

The Lausanne Standards

A Narrative Foundation

Compiled
by
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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1 Early Believers Sell Property to Help the Needy (Acts 4:32 – 5:11)	4
2 The Church in Antioch Expresses their Thanks (Acts 11:19-30; 12:25)	6
3 The Early Church Makes a Big Decision (Acts 13:1-5; 14:26 – 15:35)	8
4 God Spreads the Gospel Using Many Gifts (Acts 18:1-28; I Corinthians 1: 10-17; 3:1-23)	11
5 Early Churches Move from Enthusiasm to Action (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 – 9; Philippians 4)	13
6 Paul Says Farewell to the Leaders of the Ephesian Church (Acts 20: 13-38)	16
Conclusion	18
Appendix: Lausanne Standards	20

Introduction

The role of money in international missions has challenged the worldwide church for many years. In 2010 the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization published the Lausanne Standards (<http://www.lausannestandards.org/>), a set of values and principles to guide donors and recipients through the minefield of international funding. In this story set, we illustrate these values and principles with six biblical narratives in chronological order, mostly from the book of the Acts of the Apostles and related New Testament epistles.

The primary values underlying the Lausanne Standards include integrity, trust, respect, giftedness, interdependence, stewardship and accountability, vision, communication, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility.

1. The first story Early Believers Sell Property to Help the Needy focuses on God's grace and the issues of integrity, trust, and accountability.
2. In The Church in Antioch Expresses Their Thanks, interdependence, stewardship, and thankfulness are foremost.
3. The acceptance of non-Jews in the church in The Early Church Makes a Big Decision raises issues of discerning God's vision in multi-cultural situations. It also touches on making and communicating group decisions with flexibility and respect.
4. The interpersonal relationships in God Spreads the Gospel Using Many Gifts remind us of the many spiritual gifts with which God has blessed his people. The story challenges us to work in trust and mutual dependence toward a shared vision. It illustrates how early Christians learned from one another through multi-cultural relationships and collaboration.
5. In the story Early Churches Move from Enthusiasm to Action, God's abundant grace in the lives of his followers overflows into thankfulness and generosity. Personal relationships, interdependence, stewardship, and cultural sensitivity are shown to be essential vehicles for God's grace manifested in the life of his Church..
6. Finally, the story Paul Says Farewell to the Leaders of the Ephesian Church demonstrates how enormous effort is expended to build respect and trust amongst Christian leaders. It also shows how the Church benefits when leaders anticipate, nurture, and appreciate the spiritual gifts and vision that God grants to His children in all parts of His Church.

The stories in this document are intended to be discussed in a group setting. Each story is introduced with a “Launching Thought.” A short group discussion of this “Launching Thought” will prepare the participants to focus on some of the story's key issues. The Launching Thought is followed by the “Story” itself. The main biblical references are provided with their respective story. We recommend that the story either be read aloud by a confident reader, or that a storyteller prepare ahead of time to tell the story to the group, according to the script provided. Following each story, a set of “Group Discussion Questions” helps the group engage with the content and implications of that particular story.

This recommended process will take approximately forty minutes to an hour, depending on the size of the group and the depth to which they desire to carry the discussion. At the close of a session it is good for the group to once again hear the full story read or told, so as to fix its main message in their hearts and minds.

This collection closes with a Conclusion consisting of a brief summary and prayer.

About Ruedi and Jenny Giezendanner

Ruedi and Jenny Giezendanner are on staff with Wycliffe Bible Translators. They have served in various translation projects as well as in administrative and consultant roles in Africa and Asia. They are currently serving as program and training consultants in India. Ruedi and Jenny are grateful to Samuel Chiang, Executive Director of the International Orality Network (ION), for inviting them to work with ION on this project of developing a foundation for the Lausanne Standards in narrative form. His encouragement and input have been invaluable.

Ruedi is originally from Switzerland where he obtained an Elementary Education teaching diploma. Later, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Linguistics (University of Texas at Arlington, USA), a Certificate in Theology (Denver Seminary, USA), and a Master of Business Administration (University of Maryland University College.) He has advised translation teams about the interpersonal, technical, strategic, and funding aspects of their programs. He has also contributed to a field course for African bookkeepers and has taught principles of project design, implementation, and reporting for project funding. His life-long passion is reading stories out loud. He became engaged to his future wife while reading to her C S Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*, one of the world's great love stories, and he has read Tolkien's entire *Lord of the Rings* to his family four times.

Jenny has taught and designed curriculum for courses in Adult Learning, Bible Storying, Language Program Management, Bible Translation and Scripture Engagement in both English and Indonesian, with extensive experience teaching and consulting teachers of these subjects worldwide. She is a Certified Dialog Education Practitioner and has fifteen years of home-schooling her four kids behind her. Experience in Bible translation projects and field leadership in Asia and Africa greatly influence her worldview. She obtained her Master of Arts in Foreign Languages and Linguistics (University of Texas at

Arlington, USA) and a Bachelor of Arts in both German and Business Management (Central College, Iowa, USA). She's been fascinated by cultures and languages since before third grade. Jenny is grateful for the treasure of the Bible's stories and the opportunity to share God's Word in many different places for most of her life.

About The International Orality Network (ION)

ION is a network of over five hundred participating organizations and churches dispersed globally. ION aims to rediscover, redeem, and renew the oral learning system so that the 4.35 billion oral learners are effective at their place of work. For primary oral learners, ION's desire is to make the Word of God available to unreached people groups using appropriate oral strategies, which are clearly communicated in their mother tongue so that oral communicators may hear, understand, respond, live out, and further reproduce the message of the Gospel.

ION is extremely grateful to Wycliffe Global Alliance, one of the ION member organizations, for graciously connecting ION with Ruedi and Jenny Giezendanner to assist with oralizing highly literate documents into a narrative form.

Story 1

Early Believers Sell Property to Help the Needy

(Acts 4:32 – 5:11)

Launching Thought

List as many reasons as you can for why people give.

Story

When the church in Jerusalem began to grow, the Jewish leaders violently opposed the followers of Jesus Christ. In spite of this, the apostles of Jesus continued to testify to his resurrection, and by the power of God they confirmed their witness with signs and miracles. God's grace abounded among the believers so much that there were no needy persons among them, because the believers who owned land or houses would sell some of this property and bring the money to the apostles. Then it was distributed to those who were in need.

There was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement." He was one of the believers who sold land and brought the money to the apostles.

A man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira also sold some property. They agreed between themselves to bring only some of the money to the apostles, but to pretend that they were bringing all the money that they had received for their property. When Ananias carried out their plan, the apostle Peter confronted him and said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit? Why have you kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have lied, not just to human beings but to God." When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. They carried him out and buried him.

His wife Sapphira did not know what had happened. A little later, she came and also claimed that the money for the apostles was all that she and her husband had received when they had sold their land. Peter confronted her, too: “How could you and your husband conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” Then she too fell down and died.

Great fear gripped the church and all others who heard what had happened.

Group Discussion Questions

1. How did God's grace affect the behavior of the community of believers in Jerusalem?
2. Describe the emotions of unbelievers that you notice in this story. How did they change, and why?
3. Why were these events important for the community of God at that point in history?
4. What choices do believers have when they give to God?
5. In what ways might this story be relevant to the Church today?

Story 2

The Church in Antioch Expresses their Thanks

(Acts 11:19-30; 12:25)

Launching Thought

Sometimes we recognize that God has blessed us richly and in many ways. What are some of the ways that you respond at those times?

Story

Soon after Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, the believers in Jerusalem underwent severe persecution. Many scattered to the east and north of Judea, and wherever they went, they spread the news of Jesus Christ, but only among the Jews. At that time some believers from North Africa and Cyprus went to the great city of Antioch in Syria. There they shared the good news with people who were not Jewish, and the Lord blessed their ministry. Many people believed and turned to the Lord. When the believers in Jerusalem heard about this, they sent Barnabas, one of their most godly and respected leaders, to Antioch. Barnabas was overjoyed to see what God had done in Antioch. The number of believers there was still growing rapidly, and Barnabas encouraged them to remain faithful to the Lord. Then he went to the city of Tarsus (in what today is Turkey) and brought back Saul, also known as Paul. The two of them then stayed in Antioch for a year teaching the believers. It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

During the year that Barnabas and Saul were teaching in Antioch, some prophets came from Jerusalem. One of them predicted that a great famine would spread all over the whole Roman empire. The believers in Antioch decided to help their brothers and sisters in Judea. Each one gave as generously as possible. Then they sent their gift with Barnabas and Saul to the elders of the church in Jerusalem. Once Barnabas and Saul had delivered the gift, they returned again to Antioch.

Group Discussion Questions

1. In this account, who do we see sharing the gospel with people who were not Jews? Where?
2. How did the believers in Jerusalem react to hearing about the new believers in Antioch who were not Jewish?
3. What needs are apparent in this story?
4. What reasons did Barnabas have to go and bring back Saul from Tarsus?
5. What relationships existed between the believers of Antioch and those of Jerusalem?
6. How did the believers in Antioch respond to the prophecy of a major famine? Why would they do this?
7. What were the expectations of the donors and the recipients with regard to this gift?
8. How would the believers in Antioch know what the impact of their gift was?
9. What would you say that God was doing in this situation?

Story 3

the Early Church Makes a Big Decision

(Acts 13:1-5; 14:26 – 15:35)

Launching Thought

All of us are constantly making decisions. Often we make decisions in meetings and as groups – at home, with friends, at work. When we make decisions about issues connected with the church, in what ways do we make such decisions differently than in other situations?

Story

Among the believers in the city of Antioch, some were teachers and prophets. One day, some of these were worshiping the Lord and fasting together. They were:

- Barnabas, a Levite from the island of Cyprus
- Simeon, called “the black man”
- Lucius, from Cyrene in North Africa
- Manaen, a childhood companion of king Herod Antipas
- Saul, also known as Paul, a Pharisee from the city of Tarsus

The Holy Spirit asked them to set Barnabas and Saul apart for a special work. After more fasting and prayer, these leaders in Antioch sent the two men out. Sent by the Holy Spirit, they traveled to Cyprus and then through part of what is today the country of Turkey. They preached the gospel in synagogues wherever they went and many Jews and converts to Judaism believed. But when the Jewish leaders opposed Paul and Barnabas, the two preachers pointed out the Lord's command, “I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.” The Gentiles welcomed this news. Many of them believed, and the message spread in every direction.

Finally Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch where they called the believers together to hear their report. They shared how the Lord had opened the door for Gentiles to believe. Then they stayed in Antioch for a long time.

While Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, some men from Judea arrived. They told the believers they all had to follow Jewish customs and the laws prescribed by Moses. Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them strongly. After some fierce arguments, the believers in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas with some local delegates, including a Gentile believer called Titus, to Jerusalem to talk with the elders and apostles there. In Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas reported all that the Lord had done, especially amongst the Gentiles.

The apostles and church elders met and discussed the issue for a long time. The apostle Peter reminded them how God had sent him to preach the good news to Gentiles, and how God had cleansed the Gentiles through their faith. In fact, he argued that even the Jews themselves had been unable to keep the Lord's commandments and should not place burdens on the Gentiles that they themselves as Jews could not carry.

Then Paul and Barnabas testified about how the Lord had confirmed their message among the Gentiles with signs and wonders.

Finally James, the brother of Jesus, spoke up. He pointed out that the Gentiles' coming to faith was in line with the ancient prophecies. He then pronounced the judgment that the Gentile believers should not be burdened with Jewish laws, except for the prohibitions against eating meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, and consuming blood by eating the meat of strangled animals. The leaders in Jerusalem also encouraged Paul to keep preaching to the Gentiles and not to forget the needs of the poor.

The elders then chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas, two church leaders and prophets from Jerusalem, to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The Jerusalem leaders sent a letter with them, explaining that the men who had told the believers in Antioch to follow Moses' law had not been authorized by the believers in Jerusalem. They also wrote that neither the Holy Spirit nor the Jerusalem leaders felt it right to put any further burdens on Gentile believers, beyond the prohibitions against eating meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, and consuming blood by eating the meat of strangled animals.

When this letter was read in Antioch, the believers there were overjoyed. Judas Barsabbas and

Silas stayed with them for a while, speaking extensively and encouraging them. After this they returned to Jerusalem with the blessing of the believers in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What do we know about the teachers and prophets in Antioch?
2. How did they select Barnabas and Saul to send out?
3. In his description of this journey, Luke – the writer of Acts – switches from using the name Saul to using the name Paul. What might have caused Luke to make this change?
4. How did Paul justify his new focus to ministering to Gentiles during their journey?
5. Who took part in the Jerusalem meeting? What were the different roles they played?
6. How might the decision-making processes first in Antioch and then in Jerusalem have been influenced by cultural factors? What other kinds of factors seem to have been at work?
7. What factors influenced the final decision of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem?
8. What happened in Antioch after the reply from Jerusalem arrived?

Story 4

God Spreads the Gospel Using Many Gifts

(Acts 18:1-28; I Corinthians 1: 10-17; 3:1-23)

Launching Thought

What are effective ways of strengthening a budding organization, a church, or business?

Let's discover how these dynamics may have been at work in the expanding early Church as we reflect on this story.

Story

As Paul traveled from city to city in Asia and Greece he increasingly met with trouble from the Jewish leaders. On his second missionary journey he spent some time in the city of Corinth in Achaia (now southern Greece.) A group of Jews there accused him of “persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to the Law.” From this point on, Paul addressed his preaching more and more to Gentiles. While in Corinth, he met a Jewish couple, Priscilla and Aquila, who were refugees from Rome, since Jews were being expelled from Italy by Caesar. Together they ran a tent-making business, as Paul and the couple already shared that trade. They also joined him in ministry. When Paul went back for a visit to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila came along.

While they were in Ephesus on this trip, Priscilla and Aquila discovered an eloquent and knowledgeable speaker sharing the scriptures in the synagogue. He was a Jew who came from Alexandria, Egypt, named Apollos. His preaching was well-grounded and full of enthusiasm, but he had never heard of a baptism beyond that of John the Baptist's. So, Priscilla and Aquila spent some time privately explaining further truths about Jesus the Messiah to Apollos, bringing him up to date. When the believers in Ephesus heard that Apollos had been considering making a trip to southern Greece, including Corinth, they wrote him a letter of introduction to the believers there. Apollos' ministry in Corinth proved valuable in that he was particularly adept at

publicly refuting the Jews. He was very good at explaining that Jesus was the promised Messiah on the basis of the Scriptures.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church he chides them for quarreling and creating divisions based on the human evangelist whom they preferred. Whether it was Paul or Apollos or Peter or some other church leader, all of the believers were saved only by Christ's death on the cross. Only Jesus was the pure and holy sacrifice that justifies them before God and makes them free. Any other boasting is useless. Paul, Apollos, and any others are merely servants of God, planting and watering the soil. But God alone causes the growth of his Church. The other team members simply work together because they belong to Christ. So it's no good bragging about resources, talents, or accomplishments. Paul reminds them, it all belongs to God.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Who were Priscilla and Aquila?
2. What struggles did Paul experience in Corinth?
3. Who was Apollos? Why was he so effective in Corinth? In this story, what did the different teachers in the early church do to develop trust and confidence in each other?
4. Why did the believers in Corinth begin to argue about which Christian leader they were following?
5. How can a focus on an earthly leader or special program limit our ability to discern what God is doing in His Church even today?
6. What kinds of things were happening to promote growth in the early Church as seen in this account?
7. What attributes of Christ's person or deeds become clearer in this account of the early church?

Story 5

Early Churches Move From Enthusiasm to Action

(1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 – 9; Philippians 4)

Launching Thought

Why do we help others?

Story

When Paul visited Jerusalem early on in his ministry, the Christian leaders in that city urged him to keep the needs of the poor believers there in mind. From then on, wherever he went, Paul asked the churches to remember the Jerusalem believers.

During Paul's second missionary journey, the Holy Spirit led him to the city of Philippi in Macedonia (now northern Greece). The new believers in Philippi soon generously supported Paul in his ministry. From Philippi, Paul continued to the city of Corinth in Achaia (now southern Greece), where he established a community of believers. Paul stayed with them for some time. They became enthusiastic about helping the poor brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. After Paul left Corinth, he went back to Antioch in Syria.

Later, Paul's third missionary journey also originated in Antioch. He went to Ephesus, where he stayed for about two years to help establish the church there. From Ephesus, he wrote to the Corinthians, reminding them about their desire to support the believers in Jerusalem. He suggested that they organize collections for such a gift during their regular meetings, and to set the money aside. Later they could choose some men to take the gift to Jerusalem, and he would give them letters of introduction to the church in Jerusalem. He even mentioned that he might go to Jerusalem himself and that the delegates from Corinth could accompany him.

About a year later, he wrote to the Corinthians again. He told them that he had been boasting to the churches in the region of Macedonia about the Corinthians' eagerness to send a gift to the

poor in Jerusalem. The Macedonian churches had responded enthusiastically to the Corinthians' reported generosity and had collected a gift for the believers in Jerusalem themselves. In the midst of persecution, the Macedonians lived wholeheartedly for the Lord. Their thankfulness for spiritual blessings had overflowed into rich generosity. They were poor, but they gave gladly and more than they could afford. Now Paul urged the Corinthians to finish up their own collection of a donation for the believers in Jerusalem. Then neither he nor they would be embarrassed after his boasting about them to the Macedonian churches.

Paul also urged the Corinthians to bear in mind that those who have plenty should give to those who do not, so that their possessions would be shared more equitably. He assured them that they did not have to give more than they could, but that they should give generously and joyfully, knowing that God would always provide for all their needs. Because of the Corinthians' gift, the believers in Jerusalem and elsewhere would affectionately pray for the Corinthian believers. They would give thanks and glory to God, who blessed the Corinthians and enabled them to be obedient to the gospel and to give generously.

Paul let the Corinthians know that he intended to come to Corinth again himself, but he sent Titus ahead to help them get the gift ready. Titus had already been to Corinth on an earlier trip. This time, Titus was accompanied by another brother who had been chosen by the churches to accompany him. After Paul himself arrived in Corinth, they took the gifts from Achaia and Macedonia to Jerusalem together. Doing this together guarded them against any criticism for the way they were handling this large sum of money. They wanted to be honorable before the Lord, but they also wanted everyone else to see that they were honorable.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Draw (or find) a map that shows the location of the various cities mentioned in this story. What means of communication and travel were available in those days?
2. Why did the Macedonians respond to the needs of Paul and the Jerusalem church with such enthusiasm and generosity?
3. Why did Paul urge the Corinthians to finish up their collection efforts?
4. What was the Antioch church's role?
5. Who took the gifts from Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem? Why?
6. What response to the gift did Paul expect from the believers in Jerusalem?

7. At which points in the story are personal relationships and trust especially important?
8. What were some of the overall effects of the need in Jerusalem on the early Church?
9. With which of these churches do you personally most identify? Why?
10. What were God's roles in this story?

Story 6

Paul Says Farewell to the Leaders of the Ephesian Church

Acts 20: 13-38

Launching Thought

Think of a time when you had to give up something to which you had devoted a lot of your time, energy and passion:

- How did you feel when you had to give it up, knowing you could not return to it again?
- What did you do to ensure that it would continue as well as possible? (Or what *would* you do, if this has not yet happened?)

Story

On his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul traveled through Asia Minor and then stayed in the city of Ephesus for over two years. There he preached the Good News daily, first in the synagogue and later in a public hall. From Ephesus Paul went further west to Macedonia and Greece for several months. After all this travel, Paul was eager to return to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost there.

On his way back to Jerusalem by ship, Paul came again near to Ephesus, but he decided not to visit the city. Instead, he sent word from the coast to the leaders of the Ephesian church, asking them to come see him before he sailed on. When the church leaders arrived to see Paul, he gave a moving message. He recounted his ministry with them and told them about his expectations for the future.

“My dear brothers from Ephesus, I have spoken the truth faithfully. I have proclaimed that both Jews and Gentiles must turn away from their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have suffered, but I have remained true to my calling to share this truth with you, too. In my devotion

to you, my life has been an example of self-sacrifice, humility, and honesty. I have worked with my own hands to cover my expenses and those of my companions. I have worked hard to help the poor also.

You leaders, watch over the believers whom God has entrusted to your care. Evil teachers will come among you like wolves. Even some of you who are listening to me at this moment will fall away and take selfish advantage of your positions in the church. Still, hold on to the truth I have preached, and you will receive the inheritance that God has reserved for his own beloved people. And now I am on my way to Jerusalem. I expect more suffering and imprisonment there. In fact, I will never see you dear friends from Ephesus again. But all of you now know the truth of Jesus Christ and I urge you, Stay true to what I have preached to you!”

Then Paul knelt with the leaders and prayed with them. They wept aloud and embraced him for the last time, knowing that they would never see each other again. It was a sad time of farewell for them all, as they accompanied Paul back to his ship.

Group Discussion Questions

1. How long had Paul spent in Ephesus earlier?
2. What did he accomplish there?
3. Why did Paul not go to Ephesus on his return trip to Jerusalem? What did he do instead?
4. What were the main points of Paul’s message to the Ephesian leaders?
5. Why did Paul emphasize his own behavior in his speech?
6. What was Paul's main concern for the Ephesian leaders?
7. What enabled Paul to entrust these leaders with the future?
8. As one of the Ephesian leaders, what would you want to do as a result of Paul's message?
9. As you consider this story, what was God doing through this special meeting of Paul with the Ephesian leaders at that time?

Conclusion

The stories we have heard and discussed provide a narrative foundation and concrete examples from the Bible for Christians who are engaged in funding relationships as facilitators, donors, or recipients. They underline the Bible's focus on relationships, community, and God's work in the world and in his church. They illustrate how personal relationships and trust can form a foundation of relationships and trust among believers and churches. They also describe the complex thoughts and emotions of both recipients and givers in cross-cultural relationships. The stories show how gratefulness for God's blessings overflows into generosity, and how generosity from some triggers praise to God from all. As a challenge to all of us, the stories say much about our relationships and service to each other and God, but they seem largely silent about accountability from the recipients to the donors for finances, activities, or impacts.

With each story and question set, we attempt to represent the biblical content accurately, and yet provide leeway for individual interpretation in areas that remain unclear. Much more could be said, and would need to be said, for an exhaustive treatment of a topic that has vexed the church over so many years. In the meantime, we trust that learners from around the world will profit from this short collection.

In closing, we would like to echo the prayer concluding the Lausanne Standards:

May the Lord bring this document to life
in conversations and relationships.
May his Spirit perfect us all,
making us more and more like him as we partner in mission.

APPENDIX:

The Lausanne Standards Affirmations & Agreements For Giving & Receiving Money In Mission

1. Purpose

The Lord frequently calls disciples in one place to contribute funds for ministry by disciples elsewhere. (Luke 8:1–3, Phil. 4:15–16) The biblical record of the early church testifies that such relationships are necessary in the Body of Christ, but also warns us that the possession and sharing of wealth is fraught with opportunities for misunderstanding and sin. (Acts 5:1–11, 6:1–7) These Standards provide guidance for dialogue that will lead us to connect with each other and go about God’s work in God’s way. They are designed to equip us to:

- Respect each other as fellow stewards of the gifts given to each of us as signs of the arriving Kingdom of God. (Ro. 12:3, 10)
- Honor and embrace God-given cultural differences, finding strength in them as interdependent members of the Body of Christ, dependent together on God. (Eph. 2:19–22)
- Communicate effectively with integrity, together discovering the Lord’s vision for our common task. (Jas. 3:17–18)
- Learn from each other, growing in flexibility, maturity, and unity in Christ as we listen to him together and watch him at work in our partnership. (1 Cor. 12:18–21)
- Learn to trust God and each other, and at the same time to be accountable to God and to each other, taking care to understand trust and accountability within each other’s cultural context. (2 Cor. 5:9–11)

When we do these things, especially across differences of culture and material wealth, we can hope to demonstrate the transforming, unifying power of the Holy Spirit, glorifying God’s name among the nations through our lives and deeds. (1 Peter 2:9–12)

2. How To Use The Standards

The Standards have been developed for stewards of God’s grace to use in the development of any partnership that will involve funding. The Standards describe a healthy process of mutual discovery that can lead to a deeper participation in the love and mission of Christ, especially in cross-cultural relationships.

- In many cultures a healthy relationship begins with friendship and fellowship, not with a formal discussion of business. Consider both partners’ expectations for getting acquainted before beginning this process.
- Each partner should examine the Standards and note items that are especially important to them as well as anything that raises questions or doubts.
- The partners then should compare their initial thoughts about the Standards. They may select a few Standards to discuss in depth or to emphasize in their own partnership agreement.

- They especially should discuss the “Definitions Seen Differently,” [hyperlink to be added] giving examples from their experience and trying to understand what the other means when they say they agree to these Standards.
- They should spend as much time as necessary going through the Standards point by point to see where they may be reading them differently.
- They may discuss some of the Standards again later, since as they work together they will usually discover that their partners had some expectations they were not aware of.

At each of the above steps the partners should keep in mind the goal of building mutual trust and mutual accountability.

3. Affirmations

1. Respect and Giftedness

WE AFFIRM we are equals in Christ. We are called to be wise and gracious stewards of the gifts God has given each of us, not dominating or ignoring the other. We are willing to grant, earn, and appreciate respect rather than withhold it from others or demand it for ourselves.

2. Cultural-Differences and Interdependency

WE AFFIRM that we need each other to fulfill our callings and accomplish our purposes. Some of our cultural differences may seem to divide us, especially differing attitudes toward tasks and goals. But deliberately and prayerfully working through those differences in Christ can bring us into healthy interdependence and enrich our understanding of our Creator.

3. Vision and Communication

WE AFFIRM that our God-given vision and calling is only part of God’s greater plan. He intends for each of us to cooperate with the other parts of Christ’s Body, not dominate, undermine, or manipulate them. So we are free to communicate freely and clearly without half-truths or hidden agendas.

4. Learning and Flexibility

WE AFFIRM that each partner will need to be flexible and have a learner’s attitude. We are not just learning to partner for the sake of efficient accomplishment of our vision, but learning to love each other and to submit to the lordship of Christ.

5. Trust and Accountability

WE AFFIRM that we are accountable to Christ and to each other. Under his lordship we nurture our trust and mutual accountability, which are the inseparable essentials of our relationship.

4. Agreements

In order to put these affirmations into practice we commit ourselves to the following:

1. Respect and Giftedness

Together we agree to respect each other’s God-given callings, resources, strengths, and influence. (1 Cor. 14:26–33)

1.1 We agree to discuss the gifts and abilities we believe God wants each of us to bring to our joint effort, and to thank God for our partner’s strengths.

1.2 We agree to seek ways to build and maintain respect, recognizing that this will be a process that may require the help of a trusted bicultural friend.

1.2.1 When misunderstandings occur we respectfully seek explanations from each other. We forgive quickly.

1.2.2 If we must criticize, we do it gently and in culturally appropriate ways.

1.2.3 If we are criticized, we try to hear the Lord’s wisdom in it. (Eph. 4:31–32)

1.3 We agree never to show disrespect by trying to manipulate our partners, that is, getting our way by pressuring them or misleading them.

1.3.1 As donors we do not force our agenda onto our partners, especially not any hidden agenda.

1.3.2 As project directors, we do not do manipulative things like padding a budget or exaggerating a project's results.

1.4 We agree that either of us is just as able as the other to be guided by God, and we reject the idea that either of us could go into the other's world and do their job better than they do. (Mk. 10:42–43)

1.5 We agree to try to understand our partners' sensitivities about being treated disrespectfully, since they and their friends may have scars from previous partnerships.

1.6 If our respect for a partner is damaged, we agree to make every effort to resolve the matter. If our efforts fail, we will respectfully end the partnership rather than continue to accept money from the partner or fund his or her activities.

2. Cultural-Differences and Interdependency

We agree to pursue intercultural partnerships that show the world how Jesus Christ unites all peoples and nations. We therefore commit to become more aware of our own cultural biases and to be patient, prayerful, and non-judgmental about the cultural biases of our partner. We desire to grow by the power of the Spirit into healthy interdependence in Christ. (Rev. 7:9, Eph. 4:3–6)

2.1 We agree to discuss whether to invite a trusted third party who knows both our cultures to facilitate our relationship. (Prov. 11:14)

2.2 We agree to discuss cultural perspectives and organizational styles whenever we realize they are affecting our working relationship.

2.2.1 We share stories of our experiences in partnership, successes and failures, believing this is one of the best ways to learn from each other.

2.3 We agree that before putting foreign funds into a project, we will try together to anticipate their possible negative effects as well as their desirable effects.

2.3.1 We explore with our partners where and how to draw the line between healthy interdependency and unhealthy dependency, drawing on the best current wisdom from scholars and practitioners of mission.

2.4 We agree that interpreting and applying these Standards requires humble cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation, not the imposition of either culture's assumptions. (Phil. 2:1–5)

2.5 We agree to frequently test our assumptions about our partners' working knowledge of our cultural situation and our knowledge of theirs, lest we assume too much or too little.

2.6 We agree that we do not own our partner and do not have to jealously protect our relationship; thus others are not feared as competitors but welcomed as fellow-servants of the Lord.

2.6.1 We never regard other members of the body of Christ as competitors, for that is a form of rebellion against the Head who unites us in his purpose. (Col. 1:15–20)

2.6.2 We do not excuse any forms of jealousy or covetousness in ourselves or overlook them in others; they are toxic to the body of Christ and the life of a Christian. (Jas. 4:1–3)

3. Vision and Communication

We agree to seek a clear understanding of how our joint activity fits into the larger calling of our partners. We agree to find ways of communicating that will carry our mutual vision through to the end.

3.1 We agree to discuss our mutual mission carefully, seeking the Spirit's clarity about what God is calling us to do together.

3.2 We agree to communicate in a kind, gracious manner, seeking to build up the other person. (Eph. 4:15–16)

3.2.1 We take our partner's expectations seriously as we decide how much time to invest in our communications with each other and how promptly we should respond.

3.2.2 We always try to anticipate the context in which a message will be received, lest we thoughtlessly hurt our partners.

3.2.3 When communicating with anyone else about our partnership, we protect our partner's security, reputation, and future ministry.

3.3 We agree to listen carefully to our partners, asking questions and seeking to understand both what they are saying and what they are implying. We assume the best about the other when communication is unclear or inadequate.

3.4 We agree to make neither unrealistic promises nor loose statements that our partner may easily interpret as promises even though we do not intend them that way.

3.4.1 We are specific about what each of us is agreeing to do and what we are expecting the other to do.

3.4.2 We are exceedingly careful about the translations of our commitments, and avoid vague statements like, "We will do what we can."

3.5 We agree to search for other explanations before we judge our partner guilty of breaking a promise. (Jas. 1:19–20)

3.6 As people with a vision that requires funding, we agree not to give up our vision in favor of a different one that a donor prefers.

3.7 As donors we agree not to use money to tempt anyone to go along with (or pretend to go along with) our vision and methods when he or she does not believe the Lord will use them effectively in the local situation.

4. Learning and Flexibility

We agree to learn together from the Lord and each other, continuously listening in prayer and remaining flexible in practice as he knits us together in his purpose or guides us to go our separate ways. (2 Cor. 4:5)

4.1 We agree to learn genuinely about each new partner, not prejudge them based on our experience with others.

4.2 We agree to pray faithfully and communicate well in order to build an environment where the partners feel safe enough to describe their difficulties, admit their mistakes and speak their minds, always with respect and without fear. (Jas. 5:16)

4.2.1 We ask each other what the other is sensing or hearing from God.

4.2.2 We learn from our working relationship by talking about our successes and failures, seeking culturally appropriate ways to preserve one another's honor and dignity.

4.3 We agree to be flexible in our working relationship, for rigidity does not lead to unity in Christ or reveal the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22–26)

4.3.1 If a project or funding setback occurs, we discuss it openly and seek ways to adapt to it together, aiming to bring God glory and improve our mutual trust.

4.4 We agree to attempt to understand and accommodate our partner's cultural preference for direct or indirect communication.

4.4.1 We discuss how our partners would normally handle sensitive matters, such as expressing criticism or receiving criticism. We recognize the value of calling on a trusted third party to prevent and handle conflict.

4.5 We agree to be guided in our actions by an attitude of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love, and recognize that our partners may express these qualities differently than we expect. (Col. 3:12–14)

4.6 We agree to help our partner understand any government regulations or organizational policies that require strict compliance.

5. Trust and Accountability

We agree to minister in a trustworthy manner and implement the kind of accountability that deepens trust.

5.1 We agree to do the extra work required to be seen as trustworthy in the eyes of our partner, which is often harder than being trustworthy in our own eyes or even the eyes of the Lord. (2 Cor. 8:21)

5.2 We agree to state clearly a mutually acceptable plan for ministry activity. We realize that if the plan is written, some cultures will take it more seriously than a spoken agreement and others will take it less seriously.

5.2.1 We make sure that the local organization's vision for the project is clear to both partners.

5.2.2 We state clear objectives, always acknowledging that God brings the increase.

5.2.3 We discuss how long we expect it will take to see the results desired from a ministry project.

5.3 We agree to be faithful to the activities of the ministry plan and, before we begin the ministry, to discuss the circumstances that could cause us to depart from the plan.

5.3.1 We work according to the project plan as closely as possible, discussing any possible changes with our partner before we make them.

5.3.2 As donors, we communicate promptly with our partner if funding capacity or timing has changed.

5.3.3 As donors, we express our concerns openly and honestly if funds appear to be used for unexpected purposes. We listen respectfully to our partner's explanations.

5.4 We agree to use the measurement of faithfulness to the Lord, his Word, and the partnership as the primary way to hold each other accountable. We are accountable for our responsibilities according to our plan, not for the results that only the Lord of the harvest can give. (1 Cor. 3:6–8)

5.4.1 We speak from a pure heart about the progress of the project, including updates on the measurements and timing in the project plan. We never attempt to mislead a partner.

5.4.2 We do not assume that a failed or unfruitful project means that a partner broke a promise. There may be other explanations beyond our partner's control.

5.5 We agree to state clearly a mutually acceptable plan for regular, adequate reports on the ministry activity.

5.5.1 We discuss at the beginning how the differences between "planning" cultures and "coping" cultures are likely to affect our reporting process. (See "Definitions Seen Differently" on LausanneStandards.org)

5.5.2 For example, we discuss how strictly or loosely we expect the deadlines and details of the reporting plan to be followed.

5.5.3 We discuss how to reconcile possible conflicts between our organizational calendars and timetables and our partner's.

5.5.4 We discuss how to handle any difference between the information donors need and the information their partners can readily provide.

5. Pledge

We make these affirmations and agreements, pledging ourselves to be guided by them on the path of integrity, to learn them humbly by experience, and to grow in love as Christ commanded. Then we believe that by God's grace our relationship will be sound, our service fruitful, our vision accomplished, and our God honored.

6. Prayer

May the Lord bring this document to life in conversations and relationships. May his Spirit perfect us all, making us more and more like him as we partner in mission. (Col. 1:27–28)