Mobilising The Saints

Leonard Strydom 12 November 2019



Going on outreaches not only blesses those to whom we go, but it also helps us to grow. I've found it to be true that it is a greater blessing to bless (reach out) than to receive a blessing (be reached out to). Certainly Paul, and Jesus, understood this principle better than we do when they said, 'In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35). It might seem counterintuitive and neglectful of your local context, but sometimes leaving the place you live for the sake of the Gospel, is the very best thing you can do for the place you live. Oh, the topsy-turvy wisdom of God!

> It is more blessed to give than to receive.

This year, the Stellenbosch congregation of Joshua Generation Church (South Africa) sent out nearly 60 of our saints (about one third of our congregation) on five simultaneous outreaches to four different countries. Granted, we have a lot of students with lengthy student holidays and enough energy to power a small city! But not all of these trips are comprised of students, and I believe some of the principles we applied in mobilising our saint might just work in your context too. Why not give them a try?

Here are some of the things that worked for us:

Plan Ahead

People don't always connect dots easily. To illustrate this, think of when you preach, and let's take repentance as an example. If you only preach about the concept of repentance but never help people to ground your concept practically, you'll often be left frustrated. What must they repent of? How should they repent? To whom should they repent? You need to connect the concept you're explaining to its real-life application. If you don't do it, then most people won't do it themselves and there will be very little lasting change. I have, on a few occasions, felt deflated when someone congratulated me on a message well delivered and a concept well expounded on, but, as time progressed, I didn't see them applying it to their lives. I have learned that we need to follow through: (1) Explain the concept, but then (2) ground the concept in real life, and finish by (3) leading people to action. Too many times, we stop at the first point and expect people to figure out the rest.

> It's one thing getting people excited about the concept, but it's a whole other story getting people to actually move to action.

The same goes for outreaches. It's one thing getting people excited about the concept, but it's a whole other story getting people to actually move to action. If we follow the logic of my preaching example, then we need to (1) get people excited about going for God, (2) get them to think about how they themselves can actually go on an outreach, and (3) get them to sign up for, and go on, an outreach.

Unfortunately, for many church leaders, the first point comes naturally, but number two and three, not so much. Our lack of practical planning causes us to neglect leading people to action. In order to really mobilise the saints, we have to plan and think ahead. You have to think about where you're going, when you're going, how long you're going, what you're going to do when you get there, what it will cost, and how people can sign up to join. If you help people connect these dots, I believe you'll have more people joining you as you go.

Small Teams, More Teams

We know that God is into team ministry. We see it all over the Bible. The disciples went out two by two, Paul almost always had his co-workers with him, and Jesus had his 12 (and 72). What about you? How many people would you like to take with you as you go? I'm not sure what the best team size truly is, and I'm sure it differs, depending on the situation. I can, however, tell you what has worked for us. The broad principle we've found to be very effective is to have small

teams, so that we can have more teams.

> We prefer small teams, because it places less of a burden on the people we're reaching out to

We prefer small teams, because it places less of a burden on the people we're reaching out to and, in turn, opens up more doors to us. Initially, we sent out a team of 20, but we found that not all churches have the capacity to host and cater for such a large group. When we cut the number down to between 8 and 12, we found people to be much more open to receiving a team. We tried to set the team sizes in increments of 4 when reaching out in SA (4 people per car) and not more than 10 when travelling internationally – unless, of course, the people receiving us specifically asked for more. We found this size easy to manage and yet effective when ministering.

We prefer more teams, because it gives up-and-coming leaders a chance to develop. We had huge success this year with teams where there were no elders, deacons or even home group leaders. At the heart of Ephesians 4:12 lies the saints, active in the works of ministry – not only the five-fold ministers or the elders, but the saints! Choose your outreach leaders carefully, but allow young, potential leaders to learn on the job. At some stage someone took that risk with you.

Don't be Scared of Sacrifice

Often, Christians have full hearts and empty pockets. Certainly that's the case with many of our students – they want to go, but they don't always have the means to do so. Going is really a sacrifice for them. Maybe for the saints in your church, finances won't be the issue – but I can guarantee you that some sort of sacrifice will be necessary. It will come in the form of taking more leave days, having less time with family, or saying no to a holiday with friends. Whatever it may be, don't be scared of asking your people to sacrifice!

> 'Dying to live'

I love one of our church's (and certainly Christianity's) mottos, namely 'Dying to live'. It is really when we die, when we sacrifice, that God brings His life! We've seen this principle at play with our outreaches too.

I've been privileged enough to lead multiple outreaches over the years. Some of these outreaches were compulsory for the people joining me, as it formed part of their theology year's curriculum. In one sense, very little sacrifice was needed for most of them to go. On the other hand, I've had to lead outreaches with people who have had to sacrifice a lot to be able to go, and the difference between the two is remarkable. The people in the latter group have generally grown more, enjoyed it more, and been easier to lead. I have clearly seen that having to sacrifice is a good thing, and that in turn has taught me not to feel bad when asking people to sacrifice. God's wisdom, not ours!

I trust that you will find these principles helpful, and that they will help us as a partnership to send more saints on Kingdom-advancing outreaches.