



Member Care Update

Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team

To contact us: membercare@ethne.net

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Reflections on...

By Dr. Brent Lindquist

Link Care Center, Fresno, California

It was very interesting to attend the Lausanne Congress from the perspective of a non-full-time evangelist. I relished the opportunity to celebrate with everyone the Good News, participate in Bible study, prayer times, worship, and make many new friends. I was delightfully caught up in the evangelism mandate and thought a lot about my role as a mental health person and evangelism. I found the more I relished the call to evangelism, the more I found myself feeling uncomfortable about some of my professional stances. It could be argued that I think way too much about this stuff. At least that is what my mental health or member care colleagues tell me when I raise these issues. But then, many people tell me I think a lot about things that not a lot of people think about. Thinking opens me to God and His ability to sort things out. The reflections below and my conclusions with how I think member care helps the global church in its evangelistic endeavors will reveal that I'm still wrestling with these issues.

I think we, Member Care Providers, are great come-along-besiders, if you will. As counselors, encouragers, listeners, we help people talk through the various issues that are confronting, bothering, or hurting them. We can also be general advocates for positive, life-enhancing decisions for life and ministry. Sometimes we can help people think through the consequences of their actions and perhaps help them avoid dire serious impacts of some of those actions. This forecasting ability can be a useful asset when one considers and counts the call and cost.

However, I struggle a bit with the power I take and I am given as a "professional," and I worry, actually, that I abuse that power. Who am I to stand in front of someone and lecture them about their life choices when they feel they are of God? Certainly, we don't always know if our desires are of God, but sometimes I'm amazed at how prophetic (in a bad way!) I can be simply by quoting the latest research or the common sense approach to protectiveness and care. I don't have an answer for this except to realize I need to be cautious in how I help people who truly feel led to do things that might be problematic. How can I help them have the right supports and people speaking truth into their lives? Is there a way for me to help them confirm their desires are from God?

I have to ask myself in what way am I a hindrance to the global evangelistic effort. In addition to some of the concepts I mentioned above, it seems easy for me to take approaches that, whether I want them to or not, come across as arrogant. On one level, I'm not so sure anymore that I can always be counted on to do the right thing in the right way for the right purpose at the right time with the right results. When I

was younger, I was much more confident that I could do that, but now that I'm older I am much less sure of myself and much more wary that my training and experience may cause me to fall into predictable stances and become more like Job's friends.

Below are some troubling questions I have been dealing with in the midst of jet lag and getting back up to speed with many things happening at home. I'm not especially hopeful that there are easy answers to these questions. I hope by sharing my questions, there might be continuing thought and dialogue with you who are actually out there reading this.

1. I come from the world of the "haves" and I am trying earnestly to help those who are of the "have not" world. It is simply impossible to consider providing to the truly "have-nots" the kind of resources and delivery systems and theoretical formulations I use without even thinking. What are the basic foundational concepts that are autonomous or independent from technology, training, staffing, faculty, you name it, which allow the church to be unfettered and its evangelistic efforts rich in its healing process?
2. I think there are significant perspective differences between health and healing versus recovering. When push comes to shove, I doubt any of us completely recover from anything. By recovering, I mean that whatever happened to us completely disappears from our emotional landscape. And yet I think, especially in the Western world, many of us go around acting as if this is a possibility. Our healing methods need to coordinate with the fact that suffering is a daily and permanent occurrence for many of the people we are working with, or the people they work with. A triumphalism position towards healing and recovery can create many problems. People begin a recovery process, and in that recovery process, they are always recovering not recovered. At least that's my humble opinion. How can we acknowledge this as core in our efforts?
3. Though I'm often asked to help, I need to be more careful to learn how I can help. It is so easy to run in with solutions that may not address the problems as they perceive them. As the Scripture says, there is a time and a season for everything. I need to know when is the right time to rejoice—to what degree? And I need to learn when is the right time to work and grow.

It is quite likely that some of you reading this might think I'm being very defensive or depressive or saddened. Certainly these thoughts cause me pause. But they cause me to focus on good questions and wrestle with the answers. I'm hopeful we will find the right balance to all of this. If any of these questions struck a nerve or you're aware of other information about this please don't hesitate to give a response. You may email me at Brentlindquist@linkcare.org.