

The Resilient Mission Model (RMM) Application Guide

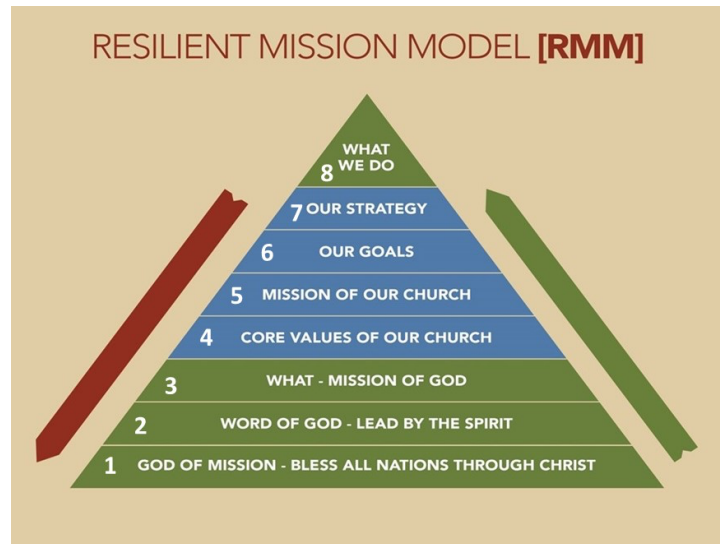
After watching the RMM video, use this assessment tool to evaluate and develop the mission strategy for your church or mission team. Complete the first two questions on your own before seeking a group perspective in the next two questions.

Missions Ministry Assessment

- On a scale of 1-5, would you consider the development of your missions ministry the way of the red or green arrow?

RED				GREEN
1	2	3	4	5

- Which of the eight bars have been included in the planning, history, experience, and discussions of your missions ministry? Mark every bar of the RMM that your missions ministry has done. [See pages 5-10 for more details.]



BAR #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
RESPONSE								

- Total your group responses to each bar from #2 above to identify your strengths and where you need additional equipping and resources.

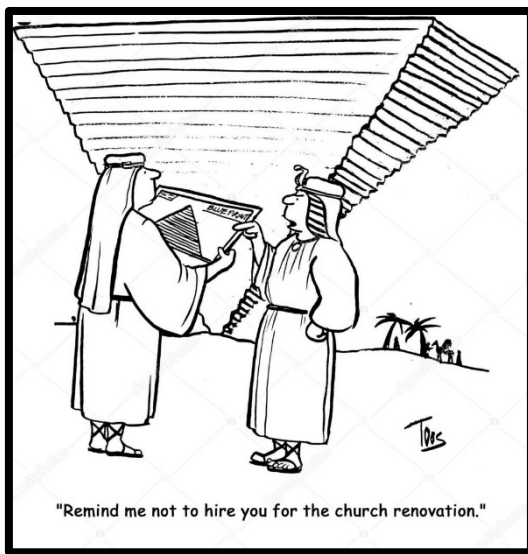
BAR #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	AVERAGE
RESPONSE									

- Our group assessed our ministry as:

- ____(a) Following the red arrow, by starting with pragmatic questions of goals (6), strategy (7), and what we do (8). [5-8 had the highest number of responses or the average of the responses in 5-8 is above 50% of the total responses.]
- ____(b) Following the green arrow, by starting with the providence of God and seeking to discern what God is calling us to do, identifying where the Spirit is leading us and discovering a clear sense of what God's mission will be in a specific context. [responses were evenly distributed]

Why Resilience?

Healthy congregations of faithful disciples of Christ give witness to the presence of the kingdom of God in any community in the world. The mission of God can never be complete without the emergence of a fellowship of disciples who can make disciples. This transformation of lives and the development of churches takes a lot of time--decades and generations. Personality clashes, inappropriate use of money, wars, political persecution, and a host of other tools can be used by the Evil One to abort the mission of God at any time and in any place. The fulfillment of the mission of God depends on the resilience of the sending church, missionaries, and the emerging new churches. The resilient growth of the church through the ages can be attributed to the Holy Spirit empowering disciples of Christ to be faithful to God's mission and God's calling.



A missions ministry of a local church will want to make a difference in the world—through the power of God. However, stories can be told of generous churches and failed missions. When missionaries are sent without adequate preparation and support their premature return home takes a heavy emotional, spiritual, and financial toll on them and the sending church. Churches have given thousands of dollars to a missionary or local evangelist, but never visited then nor set up any means of reporting or accountability. When a crisis hits the mission fails because the missionary and the church made no provision for missionary care or had resources to manage the crisis. With a good foundation, a missions ministry could have the life span of the pyramids. As Jesus put it, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Most of the letters of Paul were written to encourage, nurture, equip, and train evangelists and churches to be resilient. He never gave up. He coached them to be persistent.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. (Ephesians 3:8-13, ESV)

God has been extremely patient. From the beginning of time, the Creator expected the church to reveal his wisdom. Paul builds his mission to the Gentiles on a strong spiritual foundation—the proclamation of a Gospel rooted in the God of mission. What God has done from Creation and through Jesus Christ influenced what Paul did in the world.

- How would this foundation for global missions impact the involvement of our congregation in the mission of God?

- Do we evaluate short-term mission efforts in terms of immediate results and emotional impact on the participants or the long-term effect on all who are involved?
- Where do we start in missions—finding the right family to send to another people group or developing a spiritual foundation for what we do?

Video Discussion: What is the point of the inverted pyramid in relation to how our missions ministry functions?

Consequences of “the Red Arrow”

Many churches have engaged in missions without processing many of the factors in the eight bars on the RMM model. What happened? Often someone who grew up in that church felt called to global evangelism and asked the church to support her or him. It did. They started sending support each month, proudly included it in their budget and welcomed them back during their furlough. We might say they “backed” into missions in good faith without any idea of what they needed to be doing.

What is wrong with starting at the top – just what’s so bad about the red arrow, if that is how God gets us involved in missions? True, but it has a very low rate of effectiveness. Here are some reasons why:



1. If missions is more about what “we” do than what God does, we **depend more on our own abilities, strategy, and goals**. We let the budget limit what God can do. Missions is not a business enterprise. If you have not noticed, missions really makes no sense--if it did the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ would make sense to the world. God’s ways are not our ways—even when and where and how we do missions. Like Sarah, we can create a plan to “help God” fulfill his promises to bless the nations but we end up giving birth to Ishmael rather than waiting for Isaac. In Abraham’s house, “red was bad!” It hurt Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and many others. One does not have to look far to find mission work that had good intentions but is costly, ineffective, and doing more harm than good.

2. Mission efforts that start without God **fail to integrate the church** into their ministry. We can engage in a lot of good works, but we will not have a lasting spiritual impact like making disciples and planting churches will have. A typical example of this is the sending church that assumes their only responsibility is to the missionary they send, not to the church that is planted. So, if the missionary returns home prematurely, the new disciples are abandoned. When they include the new church into the equation, then the sending church will seek to partner with the new believers until they become a mature church that can continue to make disciples and honor God in their community.

3. One of the more telling signs of the “red arrow” strategy is that missionaries and local evangelists who are sent tend to be **the least accountable, cooperative and flexible**. Since they are under pressure to produce or to justify their “support,” they become suspicious of others. They will not develop and equip local leaders for fear of loss of authority or control. Local evangelists with outside support seldom allow

for the develop of elders because they would not want their support to come from the local congregation (or for them to even know how much they are paid). They create their own enterprise, accountable to no one, and have no means of discerning where the Spirit will lead it, because they did not begin seeking the guidance of the Spirit. As such, there will be no reason to collaborate with anyone else.

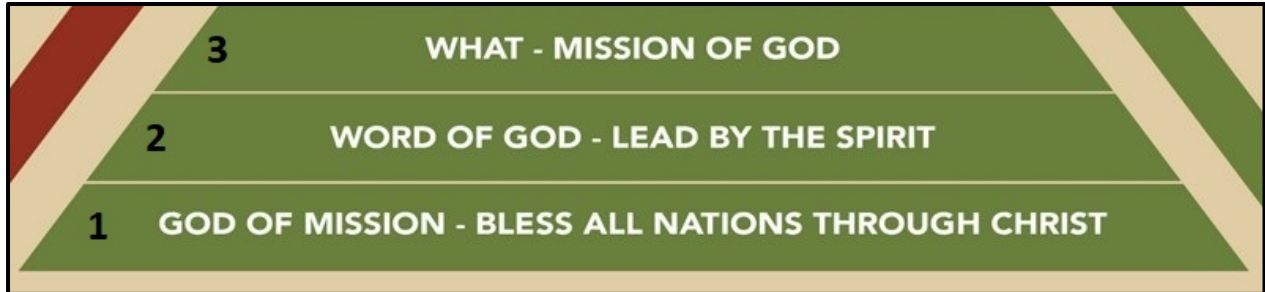
4. This strategy falls victim to the immediate experiential results that undergirds the **shift from long-term missions to short-term missions**. This growing tendency among churches in the USA to invest more in short-term missions than in disciple making movements and church planting reflects, in part, the impatience and consumerism of our culture. A concern for resilience would be irrelevant for short-term missions because they are not involved in a missions ministry long enough to need renewal and revival.

Video Discussion: What insights can you gain from the history of your missions ministry? Are there examples of aborted and resilient ministry?

What are the benefits of “the green arrow?”

On the day the Sanhedrin wanted to kill the apostles in Jerusalem Gamaliel offered some advice that rings true today. He argued that if their work was of men, it would fail, “but, if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” (Acts 5:38-39, ESV) History supports the wisdom of Gamaliel. If the mission is of God, you can’t stop it. You can persecute Christians, kill them, ban them, but when it is God’s mission, it will be resilient beyond understanding. As Theodore Beza (19th Century) once told a French monarch: “It is in truth the lot of the Church of God, in whose name I am speaking, to endure blows, and not to strike them. But also may it please you to remember that it is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.” The church of God is resilient and so is the mission of God! The assurance of God’s blessing and the conviction that it is not all up to us are the benefits of “the green arrow.”

The following discussion of the first three bars of the RMM are intended to generate discussion and reflection as you make application to your own mission. For a helpful resource for these discussions, we encourage you to read ***Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*** (Fourth Edition), edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (William Carey Library, 2009). References to this book will be listed as ***Perspectives***: [page number]. Other resources will be in the footnotes.



1. GOD OF MISSION—BLESS ALL NATIONS THROUGH CHRIST

When the Ark of the Covenant came into Jerusalem, David requested Asaph and his brothers to sing Psalms of thanksgiving, one of which was Psalm 96, a reminder that they were on mission from God to bless all nations.

Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!¹

“Mission is not ours; mission is God’s. Certainly, the mission of God is the prior reality out of which flows any mission that we get involved in. Or, as has been nicely put, it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission.”²

- a) Disciples of Christ live out the promise of God to Abraham (Genesis 12) to bless all nations. Five times God promised his blessings to the nations--three times to Abraham, once to Isaac and once to Jacob (*Perspectives*: 37). For Paul, the promise was fulfilled in Christ.³
- b) Consider these questions as you develop your missions ministry.
 - How have you and your church been blessed by God? How do you pass it on?
 - How has your church been a blessing to the nations?
 - How do the blessings of God motivate and define your missions ministry?

2. WORD OF GOD—LEAD BY THE SPIRIT

¹ 1 Chronicles 16:23-24; Psalms 96:2-3.

² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (IVP, 2006), p. 62.

³ Galatians 3:29; 4:4-5.

The Word will always be a source of resilience. A powerful encouragement for resilience can be found in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (ESV).

- a) Because we are involved in the mission of God there will be surprises—everyone who is lead by the spirit will have times when the Spirit will lead them where they do not want to go when they do not want to go there. What “right” do we have to select a missionary or a place? We discern the goals and strategy (see #6, 7, 8 below) with the understanding that in all things—we seek the will of God.
- b) As disciples of Christ we are good followers and willing to serve wherever the Lord sends us. God can lead us (missionary and the church) to a people and place through his providence. He can also lead the missionary through the thoughts and prayers of his sending church. The Spirit guides us through the Word, prayer, a “burden,” a calling, and the affirmation of our Christian community.
- c) David Mays offers four priorities for churches that build their missions strategy on the Word: (1) What do we understand the Bible calls us to do in the world? (2) What is the purpose or mission of your church? (3) What is the definition and scope of missions as you understand it? (4) What is the status of the world and the great challenges we face?⁴

According to N. T. Wright, “You are—strange though it may seem, almost as hard to believe as the resurrection itself—accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God’s new world. What you do in the Lord *is not in vain*.” This truth keeps us from the two extremes of **triumphalism** (social, political, and cultural motivation) and **defeatism** (the structures of the world are so unjust there is no need to try to seek justice). (*Perspectives*: 97).

3. WHAT—MISSION OF GOD

With a desire to bless others, faithfulness to the Word of God, and willingness to go where the Spirit leads us, what is our response in this time and place? Is there a confluence of people and events that are pointing us in a certain direction?

- a) What is the mission of God in the world today? Where is God opening doors or creating new opportunities for disciple making. How do we respond to the global movements of immigration/refugees or global connections through the internet?
- b) The principle of spiritual gifts applies to the whole mission enterprise as it does the local body of disciples. What our mission ministry will be doing in this place at this time will be shaped by the spiritual gifts of those involved and the context in which we serve.

⁴ David Mays, “Biblical Foundations for Your Missions Strategy.” <https://davidmays.org/biblical.html>

- c) What we see as our mission in the context to which we send a missionary may change drastically once that person effectively engages the new community in a very different culture.

Church leaders and mission committees would do well to devote one meeting to each of these foundation three topics (first three bars)—let this study guide facilitate the expanded discussion.

VIDEO DISCUSSION: What is the spiritual foundation this church must build on to define its mission? How will we continue the mission of God in a way that will flourish, as per 1 Corinthians 3:10,14?

As churches discover what God is doing to and through them, the mission will become clearer, with more hope for resilience.

FULFILLING THE MISSION OF GOD FOR OUR CONGREGATION



4. CORE VALUES OF OUR CHURCH

Our values represent what we cherish as most important to us. **Operational** values will influence our decisions about costs, time, tradition and independence. **Aspirational** values reflect what we think should be important to us as a church. **Core** values determine our behavior, such as priority to our own people, partnerships, desiring the most results for the money, reaching the unreached, sustainability, empowerment, etc.

- What are our core values and how do they impact the mission of this church?
[Discuss a list of your core values. It might be necessary for church leaders to identify their core values if they are not available.]
- What motivates us to engage in making disciples globally?
- Can we evangelize the world when evangelism is not a core value at home?
- What are ways that we, as a church, “do what we value and value what we do”? How have these values shaped our missions ministry? Do they line up with God’s mission?

5. MISSION OF OUR CHURCH

Good leaders help churches identify and execute their mission. Our mission as a church should be concrete enough that we will know when we have accomplished it. It has a “shelf-life” so the

leaders will need to revise or renew the mission of the church with some regularity. If the work of a missions committee represents the mission of our church, then our ministry will be isolated as the work of a few members of the church to manage funds. If the church knows its mission and the global mission becomes an extension of the church (not a committee), it will be much more resilient.

Examples of specific mission ministries of a church would be: childrens ministries, local benevolence, church planting, training in a Bible institute or school, ministry to a specific people group, short-term missions, Bible translation, medical clinics, sending our members to serve, unreached peoples, international students, etc.

- Where is God leading us at this time in our history and context?
- What is the “shelf-life” of our mission? How will we know when our mission is accomplished?
- Who identifies the mission? How can it be a collaborative effort?

6. OUR GOALS

Goal setting connects a dream to reality to accomplish our mission. If our mission focuses on reaching international students, what would be 2-3 three goals this year? If we have a goal of sending a full-time missionary to a specific people group within the next three years, what will be our goals for this year in recruitment, budgeting, and planning? How will we discern where God is leading us?

- What resources can help us develop a time-line and set goals for a mission?
- How will we measure progress or determine faithfulness to our calling?
- How could we identify missionary care?
- How do we engage the congregation in the global mission of the church?

7. OUR STRATEGY

The history of Christian missions provides a wealth of insight into wise strategies for cross-cultural ministries. Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, 19th Century strategists, proposed a strategy that would generate self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches (*Perspectives*: 235). Multiple strategies have been developed to reach unreached peoples, cities, a whole nation or tribe, church planting, and discipling movements (*Perspectives*: 228-238, 291-293, 577-579, 633-656).

Action steps to develop a strategy include prayer, research and consultation with people who have expertise in the area God will be leading us.

- a) Global ministry is so diverse it would be unwise to limit ourselves to one strategy. What we will need is a process to identify and form our strategy to fit the mission.
- b) Long-term mission strategy will involve a minimum of a decade for language learning, cultural assimilation, networking, disciple making and leadership development (*Perspectives*: 746-749).
- c) It will be very helpful to consult missionaries and church leaders in the area where we feel lead by God to serve. God can use these resources to help us develop our strategy.

- d) How will our short-term missions connect with the mission of God? For a good article on a national survey of short-term missions in the Churches of Christ see an article by Gary Green in the on-line *Missio Dei Journal* (Winter-Spring, 2017), [link: <http://missiodeijournal.com/issues/md-8-1/authors/md-8-1-green> .

8. WHAT WE DO

The back story: why are we doing this video and application guide?

The questions we often hear starts with the execution of missions without the foundation. We hear questions like--Should we select the field first and recruit a missionary to go there or should we support missionaries who decide where to serve? How do we raise support for missionaries? Do we send missionaries or support local evangelists? Where can we send our youth for short-term missions that will give them the best experience and be safe? How do we resolve conflict on the mission team we support? Our missionary has only been in the country a year and wants to return home—what do we do? We supported a missionary who returned pre-maturely and it cost the church so much we have done very little in missions for ten years—how do we get involved again? We had a church leader that was very involved in missions but he passed away and no one else at church really knows much about our missions ministry—what do we do?



What we do not hear is—“How can our missions ministry be resilient in making disciples throughout the world?” This resource seeks to guide the discuss of your missions ministry to build on the unchanging foundations for any missions ministry. Consider these questions as you move forward in your application of the RMM:



- a) What are the next steps we need to take, based on the assessment of our ministry on page 1?
- b) What are our short-term and long-term plans?
- c) What resources do we need to become more effective in making disciples among all nations?
- d) Where is the Spirit leading us? Why would we want to follow? Why would we not want to go there? What resource do we have to equip us?

Visit mrnet.org for more resources to help your church re-discover God’s mission and then other specific ways that could equip churches in fulfilling God’s mission.

RESILIENT: robust, long-lasting, tough, healthy, strong, stable, enduring, lasting