Session 06.01 - Partners in the Gospel

Lab: Partners in the Gospel
Date: October 6, 2026
Facilitator: Dan Randall

1. Purpose of today's session

Cognitive – the participants will have a better theological understanding of men and women partnering together. They will understand the strengths of weaknesses of working in partnership. This will not be a debate on complementary or egalitarian leadership.
Affective – the participants will gain enthusiasm for working in partnerships and will look forward to forming new teams together in their ministry situations.
Skill-based – the participants will know how partnerships are formed, what they need to put in place to start partnerships.

2. Starting point

What question, input or previous result did the group begin with?
What theological basis supports men and women working together across egalitarian and complementarian contexts?
What practical models demonstrate men and women partnering effectively in ministry organizations?
How do assumptions impede partnership, and what questions help leaders overcome them?
What shared vision and strategies advance co-leadership between men and women in different ministry contexts?

3. Key insights

Connie Main Duarte: Offers a theological case for men and women working together in ministry, grounded in the imago Dei, original partnership, equal spiritual gifts, and biblical examples. Emphasizes that both egalitarian and complementarian contexts should embrace collaboration to more fully reflect God's character.
Gabi Reed: Torchbearers International leader sharing practical experiences of co-serving with her husband Peter, advocating inclusive leadership tables that bring women and younger leaders into decision-making for creativity, connectedness, and richer outcomes. Highlights challenges around titles, support structures, and leadership development.

Marcel Macelaru: Newly appointed dean reflecting on hiring scenarios and the impact of embedded assumptions. Offers four guiding questions to challenge assumptions, foster vulnerability, promote real encounter, and build trust as the foundation for true partnership.
Dan Randall: UK-based leader urging a collective vision for men and women leading together. Uses a "beach ball" metaphor to unify diverse perspectives, models co-leadership with his wife Marina, and calls for practical strategies: identifying barriers, asking awkward questions, dreaming together, and "being the vision" through transparent practice.

Key Points

1. Theological grounding affirms men and women's equal dignity, authority, and gifts in ministry, reflecting the imago Dei and the Trinity's harmonious cooperation.
2. Original partnership implies interdependence; joint labor fulfills the cultural mandate and is restored in Christ (Galatians 3:28).
3. Spiritual gifts are not gendered; effective mission requires the complementary insights of both women and men.
4. Organizational inclusivity—inviting women and younger leaders into decision-making—produces greater creativity, connectedness, and out-of-the-box solutions.
5. Assumptions hinder partnership; growth requires vulnerability, authentic encounter, and trust-building rather than demanding agreement.
6. Shared vision should be co-created, capturing diverse facets while defining a collective "preferred future" for partnership.
7. Leaders must "be the vision" by modeling co-leadership, leveraging privilege, and removing barriers so others can step forward.

4. Challenges identified

- The time required to listen to one another. Assumptions are easier and quicker
- Our theology sometimes shuts us down from listening to others

5. Ideas and possible solutions

- Ask the four questions:
    - What am I assuming about the other?
    - How can I make myself vulnerable?
    - Why should I encounter the other?
    - Who am I becoming to earn trust?