

Steve Miller: Welcome to the engaged session: Building Networking Leaders.

Participant: *Father, we thank You for this opportunity. We thank You, Lord, for this opportunity to learn of You. Thank You for all that You summon into us, Lord God. And we ask for Your anointing as Steve talks about networking for leaders in Your team, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Steve Miller: One of my goals is to make you all uncomfortable. Being uncomfortable is one of the most wonderful things because in those moments of being uncomfortable is when we grow and when we learn. So I'm going to share a little bit and give you some background and a little bit of understanding. And I'll hopefully give you some keys that will help you to be successful; then, we're actually going to have you develop your own network.

My dad was a pastor, so I've grown up in the church. I've grown up around ministry. I've been doing what I'm doing now for close to 26 years. And with the present ministry I've been with, it's been 23 years. Every single thing we do is done in partnership. We build networks in some form. I can't think of anything that we do by ourselves. So, as a result, I think God has taught us some things over the years.

I want to share some things that we feel God has showed us how to operate. An example, churches often will do short-term trips and Mission agencies will do short-term trips. Some country-focused ministries will do short-term trips. So when we started looking at doing short-term trips, we asked God, "How should we do our short-term trips?" We felt led to bring together churches, mission agencies, and organizations that were country-focused. Each partner had both strengths and limitations. We had agencies that wanted to start working in specific countries, but they had nobody on the ground and no experience; but they're really gifted in raising up and training missionaries.

We found an organization that had been working in this country many years. And then when we began work, we included in the partnership churches, and they did the logistics. They helped with just many practical things as well. So everybody recruited people to help. On the trips we all shared responsibilities; it just flowed back and forth where the grace was or who had the gift or skill in that area.

There's many examples we could use. Several years ago, I was in a foreign country, and every worker I met was either burnt out or was on the road to burnout. So I began asking God, "How do I respond? How do I support them?" And as I was praying, I felt I heard God say, "When they see an opportunity, a ministry opportunity, they stop and pray, 'God, help me meet this need. Help me respond and meet this need for you. God help me. Show me what to do. Just help me do this for you, God.'"

It's great that they have a tender heart, and it's great that they want to see a need met. So I know their heart was good. But what I heard God say is, "I don't like that prayer. That prayer is not right. Instead of praying that way, they need to pray and say, 'God, how are You going to meet this need?'" So in the first prayer it's about us meeting the need. So we're doing ministry for God, but God says, "That's not what I want. I don't want you doing ministry for Me. I want to do this together with you." Understand the difference?

The focus must be on God building the network, not us. God, how will You build a network to meet this need? Start with, “God, how will You meet this need?” This is the first step in building networking leaders; you’re modeling and teaching them how to pray. And in the way you teach them how to pray there’s core values and principles of how God wants us to relate with Him and others. So the first thing is, **“God, how are You going to meet this need?”** the key principle in this is puts God in control. It puts God in the center of what’s going to happen and in the end He receives the glory and praise.

Next you pray and say, **“God, who are You going to use?”** So what’s happening here is that we’re still maintaining that God is in control, with this prayer we’re expanding it to the Kingdom and not just our people or colored circle. God is in control, and we’re engaging with His Kingdom.

The third prayer is, **“God, what are You asking me to do?”** Notice, that wasn’t our first prayer. If you pray that first, you’re going to in time be burnt out, frustrated and exhausted. It will not work. How do we handle the Scripture where Jesus says, “For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” In our own life as ministers, and in others, is that a reality? Are you seeing people worn out, burnt out, exhausted, on their last leg? So we stop and we listen. “God, what are You asking me to do?”

And the fourth prayer ... remember we’re part of a kingdom community. We stop and say, **“God, how do You want me to support, pray, and encourage the people You are using to meet this need?”**

Now, what I just gave you is a simple formula. Remember one of the core values that we shared this week was God even uses infants and the untrained. I really feel we have to keep things simple. To begin pray those four prayers and take time to listen to God. Now we’ll go into more detail.

I want to ask the question: What is the church? There are two examples on the marker board. The first is a big circle with a dotted line, with smaller multi colored circles. This is often our perception of the church worldwide. Which colored circle are we part of? What do we identify with? The church has all kinds of titles for identity and what people identify with.

In the West we call it denominations. Maybe in Asia and other places they might say church networks. If I’m a blue circle, I’m going to connect with other blue circles. They might be in the same town, the same state, or the same country. Maybe they’re in a different country. So there might be a sense of identity of who we call ourselves, but it also breaks down into theology, and the way we practice, and the way we do things. So in our mind we look at the church, and we separate. So if an opportunity comes up, our first thought is, “Let’s work with our family. I’m part of the red family, so I’m going to work with other reds.”

Do you think God looks down and sees this as the example of the church? He does see how it’s all divided. And do you think He just talks to them based on what church they’re a part of? No, He doesn’t. Actually it should be solid lines. We are all part of the church. Now, of course, there’s examples in Scriptures, and we’ll look at that a little bit later. But as far as those that believe in Jesus, that follow God, everyone is within the truth.

We work in a particular country, and in this country marriages are a mess. Ever since we started working there, there was lack of intimacy in marriages. But for over twenty years, we basically did nothing in this

area. But about three years ago, God began speaking to us about marriages. So, as a result, we began to start building networks and creating groups to together respond to this need.

1. Just because you see a need doesn't mean God is asking for it to be met at this moment. Stop and ask God, "Is this the right time?" So that's the first step.
2. Research who's working in this area. I don't know how many times I've heard a need and our first thought is *nobody's dealing with this area*. A few years ago, two ministries contacted us related to the issue of abortions. One ministry discussed the sanctity of life. The other ministry focused on abortion wounded hearts, the wounds and emotional and spiritual impact from having an abortion. Often there is deep shame and guilt that develops. They do retreats to help women and even men walk through a process gaining forgiveness and washing away their shame. Now up to that time, we had never heard of anyone working in those areas in our target country; so our mind just started thinking, *What are we going to do? How are we going to meet this need? God, how are we going to meet this need? And what's going to take place? What needs to happen?* And then we stopped and said, "Wait a minute. Even if we don't know about anybody doing it, we need to pray and ask God if there's other people out there doing this." So we prayed, and God led us to a whole network that's been operating for five years. They had materials translated, people going from church to church sharing, were involved in rescues, promoting prayer and much more. We were amazed at all God was doing in this area. So because we stopped, and prayed and asked, it's had a big impact on how we keep moving forward.
3. It is key to learn from those who have gone before us; so stop and learn from them. The difference in how we approach a need will impact our willingness to learn from and even partner with others. If we think God you are meeting this need rather than I am meeting this need for God we see others in a different light.
4. Be field focused, not home office focused. Don't develop based on what is convenient for you, but what best serves the field. You need to listen to the field. Go and listen to them. Hear their heart. Don't tell people what they need. Let them tell you what they need.
5. If you're helping to build or facilitate this network, and as God is bringing in partners and those that you're networking with, do your part to be a bridge and help them engage with what's going in the field.
6. Daily pray. Listen to God.

We want to maintain that God is in control through the whole process. I think what you learned here even before this week is one plans, but God is the One that brings the results. So our focus is on faithfulness to the process.

The character of the person that facilitates your network and partnership is critical. They need to be one who is a good listener. They need to ask questions. They need to have no personal agenda. Have the focus on God meeting this need. If God ends up using somebody else, we should be jumping up in joy. That's

our goal. This person needs to be an encourager, needs to seek God, and as we said, functions with God in control. The ultimate goal should be that God is pleased.

All this week you've been listening to many different presentations, and in those presentations there's been key points, core values, and strategic mindsets, with many of the keys for building an effective network. Let's think about this week and list out some of the core values or things that you've heard in some of your sessions.

One thing I heard on the first day is, "we reap from the labor of those who came before us, and we lay the foundation for the next generation." What is that principle? It's something that we can hold onto, and then evaluate if that should be a part of our network.

Others?

"God works through infants: those who have nothing." You might want to write these down because you'll be using them in your networking.

"we must depend and rely on God."

"We must have faith."

"Let God write the story."

"Never lose the part that drives people to know and love God."

"At the end of what we do they should love God more, but they say otherwise we're just training professionals."

"Help them to develop godliness."

"They must have a capability to practice good and sound theology."

And then one was. "to equip the whole church."

It's a good thing we're the last engaged session of the conference. There's a good part of it. You've been able to hear all of these, so you already know some critical core values. You'll be able to use them in your network. You probably have some other core values to add to these.

We're going to pray for a few minutes. And I want you to ask God a question. I want you to ask Him, "God, for what ministry opportunity would You like to see a network formed?" Now, I can just give you a project, but I want this to be as personal as it can so let's pray for a few minutes. Let's listen, and let's think of a project, need, or something that would benefit from forming a network to respond to the need. Let's pray.

Tell me your projects or activity.

Visiting. Just to visit people.

Business. A group of businessmen.

Family. Helping families. Families coming together, or just responding to family needs; so any family issues.

Churches. Bringing churches together; we'll just put churches collaborate.

Child care.

We'll just put pyramid business.

Occupation of evangelism.

Caring for the elderly, those that are about to die.

Pre-marital coaching and teaching. For teenagers. Before they're engaged? Any special word for that? If we're going to help teenagers understand about marriage. I'll still say pre-marriage if they're engaged or not. And then it's training ...

What we want to do now is for everyone here to decide which one you want to be a part of.

Steve Miller: Break up into small groups; the size of the group doesn't matter. If there's just one person, that's okay. Because when you build a network that could be how you start. So maybe you're the only person that has the burden? Decide which one you're going to be in. And then we'll go around the room one at a time.

Let's go ahead and start with number one. Visiting people. Next is number two: business. Next one is family issues. Number four: church alliance. Go ahead and get together now. Next one is childcare. The next one is addressing those who are caught up in pyramid schemes. Number seven: occupation evangelism. Number eight: caring for those in the process of dying. Number nine: premarital training for teenagers. And then the last one is dealing with drugs.

Okay, now is everybody in a group? Now I'm going to have you all start. Let's start with prayer. Let's pray for the actual need: the reason why you're together. So pray a little bit for that need. Then what I'm going to do while you're praying and starting, I'm going to write out maybe some things you need to consider as part of your plan, your strategy. I'll write on here things that they need to plan or bring into consideration. Go ahead.

Stop and pray. You want to define what is the purpose of our agenda. Why would we exist? You're going to ask God which core values ... or what should be the things that govern how we work together ... and then at the end you'll share what you've been working on. I'm going to turn this around, and on the other side I'm writing things that might stimulate your thoughts. Things you need to consider.

Decide within your group who's going to represent your group and present. I define a network different than a partnership. Partnership and network have similar definitions. Network is more broad, the whole church. Partnership is more working together closely.

We want to hear a little bit about the purpose for your network, why does it exist, core values that will be important for your network, and a few specific things you need to be concerned for, or some of the questions I put on the back of the board. Obviously, this is a work in progress. Here are the questions:

Some things to consider

1. Who is our target group?
2. Who is already targeting them? What can we learn from them?
3. Hindrances? Why has this need not yet been met?
4. Security issues?
5. Language and or cultural challenges – illiterate?
6. Economic conditions, both target group and who will collaborate
7. Felt needs of community

8. Location, ease of access
9. Who might be potential collaborators
10. How to stay connected
11. Facilitator/advocate – define their role and qualifications
12. Who do we partner with? Why? Who is the church? Is our model biblical? Who in our target group do we partner with? Believer and/or unbeliever?
13. With those who collaborate what is our common identity?
14. Who do we not partner with? Why?
15. What is our basis for success?
16. How to we treat one another? What is the relative importance of the task, goal or people?
17. What does prayer look like?

Participant: Networking is very important. One person cannot finish the peak mission. Two people is better than one person. Just one thing we found out is we contact with some of the people in our group. Without the translators we could not. With the help of the translators we were able to find out where the two others came from. Otherwise, without the translator, we'd just shake hands and do nothing else. Of course we can pray together. We need more care and understanding. This is all I'll share.

Steve Miller: Okay, great. See, you've already faced one challenge of a network.

Participant: So our network is focused on caring for children. Our core value is that we care for children and love children because when Jesus came He said, "Let the children come to Me." So our network exists to really take care of their specific needs, and also share the love of God. And today in our group, we discussed about a specific problem in India. So many girls, before they become 18, they get married. They're forced to be married. They mostly don't finish their schools. They drop out of school. They have to get married. So we wanted to help the Indian girls through giving them education. We need to solve the economic problems within the community, and educate and train the leaders and parents within the community. So, in order to solve these kinds of problems the people in the network will raise awareness of this problem, and ask God to send people who can serve in each community.

Steve Miller: Thanks, guys! Who's next?

Participant: Our group focuses on the occupation evangelism. We three talked about that. We found out that the three of us have three different directions. This young brother, he's much younger than me. After he finished sharing, I found out that he's going through a process I've already gone through because his focus is on business ministry, so tries to help the students find new jobs and how to glorify His name in their new job. I find out through this network we can have another deeper network together. Even though our progress is different, after this group I find out which steps I need now.

The pyramid business. Most of the churches in the northwest are facing the pyramid problem. One, you talk about the network, I do a lot of prayer about that. I have a burden for this pyramid business.

The brother next to me was saying he had the same problem. Even though we didn't find a solution we prayed and lifted his problems to the Lord.

Participant: I talked with strangers about the family issues, even though we have different circumstances, different family background. One of our members came from America to Thailand. He's a missionary here. He knows so many families here. I came from a church in Shanghai. There will be over 20 couples there. All the couples are very young, and they don't have much experience when it comes to teaching each other. So when problems in their marriage show up, they all focus on the pastor to be the solution. So when we find out what the problem is we can't only rely on a human being. We are seeking His guidance and seeking His wisdom for networking. And in the Bible it says we are a member of the church. Both of us want to set up this kind of networking. When problems come out we don't rely on the pastors. We pray for God's solution to meet our need.

Steve Miller: Okay, thanks to everyone. It's time. We just need to pray. *God You wept over these needs. You love these people more than we could ever love them. So, Lord, we know it's Your heart to meet these needs. We trust You. So, God, how are You going to meet these needs? God who are You going to raise up to meet this need? What are You asking us to do? How does Your church work together to encourage and support one another? Lord, how do we do this with You? Lord, when this need is met we want to stop and reflect, and we want to think about what an amazing awesome God You are. All the many ways You're going to work: how do You prepare often, how You bring along the perfect partner, and how You met every need; So that You, Lord, receive all the glory. And as we pray, I pray for each person here. Lord, they'll be amazed as they pray and seek You, and do ministry with You, and see how You work. So we just pray blessing for each person here, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Extra reference materials that were presented during the workshop:

Scriptures:

Barnabas networked Paul (Acts 9:26-31)

How much effort did it take?

What was the ongoing impact?

What other action could he have taken? Consequences?

What was the key ingredient? Phil 2:4 "Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

Motive: Phil 1:17 "Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me."
(Philippians 1:17 NLT)

(Compare 2 Corinth 12:20, Gal 5:20)

"For I am afraid that when I come I won't like what I find, and you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior." (2 Corinthians 12:20 NLT)

"... idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division," (Galatians 5:20 NLT)

Strategy: Giver or Taker?

"Giving a gift can open doors; it gives access to important people!" (Proverbs 18:16 NLT)

*Biblical basis: Unity commanded!

“I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one – as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You. And may they be in Us so that the world will believe You sent Me.” (John 17:21 NLT)

“I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.” (1 Corinthians 1:10 NLT)

Grounds for NOT fellowshiping:

1. Known/tolerated immorality
“I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you – something that even pagans don’t do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.” (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
2. preaching another Gospel
“I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ. Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9 NLT)
3. A fool, one wise in own eyes? “The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.” (Proverbs 12:15 NIV)
4. Unequally yoked ... “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.’” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16 NIV)

Look at 2 Kings 18-20, the story of Hezekiah who had an intimate relationship with God, like King David, but only thought of himself and failed to think of the generations that followed his reign.

Not: personalities, lesser points of doctrine, etc.