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# The Dream of Kingdom Business / Workplace Church Rising from the Frontiers

**Seong-Wook Lee(formerly, Department of Economics, University of Suwon)**

## 1. Kingdom Business / Workplace Church to Channel God's Wealth

For a nation to become wealthy means that its citizens' incomes increase, and income growth reflects higher productivity in the labor they provide. So, how is productivity increased? It is said that a nation's productivity growth stems from **seven types of capital**.

### **First Capital: Human Capital**

Human capital does not simply refer to a population capable of supplying labor; it refers to the ability to provide quality labor in the workplace through education and training. South Korea had strong human capital because literacy rates were very high due to the invention of Hangul, and citizens were motivated to escape poverty and educate their children, which increased work ethic. In that sense, although 1960s Korea lacked almost everything else, it still had sufficient human capital to initiate economic development.

### **Second Capital: Natural Capital**

Natural capital is not merely the stock of natural resources; it refers to resources that can be extracted from nature and used for production with the aid of physical capital, such as mining equipment. Yet many African countries, despite having abundant natural resources, often experienced political instability and civil war due to human greed.

### **Third Capital: Physical / Financial Capital**

South Korea in the 1960s also lacked physical capital needed to kick-start economic development. The Park Chung-hee government, which seized power through a coup, visited the U.S. in 1961 to express its determination for economic growth and requested long-term loans, but was refused by the Kennedy administration. In 1964, a visit to Germany secured a long-term loan of 150 million Deutsche Marks (about \$40 million), guaranteed by the salaries of dispatched Korean miners and nurses. Additionally, the 1965 Korea-Japan agreement provided \$500 million (300 million in grants, 200 million in loans), which served as seed money for constructing the Gyeongbu Expressway and establishing Pohang Steel, fueling economic development. For the unreached people at the margins to whom we must preach the gospel, financial capital to kick-start economic growth is often extremely scarce.

### **Fourth Capital: Infrastructural Capital**

For a nation's economy to function smoothly, infrastructural capital such as electricity, telecommunications, internet networks, roads, railways, and ports must be well-established.

### **Fifth Capital: Intellectual / Knowledge Capital**

A company's competitiveness relies not only on scientific knowledge but also on technology accumulated through repetitive production. Even if globally shared scientific knowledge is available, if a company does not convert it into practical technology through repeated production, competitiveness will not improve. South Korea produced its first "Sibal" car in 1955 using discarded U.S. military vehicles, and through export-oriented economic policies, reached 4 million cars in 2024, surpassing Japan in automobile production competitiveness.

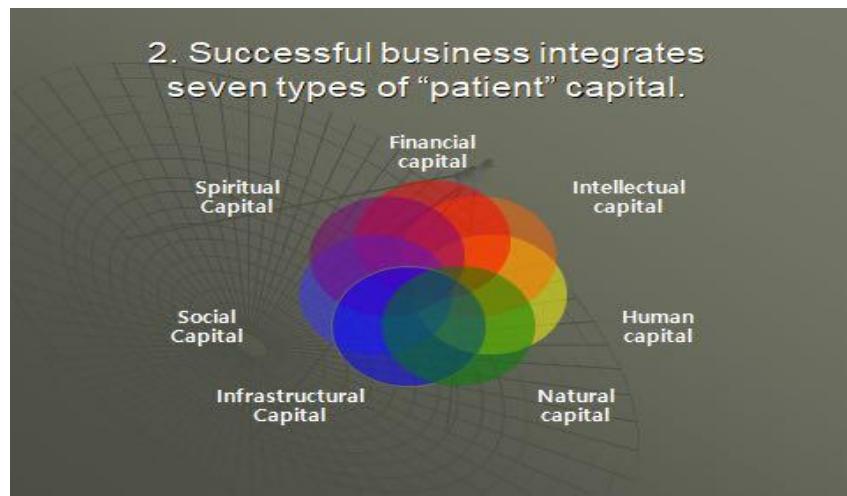
### **Sixth Capital: Social Capital (Social System)**

A country's social system must aim for a fully functioning market economy under a democratic political system for economic development and the flow of wealth. Social capital is

influenced by each nation's history, culture, and especially religion. The Christian understanding of God emphasizes the Trinity, unity within diversity. A political system based on this principle supports the separation of powers. In contrast, Islamic religious authority, which emphasizes unity and obedience over diversity, cannot accommodate Trinitarian belief, and therefore cannot fully establish a separation-of-powers democracy or a free-market system. Without these, businesses cannot operate freely and creatively, making economic growth through enterprise difficult.

### **Seventh Capital: Spiritual Capital (Most Important)**

Even if the above six types of capital exist, without spiritual capital, God's wealth cannot flow. Spiritual capital is not merely the spread of the gospel; it requires **churches established through gospel proclamation to cultivate life and positive influence**, and especially **workplace ministers and disciples** who carry this out.



**Figure 1. Seven Types of Capital for Economic Development**

God's will is fulfilled when workplace ministers, guided by God-given wisdom and strategy, establish **creative Kingdom businesses**. Only then can God's grace and abundance flow into a nation, and numerous **workplace churches** can be established to exert a positive influence on society. For example, when the Apostle Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, traveled to Macedonia, he was met by Lydia, a seller of purple cloth. The **first church in Europe** was founded in her home

workplace, and it is believed that the Philippi church established there played a role in spreading the gospel and positive influence across Europe. Likewise, for frontier missions in the last days, **Kingdom business and workplace church ministries** must arise. Small-scale Kingdom businesses suited to each nation's economic conditions should be prepared and launched, various workplace churches established, countless workplace ministers trained, and through these efforts, the gospel and good influence spread, becoming channels through which God's abundance flows.

## 2. The 5M Strategy for Starting a Kingdom Business

To start a Kingdom business that pleases the Lord, one must first analyze the **environment (circumstances: economy, society, culture, industry, and lifestyle trends)**, **competitors (who they are, their strengths and weaknesses)**, **company (who we are, our strengths and weaknesses)**, and **customers (target audience, their emerging needs or changes)**—a **4C analysis**. From this, an integrated **5M strategy** can be developed:

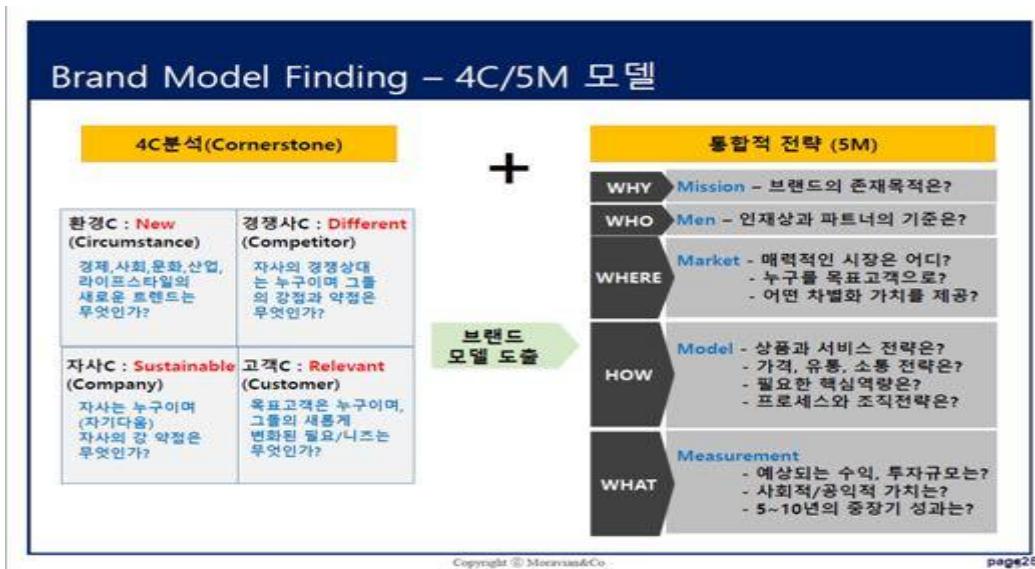
1. **Mission:** What is the purpose of the business?
2. **Men:** What are the criteria for selecting partners?
3. **Market:** What is an attractive market? Who is the target customer? What differentiated value will be provided?

Through **market segmentation**, analyze the existing market and define new markets. Define the target customers and their lifestyles (**targeting**), and prepare a **6C strategy** for value differentiation and positioning in the new market (**positioning**).

4. **Model:** Strategy for products and services (**commodity**), pricing (**cost**), distribution (**convenience**), communication (**customer value**), necessary core competencies (**core competence**), and processes & organizational strategy (**chain of value**). After planning, evaluate the strategy.

5. **Measurement:** Evaluate the expected revenue, scale of investment (**cash**), social/public value (**community value**), and medium-to-long-term performance over 5–10 years (**consecutive plan**). Business preparation should involve objective assessment of economic feasibility.

Even if the purpose of starting a Kingdom business is noble, and even if market analysis and God-given strategies are thoroughly prepared, if expected outcomes are unsatisfactory, the launch should be **postponed**. Once deficiencies are addressed and evaluations are satisfactory, then the business should be started.



**Figure 2. 4C Analysis and 5M Integrated Strategy for Finding a Brand Model**

### 5M Brand Model Canvas



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Figure 3. 5M Brand Model

### 3. In Conclusion

In the last days, the establishment of **Kingdom business / workplace churches** is essential for pioneering the Lord's church in remaining frontier regions and raising disciples who prepare for His return. However, Kingdom business ministry is too challenging to undertake alone. Therefore, it is advisable to form a **team**, dividing responsibilities according to spiritual gifts—business management, church planting, and disciple-making—so that each area is properly handled.

Furthermore, if preparation is not thorough, one should **not rush**. It is recommended to first establish a committed team and local young disciples, and then prepare for the launch through **comprehensive market analysis**.

# **The Need for Business Missions and Its Practical Operation as Experienced by a Field Missionary**

**Song-won Kim(Africa Research Association)**

## **Abstract**

This article discusses the need for business missions as experienced while planting churches in the field, and the practical operations that followed. It describes the connection between church-planting ministry and business, approaches to business and finances as a missionary, the beginning of actual entrepreneurial efforts, and the preparations needed to conduct business in the field. Additionally, it mentions various business models that were actually tried in the field and considers how business missions can continue to be developed biblically and effectively in the future.

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## **1. The Need for Business as Felt in the Field**

### **1.1. From One Muslim Believing in Jesus to the Formation of a Church**

God called me, an ordinary young professional, to be a missionary. At the age of 30, I came to the mission field with a calling to plant a church. Following that calling, even after 12 years, I am still serving to plant a church in this land. As a servant, I continue to evangelize and disciple those who believe in Jesus, nurturing brothers and sisters in Christ.

From the perspective of the local people, what is the journey of a Muslim who believes in Jesus and lives as one of the very few Christians in an Islamic context? From my experience, accepting Jesus in an Islamic society can happen if evangelism is diligent. However, over time, for various reasons, many return to the broader Islamic society rather than remaining committed as church members. A significant number accept Jesus, yet a substantial number leave the church. Through this cycle, only a minority of believers remain as committed disciples.

Why do many leave and only a few remain? Living as a Christian in a predominantly Muslim society involves giving up much and risking loss. Practically, those who accept Jesus are often socially vulnerable: the poor, marginalized, or less-educated, who have little to lose. Those with wealth or social power face a higher "threshold" to accept Jesus, as doing so requires sacrificing much.

To address this, one common practice in the mission field is that missionaries provide direct support to local Christian believers. Although socially, missionaries and local believers may come from different classes, within the church they are brothers and sisters. Therefore, material support is

sometimes provided, and a simple wage-like system may be created to compensate labor. A typical example is a language tutor: a local teaches the missionary the local language, and the missionary provides financial support in the form of a "salary."

However, while well-intentioned, this type of assistance rarely produces long-term positive outcomes. It creates two main issues:

1. Subtle tension and comparison may arise between locals who receive financial support and future converts entering the church, making it hard to form a healthy community.
2. Local disciples who believe in Jesus need to integrate into all levels of Islamic society and live with influence, rather than existing solely in the sheltered environment of a house church. Spending extended time in such an economic "greenhouse" makes it harder for them to root themselves in local society later, because they miss the opportunity to develop competitiveness.

Ultimately, once someone accepts Jesus and becomes a church member, the path they must walk extends beyond the church. For students, this could mean preparing for university entrance exams; for unemployed individuals, pursuing job opportunities that match their skills. This preparation is an essential element of discipleship.

## 1.2. Church Self-Sufficiency

Once a person accepts Jesus, and several such people gather to form a house church, the next topic becomes church self-sufficiency. How does a church become self-sufficient? If we understand the church as a living entity, it must achieve both **spiritual independence** and **financial independence**. Members must mature personally, forming relationships in society, finding employment, and building their own households. Likewise, they must be able to sustain themselves financially without parental support and gradually expand their livelihood. For a church to become self-sufficient, it must stand on **two pillars**: spiritual and financial independence.

**First, spiritual independence.** Even after the pioneer who initially evangelized and discipled one person leaves, the church community must continue the work. This requires faithful local brothers and sisters to be established as disciples. Just as Jesus spent three years mentoring His disciples fully,

planting 12 disciples over three years would be considered a great success. In reality, however, this process takes a long time—it is a journey of faith.

**Second, financial independence.** An example of early self-sufficient churches is Gosan Church in Ganghwa Island, established 120 years ago when the gospel first entered Korea. One of its five core values was **faith in self-sufficiency**:

"Not relying on missionary support, but independently purchasing and operating a place of worship and leading in missions."

Early local worship communities often met in homes. Meals were modest, but sharing what they had minimized financial needs. However, as numbers grew, rental spaces for worship became necessary. Special events, like strategically inviting friends during Christmas, also required a venue. For the long term, a physical church building was needed. This required a pastor to build external relationships and lead the church full-time, supported by congregational offerings. Naturally, offerings come only if members are financially independent. Without early financial independence among locals, after 10 years only a small group of house churches or underground churches may remain. Occasionally, a financially independent local believer came to faith and joined the community, which could help the local group achieve financial independence. However, such cases were rare, and relying on them for the community's overall self-sufficiency was not feasible.

### 1.3. The Necessity of Business Missions

Most local people who accept Jesus, as mentioned above, are socially vulnerable: the poor, marginalized, or less-educated. Jobs available to them in local society are usually **day labor**, such as washing dishes, construction labor, or office cleaning. While these jobs are valuable and may be God-led, they offer **no long-term prospects**. After 10 years, the pay and work remain largely unchanged. Such work cannot provide financial independence.

Young people are willing to take challenging jobs if they can learn from them. However, simple labor without growth opportunities is rarely pursued continuously, even when no alternatives exist. This situation leads us to consider **small-scale entrepreneurship**. The Bible supports honest work and its rewards:

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." – 1 Corinthians 9:6

"The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops." – 2 Timothy 2:6

The legitimacy of money earned through honest labor is acknowledged in Scripture. In starting a business in the field, three questions should be considered: **Why, What, How.**

**Why?** The purpose of the business must be clear. Why are we doing this here, now? If the company succeeds, what is the intended path? How will the revenue be used? This defines the identity of the company.

**What?** This is largely a matter of competition, not faith. What kind of work can generate revenue? What skills are needed to be competitive in the market? Objectivity is required.

**How?** How will initial startup capital be raised? BAM (Business As Mission) mentors suggest that healthy startups begin with the founder's own resources. Investment or loans are possible, but investment can compromise ownership and influence the company's identity, while loans require repayment on schedule. Starting with personal funds usually means beginning small and growing gradually while developing competitiveness. Careful planning, mentorship, and learning are essential to survival in the market.

## 2. Business Mission Approaches and Finances

### 2.1. Approaching Business as a Missionary

A missionary is someone officially sent by a church, and therefore publicly accountable. Planting a church among an unreached people requires a strong vision and faith. Church planting is **not management**; one must adapt to unprepared conditions and sometimes navigate uncharted territory to fulfill the mission.

To focus fully on the field, missionaries do not worry excessively about domestic issues or financial support after being sent. They receive monthly financial support for living expenses. How

much is needed and how it is spent in the field is managed personally, but finances are ultimately entrusted by faith, allowing the missionary to focus on ministry.

While everyone else earns money for daily life and plans consumption and future accordingly, missionaries have a **unique lifestyle regarding finances** and may lack practical financial awareness. Understanding this lifestyle is important before judging it positively or negatively. Over past ministry periods, I have experienced that God sufficiently provided for all needs in the field, and I am thankful upon reflection. Most missionaries continue their work trusting in the Lord in this way.

**What is Business?** Business is trade. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, it says that the servant who received five talents went out and traded with them, earning five more. Business is an economic activity—it is about **earning money**. Approaching business requires answering the question: **“How can money be earned through trade?”**

Having strong faith does not automatically mean someone is skilled in worldly matters. Just as studying requires understanding **how to get good grades** and competing effectively, business also requires thinking, approaching, and acting strategically in a practical way. Only by doing so can goals be achieved.

Ironically, one of the areas where missionaries are most vulnerable in business is **faith itself**. Living by faith does not mean questioning everything with “how?” and acting only once it is fully understood. Business, however, is about **“how?” from start to finish**. Each step must be objectively evaluated to generate profit.

The author has experience with **four startups in the mission field**. Once, he started a small restaurant with a local brother. The initial capital was very small, so strict cost reduction had to be prioritized from the beginning, and there was no room for second chances in any decision. One day, the local brother asked,

“What happens if our restaurant doesn’t succeed?”

Indeed, in faith, as long as one is right before God, there is no failure. In business, however, no matter how good the motivation, failure is possible. The author initially assumed the restaurant would succeed simply because it was for church planting and supporting local believers. After that question, the author revisited every aspect of the plan and gave his brother a clear answer:

"Of course, it could fail. But right now, the probability of success is high, and here's why,"

He then explained several reasons. The result: the initial investment was recovered within six months.

Remarkably, all three reasons he had given were accurate. The basis for these conclusions?

**Experience**—more than ten years in the field and previous startup experiences.

I also met a successful businessman who has done **Business as Mission (BAM)** for many years. Having met many missionaries and visited mission fields, he shared a similar perspective:

"Missionaries often have good intentions and different economic perspectives, but their first approach to business is rarely objective. This increases the likelihood of failure. Paradoxically, it's better not to start business missions casually." I explained that, due to the missionary lifestyle of requesting and receiving financial support, there may be gaps in practical business skills.

Business is fundamentally an activity to generate **profit**. Therefore, failure can result in loss, and success can generate gain. The founder must objectively place their capabilities and resources on a **50:50 probability scale**, asking "**What can I actually do, and how?**" Only this rigorous objectivity can prevent prayers from remaining vague, like:

"Lord, I have this dream. Please send me to a good university,"

which lacks direction and basis.

## 2.2. Financial Principles in Business Management

It is not uncommon to see faithful ministers fall into corruption because of finances. What is corruption? Since we do not have the authority to judge, it is difficult to definitively say someone is corrupt. What is clear, however, is that **one must not fail financially before the Lord**.

In business missions, what constitutes failure? In the secular world, the standard is simple: Was the business profitable and successful, or did the founder lose their investment? In **Business as Mission (BAM)**, there are two standards for success and failure:

1. The same standard as secular business: profitability and success.
2. The original purpose of starting the business—was the initial mission achieved or not?

Even if a business in the mission field generates profit and establishes itself, if it continues in a direction unrelated to the original purpose set before the Lord, it cannot be considered a **successful mission business**. Just as offerings are to be used according to their intended purpose, business missions must also be used according to the original purpose.

God does not evaluate us by how much money we have or spend. In his letters, Paul advises Timothy not to love money, yet in his letter to the Philippians, he states he has experienced both poverty and abundance and can do all things. God observes **our hearts and verbal confessions**. Worship must be sincere and spiritual; this is what matters. For business missions, it is crucial that the founder, the business, and the path taken remain consistent with the original purpose. Maintaining a **stewardship mindset** is fundamental.

### 2.3. Integrity

What is the standard of integrity in business operations? How can honesty be verified? The most basic system in business is the **accounting ledger**. If the business in the mission field is not a short-term fundraising activity but has a special purpose, it must primarily operate according to **local commercial laws**. This includes tax filings, employment, revenue, expenditures, and repayment of capital. The flow of finances should be explainable both to the local financial authorities and to the sending church or mission organization.

By reviewing the accounting books, one can understand the company, ask questions, and gain a comprehensive view of its financial condition, operational results, and future direction. If management is unhealthy or the BAM vision is lost, external feedback can be given and improvements made.

If a business operates without proper accounting, what happens? One must rely solely on the founder's word—a personal request for trust, which is insufficient. In secular businesses, manipulating or hiding financial statements is a crime. Therefore, **financial record-keeping is essential**, serving as a foundation for business management and a standard for healthy, honest BAM operations.

### 3. Business Mission: Practical Operations and Models

#### 3.1. Beginning a Startup

The first concrete thoughts about starting a business in the field arose about **seven years after being sent**. It was not yet about a comprehensive mission strategy using business for good influence, but rather motivated by just one soul. Specifically, it was because **two or three local young believers** were still living near-poverty lives even seven years after accepting Jesus, unable to become self-sufficient.

It became clear that without external support to help change their lifestyle, progress would be difficult. After much prayer and discussion with the locals involved, we considered what ordinary people like us could do in the field. At that time, we had a **4-pyeong (~13 m<sup>2</sup>) space and a small Korean-style restaurant concept**, but everything else was uncertain. Questions included: How to raise initial capital? How much revenue could the business generate? Where to buy necessary equipment? How to handle interior construction?

These are common concerns for any aspiring entrepreneur. Successful startups often share a common feature: **the founder must actively confront and overcome uncertainties themselves**. Even if it temporarily changes the missionary's usual ministry priorities, this problem-solving process is essential for success.

The author has participated in **small startup competitions at BAM conferences**, which helped objectively evaluate ideas. Receiving accurate evaluation and mentoring in the intended business field is highly valuable when taking the first steps.

#### 3.2. Elements Needed to Prepare for Business in the Field

##### 3.2.1. Language Skills

Mission work is a calling for all believers. Every believer can participate in mission through the one who gives them ability. In the field, people of all generations—from children to seniors—are involved. In particular, senior missionaries are often sent with business missions in mind from the

early stages of ministry. However, in the area where I serve, it has been observed that many senior missionaries **failed to establish a central point for their business or ministry and eventually returned home.**

These missionaries brought with them professional experience and spiritual gifts, ranging from careers in major domestic corporations to self-employment. Nevertheless, many struggled with **learning the local language**, the first major barrier they encountered in the field, and therefore could not progress to the business implementation stage. Even if they attempted a startup, the need for significant initial investment likely represented a high risk.

Business, by nature, is an activity carried out through human relationships. It requires **clear communication** with various stakeholders, such as government officials, local partners, merchants, and suppliers encountered during market research. Language barriers can pose **direct risks**, especially during contracts or negotiations that involve financial commitments.

In the country where I serve, Arabic is the official language, but French is used as a secondary language; most official documents and communications with university graduates are conducted in French. In practice, Korean expatriates running restaurants locally may not speak Arabic at all but successfully communicate with staff and customers in French and run their businesses effectively.

**Conclusion:** For business in a mission field, language proficiency is an essential prerequisite. Starting a business without resolving language barriers significantly increases the risk of failure. Therefore, missionaries should invest heavily in learning the local language (or working language) from the early stages of their mission.

### 3.2.2. Field Expertise

When a missionary spends an extended period in the field, **field expertise naturally develops**. This includes understanding geography, language, and local society, religion, and culture. Part of this expertise is deeply understanding the mindset and worldview of the people being served.

However, some areas are **more difficult to develop over time**. These include local commercial law, tax law, economic systems, labor environments, construction practices, and

operational procedures. Even long-term missionaries may lack expertise in these fields. For example, when I tried to establish a company, I spent significant time attempting to personally handle procedures typically delegated to a local tax accountant. While technically anyone can perform these tasks, in practice, it is usual to delegate them to a professional agent.

Similarly, during construction projects, such as hiring electricians, plumbers, or contractors, I faced challenges due to unfamiliarity with local wage levels and industry practices. However, these areas can **improve significantly if the entrepreneur actively learns and challenges themselves.**

Most mission fields where missionaries work are **developing countries or regions with incomplete social systems**, which inherently contain many variables. Common challenges include:

- Ordered goods not arriving
- Stock availability being unreliable
- Difficulty obtaining required documents for bank account setup
- Unpredictable construction timelines for commercial electricity installations
- Unexpected additional payments or fees

There is no single skill that solves all of these variables. Many issues are rooted in the local worldview and cultural context, requiring **deep understanding of people**. Missionaries must anticipate actual needs and comprehension beyond superficial conversation, plan holistically, and take precautions, sometimes even issuing warnings to clarify responsibilities.

However, some issues cannot be resolved despite strong objections. These difficulties are magnified if one is **making all decisions alone**. Therefore, it is highly beneficial to have a mentor, business partner, or spouse with whom one can discuss variables, share context, and receive input.

For example, determining whether a certain action constitutes bribery or is an acceptable local practice can be ambiguous. In such cases, it is crucial to discuss the context with a knowledgeable third party to objectively evaluate the situation, which can be extremely helpful.

### 3.2.3. Business Expertise

When planning a business in the field, it is essential to clearly establish **Why, What, and How** from the start. Among these, the **What** corresponds to **business expertise**. This concerns what you will do, what skills you will use, or what products you will sell to generate income.

For example, after starting a restaurant in the field, I felt the need to produce rice cakes (tteok) myself and attempted to expand into that area. Based on knowledge from online research, it seemed easy. I even had an opportunity to get a home-use rice cake machine from Korea and tried making rice cakes. I failed, losing about 300,000 KRW for the machine. Later, I explored the local second-hand machinery market and found equipment with similar performance, but the price was high, and I realized I **lacked sufficient business expertise in this area** to justify the investment.

Business expertise does not necessarily need to reside solely in the founder. If there are friends, relatives, or colleagues with the necessary knowledge who can collaborate, the founder can still execute effectively. However, if neither the founder nor anyone in their network has sufficient expertise, starting the business becomes very difficult, and there is no one capable of taking responsibility for high-cost investments.

For missionaries in the field, taking a sabbatical to **gain practical experience in the same industry**, or obtaining a degree or professional certification, can significantly **upgrade their business expertise**.

## 3.3. Business Models Tried in the Field

The **Business as Mission(BAM)** model varies greatly depending on the founder's character and the regional, cultural, and economic context. Therefore, even within the same industry, models and outcomes can differ significantly based on local circumstances.

The business models introduced in this section are **examples of cases that I personally attempted and experienced in the field while planting churches**.

### 3.3.1. Starting a Business to Employ Locals

Among the local believers in the church community, two or three brothers and sisters had strong faith but remained unemployed for several years, or were unable to live as full-time ministers due to the lack of financial support. Naturally, to provide employment for these individuals, we started a **small 4-pyeong ( $\approx 13\text{ m}^2$ ) restaurant**.

Because of this context, the business was envisioned as a sort of "**workplace church**," and operations were designed not just as a regular restaurant but as an extension of ministry. Every morning, we prayed together, held worship in the restaurant, and evangelized and served other Muslim staff. The restaurant was operated so that time and finances invested in work would directly contribute to church-planting ministry.

The initial goal of employing local Christian brothers and sisters was achieved. Additionally, other church community members were also employed, providing further jobs. This business model **benefits greatly from field expertise** when working with believers.

However, when operational responsibilities arise, emotional conflicts with staff members can occur, potentially affecting relationships. This is particularly sensitive because workplace conflicts can spill over into the church community. A good church deacon could become a bad boss at work, while the reverse—a good boss being a bad believer—is less likely. It is essential for the founder to be a **good and respected boss**. Only then can workplace conflicts gradually become opportunities to build mutual trust over time.

In the early stages, believing brothers and sisters are employees, but over time, as they gain experience and responsibility, the business could gradually **be fairly transferred to their capabilities**. These considerations are important, and there are many additional details and practical matters that must be addressed in this context.

### 3.3.2. Entrepreneurship as Holistic Mission

The evangelization of a people cannot be achieved simply by establishing a single church and registering it as a legal church with the government. Many seeds of ministry need to be sown. When

the history of Acts—spreading the gospel, prayer movements, and discipling first-generation Christian leaders—is laid as the foundation, the Lord works according to His timetable.

During my time in the mission field, I experienced many situations where the local people were spiritually and physically exhausted, discouraged, and frustrated. Often, I realized that such a context cannot be transformed through one-dimensional evangelism alone. There are many times when care, like that of the Good Samaritan who helped the man beaten by robbers, is needed.

Entrepreneurship in honestly run businesses provides opportunities and influence, especially where young people can learn and grow. How can the lazy learn diligence? By seeing diligent people firsthand. Observing those who live with hope and perseverance even in challenging circumstances brings insight.

Currently, in the restaurant I operate, three Christian youths and five Muslim youths work together. The purpose of starting this restaurant was not simply to provide jobs for the three Christian youths. It is meant to serve as a “pasture feeding the flock,” helping those who cannot establish hope on their own. This entrepreneurship began as a response to the unemployment issues that local youth desperately face. Through this, we pray and challenge ourselves to see what influence can be exerted and how new ministries can be opened.

### **3.3.3. “One Sheep” Project**

In *Daughters of Islam* by Miriam Adeney, there is a story about lending a local person a sheep. If they raise it well and it becomes a basis for self-reliance, they return a lamb, which is then used to help another local person achieve independence. This sheep circulates like seed money.

Previously, I started a small restaurant to help employ some local brothers and sisters, but after three years, I had to leave due to various issues. In that process, the brothers and sisters who had worked with me from the beginning also became unemployed. Two things surprised me at that time:

1. Even though they could have continued working under a new owner, all the brothers and sisters who had helped pioneer the church left. Perhaps a sense of loyalty played a role, but it seemed that the youth generation thirsts not only for financial stability but also for proper values and a sense of community.

2. Despite my entrepreneurship aimed at helping them, after three years, they had not achieved practical independence. Simply being employees receiving a salary made it difficult to establish a foundation for self-reliance.

At that time, a fellow missionary shared the story of the "one sheep" from *Daughters of Islam* and advised that, though difficult, we might try a small enterprise led by the locals themselves. I concluded, "I will not start a business to employ them; instead, it must belong to them from the very beginning."

To achieve this, two conditions had to be met:

1. They must be the ones leading the business.
2. They must provide the initial capital themselves.

Together with a local brother and his wife, we set three conditions:

1. Bring whatever initial capital you can provide.
2. I will lend my capital to start the business together, but I will only recover the principal. Once the principal is repaid, I will completely withdraw.
3. The scale of the business will depend on the size of the initial capital.

Under these conditions, we started a small restaurant again. They already had over two years of experience in pioneering and operating a restaurant, so they possessed basic operational expertise. My role was still significant in construction, administrative procedures, fund management, and menu development.

Although the brothers and sisters still had some shortcomings, the business was now directly tied to their independence, creating a strong intrinsic motivation. As a result, I recovered all the seed money principal within six months and, as promised, completely withdrew from management and financial tasks. One year later, I judged that they had reached economic self-reliance.

This model clearly has advantages, but the key is that the locals must have the capability to take responsibility and the expertise to manage the business afterward. Without these conditions, this model is difficult to implement.

### **3.3.4. Business Focused on Activity Rather Than Profit**

This business model prioritizes securing a platform to sustain field ministry rather than focusing on profitability or job creation. It is often referred to as *Business for Mission*.

In my case, about three years ago, I started a Korean language academy centered on Korean language education, which fits this model. At the time, my fellow missionaries and I were struggling with ministry because we could not obtain long-term residency visas. After reviewing local commercial law, we found that educational businesses, such as language academies, had relatively simple establishment procedures and required minimal initial investment. We determined that generating just enough revenue to cover essential expenses—rent, administrative costs, and promotional costs—would be sufficient, and thus we established the Korean language academy.

The academy operated on a low-commitment schedule, holding classes about once a week. Three missionaries with Korean teaching certificates used the academy as a platform to secure stable residency visas. (For reference, the Korean teaching certificate can be obtained through an intensive short-term program during a sabbatical period.)

After establishing the academy, it remained stable without requiring intensive effort, fulfilling its initial purpose. This allowed us to maintain basic engagement activities, such as personal interactions with students and Christmas events. If a missionary with expertise and vision in education fields such as language, music, or dance were to operate such a platform, it could develop even more professionally.

However, because profitability is low, it is difficult to employ local people on a full-time basis, and even if they are employed, providing wages sufficient for self-reliance can be a significant burden. Furthermore, due to the activity-focused nature of this type of business, there are inherent limitations in achieving long-term independent vision and expansion.

## **4. Conclusion**

The essence of the gospel has never changed. However, in specific eras and contexts, the gospel is communicated through various people and diverse methods. Business is not a newly emerging tool; it has always been part of church history over the past 2,000 years. Today, it is

increasingly difficult to achieve church planting and self-reliance without engaging in business. Capitalism has already established itself as the most powerful force globally, transcending ideology, region, and religion.

*Business as Mission* is still ongoing. It is not a field with a clearly defined roadmap or complete manual; new doors continue to be opened in response to local realities and changing times. Perhaps it is unfolding alongside the first-generation disciples and churches being established among the remaining unreached people groups.

Business within capitalism demands constant expansion and reinvestment. Under the justification of preparing for the future, there is continuous, relentless pursuit of competitiveness. In contrast, business within God's kingdom is different. While it must operate according to worldly business rules, there are moments of rest and guidance allowed by the Lord. As the Bible clearly testifies, God's character is one of abundance. He is not a shepherd who uses people as tools and then abandons them; He takes responsibility and cares for them to the end.

Even in the secular world, there is ongoing discussion about creating healthy business models. A healthy work environment ensures business longevity, and the understanding that fair transactions benefit both parties is spreading. Beyond this, there is an ongoing need for in-depth dialogue and learning about what biblical business mission should look like.

## Response to Song-won Kim's Article

**Cheol-Young Lee**

**(Head of the International Affairs Research Association)**

First, I want to express my deep gratitude to Teacher Kim Kwon-se for writing such a valuable piece. In your writing, I could strongly feel your heartfelt love for the local people and their souls, and it made me reflect on how much thought and prayer you must have offered while witnessing the bleak reality in Tunisia. Although I cannot claim to be an expert in BAM (Business as Mission), I would like to offer some counsel on your article based on my own experience and perspective. I earned a master's degree in economics in Japan and have taught as an adjunct professor in the School of Management and Economics at Handong Global University. Of course, this does not necessarily make me an economics expert, but because I've had somewhat more exposure to economic viewpoints within the research institute, I would like to examine your article from that angle.

### **The Starting Point and Problem Awareness of Business as Mission**

Teacher Kim's question, "Why do so many people leave the church, and why do only a few remain?" is the fundamental motivation for initiating Business as Mission and is also the key problem awareness that connects to the necessity of BAM emphasized later in the article. When you wrote that "*to make up for this, what often happens on the mission field is that missionaries directly support local Christians,*" I believe you identified the structural limitations involved in compensating for the social and economic losses a Muslim must endure when becoming a Christian. I also agree with the two resulting problems you mentioned.

However, regarding whether "*indirect support through job creation*"—instead of direct assistance—can truly resolve these two issues at the root, I hold a slightly different opinion.

## **Tension Within the Community and the Problem of “Moral Hazard”**

First, as you stated, the subtle tension and sense of comparison that form between locals who receive direct financial support and those who do not can still arise even if the method shifts to “employment.” In other words, the same tension and comparison will likely occur between locals who obtain jobs through a missionary and the second or third wave of locals who later join the church. Changing the channel of support from *cash assistance* to *employment* does not change the underlying nature of the issue.

Eventually, to resolve this problem, one would arrive at the unrealistic conclusion that the church must provide employment to all locals within the community. If that happens, the motivation for church attendance risks shifting from **faith** to **livelihood**. While this might enable short-term expansion or community maintenance, in the long run it could lead to **moral hazard**—that is, actions driven not by spiritual zeal but by material incentives.

## **Examining the Idea of “Believers Equipped with Worldly Competitiveness”**

Second, regarding the assertion that *“believers must not grow like hothouse plants inside the church but become people who possess competitiveness in the world,”* I believe this requires biblical examination. The ministries of Jesus and the apostles—particularly the Apostle Paul—were not focused on equipping believers with worldly competitiveness.

If we consider “worldly competitiveness” to be an essential element of discipleship, then the church would have to prioritize college entrance, job placement, or economic self-sufficiency over spiritual formation. Although I agree that the changing times call for various forms of ministry not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, I still question whether “strengthening competitiveness in the world” is an essential component of discipleship. When the church adopts the same competitive logic as the world’s value system, there is a danger that the essence of the gospel may become blurred.

## The History of Self-Support and the Role of the Holy Spirit

I fully agree with the point that Teacher Kim Kwon-se emphasized regarding the church's self-support. In the history of the Korean church's growth, **self-support** was indeed a crucial factor. However, the important point here is that the beginning of self-support arose not from economic growth but from **the work of the Holy Spirit**.

After missionaries Underwood and Appenzeller entered Korea in 1884, the Korean church relied on Western financial support to build churches and schools until the early 1900s. But after about twenty years, an awareness emerged: *"How long will we depend on Western capital?"* As a result, self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation began to be emphasized, and the decisive turning point was the **1907 Pyongyang Great Revival**.

At that time, Joseon's economic structure was agrarian, with almost no industrial base, and most who came to church were from the lower classes—women, servants, and slaves. Compared with present-day Tunisia or most mission fields, the situation in Joseon was likely even worse. Yet, even in such poverty, believers began self-support by contributing small offerings together. With its movement-like momentum, the number of self-supporting churches continued to grow until around 1930, and after liberation, the Korean church no longer depended on foreign capital.

This did not happen because missionaries created jobs to make people self-sufficient. Rather, it was because believers who experienced God's grace through the Holy Spirit's presence **voluntarily dedicated themselves**, and this dedication developed into a movement rather than a one-time event. In other words, self-support was the result not of "injecting economic capital and creating employment," but of "believers moved by the Holy Spirit offering voluntary commitment." I believe the Holy Spirit and this movement-like dynamic are extremely important elements in achieving self-support.

In contrast, we can look at the case of **Israel**, where I currently serve. As of 2025, Israel's unemployment rate is 2.9%, lower than the OECD average (4.8%), and its per capita income is about \$54,000—much higher than Korea's (\$35,000). Yet many churches in Israel still rely on foreign funding

and are unable to be self-supporting. This shows that employment and economic growth do not necessarily lead to a church's self-sufficiency.

Therefore, for a church to truly become self-reliant, what is needed is not job creation or employment but **the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit and inner transformation**. Believers who have not been transformed by the Holy Spirit will not use their money for the Lord no matter how much they earn, and material abundance may even harm the church. Furthermore, unless this self-support arises as a movement, no national church can become self-supporting.

## **Labor Markets and the Problem of Economic Distortion**

Now, let us examine the employment-creation model of Business as Mission from an economic perspective. From a business standpoint, it may seem very desirable for a missionary-created enterprise to succeed and for church members to achieve economic self-reliance. However, from a macro perspective—especially within the framework of labor economics—we must carefully consider whether such a structure can truly have a positive long-term impact on the broader local community.

Wages in the labor market are primarily determined by labor supply and demand and by worker productivity. However, when a missionary brings in external capital and operates employment not based on "market principles" but on "relational principles"—that is, giving hiring priority to church members—the labor market equilibrium can become distorted. Although a few small businesses may not have enough influence to disrupt the entire market, if such a model becomes widespread, the following problems could arise:

### **(1) The Problem of Distorted Signaling**

In labor economics, **signaling** refers to the signals workers send to employers to demonstrate their skills and capabilities. In modern society, academic degrees, work experience, and certifications are typical signals. However, if a missionary-centered hiring structure becomes normalized, these signals may be replaced by *"religious devotion"* and *"loyalty."* In other words, instead of improving

their skills or productivity to prove their ability, workers may attempt to gain employment through "religious behaviors" intended to please the missionary. This creates a faith-based signaling structure. Such a system not only reduces the efficiency of the labor market but also harms the sincerity of faith itself.

## **(2) The Problem of Weakened Work Incentives**

In a missionary-centered employment structure, it is difficult for missionaries to easily dismiss low-productivity church members because of the unique relational dynamics within a faith community. As a result, workers may lose their motivation, thinking "*I won't be fired anyway,*" and may become negligent in their work.

This problem also occurred in past communist systems. In the early church, voluntary sharing and dedication were possible because of the work of the Holy Spirit. But in the absence of the Holy Spirit, communist systems—which attempted to adopt similar collective sharing—ultimately collapsed due to loss of work incentives and inefficiency. In short, an economic structure without the Holy Spirit weakens the vitality of the community.

Furthermore, local workers who become negligent under missionary employment may be unable to re-enter the broader labor market, becoming what we might call "*greenhouse flowers.*" Ironically, employment structures meant to prevent believers from becoming greenhouse flowers may end up producing exactly that outcome.

We must also seriously consider whether it is wise for ministers and local believers to become financially entangled in employer–employee relationships.

## **(3) Structural Consequences of Market Distortion**

Over time, such a structure distorts labor supply and demand. Local workers will prefer church-based employment over the general labor market, and missionaries will hire based not on productivity but on "spiritual relationship and loyalty." As a result, the overall efficiency of the labor market declines, and it may even become harder for workers to enter the outside economy.

Moreover, if missionary businesses end up harming local competitors and distorting the labor market, can we truly call that "successful business as mission"?

In summary, if the goal of Business as Mission becomes "local employment," it may appear successful in the short term from an economic standpoint, but in the long term it is unlikely to become a sustainable structure. I believe that Business as Mission should focus more on forming gospel-centered relationships and providing ministry contact points rather than on job creation itself. In other words, employment should be a *means*, not an *end*, and business should function as a channel for visa acquisition or entry into local society—making it a more persuasive and sustainable mission strategy.

## Defining Business as Mission

Before discussing Business as Mission, we need a clear definition and understanding of the term. **BAM (Business as Mission)** literally means "business as a form of mission." After reading the 2020 report from the official BAM Global website, the BAM-related publications from the 2004 Lausanne Conference, and the 2014 report on church planting and BAM, I reached one conclusion:

**The primary agents of BAM are not missionaries, but professional businesspeople.** BAM goes beyond merely operating a company; it focuses on *how businesspeople can fulfill their missional calling through their businesses*. Therefore, BAM case studies frequently discuss topics such as workplace worship, Christian organizational culture, and ethical management. They also consider how to collaborate with mission organizations and missionaries. Furthermore, BAM includes not only business in mission fields but also any form of business that participates in God's kingdom and mission, even outside traditional mission contexts. From this perspective, even Korea's past "Samsung School" can be seen as a representative BAM example.

By contrast, it is relatively difficult to find extensive material on **BFM (Business for Mission)**. My understanding is that BFM refers to the concept in which a **missionary** uses business as a *tool* or *means* for ministry. That is, while BAM focuses on businesspeople running their businesses missionally, BFM is about missionaries using business to conduct mission. The two have different

emphases—BAM on “business,” BFM on “mission”—and thus their goals and measures of success differ.

BAM Global presents four success criteria for BAM:

1. **Economic success** — a sustainable financial structure that can operate without external funding, enabling stable continuation of mission.
2. **Social success** — transforming local communities through job creation, fair wages, and restoration of human dignity.
3. **Environmental success** — stewarding God’s creation through environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.
4. **Spiritual success** — contributing to the expansion of God’s kingdom through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.

However, in the case of businesses operated by missionaries, evaluating success solely by these four criteria is insufficient.

For example, imagine a missionary starts a business that consistently runs a deficit and requires continuous external funding. Yet through this business, relationships with locals are formed, a church is planted, and continued operations would likely connect even more people to the church. Economically, this is clearly a failure—but spiritually, it is a success. How should we evaluate such a case?

Many missionaries would likely argue that if souls are being reached, the business should continue even at financial loss—and I would probably feel the same if many people were connecting to the church. In missionary-led businesses, spiritual fruit may rightly outweigh economic performance.

Interestingly, according to BAM Global’s **State of the BAM Movement Report (2020/21)**, survey responses from 470 BAM collaborators showed that the financial condition of most businesses involved in the BAM movement was generally weak. This indicates that missional businesses do not necessarily achieve financial success—and that *economic self-sufficiency does not always guarantee*

*missional accomplishment.* Conversely, if a business is financially successful but produces no spiritual fruit—no evangelism, no discipleship—then it is economically successful but missionally a failure. In such cases, missionaries may struggle with identity confusion: *Am I a missionary or a businessperson?*

In the end, the essence and purpose of businesses run by missionaries and missionally minded businesses run by businesspeople are different, and therefore their criteria for success must also differ. To this day, systematic research, case studies, and clear guidelines for missionary-led businesses remain insufficient. Generally, Business as Mission discourse is focused on BAM, not BFM. Many BAM Global reports strongly reflect the concerns of businesspeople, giving the impression that Business as Mission is being viewed from the perspective of entrepreneurs. But the perspective of a missionary viewing business is different from that of a businessperson viewing mission.

I believe this is an area that must be studied and established going forward, and that our Global Bridge Institute—and Teacher Kim Kwon-se—should help lead this important work.

### **Missionaries, Business, and Finances**

As mentioned above, we cannot find a direct biblical model in which business is explicitly used as a tool for mission. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul's comments about his own labor and self-supporting ministry appear in **1 Corinthians 9**, and I believe this passage is relatively overlooked in today's discussions on Business as Mission. This is likely because most Business as Mission models today are BAM models in which the primary agents are **businesspeople**, not missionaries. So then, how does Paul explain his ministry and financial matters in 1 Corinthians 9?

*"This is my defense to those who examine me (v. 3): Do we not have the right to eat and drink? (v. 4) ... Do only Barnabas and I not have the right to refrain from working? (v. 6) Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? (v. 7) ... If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? (v. 11) If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. (v. 12)"*

In this passage, Paul clearly states that it is a **legitimate right** for a missionary to receive living support while preaching the gospel. In other words, those who preach the gospel naturally deserve to receive material support in return. According to his reasoning, it is perfectly consistent with spiritual principles for missionaries to receive financial support from local believers through their ministry. Of course, in many mission fields this may be practically difficult, but *"those who receive spiritual things sharing their material things"* is the biblical principle Paul presents.

However, Paul also states that he and Barnabas did **not** claim this right. The reason is revealed in verses 17 and 18:

*"For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship. (v. 17) What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. (v. 18)"*

Paul explains that preaching the gospel is **not** his personal choice ("of his own will") but an act of **obedience to a calling**. Therefore, the "reward" he receives is not financial compensation but the heavenly reward gained by giving up his rightful claims. Interpreted literally, Paul is saying: *"Missionaries receive no earthly reward for preaching the gospel, because they are simply fulfilling the command they were given."* If one does something voluntarily that was not commanded, there may be a reward; but for doing what one was commanded to do, there is no claim to a reward.

This aligns with Jesus' words in **Luke 17:10**:

*"So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"*

Jesus teaches that a servant called by God does not receive wages for obedience. At first glance, the passage may appear to promote a self-centered reward theology because of the term "heavenly reward." Some may ask: *"If there is no reward for preaching, should we all engage in business and support ourselves to receive a reward?"*

I do not believe Paul is instructing everyone to engage in self-supporting ministry for the sake of receiving rewards. Rather, I believe the bigger point is **not taking one's rightful claims for granted**, and choosing instead to live in pursuit of heavenly reward. Scriptural interpretation varies widely and depends on how each person receives the Word. Nevertheless, I believe that 1 Corinthians

9 is a passage that missionaries—who serve as called servants—ought to contemplate deeply at least once.

## **A Study on the Causes of the Decline of the North African Church after the Islamic Conquest**

**Jung Hae-won (Head of the African Studies Association)**

### **1. Introduction to the North African Region**

North Africa generally refers to five countries with shared historical backgrounds and political-economic alliances: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. These nations are part of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), an organization aimed at establishing a single market. A common misconception among those unfamiliar with the region is that its indigenous peoples are black Africans. However, the true natives are the Berbers, a nomadic people who now remain a minority across North African states.

### **2. Motivation for This Study**

Before being dispatched to this region, I had assumed that "all Arabs are Muslims." However, as is widely known, Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq still host significant Christian populations—communities that have preserved their faith since the early church era.

A few years after arriving here, I had the opportunity to worship with a short-term missionary team from Egypt. I was struck by the realization that these Arabic-speaking Arabs were born Christians. I was so fascinated by this that I found it difficult to focus on worship, simply watching them in awe. Seeing both those who have maintained their Christian faith since the early church era and those who have become Arab Muslims after losing their spiritual legacy made me reflect deeply.

### **3. The Flourishing of the North African Church – Centered in Carthage**

Christianity first entered the Maghreb region through Egyptian soldiers and merchants (Barness, 1985). After the early persecution period and the official recognition of Christianity in the Roman Empire in 313 CE, the Christian population in Carthage (modern-day Tunisia) reached 70–80% (Frend, 1952). As a Roman colony, the region saw church growth centered in urban areas, followed by rural expansion through missionary efforts. The Maghreb was also home to early church fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. Notably, the Synod of Carthage in 397 officially confirmed the 27 books of the New Testament.

### **4. Internal Conflicts within the Church**

Many scholars have studied the disappearance of even remnants of the church in North Africa, a topic of interest among those involved in missions. Various historical and political causes have been proposed, but the most frequently cited is the Donatist controversy that began in the early 4th century.

Under Emperor Diocletian, a major persecution occurred across North Africa from 303 to 305. Orders to burn Scriptures, destroy churches, and arrest clergy were executed immediately by the regional governor. Carthage, being one of the largest Christian centers in the Roman Empire, suffered heavily, with 3,000–4,000 martyrs during this period (Frend, 1952; Brown, 2000).

After the persecution, in 311, a bishop named Caecilianus—ordained by Felix, a bishop who had apostatized during persecution—was appointed as Bishop of Carthage. In opposition, those who

sought to preserve the purity of the faith elected their own bishop, leading to a schism. When this bishop was killed, Donatus succeeded him. The Donatists, advocating purity, clashed with the Roman Catholic Church, which was more lenient toward apostates. Appeals to the emperor and subsequent violent incidents deepened the rift.

Although the two factions coexisted for some time, a synod convened in 411 by Augustine of Hippo condemned the Donatists as heretics, resulting in excommunication, property confiscation, and exile (Brepolis, 1974). Despite persecution, the Donatists grew among the Berbers, who harbored anti-Roman sentiments. This division weakened the North African church, leaving it unable to resist external forces when Islam arrived. Although Christianity coexisted with Islam for over 400 years (Fentress, 2018), it eventually declined. Hence, examining the specific events after the Islamic conquest is crucial.

## 5. After the Islamic Conquest

Islamic rulers imposed the *jizya* (poll tax) on non-Muslim subjects, while converts were exempt. Initially, the *dhimmi* system provided protection and some autonomy to non-Muslims, but over time, increased discrimination and taxation led to conversions. The Berber elite converted following military defeat, motivated in part by tax relief. Urban elites, mostly Catholic, either converted to avoid taxes or fled to Italy and Spain.

In the 12th century, the Almohad dynasty enforced radical Islamic policies, demanding conversion, exile, or death for Christians and Jews. They eradicated Christian villages and forcibly removed children from Christian education (García-Arenal, 2021). By this time, the number of dioceses had already fallen from 500 to 40 (Talbi, 1990). The Almohads viewed Christianity as a threat to monotheism and abolished the *dhimmi* system. Although Christian communities persisted into the 9th century, the Almohad persecutions, combined with poverty, disease, and nomadic invasions, marked a tipping point for extinction (Bat Ye'or, 1996).

Even acknowledging the severity of historical circumstances, the complete disappearance of Christianity in the Maghreb is striking—especially considering that other Arab regions also faced persecution. Unlike Roman-era persecution that often strengthened the church, Islamic-era pressures

led to community collapse. This calls for deeper investigation into how the local foundations of Christianity differed from those in regions like Egypt, where Christianity persists today.

## 6. Comparison with the Egyptian Church

**First**, the degree of indigenization differed. In 7th-century Egypt, over 90% of the population (of 8–9 million) were Coptic Christians. Christianity was fully rooted as a national religion, and even as Arabic became dominant, the church remained central to ethnic identity. Christian officials contributed significantly to the administrative transition to Arabic (Foss, 2009), and religious terms were translated into Arabic (PERF, 558).

In contrast, Maghreb Christianity centered around Roman elites and failed to reach Berber commoners. Liturgies were conducted only in Latin, and the Bible was never translated into Berber. Thus, during Arab-Berber assimilation, Christianity vanished more easily (Courtois, 1955).

**Second**, geography and political structure played a role. Egypt's Nile River supported dense populations and centralized rule, making it easier for rulers to control the country by managing one capital. This minimized interference in Christian communities, and the church, with its centralized structure, thrived in villages (Davis, 2004).

The Maghreb, in contrast, developed around coastal trade cities with limited inland reach. Once cities fell, entire church structures collapsed. After Islamic conquest, cities were quickly taken by Muslim merchants, and Berber inland areas became increasingly isolated and Islamized (Coombs, 2012; Anzaku, 2024).

**Third**, key historical events allowed Egyptian Christianity to survive. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 resulted in a distinct Coptic identity, and a peaceful agreement with the Arab general Amr in

642 helped secure early survival. Even during the later Mamluk persecutions, monastic movements and ethnic Christian identity sustained the church.

In the Maghreb, the Almohad persecutions destroyed village-based Christian communities. Although monasticism existed, it was urban-centered and thus more vulnerable (Duval, 1982). The root difference lies in indigenization: Egyptian Christianity became an ethnic religion with strong organization, while Maghreb Christianity, rooted in Roman urban elites, was uprooted by war and assimilation. Today, Christians in Tunisia make up less than 0.1% (mostly foreigners), while Egypt retains 8–12% (approximately 10 million) Christians (World Christian Database, 2024).

## 7. The Process of Indigenization

Indigenization refers to the process by which the gospel becomes so naturally embedded in a people that it feels like their own way of life. While timelines vary, the initial stage of church planting by locals generally takes 80–150 years, and full cultural indigenization takes 200–300 years (Wall, 1996, 2002). Berber Christianity lasted about 200 years, so time alone was not the issue. However, barriers included Latin-only worship and lack of Scripture in the Berber language. The Donatist movement made some regional efforts to reach Berbers, but its division from urban elites limited its impact.

Modern churches must grapple with how to achieve genuine indigenization in mission fields. Rather than imposing familiar methods from sending nations, missionaries must adopt culturally sensitive approaches that preserve gospel integrity. Ministries should seek expressions of faith that feel natural within the local culture and identify positive cultural elements that can nourish the gospel.

Reflecting on my own experience, I question whether I have overly relied on familiar Korean church forms. In prioritizing structured programs and visible results, I may have overlooked the relational and experiential needs of the local people. Understanding the host culture's traits and allowing faith to naturally take root is essential. Just as individuals grow best when their strengths are nurtured, so too must churches help nations find their role in God's kingdom and embed that identity within their cultural framework.

## 8. Conclusion

Today, new churches are being planted in regions where Christianity was once uprooted. While history repeats its failures, the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the church make history dynamic. Just as the Egyptian church once evangelized this region, the current work in the Maghreb is vital. Many individuals and groups are evangelizing, discipling, and serving. What began long ago is being restarted, and new believers are rising to ensure that this time the church remains deeply rooted.

We place our hope in God's renewed work unfolding in North Africa.

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