

Title: Tentmakers in the Mission of God

Author: Mike Barnett (Columbia International University)

Abstract:

This is an overview of the role of T-2 tentmakers—mission-minded and strategically connected marketplace participants in the mission of God. The presenter’s position is that T-2 tentmakers (e.g. Aquila & Priscilla) have always been God’s default for the leading edge of expanding his mission and kingdom. These “anonymous and unchronicled witnesses” (Neil 22) continue to serve as pioneers for the gospel where the marketplace is the most critical venue for life and cultural transformation.

Who is a T-2 tentmaker? Simply put, a person fully engaged in the marketplace with a conscious and overriding purpose of serving God’s mission of a blessing for all peoples on earth. T-2s are ‘real’ marketplace participants but their *raison de etre* in the marketplace is to fulfill their role in the mission of God. Biblical and historical examples of T2s will be introduced. Viable marketplace ‘industries’ (education, community development, agriculture, business development, etc.) will be highlighted with a brief reference to the pros, cons, and challenges of each approach.

What about the calling to be a T-2? How does one know that this is God’s plan for them? How do you acquire the skills to be a successful T-2? Where does the church fit into your plan? These and other practical aspects of T-2 work will be covered. The influence and ‘value added’ to individuals as well as communities at large will be discussed. These aspects of T-2 work will be illustrated from recent case studies of modern-day T-2s. The life and work of T-2s from China, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and North America will be cited.

Questions will be posed regarding the perceived difficulty of T-2 service. Why do we seem to have so few active T-2s? Or do we? Why do professional missionaries resist T-2 implementation in their strategies? How can mission agencies facilitate versus inhibit T-2 work? These and other questions will be posed for discussion. The presenter will conclude, contrary to many critics of tentmaking, that the role of T-2s in the mission of God among all peoples is primary, not secondary, in the fulfillment of the Great Commission—for the sake of God’s glory.

The presenter, Mike Barnett, teaches intercultural studies at Columbia International University, has twenty years of experience in creative access missions, and has published on the topic.