2019, p. 5). This conduct described by Tanner does little to help a Christian navigate the realities of existence in a lost world.

Tanner (2019) also, in her objectives for the spirit of Christianity, created a “Protestant anti-work ethic” (p. 30). The book of Genesis, however, makes it clear that work has always been a part of God’s plan for humanity. “Producing goods from the earth is fundamentally good in itself because it is part of the purpose for which God put us on the earth. Before there was sin in the world, God put Adam in the garden of Eden ‘to work it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15)” (Grudem, 2003, p. 19). To divorce oneself from the work God has called one to is to deny the goodness of His plan.

Ledstam and Afdal miss the mark by falling into the same erroneous “revolutionary Messiah” thinking as the ancient Hebrews. The ancient Hebrews expected the Messiah to be a military leader who would overthrow Rome. But Jesus revealed the Kingdom of God to be something else altogether. Not a kingdom devoted to war and revolution, but one built on peace, love, and self-sacrifice. When Jesus told His disciples that He would die “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matthew 16:22, ESV). But Jesus, knowing Peter still did not understand the purpose of the Kingdom replied “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matthew 16:23, ESV).

Peter’s expectation of immediate earthly revolution was radically distinct from reality. The reality Jesus came to proclaim is a heavenly Kingdom that establishes itself on earth in the hearts of believers until that future coming of the Lord in His full wrath against the sin of man.

Until that day, obedience to the Lord is not overthrowing current systems but existing in them to bring the gospel to the lost and destitute. BAM does not seek to change the economic system because that is not the goal of the cross, but meeting people exactly where they are is.

Managing the Triple Bottom Line

This view of potential issues with BAM provides excellent clarity as to the management of the triple bottom line. BAM's goal is not to revolutionize the world, but to change individual minds, hearts, and lives through the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of His gospel. An odd paradox of BAM seems to be that this holistic change however does not come from a focus on evangelism but a focus on blessing. Much like Jesus meeting physical needs with His miracles to better proclaim the Kingdom, successful missionaries focus on blessing those around them and then take available opportunities to share the gospel. Russel (2010) found that missionaries who adopted the mindset of blessing those around them were led to be more open about their faith, which led to national partnerships (both business and missional), which enabled them to adapt to their new cultures effectively, which generated high success in all three bottom lines of BAM.

On the contrary, missionaries who viewed themselves as primarily converters were led to secrecy for fear of being discovered, which generated a need for independence, which resulted in low levels of interaction with nationals and low levels of cultural adaptation, leading to BAM struggles. While BAM's primary bottom line, that of evangelism, must never be abandoned, it is enabled by the third bottom line, social and economic development (blessing). And in turn, the third bottom line is funded by the second, that of profitability. By engaging those around them with the intention of blessing, missionaries are able to utilize all three bottom lines in tandem to see the gospel shared while sustaining themselves and their ministries.

Conclusion to Research Question Five

Tanner and others provide insight into some potential conflicts within the BAM model. However, their arguments lack important practicality and roots in the Scriptures. By viewing the mission of BAM as the opportunity to primarily bless others, then to share the gospel, and finally, to fund both through the business, all three facets of BAM can be united in pursuit of the goal of seeing the Great Commission taken to the lost.

Conclusion

Business as Mission is an exceptionally effective and Biblical missions model for the funding and care of overseas missionaries, for gaining entry to hard-to-reach locations, and for providing opportunities to advance the gospel to see the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation. The missionary strategies of the Apostle Paul and William Carey demonstrate the Biblical and historical significance and effectiveness of BAM. BAM conducted with a carefully chosen and well-equipped team that is paired with a sending organization can be effective in holistically caring for missionaries. BAM also provides access to RANs by equipping missionaries with desirable reasons to be in-country. And finally, BAM advances the gospel through attention to the triple bottom line, the principle of operating as primarily blessing to those around the missionaries, and utilizing the produced opportunities for gospel conversations.

As the global economy continues to infiltrate the hardest to access parts of the world, Business as Mission will be equipped to go with it. BAM missionary teams equipped by sending organizations, partnered with the local church, and secured in Jesus Christ, will remain a highly effective way to see the great commission fulfilled. By engaging a lost world on their own terms,

yet in a way that highlights Christ at work in the missionaries, the gospel will continue to reach the hardest to reach places and the most isolated hearts.

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