

Re-Visioning

The Aquila Project

Re-visioning is a part of every organization's life cycle. In fact, organizations that fail to re-vision fail to survive. Organizational life cycles run in about five year segments and re-visioning must take place prior to the end of each cycle or stagnation sets in. Reinvention does not throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater, but allows organizations to grow, to retool, and to meet the challenges of a changing world with intentionality.

History evaluates organizations harshly when they do not change when change will position the organization for growth and success. Western Union "passed" on the telephone as a means of communication in an internal memo dated 1876. International Business Machines (IBM) failed to act on a deal to purchase Microsoft in 1982 for \$100 million dollars citing that cost was "too much".

The Aquila Project has been re-visioning every year since our inception. With the help of our overseas Partners, we evaluate curriculum, teaching practices, and logistics in order to discover if there are additional opportunities for ministry and/or ways of becoming more effective. That type of evaluation has proven invaluable as we improve what we are already doing on the ministry field.

However, a new type of re-visioning is required at this time. As our relationships with our National Partners have grown, our understanding of their needs has grown. In Asian cultures, people are hesitant to be open with one another, and much more reserved with "outsiders". As we have met the expectations of our National Partners in Cambodia and Myanmar (Burma), their trust for us has grown immeasurably.

We have also grown in our faith journey. We are not the same men we were four years ago. We have a broader perspective of what it means to be involved in Kingdom ministry. We are more comfortable in our identity as an organization. One of our core values is: we will be Spirit led. Being Spirit led doesn't mean following 'Mapquest' directions, but it means walking by faith, not sight, in every step we take.

Therefore, as trust has deepened, as our understanding has grown, as we have grown in faith, we have come to several conclusions that are a part of the re-visioning process. And please know that it is a process.

The most urgent needs our National Partners have presented to us involve things beyond the reach of the theological classroom. These faithful leaders are hungry, sick, do not have clean water, and are unable to improve their situations because they need a new set of job skills. While we have been meeting one need (their need to know), we have failed to meet the myriad of needs that will help them in ways beyond simply existing. It is hard for many to hear and understand the word of God over the rumble of their stomachs and the worries of this life.

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In July 2007, our National Partners took David Robbins to see a children's HIV ward where 100-orphaned children are receiving the best care that Cambodia has to offer, but in reality, they are simply waiting to die. As the children latched onto this large, white American stranger, they kept repeating to

one another in the Khmer language, “this is *my* Father, this is *MY* Father, yours is not here.” It was a heartbreakingly profound experience. The prevailing thought following that experience was – *We have to do MORE!*

During the past 3 years we have learned:

- The average Pastor/Leader in Cambodia is a rice farmer working 16 hours a day in his fields, and earning less than a dollar a day. Those in his/her congregation face the same struggles for survival. (info gathered from personal conversations)
- Approximately 71% (over 8.5 million) of rural Cambodians currently have NO access to improved water sources. Lack of access to safe drinking water is one of the main causes of disease in Cambodia. (info from World Health Organization [WHO] statistics)
- Nearly 80% of the population of Cambodia lives on less than the equivalent of \$1 per day. (info from WHO statistics)
- There are approximately 700,000 orphans in Cambodia. These children are orphaned because of the high cases of malaria, tuberculosis (both treatable/preventable) and HIV/AIDS. There are approximately 100,000 confirmed cases of HIV/AIDS among the orphans. (info from conversations with Orphan/Healthcare workers in Cambodia in June 2007)
- Access to healthcare in Cambodia is almost non-existent. For the population of 12 million plus (2004 estimate) there are 7,412 hospital beds available. (info from Cambodia Ministry of Health Report 2004) In contrast, in Tulsa County, OK (USA), for a population of approximately 600,000 there are over 2,300 beds available. (info from local resources)
- People in Myanmar experience similar problems. Malaria is re-emerging. Diseases related to water purity (diphtheria, typhoid, etc) are a continuing struggle. Statistics are hard to receive from Myanmar because of governmental control. (info from WHO report on Myanmar)



David in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on July 26, 2007 with baby at orphanage.

Our love for them demands us to do more!

Partners in Cambodia ask us to help struggling Pastors/Leaders develop better job skills so that they will not have to work in the rice fields for 16 hours per day, and can focus on our Heavenly Father’s Fields.

As we reinvent our ministry focus, we want you to understand our reasons behind the expansion.

- This type of ministry aligns us with the heartbeat of Jesus’ ministry. -- It seems to us that if Jesus walked the streets of Cambodia or Myanmar he would be involved in giving hope to those who are struggling to survive. Jesus would do MORE than just teach theological principles. This stark reality above all else has driven our thoughts, prayers, and conversations. The words of Jesus in Matthew 25: 44-46 are consuming...

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Seeing the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the oppressed moves us to do MORE!

- This type of ministry engages more people in “hands on” ministry -- Under our current ministry focus we are unable to involve our constituency in “on the ground” ministry activities. That has been one of the hardest things to tell some of our friends – “no we really don’t take ‘teams’”. Under a new model, there will be open doors to take teams who can help meet some of the needs mentioned WHILE theological training is taking place. For example, we may take a team of six to Cambodia to install a water filtration system for a whole village (based in the Church), or provide medical care for a village, or train leaders in how to better raise cattle and swine, thus bringing clean water, health, and job skills to those in need. At the same time, our anchor will be equipping, encouraging, and empowering church leaders. One project – two focus.

Isaiah 58: 10-11 “...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”



Jeff encourages young leaders in Battambang, Cambodia

- This type of ministry will unlock doors to new sources of funding. – We have struggled to maintain an adequate base of funding. We are grateful for the provision God has made through the faithfulness of our current ministry Partners, but we realize that the current pool of prospective Partners is relatively small. As we expand the impact of ministry, the pool of potential Partners will grow significantly.

Luke 12:48 “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

The re-visioning of The Aquila Project has begun. Our desire is to continue to equip, encourage, and empower sacrificial servants in restricted access countries in order to help fulfill the Great Commission to the Glory of God.

How fast will it take until implementation? We are currently working out the logistics of “how, where, what, and when” so that ministry teams can be functioning in 2009. We must learn about water purification systems, transporting medical supplies, working through governmental bureaucracy and more. Prior to implementation, we must work on-site with National Partners to determine the best course of action in assisting those with the most need.

It is a daunting challenge that lies before us, but we believe that this is why we are here at this time in our lives and the life of The Aquila Project. This "next phase" will require all that we have and a little more, but imagine the changed lives of those touched in tangible ways by the Kingdom of God...how can we not do this?

Pray that God will lay a specific way you can help upon your heart. Pray for us. Pray that God will be honored by these new endeavors. Pray that we will remain faithful. Pray that we will be able to communicate this re-vision effectively so that financial resources will be available to expand our ministry impact. We believe that the future of this work is dependent on this type of change.

Thanks for taking this journey with us!

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