

Planting Churches in Diverse Demographic Contexts 44

# enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers ■ Fall 2009

## Church Multiplication

Growing the Church  
Exponentially



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Church Planters  
for Success** 36



**Launching Large:  
The New Paradigm  
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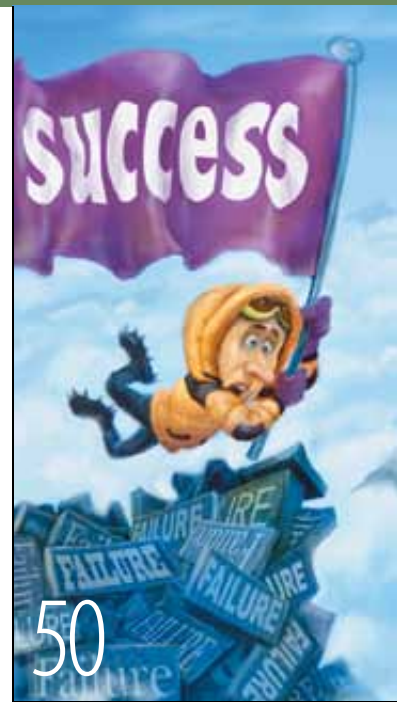
## Church Multiplication: Growing the Church Exponentially

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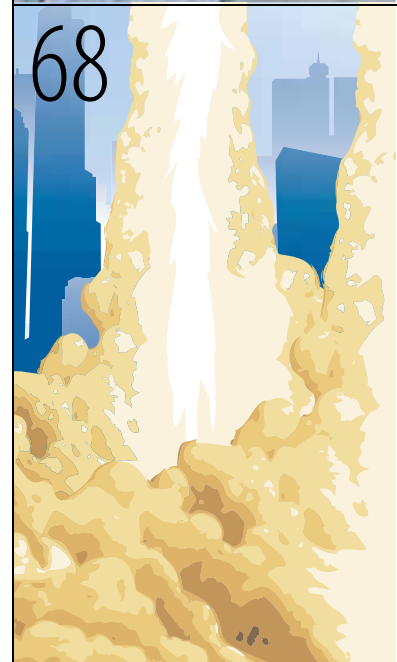


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### The Transformational Journey: Moving Churches From Stagnancy to Spiritual and Numerical Vitality

**Many churches are trapped and mired in plateau and decline.** They end up this way because they get comfortable where they are. Doing things half way or casually becomes the norm. Church services are business as usual. No thought is given to welcoming guests, toning down churchy language, breaking up fellowship huddles to engage visitors, following up newcomers, or intentionally ministering to those outside the church. If a church wants to grow beyond where it is, it needs to think and act like it is bigger than it is right now.

The transformational journey begins by reading practical and insightful articles by David T. Olson, Paul Borden, George W. Bullard, Jr., Steve Chandler, Kent J. Ingle, Aubrey Malphurs, Mel Ming, Reggie McNeal, Ed Stetzer, George O. Wood, and many others.

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- 77, 82 Dave Danielson
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**MANAGING YOUR MINISTRY**

# Same Place, Different Time Zones

**S**ome people are prompt, while others habitually rush in late or even forget to come to group gatherings. Both types of people live, work, and worship in the same place, yet seem to live in different time zones. These actions stem from personality and cultural differences. As a leader, you need to understand people's time perspectives and then make adjustments.

People-oriented individuals who enjoy social activity will stop to answer the phone, consider it rude to hang up, seldom review the calendar, and enjoy making an entrance. Goal-oriented people like to be on time if they believe meetings and events will start on time, but feel disrespected if you hold up starting a meeting for late arrivals. In some cultures, arriving on time shows respect while other cultures view being on time as inconsiderate. Some people are late because they are disorganized or work hours that interfere with meeting schedules.

Assess your group and decide how the majority view time. If most will be late, move the meeting by 15 minutes. E-mail and text message meeting reminders and agendas to encourage on-time arrival. Choose to place social event planning first to motivate late arrivals to be on time, or last to be sure they will be included. Use the first 15 minutes for socializing, greeting people, and networking. Plan items to discuss with the prompt individuals. As a caveat, serve refreshments before the meeting. When people who are usually late arrive on time, reward them with extra attention. Be on time as an example and to give respect to goal-oriented members.

**KAREN H. WHITING**, author and speaker

**JUST BEFORE THE OFFERING**

## What Difference Does My Giving Make?

A Two-Minute Stewardship Teaching

**I**n just a few moments, an usher will stand at the end of your row and you will have the opportunity to give. Maybe this question has rolled through your mind: *What difference does my giving make?* Sometimes, it is easy to see the difference it makes in the church, community, or world, but what difference does it make in my own life?

Here is one difference your giving makes. Your giving makes you more like God. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave." God is a giver, so when you give, you become more like Him. Someone said that you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. Your gift — flowing from a heart of love — makes you more like God.

Here's another difference giving makes in your own life: Your giving inoculates you against materialism. Today's culture tempts us to love things and use people, but giving injects your life with the antidote to the materialistic virus of our culture.

First Timothy 6:17, 18 says, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them . . . to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they . . . may take hold of the life that is truly life."

As you give today, remind yourself of the difference it makes — not just in your community — but also in your own life. It makes you more like God. And, it is a powerful remedy for the materialistic virus of our culture.

**GLENN REYNOLDS**, Hampton, Virginia



## UPWORDS

# TREASURE

**M**y hobby is searching flea markets and yard sales for rare and collectible books. Recently, among all the essentially worthless books at a local thrift store, I spied a rare, highly desirable, first edition. I snatched it up, hurried to the cash register, and paid 40 cents for a book I eventually sold for more than \$300. My knowledge, acquired over a number of years, allowed me to see value where no one else did.

Although we may not be aware of it, we probably meet people every day who feel like thrift-store items: worn out, discarded, and essentially worthless. You may feel like that. Even those whom God calls to minister are not immune to such feelings. Rejection by a spouse, a child, or a friend may diminish our perception of worth. Some, after years of failing to meet their own expectations, and frequently coming short of the expectations of others, have concluded that they are worth nothing.

According to the Bible, this is never true. God sees every person not only as a rare and valuable first-edition, but as a totally unique edition. When He created you, He gave you a never-to-be-duplicated expression of His likeness and image, making you infinitely and eternally valuable to Him. Deprecatory self-assessment or the critical under-estimation by others can never alter that value. You are, and always will be, God's precious treasure.

**JACK AIKEN**, Eagle River, Alaska

## RHYMES OF THE TIMES

## Life is Precious

Life is precious, sacred, blest  
from the womb to final rest.  
God is in a child's first breath,  
or a grandpa facing death.

Special needs autistic son.  
Crippled daughter who cannot run.  
Those impaired in speech or sight.  
Those whose hearing isn't right.

Those who can't recall their name.  
Those with damage to their brain.  
Those in prison, addicts too.  
Those who think their options few.

Each life matters. Each has worth.  
Everyone on "God's green earth."  
Life is precious, sacred, blest,  
from the womb to final rest.

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**,  
Mercer Island, Washington

## GROWING IN FAITH

## Lock 'Em Up, but Keep the Key

**I** will never forget the first time I toured the county jail with a pastor friend. I was working on an article about prison ministry, and he allowed me to accompany him for a day.

My perceptions about crime and criminals before I visited the jail could be categorized as hard-line. I was a young conservative and politically active. I had read all the articles and heard all the talk shows. I was sure criminals should be locked up for good, never to be seen again.

But after spending a day with a

chaplain, I came away with a different view. It's not that I want to open the jails and let murderers, rapists, thieves, and con artists roam the neighborhoods. I want to live in a society of law and order.

Still, seeing the hunger and desperation on the faces of young men who have lived life without hope gave me compassion. These men are my age. They look not much different from the average American. And yet they committed unspeakable crimes.

I thought of Paul's admonition to

humility, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Had a few circumstances changed, I could be dressed in a jumpsuit. I could be miles from my home. I could be on the hook for serious crimes.

The prison, I discovered, is where politics and faith split. Why? Because as Christians, we know the gospel has the power to change lives. For many inmates, incarceration is the last line, the bottom of the pit. Here, in their brokenness, many reach out to Jesus' offer of forgiveness and redemption.

I still think we should lock 'em up, but let's not throw away the key. In fact, let us make copies of that key and use them to open doors for the Word of God to bring transformation inside the walls of America's prisons. Because where others see despair, we see hope.

**DANIEL DARLING** is author of *Teen People of the Bible*, *Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure*. Visit <http://www.danieldarling.com>



THE CULTURE CHRONICLES

# Sellsumers: Christian Entrepreneurs on the Increase

With the current economic woes, and the ease of buying and selling services and products via the Internet, many people are becoming part-time entrepreneurs who enjoy finding novel ways to make money on the side. Trend watchers are calling these ordinary consumers *Sellsumers*. Sellsumers *make* money, instead of just spending it, and enjoy creating, participating, and contributing in unique ways.

Sellsumers are not just attracted by the possibility of boosting their income, but of controlling their own destiny or being their own boss, even if just for a few hours a week. Yet, pitfalls abound. One Christian entrepreneur describes it like this: "It seems that every day I become newly infatuated with the prospect of completing everything in one day," writes Jose Gomez, Jr, in an article titled "So Much To Do Before You Die."

"I am inundated with new business ideas, people I want to help, ministries I want to start, time I want to spend with my family, and so much more. Keeping my time and life balanced is the furthest thing from my mind as I kill myself to stay awake for as long as I possibly can. Sleeping, after all, is such a waste of a good life."

Small, niche-oriented businesses are proliferating, and any ministries related to home offices, start-ups, job seekers, or entrepreneurs will find a ready and growing audience hungry for help in balancing their priorities and keeping margin in their lives for God, family, friends, and healthy living.

SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California



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CHURCHNEXT

## Religious History and the Churching of America

American religious history is an important dimension in understanding the juncture in history in which we find ourselves. The postmodernist tendency is to dismiss the continuity that is present in the religious history of our nation. However, if we look at religious faith in the U.S. since 1776, several key principles emerge that are relevant to current efforts to multiple churches.

First, where religious affiliation is a matter of choice, the success of religious bodies depends on polity, clergy, doctrines, and evangelism techniques. To the extent that churches modernize their doctrines and embrace temporal values, they

inevitably decline in number and influence. The testimony of American religious history is that people tend to value religion on the basis of how costly it is to belong to a group; the more one must sacrifice to be in good standing, the more valuable the religious experience.

Also, recurring cycles of religious vibrancy are another part of American religious history. Newer churches tend to have a higher tension with the socio-cultural environment and inevitably tend to move toward having a lower tension with culture. Interestingly, the secularization of a church organization does not result in a decline in religious fervor of the cultural surroundings, but a decline in that particular church or denomination.

For more information, see Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776–2005: The Winner and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, Rutgers University Press, 2005.

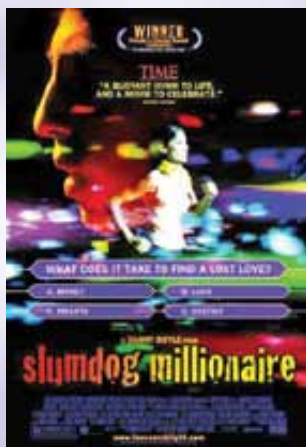
BYRON KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

WHAT IN THE WORLD

## SUFFERING IS NEVER WASTED

In the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, 18-year-old Jamal Malik finds himself in a rather enviable situation. This orphan kid from the slums of Mumbai is a contestant on the Indian version of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" Like the American show of the same name, the Indian game show rewards contestants with an increasing amount of money as they accurately answer questions of increasing difficulty.

As the movie (nominated for best



picture in the 2009 Academy Awards) begins, Jamal has correctly answered all the questions he has been asked

so far. Amazingly he finds himself just one correct answer away from winning a staggering 20 million rupees. But therein lies a dilemma. How could such a young kid raised in the garbage dumps without access to any formal

In each excruciating circumstance he learned something from which he would benefit years later.

education know what he presumes?

Between the taping of shows authorities question Jamal about how he could possibly know the answers to such difficult and obscure questions. They accuse him of cheating and demand he admit to dishonesty. When he insists on his innocence, they torture him.

As it turns out, Jamal learned the answers to the set of random questions he was posed simply by living life. A

series of tragic circumstances (including the death of his mother when he was a child) stole his childhood but rewarded him with knowledge the average person would not have. His suffering had not been for nothing. In each excruciating circumstance he learned something from which he would benefit years later.

It was the apostle Paul's belief that no hardship we are called to face is ever wasted. He learned that firsthand. Although shipwrecked, flogged repeatedly, nearly stoned to death, and jailed unjustly, Paul could speak of the indescribably joy he had in following the Lord Jesus. In Romans 8:28 he affirms that all things work together for good for those who belong to Christ.

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington



**LEADERLIFE**



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## The Dangerous Church

**E**d Stetzer, leading author and church planter, recently discussed what he calls the *dangerous church of 2010*. He suggests that in culture and in strategic activity, boldness will need to mark this church. Stetzer suggests that in 2010 the dangerous church will:

- have seized economic opportunity through greater efficiency; but also because people seek God more during bad economic times.
- address sexual brokenness by providing clear

biblical teaching, values, and guidelines where previous attempts have been reactionary and poorly framed.

- wrestle more vigorously with gender inclusion in leadership.
- face cultural and political intolerance.
- be moved beyond the post-seeker movement to less trendy strategies of reaching people with the claims of Christ.
- have regained confidence and clarity about the gospel through biblical discernment and greater leadership maturity.
- have rethought discipleship to counteract the devastation of the loss of discipleship priorities in the later part of the 20th century.
- have worked through denominational catharsis.
- participate in networks that are more than interacting with a homogenous group of church leaders whose preferences are similar and strategies are clones of each other.

For further information see: [www.churchrel-evance.com/ed-stetzer-on-the-dangerous-church-of-2010](http://www.churchrel-evance.com/ed-stetzer-on-the-dangerous-church-of-2010).

**BYRON KLAUS**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

**TECHNOLOGY & MINISTRY**

## iPhones Raising Eyebrows

**Do you judge people who use iPhones during church?** "Stuff Christians Like," a popular blog by Jon Acuff, recently hosted a lively discussion on this topic. Since Apple introduced the iPhone — named *Time* Magazine's "Invention of the Year" in 2007 — churchgoers are using the multimedia smart-phone during Sunday morning services more and more frequently.

People laud the increasingly popular iPhone for its easy-to-use touch screen, and its multiple uses which include functioning as a camera phone, an Internet device with local wi-fi connectivity, and a portable media player (equivalent to an iPod). One of the biggest selling points? The third-party applications, or "apps" — software you can download to your phone. Many apps are free, or as little as 99 cents each.

Apple advertises that they have 25,000 apps, and counting. Steve Kryger, a blogger who writes about technology and ministry on his Web site, *Communicate Jesus*, lists several apps he considers ministry essentials: "Bible," a tool that allows you to search and read the Bible in multiple

languages and translations; "Things," a to-do list system you can sync with your computer; and "Evernote," enabling you to capture information from the Internet, file it, and find it again when you need it. Other apps offer ministry helps in the areas of prayer, theology, apologetics, and Christian contemporary and worship music. So the churchgoer tapping on his iPhone during the sermon? Do not assume he is texting or playing Tetris. Instead, he just might be diligently taking notes, marking Bible passages, or texting the pastor a question.



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**SUSY FLORY**, Castro Valley, California



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**EMPTY SACKS**

## Spiritual Advantages of Poverty

**W**hy would God single out the poor for special attention over any other group? I used to wonder, *What makes the poor deserving of God's concern?* I received help on this issue from a writer named Monika Hellwig, who lists the following advantages to being poor:

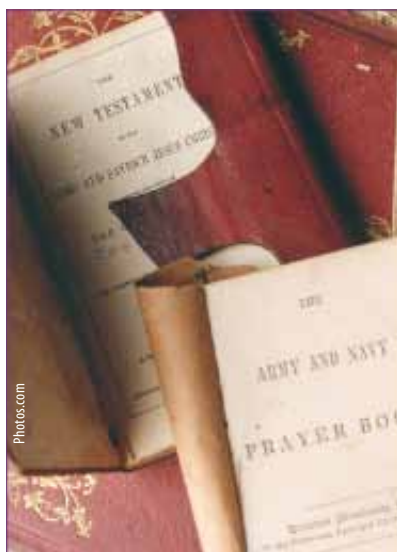
- 1. The poor** know they are in urgent need of redemption.
- 2. The poor** know not only their dependence on God and on powerful people, but also their interdependence with one another.
- 3. The poor** rest their security not on things, but on people.
- 4. The poor** have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and no exaggerated need of privacy.
- 5. The poor** expect little from competition and much from cooperation.
- 6. The poor** can distinguish between necessities and luxuries.
- 7. The poor** can wait, because they have acquired a kind of dogged patience.
- 8. The fears of the poor** are more realistic and less exaggerated because they already know that one can survive great suffering and want.
- 9. When the poor** have the gospel preached to them, it sounds like good news and not like a threat or scolding.
- 10. The poor** can respond to the call of the gospel with a certain abandonment and uncomplicated totality because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.

**PHILIP YANCEY**, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Zondervan, 2001, p.115)





## FASCINATING BIBLE FACTS



### Bible distribution during the U.S. Civil War

**T**he American Bible Society faced a formidable challenge in distributing Bibles during the Civil War. The society was committed to sending Bibles to battlefield soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Even though there were many obstacles, The American Bible Society sent some 3 million New Testaments and Bibles to Union and Confederate soldiers, escaped slaves, and freedmen, as well as civilians. After the war ended, the society issued this statement: "Providence has plainly ordained that we shall be one people, with one government, one civilization, one Bible."

### Gideon Bibles

**I**n 1898, John Nicholson sought a room at the Central Hotel in Boscobel, Wisconsin. He was told there were no vacancies but he could share a room with a stranger. That evening, Nicholson asked his roommate's permission to leave the lamp lit while he read his Bible. His roommate, Samuel Hill, agreed and asked Nicholson if he would read aloud as he too was a Christian man. The two became good friends and organized an association of Christian travelers, which they named the Gideons, after an Old Testament leader (Judges 6). Their purpose was to encourage regular Bible reading. In 1908, the Gideons expanded their mission from encouraging Bible reading to placing Bibles in hotels. The first gift was 25 copies of the King James Bible. It went to the Superior Hotel in Iron Mountain, Montana. Subsequently, the Gideons have placed nearly 50 million Bibles in hotel, motel, and hospital rooms in over 170 countries.

**VICTOR M. PARACHIN**, Tulsa, Oklahoma



## FINDING HOME

### National Adoption Day and Month Focuses on Foster Kids

**A**ccording to the U.S. Children's Bureau, data from all 50 states submitted in September 2008 shows 130,000 American kids in foster care are waiting for a family to adopt them.<sup>1</sup> November is National Adoption Month, and the Saturday before Thanksgiving, November 21, 2009, is National Adoption Day. Planners designated these events with a special emphasis on adopting children and teens from foster care.

To encourage Christian families in churches across America to consider giving foster kids a permanent home, Focus on the Family launched Orphan Care

Initiative in November 2008, providing information and resources at <http://www.icareaboutorphans.org>. According to Jim Daly, president and CEO of Focus on the Family — who credits the Christians who adopted him with causing his life to turn out much better than it started — there are 300,000 churches in America. If each congregation empowered one family to adopt a child, we would have more than enough homes for all these kids, Daly said.<sup>2</sup>

Other resources about the national day, month, and adoption in general include:

<http://www.nationaladoptionday.org>  
<http://national-adoption-month.adoption.com/>  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/foster/>  
<http://www.adoptioncouncil.org/>  
<http://christian.adoption.com/>  
<http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/>

The founder of Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers advocated for adoption of foster care kids.

*Finding Home: An Imperfect Path to Faith and Family*, by Jim Daly and Bob DeMoss, is Daly's story.

According to NationalAdoptionDay.org, more than 25,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day.<sup>3</sup>

#### NOTES

1. [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/trends.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends.htm) Accessed: 3/27/09
2. *Focus on the Family: Helping Families Thrive* letter from James D. Daly, November 2008.
3. <http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/2008/index.asp> Accessed: 3/30/09

**DIANNE E. BUTTS**, Pueblo, Colorado

## PREACHING WELL

### You Need a Preaching Calendar IF...

1. **You find yourself desperately scrambling** to put some thoughts together Saturday night so you will have something to say on Sunday.
2. **You are downloading other people's sermons** and trying to pass them off as your own.
3. **Your schedule does not allow you to do proper biblical exegesis.**
4. **Your sermons suffer from a lack of creativity** and diversity, thus . . .
5. **Your sermons have become boring** and predictable.
6. **You have learned that leading a church in a new direction will require more than just one sermon.**

**JEFF C. MAGRUDER, D.Min.**, Grand Prairie, Texas





**YOUTH**

# The Big Shift

**W**as it bittersweet to say *sayonara* to your seniors at the end of summer? For the past 6 years you prayed with them, listened to their problems, and celebrated as they grew spiritually. Maybe you have a lot of questions: How will they do in college? Will they connect with a college ministry or plug in to a new church? Or, most important: Is my job complete here?

Evan Hunter, author of the Youthworker.com article, "Preparation for the Journey," says, "College ministers' final consistent cry is for youth pastors and churches to remain connected to their students as they head off to school. Too often, seniors graduate and all the attention in the youth ministry immediately turns to the incoming freshman class, while the high school graduates stumble their way into college."

Let's call it the Big Shift — that awkward period between hitching a ride to college with Mom and Dad in the drivers seat with their stuff packed in the back, and the

moment your student becomes a bona fide adult. Are you staying in touch during that critical transition? If not, here are a few ideas to help:

- Play matchmaker. Do you know about a great college ministry, vibrant church, or on-fire small group in their new location? Introduce them through FaceBook or by phone. If the student is not too far away, meet for lunch to make this introduction.
- Invite your college freshman or sophomore to discuss real-life fun, challenges, and faith issues of college life with the younger teens in your youth group.
- Ask former students to serve in leadership positions during summer, New Years', Christmas, and spring or fall breaks.
- Most important, send stuff. This may seem archaic in this technological age, but there is nothing like a care package with chocolaty brownies or a note to say that you care. Invite the larger church body to help.

To read the Youthworker.com article, visit: <http://www.youthworker.com/resources/ministry/11552564/page4/Evan%20Hunter/> (accessed 5/4/2009).

**T. SUZANNE ELLER** is an author and youth sponsor at First Assembly of God, Muskogee, Oklahoma. Contact her at <http://realteenfaith.com>



**BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS**

## Where Are the Young Adults?

**T**he 2008 ARIS survey notes that the "no religious affiliation" category has risen to double-digit percentages. These statistics identify what church leaders have been experiencing for the past decade — the absence of young adults in regular worship.

In the September/October edition of *Circuit Rider*, noted church scholar Lyle Schaller poignantly states what church-planting agencies have found to be true: "The most important single argument for making new-church development a high priority is that this is the most effective means for reaching unchurched people."

Emerging Leadership Initiative ([www.elichurch-planting.com](http://www.elichurch-planting.com)) identifies four deficits in the U.S. church that contribute to the absence of young leaders being raised up to reach their generation:

- Lack of vision
- Lack of resources
- Lack of camaraderie
- Lack of community support

These realities reflect a simple truth: If boomer-aged leaders of the U.S. church do not equip and empower young leaders to reach their generation, the absence of young adults in regular worship will continue.

**RANDY WALLS, D.Min.**, director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



istockphoto

**THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN**

## A Righteous Brother

**A**s a twentysomething, John Wimber was the keyboardist and producer for *The Righteous Brothers* in the early sixties. But *righteous* was not the word most people used to describe John prior to the spring of 1963. In May of that year, Wimber's life was changed. John found new life in Christ in a Southern California Quaker meeting.

While music had been a passion of Wimber's from the time he was a kid, he felt the Lord was calling him to let go of something that claimed too big a hold on his life. Soon after trusting his life to Christ, John piled a lifetime worth of music manuscripts into a few cardboard boxes and drove with his wife, Carol, to the Yorba Linda dump. Together they buried the past and all it represented.

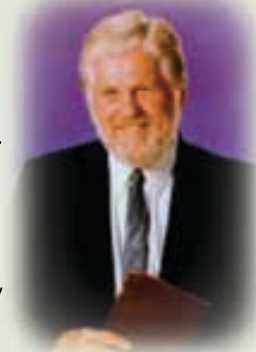
Within a short time John became a youth leader at the Yorba Linda Friends Church and hundreds found Christ through his ministry. In 1974, leaders at Fuller Evangelistic Association asked John to lead their church growth department. While there, he personally encountered the signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit. Christ's

love and the power of His Spirit became inseparable realities that brought about wholeness in his life.

By the late seventies John became pastor of the Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship and was entrusted as leader of the Vineyard movement, which has grown to more than 1,500 charismatic congregations worldwide. John invited congregants to appropriate the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a community of righteous brothers and sisters. Through John's influence, original worship songs began to mark Vineyard churches. God restored John's passion to write music. *Spirit Song*, written by John, is descriptive of his own faith journey.

*O let the Son of God enfold you  
With His Spirit and His love.  
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.  
O let Him have those things that hold you,  
And His Spirit like a dove  
Will descend upon your life  
And make you whole.*

Although John Wimber died on November 17, 1997, as the result of a brain injury sustained in a fall, his legacy lives on through his lyrics.



Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**, Mercer Island, Washington





## HEALTH NECESSITIES

### When Breast Cancer Comes to Your Congregation

**O**ctober is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (www.nbcam.org). According to the National Cancer Institute, 12.7 percent, or one in eight women, will learn they have breast cancer.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2006, I learned I had breast cancer. In spring 2008, I learned two friends had breast cancer. These thoughts from my experience might help you walk that journey with a woman in your congregation who has breast cancer.

1. My friend Lori\* immediately asked me questions. Robin\* said, "I don't need to know anything but Jesus." Take your queues from her.

2. My surgeon recommended I buy *Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book* and use the index to look up what pertained to me. I learned that information chases away fear.

3. If a woman had not talked about her reconstruction surgery 3 years earlier, I would not have understood that term when my doctor asked if I wanted it. With my mind reeling around the word *mastectomy*, my opportunity to say yes would have flown by without me realizing what I had missed. Make sure she knows another surgery can make her look normal with clothes on. Insurance companies are required to cover reconstruction.

4. I appreciated people visiting and expressing concern ... to a point. I got tired of pink everything and just wanted a conversation or time away from cancer.

5. Three years later I do not tell new friends about my cancer. I do not want them to think of me as a cancer survivor, but as the same motorcycle-riding wife and writer I was before.

**DIANNE E. BUTTS**, Pueblo, Colorado.

\*Not real names.

#### NOTE

1. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/probability-breast-cancer>

## THE CULTURE CHRONICLES

### Glitz and Flash

# BACKLASH

**B**lack is back. With the excesses of the past few years still haunting the economy, people are zipping up their pocketbooks and looking to live simply. "It's going to be trendy to dress dowdy," says trend forecaster David Wolfe, "with faded colors and melancholy looks." Many celebrities are adopting a hippie look, hair parted in the middle in a natural wavy style, and often an earthy headband around the forehead. The current back-to-the-basics fashion trends are an indication of the widespread desire to cut back on spending, while placing more value on relationships, community, and substantive things.

Toxic spending, or living above your means and buying things you do not really need or want, is out. Bartering, freecycling, do-it-yourself, and crafting are in.

"Lately, several people have even mentioned that the recession almost seems like a blessing because they are forced to readjust their values and make different choices," says Paige Newman of the Zandl Group, a research firm.

A group of friends in San Francisco took this idea to the extreme and formed The Compact. They agreed they would purchase nothing new for an entire calendar year. The rules were simple: barter, borrow, or buy secondhand for a year. Food, drink, and health necessities were excluded. The Compact has since gone international with thousands taking the vow. "It's really not that hard," says John Perry, The Compact's founding father, who has decided, along with his family, to compact indefinitely. In fact, it is a lot of fun."

**SUSY FLORY**, Castro Valley, California











Web-only articles



[www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org)

## A Starting Place for Discipleship Ministry

BY TIMOTHY L. TURNER

**This veteran church staff member and senior pastor** believes the key to discipleship ministry lies in the spiritual mentor's identity far more than in his or her methods. Turner cites Paul's exhortation to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 to follow the apostle's life example as opposed to any discipleship "program." "While Turner acknowledges the value of systematic discipleship principles, he suggests that an inner "systemic" change in the discipler can bring about the desired growth and change in the disciple.



## ENVISIONING THE INVISIBLE

BY DAVID ARNETT, D.Min.

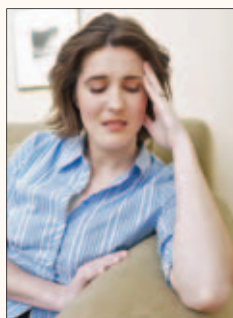
**A**rnett, a professor of church ministries at Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo., and lead pastor of the Carpenter's House Churches, challenges today's church planter to be culturally responsive, innovative and a team-leading communicator. Today's church planters must connect with society on-location and address people's spiritual need regardless of their physical circumstances. "Only the Holy Spirit can transform individuals from the inside out," Arnett insists. "This inward transformation is the first step to solving individual, familial, and societal problems."



## Mentoring Others

BY WAYNE LEE

Lee, vice president for Ministries Development at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla., describes the mentoring life as, first, a life of complete devotion to God and, second, a life completely devoted to sharing God's truth with others. "You cannot reproduce what you are not," Lee says. "You must become a disciple, and you must welcome others into your passionate relationship with Jesus Christ." Lee powerfully illustrates the mentoring principle with the step-by-step prayerful mentoring he offered a new convert.



## Hope in Transition

BY ROBYN LANGDON

What do you do when your husband resigns his staff position and you do not have another ministry position to go to? Often questions such as: *How are we going to pay our bills? What is going to happen to our home? Should we put it on the market? Should we wait and see? What should I do? How long, O Lord?* fill our minds. Yet God is faithful. Read how God helped this ministry family find a new place of service.



## Living With Integrity

BY WAYNE M. WARNER

**"Nowhere is the character crunch more critical than in today's church,"** says this writer and retired pastor. "With the average pastor overworked and understaffed, it becomes all too easy to let spiritual formation slide." Warner suggests three principles that solidly outline a pastor's integrity footprint: Live life to the fullest capability God offers, concentrate on ministry of the highest quality, and maintain a clear focus of one's calling, both in carrying out God's mission and in communicating that mission to others.



**Give us your take** on articles in this issue.

Visit the **EJ FORUM** at <http://forums.ag.org/enrichmentjournal>



## Does America's Weight Problem Start in the Pulpit?

**S**teve Reynolds believes so many Christians are overweight because so many pastors are overweight. And

he should know. Three years ago, the senior pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., tipped the scales at 340 pounds.

"We might preach against other things, but this is something we don't talk about much," Reynolds writes in *Bod4God: Four Keys to a Better Body*. "Most pastors, myself included, have a difficult time preaching on anything they're not practicing."

In first grade, Reynolds weighed 104 pounds, the result of unhealthy eating patterns that would plague him most of his adult life as well, such as never turning down a doughnut or bowl of ice cream. But at age 48, he took serious steps to bring his appetite under control, finally realizing he loved potlucks more than God. He lost more than 100 pounds.

In his first quarter century of preaching, Reynolds says he glossed over Scriptures dealing with physical health.

Now, Reynolds sees care for the body as a spiritual issue, citing Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself" as an example. He also refers to the apostle Paul's admonition in Romans 12:1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

Reynolds concedes that he could not lose weight on his own. His spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak, that is until Reynolds invited the Holy Spirit to be part of his mealtimes and exercise motivation. He notes that the Bible refers to the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). One day Christians will have to give account to God for how they treated their earthly tent, he says.

These days, instead of fattening foods,

Reynolds eats primarily nutrition bars, fruits, salads, green vegetables and grilled chicken. He also exercises regularly and drinks lots of water.

Reynolds had company in his doctrinal beliefs that while alcohol and tobacco use constituted sinful behavior, gluttony didn't. A 2006 Purdue University study found that Baptists have the highest obesity rates among Christian groups at 30 percent — followed by Pentecostals at 22 percent.

Last year, a Duke University survey found that 76 percent of clergy are either overweight or obese, compared to 61 percent of the general population. Duke research shows that pastors are likelier candidates for health problems related to weight due to a hectic schedule, job stress, sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, isolation, and depression.

Pastors expecting to lose weight should not expect miracles, Reynolds advises. A pound or two a week is normal if there is sensible eating and exercise. He also recommends that ministers try to buddy up with others to lose weight, or, failing that, at least have encouraging people around them.

"Your body is not for the gratification of self, but rather for the glorification of God," Reynolds writes.

## Mainline Clergy Continue Liberal Beliefs

society at large, according to a Clergy Voices survey published by Public Religion Research in Washington, D.C. The trend coincides with a more than four-decade membership slide that has cut the ratio of mainline members in half, to where they now comprise just 18 percent of the U.S. populace.

The largest mainline denominations are United Methodist (30 percent), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (15 percent), Presbyterian Church (USA) and American Baptists (each 10 percent), Episcopal (6 percent), and Disciples of Christ (2 percent). Only among American Baptists do a majority of clergy (two-thirds) consider themselves evangelical. Majorities in all seven faith groups disagree that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. That ranges from only 9 percent of Episcopalian clergy believing Scriptures are infallible to 48 percent of American Baptists.

Nearly half (48 percent) of mainstream Protestant ministers identify themselves as politically liberal,

**Continuing a pattern that emerged in the 1960s,** ministers in the seven largest mainline Protestant denominations are overwhelmingly more liberal than those in their pews as well as

compared to one in five mainline congregants. In fact, 69 percent of the clergy believe we need to take steps to ensure environmental protection, even if that results in higher prices or lost jobs. And 67 percent say the government should guarantee health insurance for all citizens, regardless of whether they must raise taxes to pay for it.

The issue of abortion causes a deep divide, with 79 percent of United Church of Christ and 73 percent of Episcopal clergy believing it should be legal in all or most instances, compared to 39 percent of United Methodist and 32 percent of American Baptist pastors. Overall, 51 percent of mainline ministers favor such abortion rights. Abortion is the only issue among more than a dozen political and social concerns where mainline clergy are not more liberal than society as a whole, according to the study. Most mainline clergy (52 percent) do not believe public school sex education programs should teach abstinence only until marriage.

There is a remarkable gender gap on the issue of allowing homosexual marriage. Just 27 percent of male clergy favor it while 58 percent of female clergy do. When researchers added civil unions to the mix of gay marriage, American Baptists are the only mainline group where a minority (48 percent) is not in favor. A whopping 91 percent of UCC clergy advocate gay marriage or civil unions. The average for all the religious groups is 65 percent.





## Does Tough Economy Boost Clergy Ranks?

**The sour economy may be just the ticket** to reverse a 2-year decline in the number of students attending the nation's seminaries.

From 1990 through 2006, overall enrollment at institutions accredited by the Pittsburgh-based Association of Theological Schools (ATS) increased every year. But head counts across the board dipped in 2007 and again in 2008, with enrollment falling to 72,034 in the 2008-09 academic year for the 214 member schools reporting.

Preliminary reports indicate that applications for 2009-10 are up.

"Generally, difficult economic times prompt people to consider seminary, either because they already have been thinking about it or because they have been laid off from a pastoral staff and now are convinced this is the time to go," ATS Executive Director Daniel O. Aleshire told *Leadership*.

"We are seeing strong interest in our doctoral programs and programs for cohort-based learning among pastors," says Byron Klaus, president of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Mo. AGTS, an ATS-accredited school, has an enrollment of 470.

In recent years, the ratio of seminary enrollees in their 30s and 40s — those changing careers — has been shrinking, according to Aleshire. Meanwhile, the number of those in their 20s who are choosing ministry as a first profession is increasing. So is the total for those in their 50s, people who often have finished a first career in education, government,

or military work and are looking for another profession before retiring. If there is an upswing in enrollment, Aleshire expects these age demographic trends to continue.

Seminary enrollment is declining from some mainline denominations, where shrinking church memberships have forced some ministers to become bivocational, Aleshire says. Sixty percent of ATS students now are enrolled in evangelical Protestant institutions.

"Religious communities that are sustaining growth at this time, like the Assemblies, are not the ones that have necessarily required seminary for ordination or pastoral service," Aleshire says. "There are a larger percentage of people in seminaries coming from denominations where it is more elective than required."

ATS data shows that 21 percent of first-year seminarians last year did not know what they would do with their degree. In addition, a substantial number of entering students, 46 percent, indicated they had not considered theological school until after college, graduate school, or at least 2 years' experience working.

**An increasing number in the ranks of** **Unchurched Americans** — a fraternity growing by about 1 million annually — are Bible-believing Christians, according to Julia Duin, author of *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What To Do About It*.

Unlike the latter half of the 20th century, when mainline Protestant congregations exhibited the most hemorrhaging, this decade has featured evangelical churches losing ground. Whether in megachurches or tiny parishes, many people believe going to a service is no longer a relevant experience, says Duin, a longtime newspaper religion reporter and editor whose book details how she has witnessed the trend of once-faithful adherents dropping out of church.

"I kept encountering people who had been converted back in the Jesus Movement days of the 1970s," writes Duin, who has a master's degree in religion. "Many said they were too disheartened to attend church now, knowing how vibrant it used to be and how dead it seems now."

Although younger adults are staying away in droves, Duin warns that a growing number of malcontents are pillars of the church: those who are spiritually mature, skilled in ministry, and at the height of their earning power.

"I don't think a lot of Christian leaders have any clue how many believers are simply opting out of organized religion today," Duin states. In larger churches, she found some congregants gave up because they found the pastor inaccessible. A layperson who must wait a month for an appointment, after dealing with a phalanx of secretaries and leaving multiple voice mail messages, becomes disheartened.



## Author: Involvement Key to Keeping Attendees

Research shows that loneliness is a chief reason people forsake assembling. While small groups are helpful in nurturing relationships, many attendees have little personal contact with anyone at church beyond an obligatory handshake at greeting time, Duin contends. Some would rather spend Sunday mornings in chat rooms on the Internet.

"Where the church holds the trump card is in human contact, as downloadable sermons are no substitute for friends," writes Duin, who attended an Assemblies of God church in the 1990s. "People want community."

That doesn't mean people are losing their faith, Duin says. Surveys show no decline in how often Christians pray and read the Bible. Yet, there is a disconnect between personal and institutional faith. While four of five Americans claim to be Christian, only one in five shows up in a pew on Sunday morning.

Although Duin says Pentecostals do a better than average job in providing meaningful ministry opportunities for females, most congregations are ignoring the gifting of women, especially single ones.

"I have been one of those unwanted women for years," Duin writes. "At my last church, the only avenues open to me were childcare, altar guild, or the greeters ministry. While I was the only layperson in the church who had a seminary degree, I was never asked to lead anything, not even the singles ministry."

For Pentecostals, Duin says many are disappointed that manifestations of the Holy Spirit no longer are as evident as before. Some churches, in an effort not to scare off newcomers, have in essence quenched the Holy Spirit in services, she says. ☺

# Introduction Vigorously Planting New Churches

By Gary R. Allen

G

eneral Superintendent George O. Wood, in his book, *Core Values: Serving Christ's Cause With Effectiveness and Excellence*, lists vigorously planting new churches as one of his five core values.<sup>1</sup>

This is not a shift in purpose or a new and novel idea. This value has been at the core of the Assemblies of God since its founding. If there has been any shift, it has been in vigorously planting new churches around the world while neglecting intentional church

planting in the United States.

The statistics about the American church can be disheartening. Many churches are declining in attendance and church multiplication efforts appear to be minimal. For the last few years the bright spot has been in our growing ethnic churches. We cannot, however, allow these factors to diminish our commitment to God's mandate for the Church.

## THE MANDATE

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This mandate comes directly from the Father through His Son to the Church. This has been the heart of God from the beginning and has not changed.

The Father's plan was not to simply rescue humanity from eternal destruction but to provide Jesus as Savior and establish His church. The church is the visible community of faith intended to nurture healthy disciples and facilitate a missional focus of planting churches in every community.

## THE MISSION

The mission differs from the mandate. The mandate tells us God's vision; the mission describes how God's vision will be carried out in our context.

In *Core Values*, Superintendent Wood states, "Church planting is going to be front and center in my service to this Fellowship. For some years the Church Planting Department has been a vital part of U.S. Missions. A new entity, our Church Multiplication Network, will come directly under my office. U.S. Missions will continue to select and support U.S. missionaries who are church planters, but everything else related to church planting is going to come directly under the general superintendent's office as a primary focus. If church planting is one of our strategic values and goals, it cannot be simply a department in a division. It must be front and center."<sup>2</sup>

This is a clear statement of what our general superintendent sees as priority and what the General Council is doing to intentionally resource church multiplication with people and finances.

## THE METHODS

Methods are the specific means we utilize to accomplish the mission within a specific context. Herein lays the challenge and opportunity:

The *challenge* is to look back and celebrate the milestones we have achieved without becoming unduly attached to paradigms that may not be effective in the now.

The *opportunity* is the exciting journey into uncharted waters with new paradigms while maintaining the integrity of God's mandate and a healthy appreciation for the past.

Sometimes we get stuck on methods. We equate methods with mandate and

mission. We see a method work well in a certain situation and in our enthusiasm attempt to duplicate it in our context.

The men of Issachar “understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). This is what we are about as Pentecostals; utilizing the discernment of the Holy Spirit to be most effective in our ministry.

Today’s men (and women) of

Issachar offer a wealth of faith and expertise. Scripture says, “Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). The longer a pastor lives, the more experience he acquires. With better education, mentoring, and coaching comes stronger, enthusiastic youth who are willing to take the challenges of church multiplication.

The purpose of this issue of

*Enrichment* journal is to reaffirm our mandate for church multiplication, ignite a fresh vision for establishing new churches, and provide practical resources to guide pastors in their endeavors. Our goal is that you understand your times and context and know what you should do.




**GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min.**, is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

#### NOTES

1. Wood, George O. *Core Values: Serving Christ's Cause with Effectiveness and Excellence*. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 2007, 51.
2. *Ibid.*, 55.

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# The 10 s in an Apostolic Church Plant from Acts 19

By George O. Wood

The Ephesus church plant, led by the apostle Paul, provides a helpful checklist as we assess our own efforts.



## In Acts 19, Luke chronicled

the most successful church plant in Christian history.

This church plant started with 12 spiritually dormant disciples and within 30 months grew to such proportion that over 25,000 citizens gathered riotously in an outdoor theater to protest the burgeoning church because the pagan economy was collapsing.

If we had a similar situation today, all the sin industries — the pornography and sex industry, the immoral television shows, the tobacco and alcohol purveyors (to name a few) — would likewise react vehemently against the rising tide of the gospel within our secular culture.

The Ephesus church plant, led by the apostle Paul, provides a helpful checklist as we assess our own efforts in bringing the gospel into the nearly 18,000 communities in America without an Assemblies of God church.

Here are 10 elements in Acts 19 for a church plant that shakes a city.

### TIMING

At the outset of the second missionary journey, Paul wanted to go to the Roman province of Asia, but the Holy Spirit kept him from doing this (Acts 16:6). The key city in Asia was Ephesus; it is understandable why Paul wanted to go there. His strategy lay in targeting the urban areas, and from these population hubs he would fling out new churches into the outlying regions.

He stopped briefly at Ephesus as he neared the end of his second journey and promised: “I will come back if it is God’s will” (Acts 18:21). Only in retrospect do we understand why the Holy Spirit prevented him from going earlier.

On the first missionary journey, he founded churches to the east of Ephesus; and, on the second journey, he established churches to the west. When he finally came to Ephesus on the third missionary journey, he was equal-distant from the churches on the east and west. He was perfectly positioned to keep letters and couriers going in both directions so these fledgling congregations could be strengthened and remain sound in doctrine and practice.

Additionally, the Spirit knew Paul needed to build up his church-planting muscles before he tackled Ephesus. He described having to fight wild beasts at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32). The city of Ephesus presented the greatest challenge faced heretofore. It was a city where east met west, where pagan worship crystallized in one of the seven wonders of the ancient world — the Temple of Diana.

Taking this city was no cakewalk, and the Spirit knew it. Thus, the Spirit had Paul wait until an opportune time.

We must likewise not simply plunge into a church plant without waiting on the Spirit and asking: “Is this the right time? Do we have a green light from the Holy Spirit? Is this the strategic moment of opportunity?”

### TEMPLATE

A template is a pattern or mold used as a guide to form a piece or product. There certainly is a template in what happened when Paul met up with the nominal 12 believers at Ephesus.

Here is the background. The great preacher/orator, Apollos, preceded Paul to Ephesus. Apollos was a learned Alexandrian Jew, thoroughly knowledgeable of Scripture, filled with great fervor, and taught accurately about Jesus. However, he knew only the baptism of John, so Priscilla and Aquila privately taught him more accurately. Apollos’ deficiency appears to be a lack of knowledge concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. That deficiency is reflected in the 12 believers Paul finds at Ephesus. They were probably converts of Apollos since they, too, only knew the baptism of John.

Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when [or after] you believed” (Acts 19:2)?

The question Paul asked is crucial to Pentecostal theology of Spirit baptism and empowerment. His question contains an aorist participle (having believed) and an aorist main verb (did you receive). In the Greek, when an aorist participle is used with an aorist main verb, the action described can be simultaneous or subsequent.

For example, Judas said, “I have sinned (aorist main verb), having betrayed (aorist participle) innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4, my translation). Clearly the sinning and the betraying are simultaneous events.

However, look at Matthew 22:25: “Having married (aorist participle), he died (aorist main verb)” (my translation). Clearly the marrying and the dying are sequential and not simultaneous.

In Acts, Luke describes Spirit baptism as sequential (Acts 2:4; 8:17; 9:17) to conversion, and simultaneous with conversion (Acts 10:44–48).

Clearly the Ephesian 12 were followers of Jesus inasmuch as they are called disciples. Paul does not treat them as pre-believers. He does want to know one thing: Did they either receive the Spirit when they believed or after they believed? Their answer is clear: “No” (Acts 19:2).

In his first meeting with them, Paul immediately knew where the problem lay — why the believing community in the teeming city of Ephesus only had 12 unproductive disciples.

Paul knew that, if the church at Ephesus was to grow



and have a powerful impact on the city, it had to start, as did the Jerusalem church, with the template of Spirit-baptized believers. He needed a fired-up core to begin with.

G. Campbell Morgan, even though he was not a Pentecostal, said in his commentary on Acts: “Apollos, a Jew, an Alexandrian, learned, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, careful in his teaching, bold in his utterance, could only take the people as far as he had come himself, not one yard beyond it, not one foot above it. ... Paul came, and not because he was a better man than Apollos, but because he had fuller knowledge, a fuller experience, he lifted these same 12 men to a high level.”

We need to recognize that church planting involves far more than having the right demographics, leadership, skill set, gift mix, finances, and planning. We need the Holy Spirit. Let us be like the apostle Paul who was not afraid to ask the starting nucleus of his church: “Having believed, did you received the Holy Spirit?” Non-Pentecostals do not ask that question. We must, if we are to see apostolic results.

Let us begin new churches with a core template of Spirit-filled believers.

## TEACHING

Paul’s method of ministry at Ephesus consisted of a content-based apologetic for the faith. He argued persuasively (Acts 19:8). In short, he knew the questions that needed answered, and he responded with knowledge and passion.

In some circles today, we do almost anything to reach people except present answers to head and heart questions.

Paul counseled Timothy, who later followed him as pastor at Ephesus: “Do your best (i.e., study) to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Peter seconds Paul: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

If we are going to establish solid church plants, we must also have content. Music, external phenomena, friendliness, advertising can attract. But discipleship must be at the core of our approach. We must avoid the danger of gaining an audience; we seek to transform the called-out ones, to form

**Church planting involves more than the right demographics, leadership, skill set, gift mix, finances, and planning. We need the Holy Spirit.**

the true and living church of Jesus.

At Ephesus, Paul answered questions. We know he taught in three locations: 3 months in the synagogue (Acts 19:8), 2 years in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:10), and continually from house to house (Acts 20:20).

I am especially interested in the hall of Tyrannus because I believe that detail puts in play something we may be tempted to neglect in our churches today — intensity in the discipleship process. You cannot bring about deep transformation in the lives of people by only having them for an hour or two on Saturday night or Sunday morning.

One of the variant readings for Acts 19:9 — the so-called Western text — gives the hours Paul taught in the hall of Tyrannus — 11 a.m.

to 4 p.m. Those hours were used for siesta in Ephesus, but Paul used the cultural downtime for training believers.

Add up the hours. Five hours a day for 2 years. Assume it went on 5 days a week, with 4 weeks off a year for vacation. The total amounts to 1,200 hours of training/teaching per year (5 hours daily x 5 days x 48 weeks = 1,200).

No wonder the gospel radiated out from Ephesus to the whole of the Roman Asian Province. Paul taught intensively and trained others to carry the gospel. He built a participatory church, not a church that simply came and watched a few do ministry.

Each of our churches should consider itself a Bible school that trains the laity continually for the work of evangelism. Every member learning, growing, witnessing, and assuming leadership must become our mantra.

## TEAM

All Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10). How? Through disciples. Paul had helpers, two of whom were Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22). His mentorees became elders (Acts 20:17). His vocational labor supported his own needs and those of his companions (Acts 20:34). Writing from Ephesus to the Corinthians, Paul named those in ministry with him: Sosthenes, Stephanas, Fortunatas, Achaicus (1 Corinthians 1:1; 16:17), Apollos (1 Corinthians 16:12; 2 Corinthians 8:18,19), Aquila and Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19), Titus (2 Corinthians 8:16,17).

In other words, Paul did not do church planting as a Lone Ranger. He mentored future leaders. He ministered alongside.



He did not try to do it alone.

To reach a city or community takes a team.

## OIL

Let no one kid you. Church planting (or any ministry) is hard work.

Paul evidently used the afternoons to teach in the hall of Tyrannus, and in the evenings he taught house to house. What was he doing in the mornings? Making tents. The “handkerchiefs and aprons” taken from his work place (Acts 19:12) were not puffs or clean white linens, but seat rags and work aprons. He reprises his work at Ephesus by saying he was a hard-working, successful small businessman (Acts 20:34,35).

Further, in a city where financial gain was the inspiration for all service of religion (silver shrines of Diana exported to the world), Paul declined to take the silver, gold, or apparel of any.

When Paul later describes his ministry at Ephesus, he does not focus on the miracles (which were many), but on the mundane. He never converted money into miracles. He invested in others, not himself.

I think of a pastor whose church engaged in a long day of food distribution and evangelism for the poor. When asked if he would do it again, he replied, “No. That is too much hard work.” No wonder his church is not growing.

Church planting (or any ministry) is not for those who want to be “at ease in Zion.”

## TEARS

You can work so hard in the ministry

you lose sensitivity to people. Paul worked and faced great pressures, yet he “served the Lord with great humility and with tears” (Acts 20:19). Let us not work so hard that we cease to be tenderhearted.

I look back on pastoral ministry, and my greatest satisfaction lies not in the structures we built, the numbers we gained, the increase of missions giving we experienced. Satisfaction comes from the lives that were touched.

When Paul said a final good-bye to the leadership of the Ephesian church, Luke records: “They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was

his statement that they would never see his face again” (Acts 20:37,38). You get that kind of depth in relationship and commitment only when you dearly and deeply love people.

I grieve when ministers are glad to leave a church, or a church is glad when its ministers leave. It tells me something was missing that is vital in a healthy and expanding church.

Let us be moved with compassion for people as we plant new churches.

## TINDER

Tinder is a flammable substance adaptable for use as kindling. Its purpose is to incite or inflame.

That certainly happened at Ephesus. People took sweat rags and aprons from Paul’s workshop

**Church planting (or any ministry) is not for those who want to be “at ease in Zion.”**

and laid them on the ill and demon possessed, and they were healed.

Paul had been doing all the right things — teaching, working, and evangelizing. But if the church is to go beyond normal growth there has to be the God-things.

Pastor Mung preached with my dad in the old days in Northwest China. When the persecution finally lifted somewhat, he restarted the church in 1983 with 30 old people. By the time he died in 2004 at the age of 96, the church numbered 15,000. Before he died, I asked him, “How did this happen?”

He answered, “Well, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever ... and we pray a lot.” He then described the miracles the Lord had done in that town.

May we similarly describe our church planting and revitalization growth in terms not of what we have done, but what the Lord has done (Acts 14:27).

The final match to the tinder at Ephesus came in the watershed moment of the seven occultists — the sons of Sceva — who experienced the name of Jesus exploding in their hands like a wrongly held weapon (Acts 19:13–20).

Look at the anomaly. This was the most effective miracle of Paul’s nearly 3 years at Ephesus, and he did not have a thing to do with it. But the effect was tremendous — both on the general public who were “seized with fear” and upon believers who burned the occultic paraphernalia they had kept [after conversion].

When the power of the Holy Spirit hits a church, we find that a lot of believers have retained in their possession the “dark works” of the enemy. If the people in our churches would bring their sinful videos, DVDs, magazines, books, Internet logs, bottles, and illegal drugs, we would have quite a bonfire as well. They keep such

because there is no compelling demonstration of the Spirit’s power in the church.

Exponential growth in church planting occurs whenever there is tinder — an event or series of events that only the Spirit can orchestrate, an occasion or occasions that catapult the church into a new level of growth and influence.

## THORN

The thorn is the part we would rather do without. But any church planting will have it. Writing from Ephesus at the end of his third missionary journey, Paul told the Corinthian church about the thorn in his own life that despite prayer had not been removed.

Paul never tells what the thorn is, and it is good he did not. No one of us has the same thorn.

I do not know of any effective ministry or church plant where there has not been suffering of some kind on the part of leadership.

I wish I could counsel church planters that it would all be a bed of roses, but there will be hardship and difficulty that is not taken away, despite our prayers and best efforts.

We must not let our thorn defeat our mission. We can have the same testimony as Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

## TRANSPARENCY

Paul told the Ephesian elders in his good-bye address: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia” (Acts 20:18).

What a statement. No missing gaps in his life, no time-outs for seasons of sin, laziness, or self-indulgence. He was on duty the whole time. He was never a fair-weather church planter or pastor.

Writing from Ephesus, he told the Corinthians that he never wore a mask (2 Corinthians 3:13–18). There was no difference between his ministerial *persona* and his *person*; or, as we would say, between his conduct in the pulpit and in private.

Church planting will only be as effective as the church planters are authentic. Our task is to continually live in such a way that we can say to others, “Follow me, as I follow Christ” (see 2 Thessalonians 3:7,9).

## THREAT

Church planters are also aware of dangers. Paul certainly was. He warned the Ephesian elders of two threats to the well-being of the church: (1) wolves coming in from the outside, and (2) the emergence of those from inside who would distort the truth to draw away people after them (Acts 20:28–30).

It falls  
on godly  
leaders  
to look  
out for the  
well-  
being  
of the  
church.





Wolves bring havoc. They tear up people. The true nature of wolves and false teachers is to cause division due to their insatiable quest for self-promotion. They are more interested in building their own church, their own nest — than in building Christ's church.

So, it falls on godly leaders to look out for the well-being of the church, which Christ bought with His own blood.

Before Paul tells leaders to watch over the flock, he directs them to "watch over yourselves" (Acts 20:28). The watch is personal and ministry-oriented. We must watch over ourselves before we watch over others. You are an overseer, not a big boss. We are protectors and defenders of Christ's people, remembering the high cost of the possession we now guard.

### CONCLUSION

Dynamic church planting and growth occur when these 10 apostolic Ts are present:

- timing
- template
- teaching

- team
- toil
- tears
- tinder
- thorn
- transparency
- threat

Look at the result when these elements are present in church planting. "The word of the Lord spread rapidly and grew in power" (Acts 19:20).

May the Lord give us that kind of result in the unreached communities of America as we vigorously plant new churches and revitalize existing ones. 🙏



**GEORGE O. WOOD, D.Th.P.**, general superintendent of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri



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# The Survival of the Species

## Why the Multiplication of Churches is Critical for Your Denomination

**O**ur friend Ruth knocked on our door last spring and exclaimed in an excited voice, “Do you see what I see across the street?”

My wife Shelly and I dash outside and scan the trees in the nature preserve across the road. Not more than 100 yards away is a bald eagle sitting on the top branch of a tree. We have seen eagles in Alaska, Canada, and northern Minnesota, but never in our Minneapolis neighborhood. The eagle is huge, with broad shoulders and regal bearing. It peers down at us and seems to say, “I am the most magnificent bird in America.”

Before the first European settlers arrived, bald eagles in the United States may have numbered half a million. As settlers expanded westward, they destroyed the eagles’ natural habitat, causing the population of bald eagles to decline sharply. In 1940, the United States Congress passed the Bald Eagle Act, reducing harassment by humans, and eagle populations began to recover. However, a few years later, DDT and other pesticides began to make their way up the food chain, causing eagles to lay eggs with paper-thin shells. Those eggs failed to hatch and the numbers of eagles plummeted.

**Extinction.** The word creates a feeling of deep sadness, of tragic loss. Why does extinction occur? Extinction happens most often when a species faces a crisis or a change in its environment and is unable to adapt. As a species begins to be threatened, these stresses produce a low reproduction rate. The survival of the species comes down to simple math: the number of births must outnumber the number of deaths, or the species will be in danger of extinction.

The American church lives in an ecosystem and in its own right we can call it a species. We can evaluate the long-term health of any denomination by two simple standards: the

number of new churches born each year that survive and prosper; and the vigor and reproductive rate of its established or *adult* churches.

In the American church today, some denominations are thriving, while others are on the road to extinction. We mark declining denominations by striking similarities — their members are getting older, their congregations are declining in size, and they start few new churches. On the other hand, thriving denominations have a much younger demographic. Their churches are full of children, teenagers, and young adults, with many people becoming new Christians each year. In addition, growing denominations start at least three new churches per 100 existing churches each year.

To adequately replace their closed churches and to keep up with population growth, we need

to attain three standards: 1) These new churches need to be launched with at least 75 in attendance; 2) They should continue to grow yearly; 3) At least 75 percent should survive. In short, thriving denominations create life-giving systems, while declining denominations drift into decay and diminishment. Eventually these declining denominations will become extinct unless they dramatically change their values and behaviors.

Even numerically growing denominations face these challenges. From 2003–07, the Assemblies of God started an average of 290 new churches each year (2.4 new churches for every 100 churches, less than the above-mentioned standard). During the same period, they closed 244 churches each year, creating a yearly gain of only 46 churches. However, for the Assemblies of God to keep up with population growth, it needed a net gain of 124 churches each year. As a result, Assemblies of God worship attendance did not keep up with population growth during this period. If it does not plant at least 80 more churches each year, its attendance share will continue to decline.

**By David T. Olson**





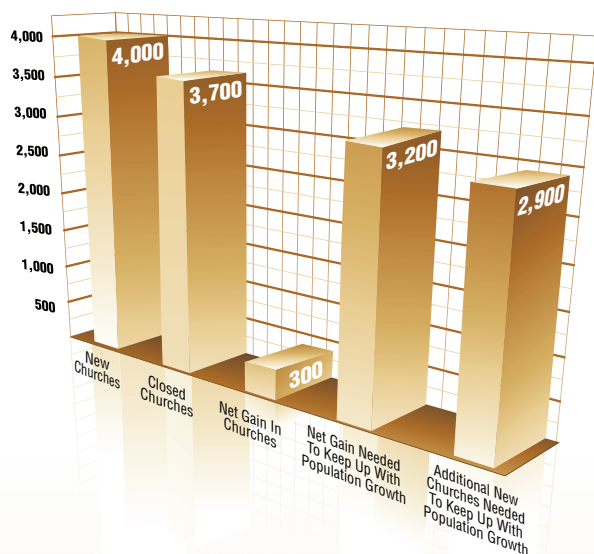


### DO WE NEED NEW CHURCHES?

As I speak throughout the country, I find that most Christians do not understand why we need to plant new churches. They ask: Why do we need more churches? Don't we have enough already? Wouldn't it be better to fill up the empty churches we already have?

There is a simple reason why we need new churches. Established churches (those over 20 years old) decline by 2 percent per year.

#### YEARLY CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CHURCHES



Every year, established evangelical congregations decline by over 1/2 million people in attendance, while the U.S. population grows by 3 million people each year. Without new churches, the percentage of the United States population that attends church will decline by 30 percent in the next 10 years. Without new churches, Christ's church is destined to become extinct, while the population continues to surge.

While on vacation in New England last year, one evening our family visited a Shaker village in Canterbury, New Hampshire. They had closed the village for the day, but we walked its grounds and viewed some of the buildings that remained open. We visited the carpenter shop where the Shakers fashioned their simple furniture, peeked into the windows of the creamery and schoolhouse, and admired the large, well-kept flower and vegetable gardens.

The Shakers were a communal, utopian religious group known for their unusual, unorthodox beliefs and worship practices. Yet Shaker culture has left behind the lasting legacy of a strong work ethic, simple timeless crafts, and lovely spirituals and ballads. At their height, there were over 6,000 Shakers living in 19 communities.

Unfortunately, the group adopted two strategies that guaranteed their eventual demise. The first was their practice of a

celibate lifestyle. They officially adopted their second lethal strategy in 1965, allowing no new members into their group. As a result, there are only three Shakers left in the United States today — two brothers and a sister — living their remaining years in the Sabbath day Shaker Community in Maine. With their deaths, the more than 200-year-old Shaker denomination will cease to exist.

Could this happen to your church? Could this happen to your denomination? I find that most Christian leaders do not understand how critical new churches are to the health of the American church.

While most established churches can recite their proud history, few of their present members ever consider the fact their congregation was once a new church. The thought of church planting is usually foreign to them, even though their own place of worship exists because pioneering Christians founded it.

How was your church started? What vision, passion, and need caused a small group to begin the adventure of faith that became your church? What are the stories of your church's pioneers? Why did they begin their new church? I have asked these questions to hundreds of established churches. Every time their answer reveals a fascinating story of the founders' love for God, concern for their neighbors, and willingness to venture outside their safety zone. Usually they were ordinary, faith-filled people driven by an extraordinary dream from God.

To help the congregation further appreciate what God has done in their midst and to comprehend the critical role of church planting, I ask another set of questions:

- How many people have become Christians throughout the life of your church?
- How many children and teenagers has your church ministered to since it began?
- How many baptisms, marriages, and funerals have been performed?
- How many broken hearts, shattered lives, and divided families have been mended through your church's ministries?

Congregations have never considered the scope of these questions and are unsure how to proceed. I ask the group to guess how many people became Christians each year throughout their history. After hearing a number of suggestions, we settle on a yearly estimate. Then on the whiteboard, we multiply that number times the age of the church. It always produces an impressively large number. We multiply the cumulative numbers for children and teenagers ministered to by the church, and the number of baptisms, marriages, and funerals, by the age of the church. I write them on the whiteboard. By this time, the light in their eyes begins to flicker on as if to say, "Our church *has had* an incredible influence for Christ over the years." Then I go back to the



first question: "How was your church started and why?" Then they begin to make the connection. All of this ministry fruit occurred because visionary people stepped out in faith and founded their church. Without the founding of their church, the loss to the kingdom of God would be enormous. One final question remains for me to ask: "Have you ever considered that your church could replicate your own incredible story by planting a new church?"

## FACTS OF NEW CHURCHES

New churches are critical to the health and vitality of the

American church in general and your denomination in particular. Thriving denominations stimulate vitality by making planting new churches a priority. So what are the basic facts we need to consider about the present state of church planting?

1. 4,000 new churches are started every year in the United States. Unfortunately, 3,700 churches close each year, producing a net gain of only 300 churches per year. To keep up with population growth, an additional 2,900 new churches need to be started each year.

2. 75 percent of new churches survive the first 10 years.

## The Top 10 Reasons To Plant Churches



**10. New churches lower the age profile of the American church, increase its multiethnicity, and better position the whole church for future changes.**

**9. New churches provide synergistic benefits to established churches.**

Research shows that denominations that plant many strong churches have healthier established churches that are growing than those who plant few churches.

**8. The continued growth of new churches will extend up to 40 years after their start.** The growth that occurs in years 10 to 40 is critical for creating a strong base of churches for the future. The mainline denominations have lost the influence of a complete generation of new churches.

**7. New churches provide a channel to express the energy and ideas of passionate,**

**innovative young pastors.** Church planting encourages the development of the expansionist gifts of ministry and leadership. Denominations that plant few churches unintentionally focus on training pastors in stabilizing gifts. A denomination needs both stabilizing and expansionist gifts to be both healthy and growing.

**6. New churches are the research and development unit of God's**

**kingdom.** New churches create most of the current models and visions for healthy church life. Healthy cultural adaptations and theological vitality occur more often in a denomination that excels at church planting because the ferment of new ideas and ministry solutions is more robust.

**5. New churches are the test laboratories for lay leadership development.**

Because top lay leadership positions are usually already filled in the parent church, new churches provide a new group of emerging lay leaders the opportunity to grow and develop as primary leaders. In new church plants that do well, most lay members report that being part of the beginning of the new church was one of the defining spiritual events in their life.

**4. New churches are historically the best method for reaching each emerging new generation.** While many

established churches have the ability to connect with the younger cohort, each generation also seems to need their own new type of churches that speak the gospel with their own cultural values and communication style.

**3. New churches are the only truly effective means to reach the growing ethnic populations coming to America.**

Every people group needs to hear the gospel in a way that makes sense to their culture. It is difficult for established churches to become diverse. Church planting can effectively create both ethnic-specific and multiethnic congregations.

**2. New churches are more effective than established churches at conversion growth.** Studies show new churches have three to four times the conversion rate per attendee than do established churches.

**1. Because the large majority of Americans do not attend church, many more new churches are needed.** In 2007, 17 percent of Americans attended church on any given Sunday. Seventy-seven percent of Americans do not have a consistent connection with an orthodox Christian church. The best and most effective way for the Christian church to keep up with population growth is to start new churches.

— DAVID T. OLSON



## The Survival of the Species

Unfortunately, the majority of them remain small and have limited impact.

3. The average new church has 55 in attendance after one year, with the median attendance of 36.

4. The yearly growth rate of new churches for their second to seventh year is 7 percent per year. New churches see strong growth in their first decade, compared to established churches, which decline by 2 percent each year.

Two methods of church reproduction divide evangelical denominations into two distinct camps. As is true in the biological world, there are reptilian denominations and mammalian denominations.

Some denominations start new churches in the same manner as reptiles reproduce: they lay as many "eggs" (churches) as possible, but they essentially leave them on their own and say, "Good luck, God bless, we hope you survive." Just as most reptile babies perish, most of these new churches do not survive to reproducing adulthood. As our culture becomes more challenging for Christian ministry, reptilian church planting will become less and less fruitful.

Other denominations replicate the reproduction of mammals. They birth a smaller number of offspring, but they create processes that help as many of their new churches survive and develop into healthy, reproductive churches. Mammalian denominations invest energy and resources in leadership development, training, coaching, and securing parenting churches. The ideal goal is to start as many new churches as possible, while maintaining high standards for each church-planting project (this ideal is called turbocharged mammalian church planting).

These new churches unite human and divine efforts to build strong congregations. The Spirit of God calls the planter, confirms that call through the larger church, inspires the parent church to plant, provides the vision, and creates the people flow. Church planters and their lay leaders follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to do the work of the ministry by gathering people and building them together into a new church.

Many churches and denominations have effectively planted new churches over the last 20 years and have created a large base of research on effective church planting. How can your denomination learn from this information to start more and stronger churches? The research shows that the church planter is the most critical component. Demographics, money, strategy, and buildings are secondary. The church planter needs to be a *godly and gifted pastor, one who knows how to gather and lead people*. These planters have a call from God to start a church, but an extensive screening procedure helps the larger church confirm that call.

The most successful planting denominations use assessment centers to process who should plant a church. These are multiday intensive events for church-planting candidates and their spouses, where they can clarify their call while trained pastors, planters, and lay leaders evaluate their strengths and growth areas.

Research also indicates that a second critical factor in a movement of new churches is *parenting churches*. This means that an established church takes a major role in helping start a new congregation, known as a daughter church. They provide funding and pledge a tithe of their attendees. While the first instinct of a church is to plant far away from their location, parenting is most fruitful when the church plants a new church within 5 to 10 miles of its own facility. Territorialism, defined as the fear that other churches will intrude on their God-given geographic birthright, is the primary inhibitor to a church deciding to parent. However, research shows that this is an unfounded fear and does not bring about the blessing of God.

Studies show that when a church plants a daughter church, both the new church and the parent church benefit. As an example from horticulture, when growing perennials, the more you divide them, the quicker they will grow. Congregations that parent new churches grow faster than congregations that do not parent. This is because the traits that cause a church to plant a new church (such as a desire to evangelize

and minister to their community) are the same traits that will cause the parent church to grow.

The third building block for a new church is an *effective launch process and training program*. The



### Pontius' Puddle

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THE PASTOR'S SERMONS ARE LOUSY.  
THE SONGLEADER IS SLUGGISH.  
OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE  
DULL AS POND SLUDGE. AND, THE  
YOUTH MINISTER IS TOO OFF-THE-WALL!



ALL MEMBERS ARE GIVEN  
A GIFT. MINE HAPPENS TO BE  
POINTING OUT WHAT'S WRONG  
WITH EVERYBODY ELSE'S!





most common launch process used in recent years is the Four Stage Launch Process. This process allows new churches to grow and develop in a sequential manner, gradually building on a foundation of strength. Four stages help the new church develop from birth to a critical mass of people, with each lasting 4 months. Those four stages are: 1) Gathering the launch team; 2) Monthly preview services, to add to and strengthen the launch team; 3) The beginning of weekly worship, with an emphasis on ministry development; 4) Launch stage, where the new church is ready to do expansive ministry in its community. The goal is that when the new church completes the fourth stage, they will have at least 75 to 100 worshipers each Sunday and then continue to build on that solid foundation. Thousands of new churches from multiple denominations have used this process in the first 12 to 16 months to establish a strong foundation and a vibrant ministry.

The final building block is *coaching*. New churches do best when a trained coach meets monthly with the church planter, talking through challenges, keeping the focus clear, and finding ways to produce a healthy and growing ministry. My research shows that when a church planter has a trained and gifted coach, the new church grows twice as fast.

### ETHNICITY AND SYNERGY

Church planting has changed considerably since the 1990s. As the oldest of the baby boomer generation approach retirement, the emerging generation and the growing non-Anglo populations require new and creative church-planting models.

Multiethnicity is the most important and challenging growth edge in church planting. Over the last 15 years, many denominations have been actively engaged in planting new churches in a variety of ethnic communities. Because the future will bring increased diversity in America, planting more first-generation (new immigrant) and second-generation (the English-speaking children of immigrants) churches will be crucial. Many denominations are also beginning to plant intentional multiethnic (made up of two or more ethnicities) congregations. These convey a crucial image to our culture that the gospel breaks down the barriers of race, class, and gender (Galatians 3:28) — issues that are important issues to younger Christians for both theological and practical reasons.

Growing denominations also understand the synergy created between new churches and established churches. Research shows that denominations that plant many strong churches have a higher percentage of healthier, growing, established churches than those who plant few churches. Just as children create vitality and energy within families and society, so new churches create vitality and energy for the whole church.

Church plants pioneer many of the best ministry ideas. New churches are a great development setting for young pastors and underutilized lay leaders. Typically, new churches have three to four times the conversion rate of established churches. These churches also allow the younger generation to speak the gospel with their own cultural values and communication style.

Established churches enrich new churches as well by teaching them the importance of history, tradition, and stability within a church. They often are excellent models to young churches of the value of multigenerational ministry, patience, love, and an interconnected community.

### REFLECTION

What happened to the tailspin trajectory of the bald eagle? On July 4, 1976, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially listed the bald eagle as a national endangered species. Because of the banning of DDT and the restoration of habitat, birthrates increased and the eagle population began making a remarkable recovery. On June 28, 2007, by an Act of Congress, the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially removed the American bald eagle from the endangered species list. Bald eagles are thriving again in North America.

Two factors will determine the future of the American church species. The first is the health and growth of its established churches — whether they thrive and reproduce or diminish and die. The second is the fertility rate of the American church — whether they will nurture new offspring, survive and flourish, replacing closed churches as well as providing new churches for the new Americans.

What about your church or denomination? Will it perish or will it flourish? Will declining churches and denominations learn reinvigorating habits of health and growth? These are vital questions to ponder.

Churches and denominations can make dramatic and unexpected comebacks. Will this be the story of the American church in the next decade? Will there be a comeback? Will we follow the example of Joshua, Deborah, David, Ezra, and Paul in leading the people of God to restoration? Will we allow the message and mission of Jesus to return the American church to a renewed vitality? Will God pour out the Holy Spirit on our land again, creating a movement of God in our time and in our midst? 🌀



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Dave Danielson

# Equipping Church Planters for Success

By Ed Stetzer

Church-planting systems: who uses them? How effective are they?  
What have we learned about them?





## I have always been struck

by the first few minutes of the movie *Saving Private Ryan*.

The Americans have landed on the beach. Captain Miller (Tom Hanks) sees an opening for the men with protection on the other side. He says, "That's the route." Immediately, he sends six men through the gap and they are brutally killed.

The sergeant, who is more experienced, warns Miller with a stern look, "That's a ... shooting gallery, Captain."

Miller/Hanks responds, "That's the route." Miller commands another group of six — "Go." They obey and are brutally cut down.

Miller turns to the next six and says, "It's the only way ... you're next." The third group of six loses several but finally breaks through the German lines. It is hard to watch. Many people close their eyes, unable to stomach the harsh realities of combat.

That is what church planting looked like when I started in the late '80s. Planters and their teams,

unprepared for the challenges, quickly ran into harvest fields that soon became killing fields. They were excited for the task, but they were not ready to face the realities.

When I came to Buffalo, New York, to plant my first church, eight of us began with great enthusiasm. Now, 20 years later, only one of our churches remains. Four pastors are out of the ministry; three are out of their marriage and faith.

My interest in developing ways to change some of these brutal realities started in a conversation in St. Louis, Missouri. My denomination wanted to stop the carnage, so they brought our church-planting leadership together and asked, "What systems can we create to change the tide?" I was determined to be a part of the solution. I later wrote my Ph.D. dissertation focusing on how church-planter support systems impact church plants.

The past 20 years have produced radical changes in how churches are planted. Success rates are increasing. A 2007 North American Mission Board study assessing multidenominational church-plant survivability rates shows how 99 percent of church plants now survive their first year, 92 percent survive





their second year, 81 percent survive their third, and 68 percent survive their fourth.<sup>1</sup> These are encouraging statistics, especially in light of pessimistic reports that “80 percent of church plants fail in the first year.”<sup>2</sup>

We are doing many things better and much of this is due to the emergence and development of church-planting systems. This article will explore church-planting systems, their components, and the impact they currently have in church planting. I will address church-planting systems in three ways: who uses them, how effective they are, and what we have learned about them.

### CHURCH-PLANTING SYSTEMS

Church-planting systems typically consist of assessment, real-time training (usually in the form of a BootCamp or other intensive), mentoring/coaching/supervision, and church-planter networks. These work together to provide guidance, encouragement, and accountability for church planters. This support provides planters a greater chance for success. Church planters involved in church-planting systems tend to lead faster-growing churches and reach more people than those who are not.<sup>3</sup> The reason is simple: Each component of church-planting systems is designed to support planters in an area of major need.

### BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

Most church planters begin with an assessment. An assessment evaluates potential church planters for important qualities they need to plant a church. It helps planters know if they are gifted and called to plant a church.

Most behavioral assessments measure 13 key qualities identified by Charles Ridley, Ph.D., of the University of Indiana: visioning capacity, intrinsically motivated, creates ownership of ministry, relates to the unchurched, spousal cooperation, effectively builds relationships, commitment to church growth, responsive to the community, utilizes giftedness of others, flexible and adaptable, builds group cohesiveness, resilience, and exercises faith.<sup>4</sup>

Assessment interviews help candidates understand whether or not they have the potential to be a church planter. Assessment interviews affirm those gifted and called to church planting and effectively screen applicants who are not. Assessment does not make any single planter more effective; it does, however, help eliminate potentially ineffective church planters. Thus,

it improves the effectiveness of any collective church-planting effort as a whole.

Most sending denominations, churches, and networks use

some variation of the Ridley Behavioral Assessment. The Assemblies of God reports: “We use the Ridley Behavioral Assessment interview, plus personality tests and typical interviewing processes.”<sup>5</sup> In a recent study including 109 denominational leaders from 40 denominations, more than two-thirds possess a formalized church-planter assessment system.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, church-planting networks such as Vision USA, Church Planting Network, and Acts 29 are often more selective than are denominations, utilizing only 20 percent of those who apply.<sup>7</sup> Assessment has become a staple for most sending groups.

Most church-planting leaders now believe assessment is essential because it has proved to be successful over the past 20 years. In 2003, I studied several hundred church planters and discovered that assessed church planters substantially outperformed those who had not been assessed. Assessed church planters led churches with at least a 20 percent higher attendance each year during the first 4 years than planters who were not assessed.<sup>8</sup>

In year three, churches led by assessed planters were 27 percent larger than their counterparts.<sup>9</sup>

Assessment is also a strong indicator of evangelistic effectiveness. By the fourth year, assessed church planters average approximately 25 conversions annually, while non-assessed church planters average 12.<sup>10</sup> Thus, assessed church planters achieve more than twice as many conversions. And, many who were not assessed would not have successfully passed a Ridley Behavioral Assessment. Removing such candidates from the pool would further inflate the statistics. If we were to track this same phenomenon with church planters who both passed and failed the assessment interview, the results would undoubtedly be even stronger. Assessment obviously impacts the integrity of church-planting efforts by screening out ill-suited candidates and assures that stronger candidates are affirmed in the process.

Assessment is arguably one of the most important church-planting developments during the past 20 years. For those seeking to facilitate a church-planting movement, it would be foolish to ignore some type of formalized church-planter assessment process. Any denomination, network, or church seeking to plant effective and successful churches must have

**Church planters  
who meet with a  
mentor  
or coach  
plant larger and  
more effective  
churches.**





some mechanism in place to effectively assess church-planter candidates. Failure to initiate such a mechanism will result in weaker churches and a higher rate of attrition.

Finally, anyone seeking to plant a church will likewise be unwise to forego a behavioral assessment. A church-planter assessment is well worth the effort because it affirms gifted and called church planters, while saving untold heartache, failure, and embarrassment for those who are not.

### BOOTCAMP OR BASIC TRAINING

Intensive church-planter training and strategy sessions, often referred to as BootCamps or Basic Training, are another key element of church-planting systems. BootCamps provide real-time training for planters preparing to enter a target community. Hence, a high degree of learning readiness can be developed as planters anticipate the challenges they will face.

Most BootCamps last 3 to 5 days while a few last as long as 2 weeks. A typical BootCamp walks planters step-by-step through starting a new church with an emphasis on contextual application to their specific community. Such training is intended to help planters consider all aspects involved in

40 denominations, we found that 65 percent of them possessed specific training systems for church planters.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, 51 percent of denominational church-planting leaders agreed with the statement, "We have a defined strategy in place for training church planters." Only 14 percent disagreed with that statement.<sup>13</sup> In addition, 40 percent of these denominations provide online training resources and 13 percent provide internships.

Denominations are clearly taking church planting and church-planting training far more seriously than they did 20 years ago. In fact, many denominations and church-planting networks now require church planters to attend a BootCamp or basic training before they receive any funding. Church-planting leaders now understand the necessity for church planters to receive real-time training and are doing everything they can to facilitate this component of church-planting systems.

BootCamps are perhaps the most embraced component of church-planting systems for good reason. Planters participating in BootCamps or basic training are clearly more effective than those who are not. In one denominational study, those who did not participate in a BootCamp were leading

churches that were 23 percent larger at year one than those who did participate in a BootCamp. However, planters who had participated in BootCamps were leading churches that were 30 percent

## Assessment is arguably one of the most important church-planting developments during the past 20 years.

starting a church. Therefore, most BootCamps are not intended for people interested in church planting but are reserved for those who are planting a church.

BootCamps ensure that planters address weaknesses in their strategy and make adjustments. Planters have the added benefit of developing strategy while having access to experienced church planters that typically include their field supervisor or mentor. The presence of a mentor enables higher degrees of accountability while planting their church and during other stages of the church-planting system. These experts are responsible to ask hard questions to assist the planter to define vision and approach. Planters leave a BootCamp with a comprehensive, contextualized, and more clearly defined strategy.

BootCamps are widespread and easily the most utilized component of church-planting systems. A survey of over 300 church planters in one denomination revealed that 66 percent had attended a BootCamp or basic training.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, most denominations and church-planting organizations have extensive church-planter training systems in place. During the 2007 study I conducted for Leadership Network involving

larger by year three and 27 percent larger by year four.<sup>14</sup> This statistic emphasized the effectiveness of BootCamps and basic training.

Church-planting leaders have learned how critical *real-time* church-planting training is. We now know that BootCamps, basic training, and toolkits assist planters in planting larger and more effective churches. Denominations and networks invest a large amount of time, energy, and resources in training those starting the next generation of churches. This investment is paying dividends, and BootCamps are partly responsible for the higher survival rate among contemporary church plants. Real-time training is essential for any missionary enterprise seeking to send out prepared and equipped domestic church planters.

Planters should likewise realize the benefit that real-time training can provide. Twenty years ago there was little material available for domestic church planting.

I am aware of few books and no specific training mechanisms. Most church planters did the best they could with what they had. Not surprisingly, church-plant survivability





rates were low, and many church planters suffered along with their failing congregations. Training resources are now readily available to anyone planting a church. Still, nearly one third of church planters fail to take advantage of this beneficial experience. It is a needless risk often based on a mythological need to get going rather than take time to plan. Statistics show that these church planters will likely struggle unnecessarily.

All church planters should be strongly urged, if not required, to participate in a BootCamp, basic training, or toolkit process. Fortunately, most denominations, church-planting networks, and sending churches agree and require their church planters to undergo real-time church-planting training.

### MENTORS (SUPERVISORS)

Mentors, supervisors, and coaches have demonstrated that they are invaluable to church planters and church-planting systems. All three of these roles fulfill separate functions in most settings. Mentors tend to focus on church-planter spiritual development. Coaches tend to focus on the strategy and development of the church plant. Supervisors tend to focus on church-planter accountability. All three are important and often occur simultaneously within the mentoring process or even with a single mentor/coach/supervisor. Also, it is not uncommon, and even advisable, for church planters to meet with separate mentors, coaches, or supervisors. There is no set rule regarding the frequency of such meetings. Some church planters meet with mentors and coaches weekly, some monthly, and some less frequently. Church planters benefit from these meetings not only because of their frequency but also because they have regular access to a trained and experienced church planter during their church-planting experience.

Church planting is an extremely and often lonely experience that can wear down church planters — especially lone church planters. The opportunity to regularly dialogue about personal and strategic issues provides encouragement, accountability, and expertise. Thus, this important relationship guards the spiritual health of the planter and his church. Mentors, coaches, and supervisors are a necessary resource for most, if not all, church planters.

Church-planting leaders certainly recognize this need and many now require mentors for their church planters. The challenge for

denominational church-planting leaders is finding enough qualified mentors to assist all of the church planters they deploy. The International Church of the Foursquare recently discovered that two-thirds of their current planters use a coach during their church-planting experience.<sup>15</sup> They explain, “77 percent reported that coaching had ‘some’ to ‘very significant’ impact on their personal effectiveness and productivity, with 54 percent reporting coaching had ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ influence.”<sup>16</sup>

I discovered similar results in a study of one denomination that showed 60 percent of their church planters had a relationship with a mentor during their church-planting experience.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is likely that church-planting networks and missional churches possess far higher rates of mentor and coaching use. Such groups tend to be more hands-on and involved with their church planters.

Mentoring is a growing practice among church planters and shows no sign of slowing down. Mentoring is also enjoying strong results. In one study, church planters who meet with a mentor or coach plant larger and more effective churches than those who do not.<sup>18</sup> Church planters with mentors lead churches that are 12 percent larger during the first year, 13 percent during the second year, 16 percent during the third year, and 25 percent during the fourth year.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the frequency of the mentoring meetings also impacted the success and size of the church plant. Church planters who meet weekly with a mentor lead churches that are 50 percent larger than church planters who only meet monthly or quarterly and are 100 percent larger than those who do not meet with a mentor.<sup>20</sup> Statistics for supervisor meetings are even more pronounced indicating that church planters who meet weekly with a supervisor lead churches that are twice as large as those who meet only monthly.<sup>21</sup> Without question, mentors, coaches, and supervisors increase the effectiveness of church planters. The more intentional a church planter can be in this area, the better.

The past 20 years have taught us that church planters need direct field support. The rigors of church planting are well documented. Planters need encouragement, strategic and emotional support, as well as accountability. Church planters who receive mentoring, coaching, or supervision gain an important partner for their task. Given the personal effort and

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## Church Planting Survivability and Health

**Many people have repeated the idea — which turns out to be a myth — that the vast majority of new churches fail within their first 2 years.** In fact, the opposite is true. In a research project commissioned by Leadership Network, The North American Mission Board reviewed dozens of studies on church plant health, survivability, and processes to discover what improves the strength and effectiveness of church plants. Church plants from 12 denominations and networks were included in the study. Leadership Network participated in this study of more than 1,000 churches. From this study NAMB discovered that 68 percent of church plants still exist 4 years after denominations had started them. The graph below displays the survivability by year.

### FACTORS INFLUENCING SURVIVABILITY

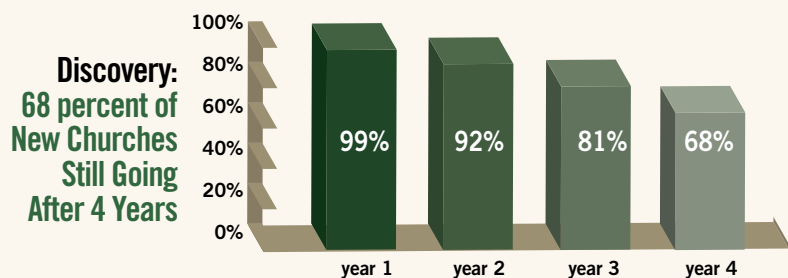
One long-held principle says that churches must become self-sufficient to have long-term survivability. Though 30 percent of the churches studied attained self-sufficiency in the first year, 30 percent were still not self-sustaining by year 5.

In the North American Mission Board study, over 100 factors were tested for statistical significance in relationship to survivability. Only a few factors indicated a statistically significant relationship to survivability. Interestingly, the chance of survivability increases by over 400 percent

when the church planter has a “realistic” understanding and expectation of the church-planting experience. On the other hand, conducting door-to-door or cold-call evangelism in church planting decreases the odds of survivability by 59 percent.

The odds of survivability increase by over 250 percent in church plants that offer leadership-development training. In addition, survivability increases by 178 percent when there is a proactive stewardship-development plan within the church plant.

or church-planting churches. Before the 1990s most church-planting groups had little interest in focusing on the church planter’s abilities, training, or involvement in support networks. None of the church-planting books written before 1990 address such issues. In contrast, today the topic of systems is a key issue for church-planting organizations. Every group surveyed indicates that having well-designed support systems for the planter improve their survivability. Some groups report that their survival rate has doubled since



### THE PLANTING PASTOR

Over the past two decades most church-planting leaders have come to believe that the most critical factor to the success of a church plant is the church planter or planters. Research by Leadership Network and others bears this out. Survivability is significantly higher when the church planter engages in support systems provided by denominations, networks, and/

implementing important systems such as assessment, training, and coaching.

The NAMB study also focused on the value of peer groups. Odds of survivability increase by 135 percent when the church planter meets with a group of church-planting peers.

— **ED STETZER**. From “Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches,” Leadership Network. Used with permission.

potential spiritual fatigue that accompany church planting, a mentor becomes a valuable line of accountability, plumb line for the church’s strategy, and encourager when sailing in deep waters. Church planters are better equipped to face the turbulent and challenging environment of church planting when partnered with those who have already traveled the path

of church planting. They possess an ever-ready source for insight, perspective, and perseverance. Sending bodies understand this truth and are making efforts to provide qualified mentors for every church planter. In fact, any church planter would be wise to seek out a mentor, coach, or supervisor, whether his sending body provided one or not.



### Indicators of New Church Health

#### Size is a common indicator used to evaluate the health of a new church.

Though size is not a complete measure of health, achieving a critical mass is essential for survivability. A surprising result of the North American Mission Board study shows that church plants are actually smaller than many imagined. The typical church plant does not pass 100 in attendance after 4 years.

Another indicator of new church health is evangelistic effectiveness. The number

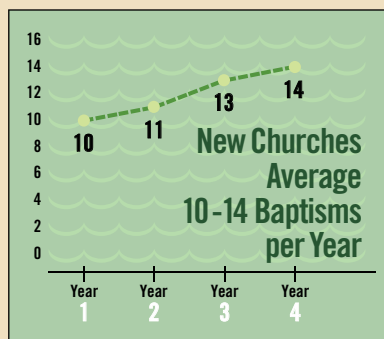
of baptisms or conversions has a strong correlation to the evangelistic effectiveness of new churches. The average number of baptisms or conversions is 10 the first year, 11 the second year, 13 the third year; and 14 the fourth year.

Certain factors, when present, correlate with higher baptisms. Over 100 factors were tested and the following were found to be statistically significant:

- engaging in ministry evangelism (i.e., food banks, shelter, drug/alcohol recovery)
- starting at least one daughter church within 3 years of the church plant
- having a proactive stewardship development plan enabling the church to be financially self-sufficient
- conducting a midweek children's program
- conducting a children's special event (i.e., Fall Festival, Easter Egg Hunt)
- sending out mailers for invitation to services and church events

- conducting a block party as an outreach activity
- conducting a new member class for new church members
- conducting leadership training for church members
- receiving church-planting training in terms of a bootcamp or basic training by the church planter
- working full-time over part-time as the church planter
- being assessed prior to the beginning of the church plant as the church planter
- delegating leadership roles to church members.<sup>1</sup>

— ED STETZER. From "Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches," Leadership Network. Used with permission.



#### NOTE

1. Ed Stetzer and Phillip Connor, *Church Planting Survivability and Health Study* (Nashville: Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, 2007), 5.

### CHURCH-PLANTER SUPPORT GROUPS

Church-planter support groups are the least utilized and the most underdeveloped aspect of church-planting systems. Church-planter support groups involve several church planters meeting together with a trained facilitator to discuss church-planting related issues and receive continual church-planting training and education. These support groups provide another team level for church planters who feel isolated and alone in their church plant. Church planters are able to learn from one another as they pool their collective experiences. Church-planter support groups tend to meet monthly and most planters find them helpful.

The data regarding how widespread church-planter support groups are utilized is somewhat incomplete. Many denominations and other sending groups use church-planter support groups, but tracking participation in those groups is not

always a priority. Thus, we know that many church planters are participating in peer support groups; we simply do not know the extent.

Church-planter support groups do give every indication they are effective in helping planters plant larger and more successful churches. One denominational study shows that church planters involved in peer support groups lead churches that are larger during the first 4 years of their new church.<sup>22</sup> The largest margin is seen in the first year as church planters involved in peer support groups lead churches that are more than twice as large as those who did not participate in peer support groups.<sup>23</sup>

Church-planter support groups are the newest component of church-planting systems, and we can certainly learn more about them. However, statistics show they are effective in helping church planters build a base of support. Many



church-planting leaders are beginning to invest more effort in providing this helpful resource. It is advisable that anyone planting a church seek out a church-planting support group when it is within his power to do so.

## CONCLUSION

Twenty years ago the parachute drop was the dominant church-planting method. This occurs when a sending denomination or church drops a church planter and family into a community with little training or support. By the grace of God, many of these church planters succeeded in planting healthy, growing, and reproducing churches; however, many did not. In fact, many of the alarming statistics regarding the survivability of new church plants may simply be outdated.

Imagine being asked to begin a business with only a city to face and a dream to make reality. No one gave you any resources and no one trained you how to accomplish this task. The person who said yes to such a request would either be a supreme hero or an utter fool.

Now, imagine being asked to start a church without knowing if you possessed the gifts and calling to do so, without any specific church-planting training, and without any field support in the form of a mentor, coach, supervisor, or peer network. The task would be daunting to say the least. Many church planters experience this scenario and many subsequently fail. Let us not fail these God-called church planters. Instead, we need systems to help them be a part of a growing movement that is penetrating the darkness and bringing many people into God's kingdom.

We have learned over the past 20 years that support must be given to those entering the mission field. The support must come from us. It is difficult to plant a church. Not everyone can do it. A church planter should be gifted, called, trained, and supported. Church-planting systems were developed by church planters to address this great need. Assessment, training, mentoring, and support groups have proven to provide valuable assistance enabling church planters to plant larger, healthier, and more successful churches. We have learned that church planters perform better when surrounded by a team committed to their success. Church-planting systems provide an excellent framework for such a team to function. We believe Christ has sent us to every city and every nation. Let's prepare one another for the task of reaping God's harvest through church planting. 🌱



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23. Ibid.

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**"Pastor, your personal GPS shows you are at Marge's Donut Den. Is that where the bedridden and homebound are meeting now?"**

# One Passion, One Purpose:

Planting  
Thriving Churches  
in Diverse  
Demographic  
Contexts





JEFF LEAKE



JAREN LAPASARAN



CHRIS BEARD



DENNY CURRAN



JOHN VAN PAY



OTTO WEGNER

**T**he increasing diversity of America represents a demographic challenge for the church. To meet this growing challenge, denominations, local churches, and networks are taking a more proactive role in multiplying churches than in previous decades.

New models, strategies, and approaches are required in order to plant thriving churches in diverse demographic contexts.

Steve Pike, director of Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network, visited with six Assemblies of God church planters from six demographic contexts. Their practical insights will benefit those who share their passion for church planting.

Participants in this interview include: Jeff Leake, MultiChurch Movements, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (parent church planting); Jaren Lapasaran, Jr., Heights Worship Center International Ministries, Hacienda Heights, California (ethnic church planting); Chris Beard, First Christian Assembly of God, Cincinnati, Ohio (multicultural church planting); Denny Curran, River of Life Assembly of God, Cold Spring, Minnesota (rural church planting); John Van Pay, Gateway Fellowship Church Assembly of God, Helotes, Texas (suburban church planting); Otto Wegner, Highway Mission Tabernacle, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (urban church planting).

**Explain the common, nonnegotiable principles that apply to every church-planting project.**

**Leake:** One core principle is the idea of reproduction — disciple making. Church planting is the expression of disciple making in a community. This is not simply sending a pastor, people, or money, but reproducing healthy DNA in a new church family. Reproduction is a key.



**Curran:** People matter. If we lose our passion for people, it becomes more difficult to reach out or spend the resources to reach the community.

I walked into a board meeting one day and all my board members had their arms folded. I said,

“What’s up, guys?”

They said, “We haven’t planted a church in over 2 years. What is wrong with us?”

That spoke to me about their passion for people. People matter, and we are going to touch lives any way we can.

**Lapasaran:** For ethnic groups, a nonnegotiable guiding principle is the Great Commission. Ethnic groups crossed land, sea, and air to come to America. We feel God has sent us because He designed our destiny, even if we left our country of origin because of political or economic persecution. Yet, we were scattered to preach the gospel wherever we go.

**Van Pay:** If we do not love each other as a church family, we will find it difficult to reproduce ourselves and fulfill the mission to which God has called us. When people come through the doors of our church, they will know if we have deep love for each other. It has to be modeled from the top down. That means it begins with me, the lead pastor, down to our launch team, and then to our staff. Building people and relationships has been key for us.

**If we lose our passion for people, it becomes more difficult to reach out or spend the resources to reach the community. — CURRAN**



**Wegner:** One nonnegotiable principle is the practice of presence. A lot of people want to do something or see something happen in a community, but do not want to live there. We would never stand for that in world missions: “I’m wanting to reach people in Australia, but I’m going to stay in the U.S. to do it.” A study in Philadelphia reported that less than 40 percent of the pastors and primary leaders of churches live in Philadelphia.

We have a slogan: “It’s the presence of God’s people that guarantees the presence of God.” If a church planter is not willing to live in a neighborhood, he is not qualified to lead.

**Beard:** A leader who has a good handle on what he is called



# One Passion, One Purpose

to do and is willing to lay down his life, with God's help, to do it has a good sense of what God has put in his heart to accomplish.

**What practices founded on these principles have proven for you to be effective?**

**Leake:** The practice of good planning comes out of BootCamp. Church plants cannot live off past success, because a church plant does not have a history to build on. That is one of the benefits of a church plant: You must do this well or you will die. Church planters must learn how to cast vision, form a strategy, and build a team. These areas are necessary to effective leadership. As a parent church pastor, I strive to build the leader of the new church, not just the church. Investing in the new leader so he can succeed is a great plus.

Another practice comes from Nelson Searcy's book, *Launch* (see Nelson Searcy's article in this issue, *Launching Large: The New Paradigm in Church Planting*, on page 68). We recently introduced preview services into the church-planting process. This has worked well to help a church gain momentum.

There are great materials now to aid church planters — whether BootCamps or through organizations like Church Leader Insights. Learn to be a good resource so you are learning and growing and can do things effectively.

**Beard:** Concerning a multiethnic or a racially reconciled context or vision, there are not a lot of tools. Church planters need to have a conviction to help people work through understanding each other. Church planters need to have a strong theology of church. Church is not just diversity for diversity's sake, but building a church that looks like heaven.

**Wegner:** The church will ultimately take on the personality of the primary leaders. We teach what we believe, but we reproduce who we are. The objective is to reproduce after our kind. On occasion I have made the mistake of skipping that step. But I have never been disappointed when we have good people who have the skill sets and the gift mix. I have never been disappointed when they are people of integrity, are generous, and are unselfish in their time.

**Lapasaran:** To have a successful ethnic church plant, we first find

a man, a family, or a church to lead our church plant. Most ethnic church planters are bivocational. Concerning strategy, if a person is outgoing, we start with evangelism. But if a person is relational, then we start with a home group. As we find the person and discover his giftings, that predicts what we will do.

**Van Pay:** In the suburban context, our church family is learning that our money and talents are not ours, so we need to be generous. The antidote to greed is generosity.

We have simplified our calendar by focusing on what is truly important. Eighty-one percent of our adults volunteer in our church and city each month. We regularly have volunteer orientations where people get a behind-the-scenes look at our teams, then try one out. If they fit, they serve once or twice a month, opening more opportunities for others. We celebrate and tell stories of people serving the Lord and others in love. It has been fascinating to watch how their faithfulness in attendance and giving has increased as a result of being generous with their talents.

**What are some challenges that are specific to your area of planting, and how have you overcome them?**

**Curran:** A year ago we planted a church in Sartell, Minnesota. Because the parent church is a strong relational church, some people said, "I live in Sartell, but I do not want you to ask me to help plant that church." But they ended up going, and it was exciting.

A week before we planted the church in Sartell, 500 people gathered in small groups in our foyer, crying, and hugging. I thought something was wrong. They said they

realized this was the last Sunday they would be in this church.

Pastors need to create a vision in their church so it becomes a natural thing for people to leave when you plant another church.

One lady said, "This is so wrong, but it is so right." Some people who had a hard time making the switch because of the deep relationships they had here are building relationships in the new church plant.

Releasing the people has been a challenge. A lot of people have had a hard time doing that. What we do from the pulpit and how we create that climate helps us.

**Leake:** I want to see the churches we plant become thriving churches. Early on we would have a good push for our church plant with a lot of enthusiasm and backing. Then once a

If a person is outgoing, we start with evangelism. But if a person is relational, then we start with a home group.

— LAPASARAN



church was functioning as a sovereign church, we pulled away to plant another church. Often the churches we planted hit a plateau. One of the strengths of the multisite system is that the mother organization that helps birth these campuses owns the ongoing success of these campuses because people perceive all of the campuses as one whole.

Now we are asking how we can continue to push our resources as a parent church to the edge and keep our church plants where they feel they are connected to something that helps them grow. Our goal, even though we are planting sovereign churches, is to create a network that helps these churches continue to thrive.

**Beard:** Our city is historically fractured and segregated. The body of Christ, just like the rest of the city, has homogeneous congregations. We are working to overcome that inertia in the mind-set of believers who would be a core group of planters at the district and sectional leadership levels.

We need to realize the demographics of our country are drastically changing. Seven out of 10 new employees nationwide are people of color or women. If we do not start to change, down the line a lot of us will be in trouble. This is not the main motivation to change, though. We must change because God loves all people. We need to overcome the challenge of the homogeneous church-growth principle and the mind-set of “can this really work?”

Once people start coming to Christ, are baptized, and demonstrate a different kind of Kingdom community, the energy and excitement are incredible. In Cincinnati, church planters — black, white, and Latino — are starting to come out of the woodwork with a desire to plant multiracial churches. People throughout the city are starting to ask, “What is going on?” This is a new prophetic voice we did not have because we were racially, politically, ideologically, and theologically segregated congregations. Overcoming that inertia is the biggest challenge. Once you start breaking through that and get financial and numeric traction, it is an incredibly exciting ride.

**Lapasaran:** The first major challenge in starting ethnic and immigrant churches is to find a place to meet. After identifying the person who will take the lead, we start our churches in homes or in other suitable locations. To become a church that will reach its community, we need existing churches to coparent with us. This is a challenge. For our church to grow, we need trained leadership and support from other churches

that might loan us a Sunday School teacher, a women’s director, a youth or children’s leader, or any resource to help us nurture an ethnic congregation.

I met with a district official after our living room could no longer accommodate the growth we were experiencing. The next Sunday he opened his church to us. On that Sunday we had 50 of our ethnic people worshipping together with an existing church.

**Curran:** One challenge I have is creating a vision and keeping my church outreach focused. I also am looking for people who are qualified to plant a church. When we first started planting churches in 1993, nobody wanted to plant a church. Today, many people want to plant a church, but the success of a church depends on the leader.

We are behind schedule on our next church plant. We have a place to meet and a core group, but we are looking for the right person who has the right DNA to lead the new congregation.

We have started a Master’s Commission connected with North Central University. Church planters will go through our Master’s Commission. Two years of our Master’s Commission will be equivalent to 2 years at NCU, and then students will finish their degree with an emphasis on rural community at NCU. We are calling it Heartland Master’s Commission. We plan to identify students we think will do well in a rural setting and begin shaping them in a Master’s Commission.

My biggest frustration is finding people who I think will qualify. The assessment we are doing is helping.

“Church plants cannot live off past success, because a church plant does not have a history to build on. — LEAKE”



**Van Pay:** Before launching our church, we were aggressive in meeting unmet needs in our community. With weekly services, administration, and pastoring, the No. 1 challenge has been to stay missional. We knew that at the 3-year mark, churches can become inward. We are fighting against this by planting churches and meeting needs.

Our dream was to be a part of launching a church in our first year in our city, country, and world. On our launch service, we gave our first offering away by planting an Assemblies of God church in Tanzania for \$4,500. During the summer, we gave \$1,262 to a Baptist church less than 2 miles from us. In the fall,

# One Passion, One Purpose

we gave \$3,800 to The Well Church (Assemblies of God) in Oklahoma. We have partnered with homeless shelters, inner-city food banks, and mentoring programs. On our first missions trip we took 32 men to Galveston, Texas, for 3 days rebuilding a floor of a church affected by Hurricane Ike.

**There are people who are generally qualified as church planters, but how do they fit into a specific context?**

**Wegner:** In the 1950s Melvin Hodges, J. Philip Hogan, and others committed to the indigenous church principle and redirected energy to training indigenous peoples to do ministry. That is where the exponential growth took off.

The Assemblies of God tends to be suburban, rural, Southern, and Western, so we have few indigenous people trained to work in urban areas. The way we train people in our colleges is not the way urban people tend to learn. Also, working in the inner city becomes more inaccessible when young people graduate with huge college bills and have been trained for ministry in a rural setting.

**Lapasaran:** Our organizational structure with regard to the ethnic language fellowships and how our finances are being structured are specific challenges. Presently, we have 75 churches in our ethnic fellowship, but none of those churches can fund our church planting. We must rely on other churches or the district for funds. Some of our pastors are suggesting that part of the ministers' tithe given to the district be redirected to the fellowship to help us operate an office for the ethnic language fellowship.

**How can districts help you be successful in what you are doing, and how can other churches and individuals partner with you?**

**Leake:** My district does a really great job on a couple levels. They have a seed fund, similar to MX9. They have a 20/20 plan where they provide matching funds from other church organizations that want to plant a church. They provide BootCamp every year. We send all of our potential church planters through the assessment process. They have also encouraged churches in the district to partner with the churches we plant. We have some rural churches that are sending work teams and

mission teams to an inner-city ministry.

The district has given opportunity for one of our inner-city planters to visit sectional meetings and cast vision. The district celebrates the successes, which is great affirmation. This kind of district support helps build a sense of partnership between a parent church and a district or the General Council.

**Planting a church can be lonely and exhausting, so having a friend who is a pastor to the church planter is a tremendous blessing.**

— VAN PAY



**Wegner:** I am from the PennDel district. Our district does it very well. They did something in our current church plant that really helped us. Superintendent Steve Tourville began affirming what we do. It is axiomatic that every group become what they are affirmed for doing. Historically we have celebrated other things, but now that church planting is in vogue, I do not think it is complicated for district or national leaders to hold up church planters as examples of what is needed, what is good. That moves the whole process forward.

**Curran:** In the Minnesota District, Superintendent Clarence St. John and Roger Stacey, church planting/U.S. missions director, have created an atmosphere for church planting. Some pastors have not completely caught the vision. We need to be outreach focused and get away from the maintenance style of ministry and begin to reach the lost for Christ. We have had success because this atmosphere has been created. Church planters do not want to feel they are an island fighting on their own. The assessment has been a great tool that's come out of our district and in Springfield.

**Van Pay:** District officials can help by encouraging and partnering with church planters. Planting a church can be lonely and exhausting, so having a friend who is a pastor to the church planter is a tremendous blessing.

As for churches, we are on the same team, but the spirit of competition can be tempting. I meet monthly for prayer and fellowship with five church planters. They are a tremendous support. Pastors of existing churches can partner with church planters by donating resources, unused equipment, office space, monthly support, and even volunteers for the first 6 months.



**Beard:** It is an exciting day today, more than it was a few years ago when pastors were fearful, territorial, and concerned about someone planting a church near them. District and national leadership recognized this territorialism and began saying, "We need to plant churches; this is a good thing. We grow the Kingdom as we multiply churches." They started resourcing and removing barriers. In the Assemblies of God, there is an exciting new momentum because leaders are willing to face our problems and say, "Let's turn a new leaf and grow the Kingdom."

**Curran:** I was not raised Assemblies of God. I come from a strong Irish Catholic background. When I came into this

There is an exciting new **momentum** because leaders are willing to face our problems and say, 'Let's turn a new leaf and grow the Kingdom. — BEARD



Movement, prayer was a great priority. Churches prayed. We are where we are today because of those who prayed.

Prayer is the No. 1 tool we use to identify a target area. We have people saturate a community in prayer once we identify that community. Much of the success we are having in church planting is the direct result of the prayer.

**Lapasaran:** Right now in Las Vegas we host 24-hour nonstop prayer. This has been going on for the last 3 years for the city of Las Vegas. We are ready to plant 10 churches in Las Vegas. 🌐



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is the best thing that can happen.

# Failing *Forward*

By Mark Batterson

**F**or more than a decade  
I have served as lead pastor of National Community  
Church in Washington, D.C. I love living on Capitol  
Hill. I pray for the privilege of pastoring one church  
for life.

But I have also experienced my share of challenges, disap-  
pointments, and failures.

After graduating from Central Bible College in Springfield,  
Missouri, I attended seminary at Trinity Evangelical Divinity  
School in Deerfield, Illinois. My dream was to plant a church  
in the Chicago area. My wife and I grew up in Naperville, a





## Failing Forward

western suburb of Chicago. I love Chicago style pizza. And Michael Jordan was still playing for the Chicago Bulls. Why would we want to be anyplace else? So we formed a core group, opened a bank account, and chose a church name. I even put together a 25-year plan. But our core group imploded before we could hold our first service.

I still have unanswered questions about that first church plant. Were we even called to plant this church? Or did God plan the failure? Was our timing off? Or did my ineptitude or inexperience cause it to fail? I came out of this experience with a core conviction: Sometimes our plans have to fail for God's plans to succeed.

That failed attempt at church planting ranks as one of the most embarrassing and disillusioning seasons of my life. I had no idea where to go or what to do. And I was emotionally and spiritually miserable.

If we allow our failures to define us, they can ruin us. But when failure is handled properly, we learn our most valuable lessons. We are far less likely to take the credit or take for granted later successes. We discover that, even when we fall flat, God is there to pick us up. Failure has a way of opening up other options.

When the dream of planting a church in Chicago died, I was willing to go wherever. So after several months of praying and seeking, I found a door opened in D.C. We did not have a place to live or a guaranteed salary; but, by faith, we packed our belongings and moved.

### COMING SOON TO A THEATER NEAR YOU

On the first weekend of January 1996, a blizzard swept through the East Coast leaving record snowfalls on the nation's Capitol. That was my first weekend as pastor of National Community Church. Only three people showed up for the service — my wife, my son, and me. The upside is that we experienced 633 percent growth in one week when 19 people showed up the next Sunday.

We broke several church-planting axioms. I was told that if you did not reach 100 people by your first year or 200 people by your second year, you would never break those barriers.

Our average attendance our first year was approximately 35 people. We would often start services with six or eight people in attendance. I would close my eyes during worship because it was depressing if I opened them. But I never lost

a sense of destiny. I knew God had called us. And I knew something good would happen. I just did not know the good thing would be something I perceived as a bad thing.

In fall 1996, the D.C. public school where we had been meeting was closed because of fire code violations. National Community Church could have easily become a church-planting casualty. We started exploring meeting space options. Every door closed except one: the movie theaters at Union Station.

In retrospect, it is hard to imagine a more strategic spiritual beachhead than Union Station. Twenty-five million people pass through Union Station every year making it the most visited destination in D.C. We have nine theaters, 40 food court restaurants, and a parking garage. We even have our own subway system that drops off and picks up at our front door. If God had not closed the door to the D.C. public school, we would not have been looking for an open door at the theater.

I must mention one historical footnote. On the day I signed the lease with the movie theater at Union Station, I picked up a book, *Union Station: A History of Washington's Grand Terminal*. I wanted to know the story behind the Station. On February 28, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Bill of Congress allowing for the creation of Union Station. The bill stated: "An Act of Congress to create a

Union Station, and for other purposes."

Roosevelt thought he was building a train station, but God knew that years later Union Station would be serving His purposes through the ministry of National Community Church.

### THE MIDDLE OF THE MARKETPLACE

I went into church planting with the traditional mindset: Meet in rented facilities until you can buy or build a church building. But I experienced a paradigm shift. I knew it would be a long time before we could even think about buying or building. Property was going for \$10 million an acre. And this thought occurred to me: *Why would we build a church building when we have a made-to-suit auditorium complete with screens, comfortable seats, and surround sound? Besides, how many churches have a food court, parking garage, and subway system?* Doing church in the marketplace became part of our spiritual DNA.

I was walking home from Union Station, and I had a vision

If you have a  
short-term  
perspective,  
you will live  
in perpetual  
discouragement.



at the corner of Fifth and F streets, NE. No angelic choirs. No graffiti on the sidewalk. But I could see a metro map in my mind's eye. I envisioned NCC meeting in movie theaters at metro stops throughout the D.C. area.

We eventually launched our second movie theater location in Ballston Common Mall in Arlington, Virginia. We have since launched two more theater locations in Georgetown (Washington, D.C.) and Alexandria, Virginia.

Along with our four theater locations, NCC also owns and operates the largest coffeehouse on Capitol Hill. In 2008, Ebenezers was voted the No. 1 coffeehouse in the metro D.C. area by AOL CityGuide.

The passion was simple: Create a place where the church and community cross paths. Jesus did not just hang out in

the synagogue; He hung out at wells. Wells were not just a place to draw water. In ancient culture wells were gathering places. Coffeehouses are postmodern wells.

Not only do we interface with hundreds of customers daily; we also do two Saturday night services in our performance space. All coffeehouse profits go to missions.

## FIVE LESSONS

Here are lessons I learned during our church-planting journey.

### #1 Zoom out

If you have a short-term perspective, you will live in perpetual discouragement. When I am discouraged, usually it is because I have zoomed in on something I am frustrated about. I need to

## Vineyard Study of Failed and Successful Church Plants

**Todd Hunter conducted a significant study** while he was a denominational director of church planting. Though dated, several significant findings are still quite relevant from his study for *Association of Vineyard Churches Church Pathology Report*, December 1986.

Hunter divided his report into two main categories: "Autopsy Reports" of failed churches and "Successful Churches." Key issues cited that contribute greatly to church-planting failures include:

- The planter's inability to recruit, mobilize, and nurture workers and leaders,
- The planter's inability to plan effectively,
- The planter's ineffectiveness at gathering new people, and
- The planter's ineffective evangelistic methodology.

Hunter concluded that church planters could correct these issues with training and church-growth experience.

Hunter went on to discover that the

disposition of the planting pastor makes a crucial difference.

The pastors who struggle the most are more pastoral than hard-charging and lack strong leadership skills. Low success church planters are simply predisposed to a more passive approach to ministry that focuses on nurturing those who naturally come to them rather than aggressively seeking to penetrate the community and gather those who could be leaders for the Kingdom. They prefer to nurture existing relationships rather than recruit, evangelize, plan, or research their community.

### SUCCESS FACTORS

On the other hand, according to the Vineyard research, the plants that thrive are led by pastors who work hard, who have well thought-out plans, who focus on gathering new people, and who can creatively work through and solve problems. These pastors engage in aggressive

outreach, and optimism and faith fuel their passion. Additionally, these planters have good social skills and take responsibility for the growth of the church while imparting the value of the church to the people.

Finally, Hunter also discovered several success factors related to the new congregation. The prospects of survivability in a new church diminish if in the early stage the church attracts too many nominal or hurt Christians who are unwilling or unable to change and grow (i.e., church hoppers, burned out leaders, the chronically hurt, etc.). Also, if those initial members are unwilling to actively seek and welcome those who are different from themselves, it can also reduce the health and survivability. Sociological strangulation and backdoor problems hurt new churches as well as established churches.

— ED STETZER

From "Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches," Leadership Network. Used with permission.



## Failing Forward

zoom out and remember the big picture. I need to remind myself that 2,000 years ago Jesus died on the cross for my sins. And I need to remind myself of the eternal future I have. That helps me recalibrate spiritually. Why am I doing what I am doing? I need to reconnect with the primal calling that God placed on my life. And I need to remember that I am in it for the long haul.

Growth takes time. God will not bless you beyond your ability to handle it. He is far less concerned about what you are doing than who you are becoming. The longer you have to wait, the more you appreciate. Our coffeehouse, for example, is the byproduct of 8 years of praying, rezoning, and constructing.

Church growth is not the issue. The issue is personal growth. If you are growing personally, the church you lead will grow corporately.

Here is an irony of church growth. On the weeks I am hitting on eight cylinders and I think every visitor will become a member the next week, no one comes back. Then the next week I preach a message that bombs. I feel like e-mailing a complaint to myself. Then people get saved and all the guests return.

### #2 Make mistakes

Every church planter wrestles with fear of failure. The cure is not success. The cure is failure in small doses, almost like allergy injections, so you build immunity.

Failure has a freeing effect. You realize God is there to pick you up and dust you off. And it keeps you humble.

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**Terry Smenckel is maturing: the junior pastor has a senior moment.**

**Part of the leadership challenge is discovering who you are.**



We have a core value at NCC: Everything is an experiment. If the kingdom of God had departments, we could work in Research and Development. I am driven by a core conviction: There are ways of doing church that no one has thought of yet. But that means I need to make some mistakes. I must get to the point where I am more afraid of missing opportunities than making mistakes.

I have no problem with staff making a mistake. I just do not want them to make the same mistakes over and over. Mistakes mean you're trying new things. And that is the way to continue to grow as a leader.

### #3 Quit comparing

I am competitive. I do not like losing a game of Candyland to my kids. But I have asked God to sanctify my competitive streak and use it for His purposes. Too often we compare ourselves with other pastors and view other churches as competitors.

Healthy leaders have a Kingdom mind-set. I do not have to be all things to all people because I am not the only church in town. We need different kinds of churches because there are different kinds of people. Let us celebrate our differences as long as we are preaching the gospel.

You can compare yourself to someone who is not as gifted as you, and it will result in pride. Or you can compare yourself to someone who is more gifted than you, and it will result in jealousy. Either way, you lose.

Part of the leadership challenge is discovering who you are. The other half is discovering who you are not. And then you surround yourself with people who can compensate for your weaknesses. Early in ministry your level of giftedness will determine your influence. But over time your giftedness will have less to do with your ultimate influence. Your influence will be determined by the giftedness of the people with whom you surround yourself. That is why leadership development and hiring staff are such mission-critical capacities.

If you do not have a clearly defined vision, you will try to be all things to all people. Too many pastors are contortionists. We try to meet all the whims and wishes of everyone who walks through our doors.

Years ago I memorized something Abraham Lincoln said and it has become a leadership mantra: "You can please all of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time, but you cannot please all of the people all of the time."

### #4 Keep learning

An intern asked me: "What is the key to success in ministry?" I said, "Keep learning."



Leaders are learners. Part of what drives them is a holy curiosity. And they are humble enough to admit their lack of knowledge.

One of my fears is becoming a closed system. You stop doing ministry out of imagination and start doing it out of memory. You stop creating the future and start repeating the past. You stop leading and start managing.

Two things have helped me remain an open system. First, books keep my synapses firing in new ways. And I try to do as much reconnaissance as possible. I go to conferences and visit other churches to get new ideas. It helps me keep a healthy perspective on National Community Church.

#### #5 Enjoy the journey

When I interviewed for credentials, one pastor on the credentialing committee asked: "If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?"

"I said, 'Driven.'" I thought it was a great answer then. I am not so sure now.

My goal as a church planter was to pastor a thousand people

before I turned 30. There is nothing wrong with setting God-sized goals if the motive is right. The size of our dreams is a pretty good barometer of spiritual maturity. But the problem with that particular goal is: I was more concerned with numbers than with people. We plant and water; God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7).

I am so future oriented I often fail to appreciate the journey. But the Lord impressed on me early on: *Be the best pastor you can be right here, right now.* This is like being a parent. You need to enjoy every age and every stage. Ministry is difficult. But may we never forget the awesome privilege of being part of God's redemptive plan for planet earth. The sacrifices we make will pay eternal dividends. ☺



**MARK BATTERSON** is lead pastor, National Community Church, Washington D.C., and author of *A Lion in a Pit* and *a Snowy Day and Wild Goose Chase*.

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**AG GUIDE**

# The AARP Generation Plants Churches

By Earl Creps

50+



**THIS  
IS A JOB FOR  
FIFTY-PLUS MAN!**

**Church  
Planter  
Needed**

**W**

**hy would you give up**

**your dream job?"** The psychologist asked that question at our screening interview with U.S. Missions. I had spent over 6 years as director of doctoral studies at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

He wanted to know why I would consider giving up such a position for a new adventure: church planting.

While people decide to plant new churches every day, it is not often they do so in their mid-50s after working in higher education, a role people often see as reserved for later in life. Even the church-planting poster issued by the Assemblies of God depicts an attractive couple in their mid-20s dressed in the casual style of today's young adult. Having already pastored three churches, should we not have stayed at AGTS until I retired from my dream job?

We would have answered yes, had we not felt called to plant a university church in Berkeley, California, a city of 100,000, 10 miles north of San Francisco. This location, home of the University of California at Berkeley, would be our new home and the site of a new church reaching out to the Cal community. As the vision for Berkeley grew within us, we discovered something: Calling is not determined by age. While our custom is for younger people to plant churches, Peter quotes the prophet Joel: "Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17, NIV).

If the church is to reach its potential, it needs everyone. The world knows this. The CEO of General Motors, for example, is my age (55). Surely we do not believe a mid-50s person is capable of leading a major international conglomerate, but lacks the assets to start a new congregation? Perhaps we have used the young because they seem the most willing. After all, why would anyone with anything to lose risk it all on the uncertainties of church planting? Our journey indicates that older people have untapped potential in start-ups as well as in a variety of ministries. Just because you have an AARP card in your wallet does not mean you lack fire in your heart.

**Thinking  
of younger  
people as  
incapable  
of leading  
is just as  
misguided  
as defining  
boomers as  
too old  
to plant.**

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This article explores the potential of post-midlife people — the AARP generation — as church planters. While researching this subject, I contacted Ed Stetzer, a missionary strategist with the Southern Baptist Convention, and asked if anyone had conducted a study of older planters. His response was: “I do not know of anyone who has done research like that. Honestly, it is mostly a young man’s game.”<sup>1</sup> His conclusion is ironic in a nation that is home to more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 18. The goal of this article is not just to review what is known about post-midlife planters, but also to encourage the AARP generation to be open to this option.

The builder generation has blazed the trail with RV Volunteers like Richard and John, the senior citizens who built the oak furniture in my AGTS office. Rather than boomers putting their ministries on cruise control, now is the time for them to take a chance on church planting, to finish their careers playing offense rather than defense.

Dan Estes, who left an established church in his mid-50s, summarized some of his motivation when he noted, “I felt I had become the keeper of the aquarium rather than a fisher of men. ... I do not think about retirement and I have no intention of going anywhere else.”<sup>2</sup> The first step in opening up to this possibility is to hear from some who have already taken the journey.

### THE OLDER PLANTER EXPERIENCE

When my wife, Janet, and I decided to become church planters, we developed a natural curiosity about other older people who might have done the same. We had heard of a few, but had never met one. So I posted my interest in meeting older planters on Facebook, a leading social networking Web site, and I immediately received several responses. I was impressed that older leaders were using Facebook, usually regarded as the preserve of teens and twentysomethings.

Following up on these contacts, I asked several post-50 planters three questions by e-mail or Facebook:

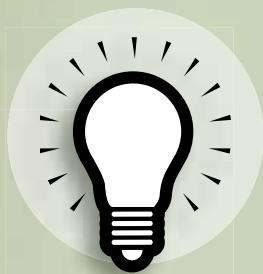
1. How did you become a planter?
2. In what ways was your age an advantage?
3. In what ways was your age a disadvantage?

Everyone I interviewed responded positively to the request and supplied thoughtful answers.

Virgil, previously a senior associate at a church in the Pacific Northwest, offered a typical answer to the first question when he wrote, “What led me to plant was, of course, a complete leading of Jesus Christ.” He confessed, “I had never thought of myself as a planter, never prepped to become one.” Nonetheless, Virgil’s new church has experienced steady growth building to a Sunday morning attendance of around 150. Not unlike most of the other boomer planters, Virgil was taken by surprise when the call came into start-up ministry.

Pete took a seminary class on church planting and got much more than an education. “God broke my heart for the lost,” he states. “I discovered that it was one of the best ways to reach the lost and that my gifting, experience, and passion all pointed at planting.”

On the issue of advantages of age, Pete notes, “My life and work experience (CEO) have been tremendous assets as have the relationship networks I have developed over the years.” He points to the fact — while age may bring some physical challenges — an older person may also have unique assets such as professional experience and advanced education.



### Models of Post-midlife Planters



#### The Entrepreneur

An older person leads a plant in the same way a younger person would. These examples exist, but are few in number.



#### The Family

A younger person plants a church, but his parents join the effort, often by relocating to the new city. I have witnessed this model in several locations.



#### The Coach

An older person who planted in his younger years now works in a recruiting and advisory role, often for a district or other organization.

If church planting were only an issue of raw effort, then only the young would be eligible. But those who have started new congregations would be the first to say that wisdom and experience are just as important as hard work. Age does not inevitably supply these assets, but it does provide options that are seldom available in youth. In fact, Larry, who has planted in both the U.S. and Europe, points out, "Age is a big advantage because of pastoring experience, and our children being grown made the financial part easier."

When I asked boomer planters the disadvantages of age, Larry replied, "There has been no disadvantage other than I wish I had started years ago, and I am sure someday I will wish I had more time to serve." He did admit, however, that he might possess "a little less energy, or a lot less on some days. I do not think of age as a disadvantage unless you feel old in your spirit. We keep up on education, reading, music, etc." Larry and his wife, Mary, are exemplars of the advantages that boomer planters can bring to church planting.

### THE OLDER PLANTER ADVANTAGE

Openness to the calling of church planter begins, not with reading books about it but in accepting age as a gift from God. Scholar R.C. Sproul reflected on this principle in his ministry: "When I last crossed a decade barrier in my own aging process, God was good enough to grant me this small bit of wisdom — the Bible honors age, not youth. I came to understand that the disappearance of my youth was something God thought a good thing; and if I were wise, I would agree."

If we embrace age as a gift rather than a curse, a whole new world of possibilities opens up. Rather than thinking of our age as disqualifying, we can consider the unique ways in which it prepares us for ministry. We may not perform that ministry in the way a younger person would, but our contribution can still be extremely valuable.

Consider for a moment some of the specific advantages older people have concerning the potential they bring to the start-up experience:

- **Older planters can get higher in social networks faster and closer to people of influence in the community** because they tend to have more education and experience. Jan and I, for example, both have earned doctorates which will help us relate to the Cal community. A younger person may hold an

advanced degree, but the likelihood is much less.<sup>3</sup>

- **Older planters will have to look for succession from the beginning.** Because the time remaining to us in ministry is correspondingly less, we will need to consider developing younger leaders to succeed us almost from the first day.

- **Older planters have enough of a past to understand their future.** We have lived enough of life to have some perspective on how the elements of our past fit together. Our educational background, for instance, which at one time made it difficult for us to find ministry assignments, today turns out to be the ideal qualification for planting in a college town.

- **Older planters benefit more from the energy of a fresh challenge.** The start-up enterprise has proven to be a personal renewal for us, almost turning back the clock to the days when we were young. It also gives us a new peer group of young friends: other church planters.

- **Older planters may have the privilege of sacrificing more.** We have had the chance to give up our professional careers, our income, and the only home we have ever built to move to Berkeley. These sacrifices are not heroic; they are an honor.

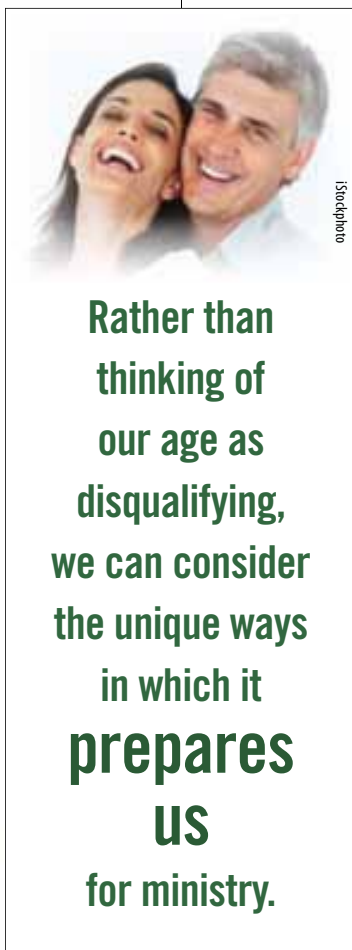
- **Older planters may have to relearn how to do the faith.** When we made our decision, Janet said, "Now we have to be Christians." She meant we were walking by faith in a way we have not experienced since our youth. We have rediscovered our relationship with God in the absence of institutional structures.

- **Older planters can project a more influential example.** No one expects anyone with anything to lose to attempt planting. So those who do will have greater influence through the power of their example.

- **Older planters have a chance to redeem past errors.** If things have not gone well during some seasons of ministry (which is true for all of us), planting can provide a way to finish strong, to break the tape running.

- **Older planters have fewer identity/accomplishment issues to work out.** As boomers, we have had decades to work on issues related to our identity and our place in the world. Hopefully, this means we can work on our ministry for its sake, rather than as a means for dealing with our personal issues.

- **Older planters have a great opportunity to experience reverse mentoring.** Since most planters are young, we boomers can draw



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on their wisdom and experience to improve our own performance as start-up leaders. Jan and I have learned a great deal from younger planters already and continue to interview them at every opportunity.

- **Older planters have a lesser chance of creating collateral damage.** Since we tend to be empty nesters, our church-planting adventure does not gamble with the lives of young children or put our future career at risk (since our career is mostly behind us now).

- **Older planters have survived more disappointments.** Jan and I have found that the ability to assimilate setbacks is a key feature of start-up ministry. After years involved in planting, Todd Hunter describes the change in his attitude: "Reality mugged my naiveté."<sup>4</sup> The problems encountered by planters have the ability to overwhelm both the leader and the ministry. But like a great quarterback who has been sacked, you shake it off and run the next play. Older leaders have been sacked so many times in the past that running that next play may be just a little easier.

- **Older planters have ministry experience.** We have pastored three churches, plus served as assistant pastors, a consultant,

**Every member of every generation has a contribution to make to the mission of the church.**



and writers. None of this adds up to being ready to plant (if anyone ever is); but having been through years of ministry leadership, we have developed some skill sets and learned how to work through conflicts. Perhaps some of the stress of planting, then, is related to the fact the average planter has never

been a senior pastor. In fact, Bob Franquiz, pastor of Calvary Fellowship, admonishes younger planters: "You will be surprised how much you can learn if you will stop talking about how great your vision is and listen to the wisdom that older church planters have learned over the years."<sup>5</sup>

Our move to Berkeley is based on our assumption that we can capitalize on these AARP generation advantages. However, the most obvious way in which older leaders can benefit the planting process is that there are so many of us. With Generation X being one of the smallest in recent history, boomer planters will be necessary until 80 million millennials arrive on the scene. No one else is coming.

### THE LIPITOR REVIVAL

My friend, Curt Harlow, regional director of West Coast Chi Alpha, refers to older people involved in planting as the Lipitor Revival. As long as we can keep our cholesterol at a manageable level, there is no reason boomers should be disqualified or disqualify themselves from the pool of potential start-up leaders. This openness will require stepping off the predictable ministry career path that often tends to gravitate toward safety as we age, relegating risk-taking to the young. While the young can take more risks, many post-midlifers are finding that a second window for spiritual adventures opens up after age 50. With the kids out of the house, we are in a position to do things that are not really feasible during our middle years with commitments to childrearing, paying mortgages, etc.

Taking advantage of this second window may be exactly what my generation needs. Bobby Welch, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, frames the issue this way: "There are two roads to the same dream. ... One road is traveled by older people who have gotten near the end of their

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**"I need a little information for your application. Do you drive a race car, fly a jet, bungee jump, hang glide, or pastor a church?"**



ministries and never got to where they envisioned themselves going. They are disappointed and feel like they have failed. They are hungry for one more shot for giving their best for the rest of their lives. The other road is traveled by younger folks who are looking for something to give the rest of their lives to. Here is what I am saying: Older guys, do not lie down and quit on us, not now. Younger guys, do not turn and run away from us, not now ... we must have a unity of purpose for reaching a lost world."<sup>6</sup>

Every member of every generation has a contribution to make to the mission of the church. Limiting the potential of any group with artificial barriers to making that contribution serves no one well. Thinking of younger people as incapable of leading is just as misguided as defining boomers as too old to plant. These limits are cultural, *not* biblical. The Scriptures call on us to mobilize all people to be open to the call of God in any form that it may take, whether it fits our cultural stereotypes or not. We need every kind of called, qualified planter available. They may mostly be young, but some of them must be older if we are to form the new congregations

needed to reach our communities. The psychologist who interviewed us agreed. He, too, left his academic position — to work in a church plant. ☺



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# Why Church Planting Must Be



R

## Rated

In church planting, the  
three most important words are:  
Relationship. Relationship. Relationship.

By Jonathan Gainsbrugh



W

## hy must church

planting be R-rated? Because God is an R-rated God; His book is an R-rated book; His gospel is an R-rated gospel; and His church must be R-rated.

What do I mean by R-rated? R-rated does not mean religion, religiosity, ritualism, and rulebook based. Rather, R-rated means relationship based, relationship powered, relationship driven, and relationship prioritized.

**Jesus calls His  
church  
to love  
shoeless  
strangers  
into the  
family of God.**



In August 1969, two young barefoot flower children, hitchhiking outside Sacramento, California, asked a future church planter and passerby: "Do you know where there's a park we can sleep in?"

Nineteen-year old Bible school student Archie Brooks (founding pastor, Transformation Assembly of God, Friday Harbor, Washington), said: "Come with me; I will help you."

Archie took us home with him. He was staying the summer with a Bible school friend's parents. After dinner and a huge bowl of fresh peaches, the two hippies hit the backyard with their sleeping bags. Once they left, the wife told her husband, "Honey, those hippies are probably not married."

He replied: "Relationship, Darling. These people are so far gone, one more night will not make any difference."

But, oh, how it did — an eternal difference.

*Philoxenos* is the love of strangers. Jesus calls His church not only to brotherly love (*philadelphos*), but to *philoxenos* love: to welcome shoeless strangers and to love them into the family of God.

### BEING R-RATED PUTS RELATIONSHIP IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

R-rated does not mean relegating relationship simply to be sitting somewhere on the bus. It means putting relationship in the driver's seat.

Jesus was the most relational person who ever walked the planet. Since God is love and Jesus is God incarnate, who dares say otherwise.



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Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He said, "Come and see" (John 1:39) and created His first core group. Does He not do the same through His churches and people today, especially in launching church plants?

The answer is yes.

## TRAGIC RESULTS — WHEN R STANDS FOR RELIGION

True False

- ☐ ☐ 300,000 U.S. evangelical churches produced no growth over the last 20 years.
- ☐ ☐ In 12,362 U.S.A. Assemblies of God churches in 2007, Sunday a.m. attendance only grew by a total of 7,685 over 2006.
- ☐ ☐ 444,918 2007 conversions left 38 U.S.A. Assemblies of God districts (out of 59) reporting fewer new converts than in 2006
- ☐ ☐ We planted 309 Assemblies of God churches (closing 258) in 2007 for a net U.S. gain of 51 churches.

Something important is missing in the American church when 50 million U.S. evangelicals produce no growth. We have traded our R-rated birthright for a pot of affluenza. I call this vitamin R deficiency.

In 1914, 314 people launched the Assemblies of God in Hot Springs, Arkansas, saying: "We dedicate ourselves to the greatest evangelism this world has ever seen." Ninety-six years later, how can it take on average 1.5 U.S. Assemblies of God churches an entire year to produce a growth of 1?

Champion National Football League Coach Vince Lombardi is famous for telling his lagging team: "Gentlemen, this is a football."

It is reported that a 300-pound lineman followed Lombardi's saying with: "Coach, could you take it a little slower."

Let me slow down and spell out some basic R-rated specifics.

## DEVELOPING A MISSING THEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIP: *RELATION-OLGY*

Bible schools field a panoply of scriptural emphases: biblical inerrancy, the Trinity, Virgin Birth, divinity of Christ, and Christ's atonement. Nonetheless, we lack a theology of relationship. This is what I call Bible-based *relation-ology*.

Ask believers for words to describe God. They say *omnipotent*, *omniscient*, *omnipresent*, and *holy*. God is *love*, *righteous*, *unchangeable*. God is *light*. God is a *jealous* God. But would the R word appear on the list?

What does such picayune emphasis on relationship in our



theology reveal? We are not teaching an R-rated, effective, and truly biblical faith.

The God of the Bible is the God of R — relationship. We serve a God who, in His Trinity essence, is a community. We serve a God who is an eternal relationship. He is the God who in the very beginning said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

The missionary church planter, Paul the apostle, wrote in Ephesians 3:14,15: "For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family (*pas patria*; all *family*, all *relationships*) in heaven and earth is named" (KJV). Not only is the Scriptures God's personal, relational love letter to humanity, God intends for the church to transmit it relationally to others.

Relationship is God's registered trademark. Relationship was in the beginning within the heartbeat of God. Our God is a knowable Father — a God of love who delights in relationship, community, and connection.

The God of the Bible is the God of covenant. Covenant is relationship. Whether it is Enoch walking with God into heaven, or Abraham the friend of God, or David a man after God's own heart, the Old Testament overflows with R-rated men and women who were drawn to know a God who longs to be known.

Hebrews 11, the faith hall of fame, mentions innumerable men and women who by faith subdued lions, saw Jericho's walls fall, and won battles. Their faith was spelled with a huge R for relationship, not intellectual knowing. Furthermore, the God of the Old Testament promises a future new covenant of an intimate *knowing* with His people.

In Jeremiah 31:31,33,34 the prophet writes, "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord: "I will put My law

in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the Lord" (NKJV).<sup>1</sup>

Ezekiel says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26,27, NKJV).

We have received a distortion of the original relational Hebrew faith. It has been diluted from a strong, life-changing R-rated, relational faith into a weakened, Greek, neo-gnostic



philosophical belief. But faith must be spelled with an R. The God of the Hebrews was the God of individuals: God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name). He has incorrectly been mistranslated into the God of a cerebral, knowledge-based, cognitive faith.

The original R-rated relational faith has morphed into a mental counterfeit. The result: We over-use the words *believe* and *faith* in place of the word *relationship*. Then we wonder why millions say: "I tried it; it just did not work."

A person can say he has faith in Abraham Lincoln. He can believe in him and agree he lived, yet have no relationship with him because he never met him. The same applies with our Lord Jesus Christ.

A person can have faith or believe in a philosophy or thing, even have faith in the chair one sits on. You may believe in a chair, but you do not have relationship with a thing, like a chair. We can only have relationship with a Person.

By avoiding the word *relationship*, we default to the word *believe*, and yet culturally translate believe as "mere mental assent." The disconnect is huge and lethal. The Gadarene demoniac knew who Jesus was. He screamed, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7).

Some salvation calls leave Romans 10:9 wide open to being mistaken as a mere mental, nonrelational belief. "Confess with your mouth ... and believe in your heart." The word *believe* (*pisteo*) is easily mistaken as mere mental belief. We see from James 2:19: "Even the demons believe — and tremble." Misunderstood thusly, even Satan himself is a *believer*. He knows in his heart and confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord — but not his personal Lord. The key issue is not belief or faith; the key issue is relationship.

God's program is relationship, but most church programs are programs. God's program is salvation in Christ, and salvation in Christ is a relationship.

God is not a program. Jesus is not a Bible quiz. Jesus is not a book, nor mere words on a page. He is not a religion, and He is neither Christendom nor Christianity. Jesus is a person, and the only way to truly know a person is through a relationship.

### RELIGION IS TEFLON®; RELATIONSHIP IS VELCRO®

Knowledge, programs, and religion at their best are smooth, like Teflon®. Relationships, like Velcro®, have hooks and loops to create connections. And like Velcro®, relationships

do not easily come apart.

For any church, but specifically a new church plant, Teflon® is the kiss of death because Teflon® does not stick. Every new church plant must be triple R-rated.

Jesus, the Lord of the Church (and every church plant and planter), is the promised Redeemer in Genesis 3:15, where God vows to Satan: "He will crush your head." *He*, not an *it*; a person, not a program; a relationship, not a religion; a who, not a what.

Our theology of church planting, of the Great Commission, and of God himself must get out of What-ville and back into Who-ville.

When God asked "Adam, Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9), that was a relational question. God's words to fallen man were a call back into relationship. Before Adam's fall into sin, there was elation in the relation. After the Fall, Adam and Eve's need was for *re-elation* — reconnecting into relationship.

Many people confuse relationship with programs. Who orders an 8-ounce parsley? We consider parsley a decoration, fluff. However, our culture (and unfortunately our theology as well) treats information and programs as the steak, and relationship as the parsley. In God's values the reverse is true. Relationship is not the parsley; it is the steak.

We must reprogram our entire program to God's program. God's program is relationship; unfortunately, for most churches,

programs are programs. Until we reprogram, we will find it hard to believe that relationship truly is the steak. Relationship is not the side vegetable; it is the main course and Jesus himself is the meal.

Until we learn to value relationship as the center of God's plan, we will never order the appropriate R-rated portion of relationship God desires us to enjoy and operate in.

### RELATIONSHIPS AND CHURCH PLANTING

Jesus is the Lord of His church. He is the church's Founder. He alone envisioned her, loved her, purchased and washed her in His own blood. It is up to Jesus Christ and Him alone to define His church, His churches, and by what method His churches are to be planted and built.

Mark tells how Jesus planted His first church: "He appointed twelve ... that they might be with Him" (Mark 3:14). He utilized a relationship-centered discipling style. Thus, when He was no longer with them, He was still recognized in their midst, hearts, words, and actions.

**Wise church  
planters  
(and pastors)  
become not  
CEOs, but  
CROs  
— chief  
relationship  
officers.**





Jesus chose to do life with His 12 disciples, knowing this would mark the depth of their beings. Jesus relationally birthed and planted His first church, through the original Twelve.

"Come and see," Jesus said as He gathered His first core group recorded in His first words in John's Gospel. They came and saw: "It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place, and they stayed there the rest of the day" (John 1:39, NLT).<sup>2</sup>

Jesus created a small group — a core group — of His Twelve, because He knew relationship (and life-change) occurs in small settings. He chose to do life intimately with His 12 disciples. Since Jesus himself was His curriculum, rather than a set of beliefs, He imparted himself into them.

This imparting is seen later in Acts 4:13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, ... they realized that they had been with Jesus" (NKJV). Mark 3:14 produced Acts 4:13.

## COMMITMENT DOES NOT PRODUCE RELATIONSHIP; RELATIONSHIP PRODUCES COMMITMENT

The linear business-world formula that commitment produces relationship has left church leaders asking for more commitment, but often not receiving it, especially from volunteers.

However, people are asking their leaders for more relationship. Commitment does not produce relationship: R produces C.

If church is a building, then who needs relationship? But if church is a family, then relationship is everything.

The U.S. evangelical church, according to Barna, is descending from its current 20 percent of U.S. population toward Europe's 2 percent.

Jesus never intended church to be called a building. Calling the church a building is like calling people 2 by 4s. We

have accepted a cultural definition of church as a building rather than a family. We need Lombardi's basic training camp definition: "Gentlemen, church is relationship."

What is a church, particularly a new church plant, called to be or provide? The thing people are missing and craving in their daily dysfunctional homes, families, marriages, and work is relationships. By satisfying this need, church plants will reproduce and grow, the same way healthy, loving families do. The desperate felt need in society is for vitamin R.

The Western church has seen the R factor whittled down to a minus. In the agricultural age, multiple generations lived together in small towns and the R factor was huge. In the industrial age, some generations moved to the city and the R factor dropped. In the information age, further national mobility drastically dropped the R factor to a dysfunctional minus. Churches, especially church plants, must be an R-powered entity and family.

Wise church planters (and pastors) become not CEOs, but CROs — chief relationship officers. Church planters and veteran pastors must honestly ask: "Is our church an R-rated church?" When we invite people to come to church, it must be to a family, not to a building, program, or event. Relationship must be the event.

General Motors failed to stay R-rated with its customers. By not listening and by disconnecting with its people, GM reported a \$8 billion corporate loss several years ago. By creating huge cars, instead of the quality and smallness people wanted, their congregation turned to Japanese automakers.

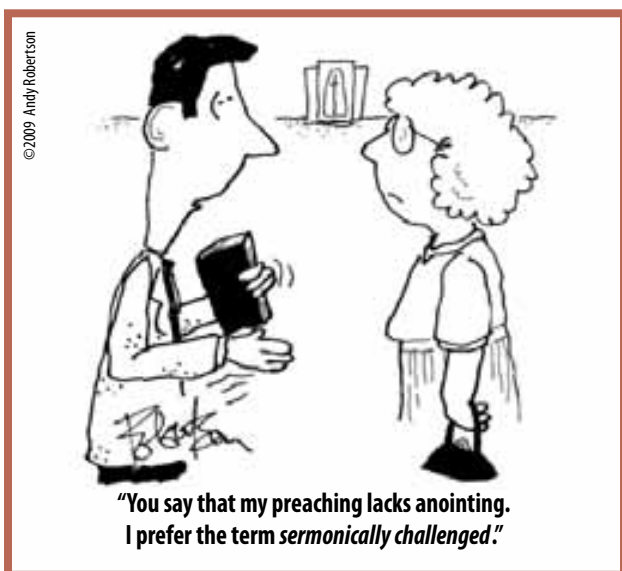
Ask yourself: *Why did I get saved?* The answer will ultimately come down to the same reason why all church planting must be R-rated.

In real estate, the three most important words are: Location. Location. Location. In church planting (and all Kingdom work), the three most important words have always been and will always be: Relationship. Relationship. Relationship.

Jesus built and planted His first church on relationship; it is God's program and it must be ours. He is not about to change it for us. Jesus is the ultimate High Priest of relationship and of church planting. ☺

## NOTES

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The background of the entire page is a stylized illustration. At the top, a two-story church building with orange-brown walls and a grey roof sits on a white, fluffy cloud. A red banner with the words "GRAND OPENING" in white capital letters hangs across the front entrance. Several small figures of people in colorful clothing are standing on the cloud around the church. Below the cloud, three thick, billowing columns of white smoke or steam rise upwards, partially obscuring the church. In the far background, a blue city skyline with various building silhouettes is visible under a clear blue sky.

**Church  
Multiplication**

**LAUNCHING**

# LARGE

**The New Paradigm in Church Planting**

**By Nelson Searcy**

Dave Danielson



Churches birthed  
out of existing,  
healthy churches have  
a **significant  
advantage**  
over church plants  
started from scratch.

W

## hat would it look like if

**your church started a new church? Or if you felt called to plant a church?** Maybe you have dreamed of planting a church, but the logistics of making it happen seem too daunting. You already have a church — and likely a thriving one at that — so why start another one?

Why should you consider becoming a launching church?

Churches birthed out of existing, healthy churches have a significant advantage over church plants started from scratch. As a church planter from an existing church, you have the experience, support, and financial backing of your current staff and congregation. If you lead an outwardly focused church, you already have a team of people who understand the importance of reaching into the community. If your people are growing followers of Jesus, they will likely embrace being part of a culture that is focused on starting new churches. They will want to be a part, on some level, of expanded opportunities to share their faith with other areas of the community.

God's church is meant to multiply. In the early days of church expansion, Paul wrote, "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21). If God is calling your church to be a launching church, His hand will be with you just as it was with the Christians in Acts.

The path of least resistance is to keep tending our little corner of the world — to let ourselves become busy with the daily concerns of running our churches. But God has called us to spread the gospel more effectively by multiplying. He has called us to touch more unchurched people by taking the truth closer to them. By learning how to biblically and strategically launch new churches, we can grow healthy communities and lead more people to become fully developing followers of Jesus.

The most important factor in the decision to launch a new church is God's leading. You must know that you know you are being called. Thriving churches have always been, and will always be built on the foundation of personal calling — not personal choice. Once you are certain your call to start another church is from God, start exploring the details. As Guy Kawasaki writes in *The Art of the Start*, "The hardest thing about getting started is getting started." If God is leading you down this path, follow.

In 2001, when I first began to think seriously about starting The Journey, I set out to read all of the church-planting books and resources on the market. I wanted to be informed. I found several books helpful on specific points. Others painted in broad strokes and gave clear boundaries concerning what I should avoid or what key questions I needed to consider. Several taught church-planting systems that had worked in the 1960s or 1970s, but now seemed outdated. A few gave me a solid picture of what a mature church looks like, but did not provide a clear map for getting a new church off the ground with no money, no meeting location, and no members (the situation I was in). I was looking for a how-to guide on church planting — an instruction manual that not only made sense theoretically, but was also visibly working in a number of growing churches. It did not exist.







## Launching Large

Because of my desire to learn all I could about starting a new church, I talked with successful church planters across the country. Many of the planters I interviewed were growing their churches with little guidance from current methods or resources. Because they were discovering their processes and principles through trial and error, most were excited to share their insights to help future church planters save time and energy.

Through conversations with these church planters, and through our study of the New Testament church, my team and I began to assemble a collection of contrarian church-planting wisdom on which our launching large mentality is built.

### LAUNCHING VERSUS PLANTING

I am passionate about helping pastors start a church from scratch that will reach as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. I want to provide them with everything they need to launch large — a concept that stands in contradiction to most traditional church-planting thinking.

In today's culture, a new church should not be something you plant. It is not something you put in the ground and tend, in hopes it will eventually grow. Rather, a new church should be a vibrant, life-giving mechanism positioned to bring truth to a desperate, fast-moving world. God is calling church planters in the 21st century to stop planting and start launching.

To understand launching large, you must understand its two essential complementary components — launching quickly and launching from the outside in. Let's examine these precepts in more detail.

### LAUNCHING LARGE

Launching large is the ability of a new church to reach as many people as possible within the first 6 to 8 months of existence. This is an issue of discovering and fulfilling potential. Of course, *large* is a relative term. Launching large will look different for different churches in different environments. Launching large is as unique as the area to which God has called you. Areas that are warm to the gospel may lend to a larger launch than completely unchurched areas. I have also seen the reverse hold true. Do not get too caught up in the numbers. Instead focus on the potential of your area as you allow the concept of launching large to sink in.

Do not underestimate the importance of numbers. Numbers represent people and impact in a community. Every person in a community matters to God and needs a spiritual home. God wants His family to be as large as possible. So, numbers do serve a purpose ... a tool for measuring the expansion of God's kingdom.

Ask yourself, *What would launching large look like in my area?*

One way to determine a broad answer is to examine what God is already doing in and around your community. When we set out to start The Journey in Manhattan, we had a difficult time finding comparison churches, because there had been no successful new churches in the years just before our start. In the New York City culture of 2002, having 110 people at the launch of a new church was significant. Since then others in the city have launched larger than we did. And we are their biggest fans. God wants to use many churches to reach our city. This is not a competition.

God's dream for the church you want to launch is bigger than your dream. Launching large is about *cooperating with God* to see His vision accomplished in your area. Do not underestimate your vision or your church's ability to tap into it. If God is calling you to this task, He is not trying to play hide and seek with His plan. Use your sanctified imagination to envision what launching large would look like for the church you want to start.

### LAUNCHING QUICKLY

Contrary to some schools of thought, even though you launch a church quickly, it can still be a healthy church. I believe a new church can begin monthly

services within 2 to 3 months after finding a strong leader. From there, I recommend only 3 to 6 months of monthly services until the church launches weekly services. This combination of speed and momentum building has worked well in new churches around the country.

Some argue that you can start a new church even more quickly. Indeed, in many countries, some are launching church-planting movements in under a week or even in one day (see David Garrison's *Church Planting Movements*). Here in the States, however, a slightly longer build-to-launch time brings greater health over the long haul. Launching a church

**To understand  
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large, you must  
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essential  
components  
— launching  
quickly and  
launching from  
the outside in.**



is a bit like birthing a baby; the gestation period matters. While a baby can survive a premature birth, she may face long-term consequences. Resist the temptation to launch your replicate too soon.

On the other hand, many propose a long gestation period for a new church by using small gatherings, core groups, and high initial commitment by the early attendees. Some churches stay in this pre-launch stage for a year to 18 months. But many of these churches never get off the launching pad. There is always going to be a reason to postpone the launch. This slow approach to launching is detrimental to overall church health and to everyone involved — particularly your current congregation who is championing and supporting this new church. Take the time needed to ensure you are on a healthy track, but resist the temptation to wait too long to get off the ground.

### LAUNCHING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

Launching large includes launching from the outside in —

which is perhaps the most radical of the launching large precepts. It is possible to launch a church where the only Christians on the initial team are the staff (pastor, worship leaders, and spouses). When starting a new church, you do not need to wait until you can attract a set number of Christians from the area, or convince a few Christians from your current location to embrace the vision and relocate. God may want to use those people, or He may not. They are not necessarily required. Throughout history God has worked through believers and unbelievers alike.

Keeping the goal of launching large in front of you causes a shift in the early DNA of the church you are starting. Your church will have an outwardly focused mentality from the onset. Churches that launch large tend to stay focused on the unchurched, while churches that wait to launch often get distracted with insider concerns and taking care of the core. Keeping your church focused on those you want to reach from the beginning is much easier than trying to refocus a

## Are You Sure You've Been Called?



**When you know God has called you to start a church, you will be able to face those first difficult years** with confidence and grace. While there will be periods of trial and uncertainty, knowing you have been called to the work you are doing will keep you moving forward. Look at some ways you can recognize a proper calling:

### PROPER SOURCES OF CALLING

- **Prayer and Bible study.** God calls and confirms His call through prayer and Bible study. When God calls people, He often confirms His calling every time they pray or read the Bible.

- **Surprise.** Ministry may have never entered into your own plans when God intercepts your plans. Someone said, “When God is stirring in my life, everything familiar gets uncomfortable.” This surprise calling leads to a 180-degree turn in career and focus.

- **Holy discontent.** While anger, resentment, or discontent toward an existing church or

pastor can be a source of improper calling, a proper calling will often carry with it a sense of *holy* discontent. This discontent does not focus on problems within a ministry, but has a heart to improve the situation in a particular community. Holy discontent also comes when you have ignored God’s call in your life, and you realize you will not find fulfillment until you surrender to His will to start a church.

- **Burden for the unchurched.** A desire to reach the unchurched always accompanies a proper call. If your goal is to change the Christians in your community, most assuredly God has not called you to start a new church. However, if you have a strong passion to reach the unchurched, you may be hearing from God.

- **Godly counsel.** A proper call will be accompanied by the confirmation of those around you. Seek other leaders and gauge their response to your call.

— NELSON SEARCY



church that has become inwardly concerned.

### FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Launching churches are becoming more and more prevalent across the United States. In my work with these church starts, I have seen many grow from zero to over 400 in 6 to 12 months, using the launching large strategy. In a southern town with a population of 160,000 people, I worked with a church that grew from zero to over 250 in monthly services, and then launched their weekly services with over 300. A church in Florida, in an established major city where many other new churches had failed, accepted the idea of launching large and launched with over 300. It grew to over 400 people in under 8 months. Often, churches that launch large are able to grow to several hundred or to over 1,000 people in a

few years. Then they, in turn, have the stability to start other churches. These testimonies should expand your vision of the potential God wants to fulfill through your desire and calling to start a new church.

### DESIGNING THE DNA

As you move toward becoming a launching church, ingrain the desire to start new churches into the DNA of your current church. Cast the vision. Make sure your people know your church will eventually start other churches — locally and around the world. Put money aside to assist in starting churches, even if its only \$50 or \$100 per month. Plant the seeds. Mobilize early mission teams to work with new churches in your area or on national mission trips. Remind your people that you are a church committed to proliferating

## Finding Focus

If I asked, “Who do you want your new church to reach?” you would most likely respond, “Everyone.” While you want to share the gospel with anyone who will listen, developing a clear picture of the demographic you are targeting will help you effectively reach the most people from the start. *FOCUS* on the specific group to which God is calling you. Your focus population should be:

**F**indable  
**O**utward-oriented  
**C**ommunity-based  
**U**nreached  
**S**pecific

To find focus for your new church, ask yourself three questions:

#### 1. Who are the key population groups living in my area?

Do some demographic research. Do not just go with what you see. If you have lived in an area for a long time, you need to examine it even more closely. Studies show that once people live in an area for a while, they do not really see the community as it is. They only see their small corner and translate that personal reality onto the whole area. Find the facts.

#### 2. What population group is not being reached effectively?

Invariably, there are certain groups in your community who are less exposed to the gospel than others. Perhaps a housing boom has recently attracted young couples. Maybe a certain ethnic demographic has just moved in. You will effectively influence more people if you can couple your new church plant with the rising population trend of an unreached group.

#### 3. To what population group do I best relate?

Of the varied people groups in your area, to whom do you most relate? You will best relate to people who are similar, and slightly younger, than you. You may have a heart for a different population group, but that does not mean you are called or equipped to reach them.

Your sweet spot lies at the intersection of these three questions. At The Journey, we discovered we needed to focus on the young professionals moving to Manhattan. This demographic is one we can effectively and enthusiastically reach. By learning to FOCUS, our answer was clear.

— NELSON SEARCY



the gospel outside of your doors. Here are three ways for a growing church to move toward starting its first church:

**1. Find a church planter inside your church.** New churches, especially, often raise up planters quickly. Be on the lookout for people who might have this desire and calling. Give them resources and take them to conferences with you.

**2. Find a church planter who is moving to your area.** If there is already a solid church planter in your region, seek out a partnership. If there is a good match, jump in as one of his financial partners.

**3. Find where your current financial partners are working and join them.** The churches that helped you financially may have other partnerships they are pursuing. If they are doing something that ignites your passion, get on board.

Seek God's will, so you do not fall into the common trap of dualistic thinking. Too many growing churches who consider starting other churches make the mistake of asking, *Is it God's will for us to grow larger or for us to plant other churches?* This is not an either/or proposition. God intends for you to do both. I call this bifocal vision. Keep one eye on the growth and health of your church and one eye on planting other churches as quickly as possible.

As a model for starting other churches, look to the guideline in Acts 1:8 and lay out a 3- to 5-year plan for planting churches in each area:

- locally (Jerusalem)
- regionally (Judea)
- nationally/cross culturally (Samaria)
- globally (the world)

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**"Pastor, while you were on vacation, the youth pastor brought our church into a revival. We have had hundreds of conversions. Thousands have confessed their sins. Enemies have become friends. Many of us are planning missions trips for the fall. And we even used the baptismal tank again. 'Welcome back. You were missed.'"**

## Fast-Growing Church Plants

**According to studies, most new churches start and remain small.** However, strong interest exists in the *launch large* approach.

Acts 1 and 2 indicate that the Early Church went from 120 believers to 3,120 believers overnight.

In the first year after Christ's death, the number of believers increased to over 20,000.<sup>1</sup> Church planter Ron Sylvia is one of the voices that believes "launching large is congruent with the best of missionary theology and with the methods of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Such large starts lead to momentum, credibility, and status as self-supporting will soon follow.<sup>3</sup>

Stephen Gray is a researcher who compared 60 fast-growing church plants and 52 struggling church plants to try to understand the factors that enabled churches to grow larger than 200 in their first 3 years. He has a new book developing this research called *Planting Fast Growing Churches*.

Gray found that in successful church plants:

- 88 percent have church planting teams.
- 63 percent have a core group of 26 to 75 people.
- 75 percent use a contemporary style of worship.
- 80 percent put 10 percent or more of their budgets toward outreach and evangelism.
- 16 percent have a higher rate of full-time pastors than struggling church plants.
- 63 percent of planters leading fast-growing plants raise additional funding, compared to 23 percent of those that are struggling.

Church planters leading fast-growing church plants felt a greater sense of support from their pastoral colleagues and surrounding churches, they have more fellowship with other pastors, their work is more highly celebrated by their denomination, and they experience far less negativity from their direct superiors than did those planters leading struggling church plants.

— **ED STETZER**, Alpharetta, Georgia. From "Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches," Leadership Network. Used with permission.

### NOTES

1. Bill Easum and Bil Cornelius, *Go Big: Lead Your Church To Explosive Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 7.
2. Ron Sylvia, *Starting New Churches on Purpose* (Lake Forest, Calif.: Purpose Driven Publishing, 2006), 108.
3. *Ibid.*, 109.



### Priorities In Fast-Growing Church Plants

**Church plants that grow faster are also intentional about their outreach priorities.**

For example, 80 percent of fast-growing churches put 10 percent of their budgets toward outreach and evangelism compared to 42 percent of struggling churches committing this percentage. Fast-growing churches also use more contemporary worship styles that are more culturally relevant to the unchurched people they are trying to reach.

Other significant findings that differentiate fast-growing church plants from struggling church plants during the 3-year period following launch include:

1. Only 9 percent of fast-growing church planters are given salary support past 4 years; 44 percent of struggling church planters are supported past 3 years.
2. 63 percent of fast-growing church planters raise additional funding for the church plant. Only 23 percent of struggling church planters raise additional funding.
3. Planters leading fast-growing church plants are given more freedom to cast their own vision, choose their own target audience, and have more freedom in the spending of finances.

4. Fast-growing church plants have multiple paid staff. Two paid staff members was a majority among the church plants.

5. A majority of fast-growing church plants utilize two or more volunteer staff as part of the church planting team prior to public launch.

6. Fast-growing church plants utilize more seed families than struggling church plants.

7. Fast-growing church plants use both preview services and small groups to build the initial core group.

8. Fast-growing church plants that use preview services used three or more of these services prior to public launch. A large contingent of these churches use over five.

9. Fast-growing church plants have children and teen ministries in place at time of launch and offer at least three ministry opportunities to first-time attendees.

10. 57 percent of fast-growing church plants teach financial stewardship during the first 6 months from public launch. By contrast only 40 percent of struggling church plants teach financial stewardship.

— **ED STETZER**, Alpharetta, Georgia .

From "Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches," Leadership Network. Used with permission.

Launching a new church that impacts the community, reaches the lost, grows rapidly, helps people mature in their faith, and then starts more churches nearby and around the world is entirely possible — with God. When He calls you to become a launching church, give all of the potential and possibilities over to Him and let Him lead your work. Then and only then will the churches He wants to start through you become churches of greater success and significance than you've ever imagined. 🙏



**NELSON SEARCY**, Manhattan, New York, pastors The Journey Church, launched in 2002 with no money, members, or meeting location, and now one of the fastest-growing churches in the U.S. He is the author of *Launch: Starting a New Church From Scratch* (Regal Books). He is also the founder of [www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com](http://www.ChurchLeaderInsights.com) where he offers \$75 in free Church Planting resources. Click on "Free Resources."









# The Seven Most Important Questions When Going Multisite

If you are among the growing numbers of churches that are considering reproducing through multiple locations, here are the seven most important questions you need to answer.

By Dave Ferguson

**I**laughed when *Mental Floss* magazine strained their editorial brains to compile a list of “The 25 Most Important Questions in the History of the Universe.” The list included questions that really matter such as:

- “What makes No. 2 pencils so special?”
- “Who’s that AOL guy who eerily knows when you’ve got mail?”
- “How can I win at that ultra-important-corporate-decision-making-process — rock-paper-scissor?”

While *Mental Floss* may list those among the most important questions, none of those questions are on the most important list for churches that are developing multiple sites.

Over the past 20 years, a movement of churches has emerged that sees the best and most effective way for reaching out through reproducing locations of their church. The following shows the dramatic increase in the number of churches that have multiple locations:

- 1990: 10 multisite churches in the United States
  - 1998: 100 multisite churches in the United States
  - 2004: 1,500 multisite churches in the United States
- Today, 30 percent of all churches are considering the

multisite option, and the top 100 fastest-growing churches in the country average 2.4 sites.

If you are among the growing numbers of churches that are considering reproducing through multiple locations, here are the seven most important questions you need to answer:

## DREAM QUESTION: “WHAT IS THE DREAM?”

When pastors tell me they want to go to multiple sites, I ask, “How many sites?” or “How big is your dream?” If they say, “We would like to be a church of two or three sites,” then their challenges are not necessarily easy, but they are simple and straightforward. I often tell churches wanting to go from one site to two sites that it is like adding another worship service. The difference: Instead of adding another worship service at their current location, they are going to add another worship service at a different location. If pastors think of it in those terms, it dramatically reduces the complexity.

The biggest challenge going from one site to two sites is the fact it requires the pastoral staff to equip others to do ministry. Most churches with two locations will not be able to afford to double their staff, so equipping cannot be lip service. Your staff will need to equip lay leaders to do ministry because







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they can physically only be at one location at a time.

If a church answers the dream question, "We want to be a church of four or more sites," then the challenges are increasingly complex. These challenges will include deciding what will be decentralized to each location and what will be centralized. The question of centralized versus decentralized will include decision-making processes, curriculum creation and content, finances, etc.

One person who pushed me to dream bigger is Lyle Schaller. He ribs me by looking me in the eye and saying, "Dave, your biggest problem is that I have a bigger dream for your church than you do." Every time he says that, my dream gets bigger. Right now I am dreaming of a church with 200 sites locally and 100,000 3C Christ followers (followers who celebrate, connect, and contribute). And that does not include NewThing, because that is another dream.

For some of you reading this, your biggest problem is that God has a bigger dream for your church than you do. So start by prayerfully answering the question: "What is the dream?"

### BRAND QUESTION: "WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR BRAND?"

When McDonalds opens a new location, they may or may not have a playland, but they will have hamburgers. When Starbucks opens a new store, they may or may not have a drive-thru, but they will have coffee. There are some things essential to a brand while other things are optional. One of the tough decisions every church has to make when reproducing sites is determining which ministries are essential and which are optional.

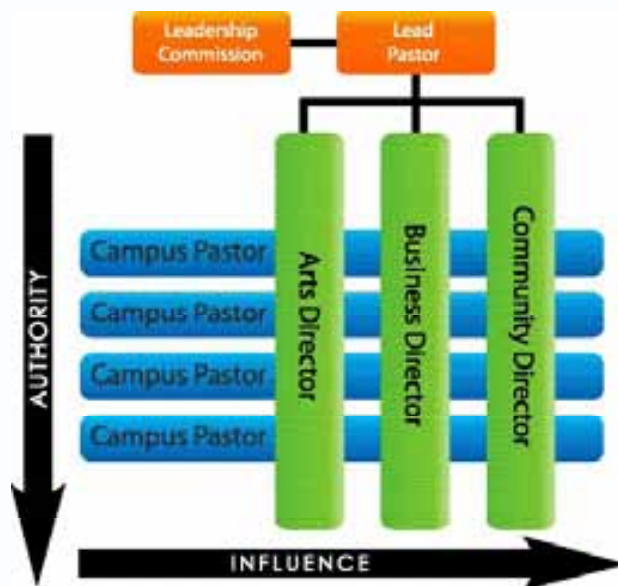
When Community starts a new site, we know there are four essentials to our brand: a celebration service, adult small groups, Kids City, and hospitality. At some of our larger sites, we have a support and recovery ministry and a school for the arts. I love our support and recovery ministry and school for the arts, but we cannot afford to reproduce everything we do at our established sites at our new sites.

Newer churches understand this question because when you start a church from limited resources, you are forced to answer the question "What is essential?" New churches will then implement those programs and that, in many ways, determines the brand of the new church. Established churches struggle with this question because over the years churches add programs and not keep to just the essentials. I have known of churches that are going from one site to two sites that want to reproduce every program and ministry including the bookstore at the new site. This is not answering the brand question; this is avoiding it.

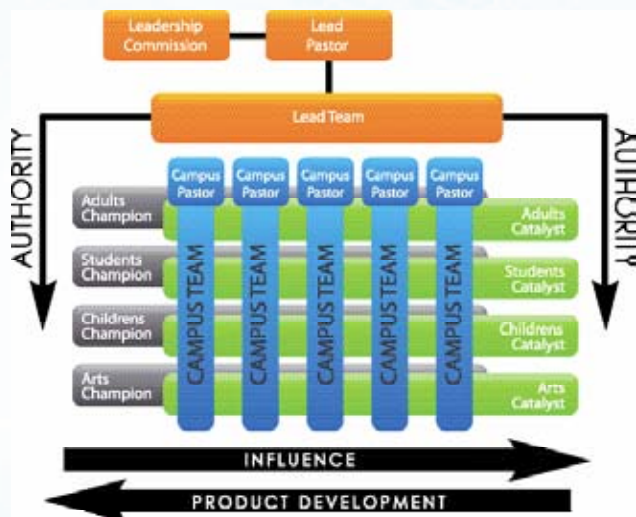
### ORGANIZATION QUESTION: "WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN?"

If you answered the dream question by saying two to four

sites, I recommend an organizational design that takes your existing vertical ministry silos and adds a horizontal process across these ministries. The horizontal silos represent each campus. In this organizational design, the authority resides in the vertical silos and influence resides with the campus pastor in the horizontal silos. The organizational design looks like this:



If you answered the dream question by saying four or more sites, take the previous organizational design and turn it on its side. The biggest change is that the authority now resides with the campus pastor and the influence resides with the ministries. This is a necessary shift to make sure effective ministry is happening in every context. The organizational design looks like this:





This is a critical question for churches that dream of having more than four sites. If you do not answer this question, you will most likely not realize your dream.

### LEADERSHIP QUESTION: “DO YOU HAVE A LEADERSHIP FARM SYSTEM?”

Multisite churches are like baseball teams. Baseball teams need a continual pipeline of new and young players who can take the field to improve their team and replace retiring players. These new players will come via free agency or through the team’s farm system. The more expensive way is to pay big bucks and sign a free agent from another team. The more efficient means is to create a farm system that constantly develops talent from within your organization.

Since a multisite church’s dream is to reproduce new sites, like a baseball team, it creates the need for a farm system of new and young leaders to fill ministry roles. A church can go the free agent route and recruit leaders from other churches, but churches with big dreams will never see them fulfilled if they depend on other churches and organizations to do their leadership development for them.

Churches that have created a farm system for developing more and better leaders usually do it through their small group ministry. At Community we have several campus pastors and with our NewThing Network we have several church planters who have come up through the following farm system:



About a year after we started Community, Troy and Janet McMahon decided to check out our new church. Immediately

they knew this would be their church home, and I knew Troy was a leader with potential. Troy was working for General Mills and was a *golden boy* on their management fast track. I invited him to join a small group I was starting and become my apprentice leader. When Troy said yes to become my apprentice leader, this was the first step on a long journey of developing his leadership gifts.

I started meeting with Troy once a week for breakfast. We soon became good friends. Over the next 2 months we shared the leadership of this new small group. Sometimes I would lead and sometimes he would lead. After each small group meeting, we would debrief over breakfast and I would invest in Troy. In less than a year Troy was ready to start his own small group. He easily gathered a group of people including a new apprentice leader he would develop. In addition to the weekly small group meeting, Troy also met weekly with his new apprentice leader investing in him until he was ready to start his own group. This reproduction process again took a little less than a year. Troy then moved from being a leader to a coach of leaders.

A few years later I was looking to add a staff person to oversee the business aspect of our ministry. Because of Troy’s leadership gifts and proven commitment to the mission and vision of our church, I asked Troy to join the staff. He not only said yes; he also raised some of his own salary. Within the next year we prepared to go to multiple sites for the first time. I asked Troy to be our first campus pastor. Troy had successfully moved through our leadership pipeline: individual → apprentice leader → leader → coach → staff → campus pastor.

A little over a year ago Troy approached me about starting a new church. Although Troy had never been to seminary, it was clear he not only had the gifting but also had the proven track record to be effective as a new church pastor. In 2007, Troy’s family and 20 others moved from Chicago to Kansas City to start Restore Community Church. The new church launched under Troy’s leadership had more than 400 at the first service. Within 6 months their average attendance was 500. And it will not surprise you to know he had on his staff an apprentice campus pastor and two apprentice church planters whom he was developing.

Do you have a farm system that is growing campus pastors? Where are you going to find the leaders and staff for those sites of which you are dreaming?

### ARTIST QUESTION: “DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR ARTIST DEVELOPMENT?”

Of all the multisite questions on this list, this question most often is overlooked. In the same way you need a leadership-development strategy, you also need an artist-development strategy. Reproducing a new site can be looked at as simply



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reproducing your small group events and your large group events. Your large group events require artists to facilitate and lead worship services. These artists include those who are up front: musicians, vocalists, and actors; as well as those behind the scenes: sound technicians and videographers.

We have both an informal and a formal process for developing more and better artists. Our informal process is through apprenticeships. We encourage actors to have an understudy, our musicians to have a second chair, and our technicians to have people shadow them. It is not unusual at Community to see this artist development process play itself out onstage during a celebration service.

Recently when Bill Carroll was leading worship, he announced to the congregation, "Please welcome my new apprentice worship leader Chris Heller." At that point Bill stepped back and a back-up band member stepped to the front of the

stage with his guitar and led everyone in one song. After that song Bill finished leading the rest of the worship service. This not only gave Chris his first opportunity to lead worship in front of a large group but also modeled an important value for the entire church. Bill continued to give Chris — who is a talented artist — more opportunities to develop his gifts. Today, Chris is on staff at our newest site as the creative arts director. The last time I was at that location, he had Mark on stage giving him his first chance to lead worship as his apprentice. That is the informal process for developing artists.

Our formal process for developing artists is through our school for the arts. We currently have over 400 artists enrolled in classes and workshops, developing and growing in their talents.

If you are planning on reproducing more locations, what

## Principles for Multisite Churches

### MULTISITE IS ABOUT QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

Becoming multisite is not about being a megachurch or getting huge. It is about taking who you are, reproducing the ethos or quality experience of your church, and bringing it to more people. The multisite church is really just one form of what I call the reproducing church — the idea that you are continuing to produce at all levels, whether it has to do with reproducing leaders and artists at a micro level, or reproducing congregations, campuses, and even churches at the macro level.

### MULTISITE IS ABOUT MISSION, NOT SIZE

We often see examples of large mega (even giga) churches that are multisite. But fundamentally, any church that has *one* leader who is ready to start a new thing can reproduce itself. You only need one leader. We need to keep it that simple. Remember, larger churches are much more complex organizations and less of an organism, so they are harder to reproduce than a small church.

It is incumbent on church leadership to start new churches. The senior or lead pastor must bless that and not be afraid of it, or afraid of losing people. That is a scarcity mentality.

If smaller churches have the right ethos and a missional DNA, they will be able to reproduce. Even from the beginning, start thinking, *How can we do multiple locations?* Church planters are transitioning from thinking, *How can I plant a church, grow it, and make a big impact?* to the sharpest and the brightest planters thinking from day one, *How can I do this in multiple locations?*

### MULTISITE IS ABOUT GOOD STEWARDSHIP, NOT EXTRAVAGANCE

Community Christian Church has nine locations locally, and we have also started 21 churches internationally in less than 4 years. We want to plant churches *and* start new sites, but right now we are focusing more on multisite for a good reason: stewardship. We have looked at retention rates. When we first

started CCC, we had 465 people at the first service. Our average attendance our first quarter was 180. That gave us a 39 percent retention rate.

Then we started a second campus and had 552 people at the first service, 360 of which stayed, giving us a 65 percent retention rate. We spent about the same money launching both the church and the second site. We started our third site and had 606 people at the first service, and 350 stayed. This was a 58 percent retention rate.

So, when you compare the original church plant — at 39 percent retention rate — the second campus had a 26 percent increase in retention. At our third site, we had a 19 percent increase. So a basic stewardship question is, "What is your return on your dollar?" Within a certain geographical proximity, multisite allows you to reach more people for the same amount of money, or reach more people for less money.

— DAVE FERGUSON, Naperville, Illinois



## Church-Planting Churches

**We are witnessing an increased interest in church planting** within many local churches today. Twenty-five years ago it was almost impossible to find a local church that had church planting as a major initiative. However, today an increasing number of new churches want to be “church-planting churches.” Thus, most of the churches that want to be “reproducing churches” are less than 20 years old.

Denominations appear to be encouraging their churches to become church-planting churches with some positive results. However, it appears that although denominations are reporting a marked overall increase in church planting and in parent churches, most denominations report that only 15 percent of their churches are actually parenting churches.

Churches that aggressively plant churches operate differently from other churches. Many of these churches have paid staff assigned to church planting. Also, these churches typically become more involved with other partners and plant more churches. The Leadership Network research reveals a direct correlation between the senior pastor’s commitment to church planting and the church’s ability to plant successfully.

Size matters among churches that plant other churches. Churches that are 200 or less in attendance are four times more likely to plant a church than churches of 1,000 or more in attendance while churches between 200–500 in attendance are

twice as likely to plant a church than their larger counterparts.

All the recent church plants that have reproduced a daughter church see church planting as part of their DNA from the beginning, often having it written into their chartering documents or taught in membership classes.

— **ED STETZER**, Alpharetta, Georgia.  
From “Who Starts New Churches?”  
Leadership Network. Used with permission.

### Smaller Congregations Plant More Churches

# of churches responding in each attendance category	average attendance	number of plants	average plants/church
38	1-199	271	7.13
39	200-499	279	3.23
19	500-999	126	1.727
77	1,000+	1,109	1.695

are your formal and informal processes for developing more and better artists?

### FUNDING QUESTION: “IS YOUR FUNDING IN PLACE?”

At Community we have nine locations. The campus launches that have gone the smoothest and have been the most enjoyable answered this question. The launches that have been the most challenging did not answer this question. Before you start a new site, make sure you crunch numbers and know you have the funding in place.

The amount of funding a new site will need is different based on expectations and context. Some megachurches expect a new site to have more than 1,000 in attendance at the launch and grow from there. These new sites will have budgets well over \$1 million. Other churches will start new sites with a single volunteer leader and will do it on a shoestring. Chances are your church is somewhere in between and the best way to answer the funding question

is to do the following:

1. Prepare a pro forma for the first 3 years of the new site.
2. Know and communicate the date you expect the site to be self-supporting.
3. Make sure you have secured all the funding needed for the prelaunch phase.

Adding a new site will most likely mean new staff. These staff members are taking on a new mission in a new location and this should be leveraged for fund raising. In new church work, it is a common understanding that if a church planter cannot raise enough money to start the new church, he probably does not have the leadership gifts to lead a new church. At Community we encourage new staff at new sites to raise part of their salary. It is both a test of their leadership and an opportunity that should not be missed. Some churches that have started new sites have expected the new staff to raise all of their support.

As the new site begins to gather a launch team prior to





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**The alignment question asks how you are going to keep all the sites moving toward the same vision with the same values.**



its opening, we have also expected the launch team to raise significant dollars toward the start of the new site. To not ask the launch team to sacrifice financially for this cause would be doing them a disservice.

Make sure you answer the funding question. Failure to answer this question will not only impact the new site, but also the existing church.

### **ALIGNMENT QUESTION: “HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MAINTAIN ALIGNMENT?”**

When we decided to go to multiple sites, Lyle Schaller gave me this prediction: “Dave, there will be lots of churches that will go to two sites, almost no churches with three sites, and lots more that will reproduce to four and beyond.” Ten years later he was right. Why would this be true? Some churches answered the alignment question and others did not.

The alignment question asks how you are going to keep all the sites moving toward the same vision with the same values. If there is vision and value drift by any of the locations, it will slow down the whole church. But if you get all locations moving toward the same vision with the same values, you

will exponentially increase the impact your church can make. Some churches with a big dream have stopped at two locations because they did not answer the alignment question. Other churches are seeing their big dream realized as all their sites are moving forward in step and having a huge impact.

At Community we have developed what we call the “The Four 1s” that keep us in alignment:

- 1 Vision: every site is pursuing the same vision.
- 1 Big idea: every site is being taught the same big idea.
- 1 Budget: we have multiple locations, but one church budget.
- 1 Eldership: we have a plurality of elders that represent all sites and oversee the church.

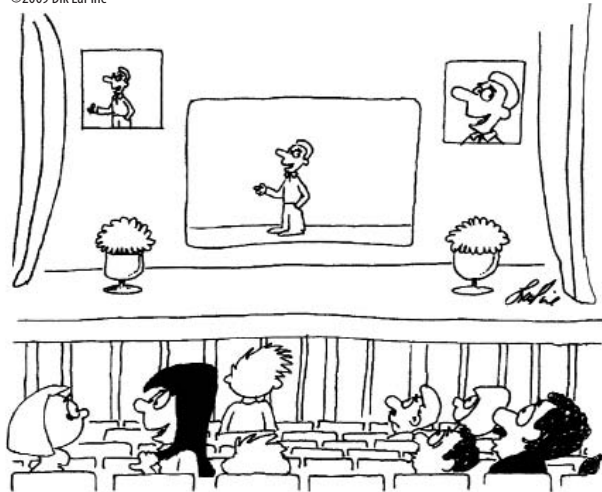
If your dream is more than two locations, answering the alignment question is critical.

If you want to be successful in your multisite transition, make sure you answer these most important questions. Make sure you know the answers. Make sure your team knows the answers. And if these questions have scared you off, then maybe it will make you smile knowing that Elwood Edwards is the man behind the AOL message that 63 million times a day says, “You’ve got mail.” ☺



**DAVE FERGUSON** is lead pastor, Community Christian Church/NewThing Network, Naperville, Illinois.

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**“That’s our pastor on the big screen. He’s never been to this campus. None of us have ever met him. Why, he’s the best pastor we’ve ever had.”**







# Organic Church

Real Christianity



Religiosity

By Neil Cole



# Are we planting **religious organizations** *rather than* planting the powerful **presence of Christ?**

**W**

## hat questions do

people ask about your church? "How big is your church?" "Where is your church?" "What kind of music do you have?" "What denomination is your church?" These are things *about*

churches. But what *is* a church?

After trying to plant churches, I asked, "Lord, what is a church?" I had been trying to plant and grow something without knowing what it was. This question led me to some precarious understandings that have questioned almost everything I once accepted as normal in a church.

### OUR VISION OF CHURCH: LIMITED BY OUR EXPERIENCE

I went to my peers and leaders and asked, "What is church?" They realized they might not really know what church is either.

We know what our experience is. We know what our traditions are. We speak as though we know the answer to this question. But in reality we found that many had never asked this question. Rather than starting by asking what church is, we had been asking how we can make churches become bigger or better, or how we can start more of them.

We are tempted to define church according to our experience. We think we know something because of familiarity. By defining church this way, we are assured we are always

right. But this solution perpetuates our current problems. It is vital that we look at Scripture with honesty and courage as we try to define church. Once we ask the question, however, we must be ready to expect the unexpected.

When I was a seminary student, teachers gave me a definition of church that was more of a description. They explained church embodied these five characteristics:

1. A group of believers gathered together regularly ...
2. Who consider themselves a church ...
3. That has qualified elders present ...
4. That regularly practices the ordinances of water baptism and Communion as well as church discipline ...
5. And that has an agreed-on set of doctrinal beliefs and evangelistic purpose.

But my question was still with me, so I asked what is mis-

sing from this list. Since that time I have put the same list and question before several groups. What is missing? After a few minutes of responses, I tell them what I think is missing if they have not already found it.

### JESUS IS MISSING

One of my respected mentors, a theologian and career missionary, told me we assume Jesus is in the definition because it is *believers* who have gathered. My response: Why would you verify that qualified elders are present, but assume that Jesus is present?

This assumption betrays a serious problem. The church is often more

The presence of  
Jesus is crucial to  
what church is. His  
**presence**  
is life; His absence  
is death.



# Organic Church

about the people and the institutions that gather in the name of Jesus than it is about the risen Christ, alive and active with His people. If we can leave Jesus out of our definition of church, then we can be church without Him.

## SEEING JESUS

As the world looks at our churches, particularly in the West, it only sees what people have done or what programs they are doing. We scheme, plot, and plan.

What can we do to make our church more appealing to the people in our community? This is, once again, the wrong question. It is as if we are trying to boost God's approval ratings. God's name is at risk, not ours, and we are not responsible for protecting His reputation. He can handle that by himself.

A better question is: Where is Jesus seen at work in our midst? Where do we see lives changed and communities transformed by the power of the gospel? Where do we see fathers restored to a life of holiness and responsibility? Where do we see daughters reconciling with fathers? Where do we see addicts who no longer live under the bondage of chemical dependency? Where are wealthy businessmen making restitution for past crimes that went unnoticed? These are the questions that lead people to recognize the living presence of Jesus, loving and governing people's lives as their King. When people encounter Jesus, alive and present as King, they get a taste of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

If Jesus is missing in our understanding of church, He will

likely be missing in our expression of church as well.

## WHAT A CHURCH IS: JESUS FOLLOWED TOGETHER

I understand church as: The presence of Jesus among His people who have been called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on this planet.

If Jesus is missing in our understanding of church, He will likely be missing in our **expression** of church as well.

Granted, this is broad, but I like a broad definition of church. Scripture does not give a precise definition, so I am not going to do what God has not done. I want something that captures what Scripture says about the kingdom of God. In one of only two places where Jesus mentions church in the Gospels, He says, "For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them" (Matthew 18:20). His

## You Would Be Surprised What People Will Do for Jesus

### Churches ask for volunteers

**all the time.** They offer spiritual-gift assessments to see where people fit best in their program, but they never offer challenging experiences for people. Handing out bulletins, directing traffic wearing a bright orange vest, chaperoning a youth function, or changing a diaper in the nursery may help the church, but none of it is a

Do people see church as something worth giving their lives for?

a-week worship event to an ongoing spiritual family on mission together. Then people will see church as something

task worth giving your life to. Many who struggle to do these things have a nagging unspoken question: "Did Jesus come so I can do *this*?"

We must transition from seeing church as a once-

worth giving their lives for.

People need one another more than they need another inspiring message. You would be surprised what people will do for Jesus, or for a brother or sister, that they will not do for a vision statement and a capital giving campaign.

— NEIL COLE



presence must be an important element of church.

To a church that has lost sight of its true love, Jesus says these harsh words: "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ... Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Revelation 2:1,5). To a disobedient and unhealthy church, Jesus threatens to remove the lampstand (representing the church) from the presence of Jesus. The presence of Jesus is crucial to what church is. His presence is life; His absence is death. He is the most essential portion of who and what we are. He should be the most recognizable aspect the world sees.

In seminary I learned all five of the ingredients listed above concerning a New Testament church from Acts 1. But you still do not have a church. In Acts 2 the church is born. What is the difference between Acts 1 and Acts 2? The Holy Spirit fell on the disciples, filled them, and the church was born. The Lord's active presence is the most important element that sets us apart from the Elks Club. To leave this out of our understanding of church is not just foolish, it is a demonic maneuver that is devastating us.

In many of the churches in the West, ministry is done *for* Jesus, but not *by* Jesus. Therein lies a *big* difference. If we evaluate our churches not by attendance or buildings but by how recognizable Jesus is in our midst, our influence will be more far-reaching and our strategies will be far more dynamic. Unfortunately, it is possible to do all of the things that make up the five qualities of traditional churches but fail to demonstrate anything of the person or work of Christ in a neighborhood. But if we start our entire understanding of church with Christ's presence among us and working within us, then we will expect to see much more.

## ORGANIC CHURCH

We have come to refer to some of the ideals of church-planting movements as an organic church. By organic, I do not mean it is merely pesticide free. It is a matter of churches being alive and vibrant as living organisms.

The core reality is not how the followers are organized, disciplined, or helped. The core reality is that people are following, loving, and obeying Jesus Christ. Christ alive, forming spiritual families and working with them to fulfill His mission, is the living reality of the organic church. The church is an embodiment of the risen Jesus. No wonder the Bible refers to the church as the body of Christ.

## CHRIST FIRST

Mike Frost and Alan Hirsch, in *The Shaping of Things To Come*, have challenged the way we order our thinking about Jesus and the church. Typically, we think of church as something

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## This Scares the Hell Into the Devil



### One side effect of pursuing excellence in church production

is that common Christians become spectators who contribute a percentage of their income — but little more — to keep things going. We have raised the bar so high on how church is done that few believe they could ever do it themselves. The dark side of this endeavor is that we have lowered the bar of what it means to be a Christian, so simply showing up to the weekly 1-hour event with some regularity with your checkbook is all it takes.

My goal is to reverse this. I want to lower the bar of how church is done so anyone can do it, and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple so people will do it.

I met with an organic church made up of high school students. As we were singing praises to the Lord, I felt His pleasure. I asked the students to share the biggest church they had ever been to. Southern California has many megachurches. Several were mentioned, ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 attendees.

"I think Satan is more intimidated by this little church of 15 kids than by any of those Godzilla-sized churches," I said. They all snickered and looked around the room at one another with smiles.

I then showed them why I thought this way. I asked, "How many of you think you could start a church like one of those megachurches?" No one raised a hand. I then asked, "How many of you think you could start a church like this one?" All raised their hands.

The snickering stopped. It was one of those holy moments that are hard to forget. I then asked them to look around the room at all the raised hands, and I said, "I assure you, Satan is terrified by this. And he should be."

— NEIL COLE



# Organic Church

to mobilize so people will come to Jesus. Instead, Jesus leads people in mission, who in turn bring forth fruitful churches. Frost and Hirsch show the right sequence for our thinking by beginning with Christ. They say that clear Christology will inform our best missiology, which in turn leads to the most fruitful ecclesiology.

## Christology → Missiology → Ecclesiology

Christ comes first. He then commands us into His mission. Church is the result. We often do things backward. We think that the best way to do mission is to plant churches, but this is reversed: The best way to plant churches is to do mission. We think that if we start a church, disciples will be the product. But if we make disciples and put Jesus first in people's lives, we will start a church. Unfortunately, it is easy to start a church and never make disciples. Jesus never commanded us to plant a church; He commanded us to make disciples.

I say often, "Do not plant churches. Plant Jesus. Plant the

gospel of His kingdom and let the church grow from that." The byproduct of our mission is His kingdom spread on earth via building His church.

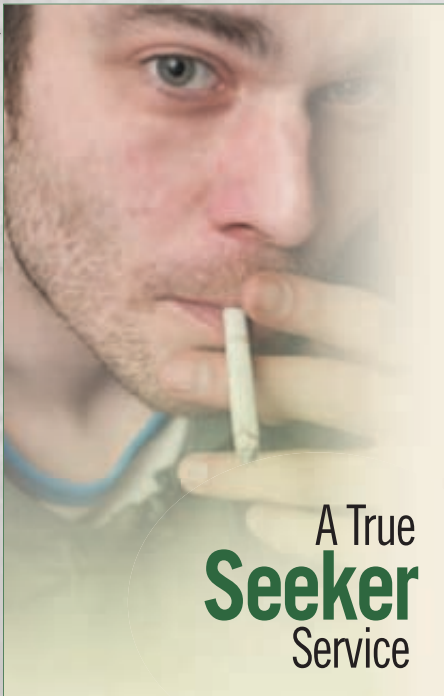
We need to focus on planting Jesus, and let Jesus build His church and work through His church. Jesus commanded us to connect people to Him as their King. We are to extend the reign of Christ on earth. The byproduct of this work is church.

## ORGANIC CHURCHES REPRODUCE

We confuse the fruit with the seed. We must plant the seed of the gospel of the Kingdom and the fruit that grows will be changed lives living out their faith together.

The true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but more apple trees. Within the fruit is the seed of the next generation. Christ in us is the seed of the next generation. The difference this seed can leave in the soil of a people group is significant. We all carry within us the seed of future generations of the church. We are to take that seed and plant it in the soil of

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## A True Seeker Service

If you want to reach this world for Christ, you will need to learn to sit in the smoking section.

### Today we expect the lost to come to us. In the Bible, God is always the Seeker going after those who are lost.

He pursued Adam in the Garden and Moses in the desert. He pulled Jonah off the bottom of the sea and Peter off the top of the sea. Jesus found Matthew in an office and Paul out on the road.

God became a man and entered the world through a birth canal just like the rest of us. He chose to come to us on our turf, rather than expecting us to rise to His. Jesus preached everywhere that the kingdom of God has come near. He came to seek and to save the lost, and He invites us to join Him.

If you want to reach this world for Christ, you will need to learn to sit in the smoking section.

Many ask: "How can we make the church more attractive to the lost?" If we start down this path we unintentionally leave our true path: Letting people see how attractive Jesus is. It's all about Jesus, *not us*. For every step we take toward impressing people with our own strengths we move further from letting

them become impressed with His.

God always prefers to reveal himself in weak things rather strong. It is the simple vessels that often reveal God's glory more than having to find Him in the midst of laser lights and fog machines. The curiosity of a child's question; the embrace of a loving grandmother; the accepting handshake of a good friend; the smile of a proud father; the warmth of a soft shoulder to cry on — these things reveal God's character more than any sermon.

Love for one another is a powerful ingredient in transforming the world, but sitting in an auditorium listening to a preacher talk about it is not as powerful as being able to see it and taste it first hand. A "neighbor nudge" for 2 minutes on Sunday morning is not enough.

Bono said, "If Jesus were on earth you'd find Him in a gay bar in San Francisco. He'd be with people suffering from AIDS. These are the new lepers. If you want to find out where Jesus would be hanging out, it'll always be with the lepers."

— NEIL COLE



## House Churches

**House churches are increasing in number and popularity.** While they are certainly not yet “mainstream,” they have potential to become much more influential in the

“relationship with Christ” was a key value of their church. The same percentage also stated the importance of prayer in their meetings.

spiritual landscape of America due to their simplicity, their intentionality around discipleship, and their ability to multiply rapidly.

### COMMON VALUES

In the Leadership Network research, house church leaders communicated certain values with a high occurrence. Ninety-seven percent of those surveyed stated that the

Maturing as a disciple was a key value of 86 percent of those responding and 85 percent identified reading the Bible as a key value. A pervasive and common perception among respondents is that a personal, intimate relationship with God is the driving force within house churches. “Small groups of Christians gathered together for discipleship, accountability, and to act on the commands of Jesus” remarks Bill Tenny-Brittian regarding the life of his house church.

Evangelism as a key value ranked significantly lower than the internal value of personal growth in faith. This lower emphasis on evangelism versus personal spiritual growth may reveal why there is not a greater rate of growth in the house church arena.

— **ED STETZER.** From “Who Starts New Churches?” Leadership Network. Used with permission.

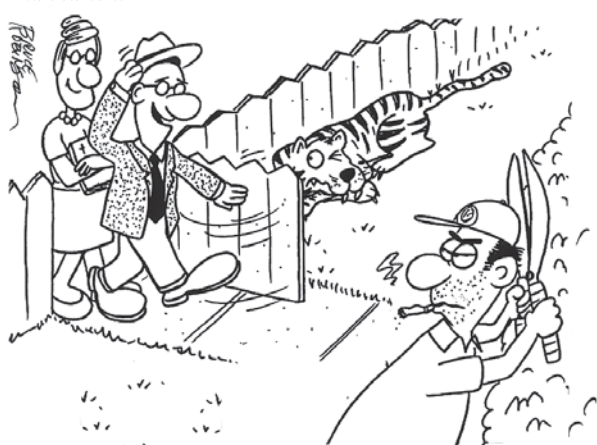
every people group under the authority of our King.

The difference this seed can leave in the soil of a people group is significant. If we put Christ and His kingdom first, we leave behind agents under submission to the reign of their King.

### CULTIVATING FRUIT IN ITS OWN CULTURE

Our mission is to find and develop Christ followers rather

©2009 Bruce Robinson



**“Howdy! We’re from the First Church visitation committee. You don’t have a dog, do you?”**

than church members. There is a big difference in these two outcomes. We see this difference in transformed lives that bring change to neighborhoods and nations. Simply gathering a group of people who subscribe to a common set of beliefs is not worthy of Jesus and the sacrifice He made for us.

We have planted religious organizations rather than planting the powerful presence of Christ. Often a religious organization has Western structure, with values not found in the indigenous soil. If we would simply plant Jesus in these cultures and help His church emerge indigenously from the soil, then a self-sustaining and reproducing church movement would emerge, not dependent upon the West and not removed from the culture in which it grows. Missions would be far less expensive, much more simple, and a whole lot more effective. Simply investing more money in a failed system results in a more expensive failure. We need to rethink our understanding of church and mission, and put Christ first in all of it. 🌱



**NEIL COLE**, Signal Hill, California, is founder and executive director of Church Multiplication Associates ([www.cmresources.org](http://www.cmresources.org)), and the author of *Organic Church*, *Cultivating a Life for God*, and *Search & Rescue: Becoming a Disciple Who Makes a Difference*.



*For our neighbors!*

# Compassion Planting:

Service Power  
That Grows Healthy  
New Churches

By David Mills







**Service to others is  
not an option  
if we are to be credible  
with people under 30.**

**A** growing number of church planters are making community service a central focus of their churches. The philosophy behind this ranges from those who launch their church at the culmination of multiple service projects, to others who will not start formal planting activity until they have completed 6 months of service in their community. As they grow, their first hire will not be a youth, music, or administrative person. Rather, it might be a community coordinator. These churches will do more than random service events with a marketing focus; they will establish leadership and evangelism around community-serving activities that will shape the DNA of their congregation.

People identify this emerging trend by several names: compassion-based planting; incarnational or missional; externally focused; community based; or compassion by design. No matter the label, these churches are growing with a new kind of service-powered character that results in greater access to community networks and relationships prior to launch. They use missional discipleship to bridge the credibility gap with populations who are skeptical toward the church and the gospel. While their power does not come from service, serving positions their congregation as an instrument through which power then moves to transform lives.

These churches align their experience with the teaching of Acts 2:18 where the Holy Spirit poured out power on servants, and Jesus' teaching about Kingdom greatness through service (Matthew 20:26). These new church leaders view their role in the community in light of Jesus' teaching about active social involvement (Luke 10:30–37; John 2:1–11), but do not view

their social involvement as a replacement for the gospel.

Service-powered planters instinctively realize how resistant our culture is becoming to the gospel. They view community service as a way to change how people perceive the church and to build relationships that open the door for life transformation. Research on the emerging generations makes it clear that service to others is not an option if we are to be credible with people under 30.<sup>1</sup>

Service-powered planters build service into the timeline and rhythm of church life from day one. Rusty, a church planter, writes, "We have included community service from the beginning of our church plant. At The Crossing we believe [that] community service is a direct result of a life changed by Christ."

Ron, an independent Christian church planter, puts it this way, "Providing people a church service breeds complacency. Providing people opportunity for community service breeds life change."

According to Andy, an Assemblies of God church planter, "Service in the community is not only opening doors for new relationships; it is creating a sense of 'sent-ness,' — a missional DNA in the fabric of this new church and my whole team."

### **RANGE OF PRACTICE**

Service-powered churches employ a range of approaches to service. The frequency, intensity, and type of service vary within each church. During the coaching process, coaches ask church planters to define their long-term role in the community. Important consideration goes into whether they will create a one-stop shop, join the community as partners to support existing services, or offer specific programs. Planters may focus on one of many service sectors ranging from recreation to reading, mentoring, or home repair — any service that meets human needs. Service



# Compassion Planting: Service Power That Grows Healthy New Churches

is not restricted to traditional social service, but can address any felt need among any socioeconomic group. This author is currently coaching planters who are developing medical clinics, basketball programs, home repair, food distribution, volunteer mobilization, life-skills training, and public school support programs.

Andy in Lorton, Virginia, and his new church, South County Mountaintop, conduct community service activities known as South County Cares. The service program and church share the same logo; but, according to Andy, "The way people first meet us is through community service." Operating out of a modified, donated motorhome has given them visibility and access to the entire community from the beginning. They also lead cooperative food distribution in their community and serve almost as many as comprise their new church.

In the northern tip of Virginia there is another service-powered church plant. Ron is launching his church through community service starting with a needs assessment. In his first needs-assessment outing, he mobilized 16 volunteers who spent the day talking with community members about needs in the community, while a volunteer did face painting with children. He did this before he formed a launch team. The net from this one event? Nearly 90 people indicated they would like to know more about his new church and gave team members their contact information. Seven community organizations invited him to join their events. This was good for the community and great for growing a missional launch team.

As planters join the community in service, they discover that communities are hungry for people who care. Scott, a mid-western church planter, is not meeting on Sundays yet, but his service-powered church plant is participating in citywide leadership at the invitation of the mayor. His church recently constructed a playground with volunteers from supporting churches. They have become valued community members even before they have launched, and they have attracted leaders and volunteers who have a heart for the city.

Rusty, in Texas, is using a series of mini-launches. Each includes 3 months of service and discipleship. He initiated needs assessment early. As the church core grows through each successive mini-launch, they learn a routine that includes discipleship, worship, and service in the community.

## RISKS OF THE SERVICE APPROACH

The risks of a service approach in launching a church are the same as missionaries experience using a needs-based service platform overseas. Planters can be distracted by the additional details if they do not have good support, fail to plan for adequate leadership to support their community efforts, or allow church development to take a second seat to community work. Effective coaching, training, and ongoing support by those who have the dual expertise of planting and community service can minimize these risks. The historical trend toward a social gospel must also be addressed in a planter's theological and ministry preparation.

Emphasizing producing Kingdom fruit is essential as a part of the discipleship and leadership development process within the new service-powered church. Planters need to pay attention to how their service activity is producing transformation in lives through relationships formed in the service context. While a church needs to offer service with no strings attached, according to Rick Rusaw of Externally Focused, community work that fosters relationships with loving believers will produce fruit in the lives of those who are served.

One of the greatest challenges for planters is to find healthy models from which they can learn. Often the planter is the one who has to search for help and build support among his resource networks for an approach that some see as nontraditional.

The best prevention for the risks faced by new churches is for those who support planters to join them in both learning and building effective patterns of community service. Of value are compassion networks — church-planting networks that intentionally include a focus on community service and encourage supporting churches to participate with the planter while also

improving their own community service capacity as a result.

**Needs assessment.** This practice comes from social work, and churches have modified it to fit the church setting. Needs assessment allows a new church to identify community needs at the same time it increases its network of relationships.

The service focus and opportunities that result from conducting a needs assessment include dramatic response rates that make traditional marketing pale in comparison. One church reported a 99 percent "yes" response to its requests for needs-assessment interviews with over 200 community

Service can  
address any  
felt need  
among any  
socioeconomic  
group.





## It's No Car Wash

This new movement is fundamentally different from the outreach/marketing approach — random acts of service where one-time events like free car washes or barbecues are used as a marketing activity during the early phase of church preparation — that has become common in many churches. A shotgun approach to serving is giving way to intentional and focused service that may begin with a community needs assessment tailored for church planters, followed by targeted service projects, and eventually long-term service commitments. By reaching beyond a random-service approach, churches avoid developing an internal focus

where serving is an exception instead of a lifestyle. These churches believe communities need them to be intentional and sustainable in their approach to service because programs that offer hope but are not sustained have ravaged many communities. These service-powered planters want Kingdom ventures that instill trust and build relationships to open the door to pre-evangelism and ministry rooted in relationships. Approaching service only as an episodic event would be similar to exclusively focusing on weeklong missions trips and never investing in a long-term missions presence.

— DAVID MILLS

leaders. Another church reported an 88 percent request for follow-up information from a cold audience. These results far exceed the outcomes of traditional marketing or cold calls. To put it simply, needs assessment is the accepted first step for community organizations that are serious about serving.

When churches complete this process, they not only change people's minds about the nature of the church, they let community leaders and members know they are serious about serving. The new church is then able to establish a service focus as a result of this process that aligns its unique sense of calling and gifts with real community needs. Virtual church plants, those who are restarting congregations, and those establishing multisite campuses are also using this process.

**Coaching.** Many planters will make service activity a central feature in their new church, with or without support from others. A church can avoid many obstacles with good coaching that brings the dual expertise of church planting and community service. Coaching programs usually offer at least a year of support. This helps reduce the administrative burden on the planter and also helps balance the growth of the new church with service opportunities.

**Focused project-based service.** After completing needs assessment, the church plant team engages in short-term or project-based service activities. This is different from random outreach events because the church carefully selects these events based on needs assessment, target audience, and the unique gifts and calling of the launch team.

When churches initiate service projects as a result of the

insights that follow needs assessment, the church can explore specific service direction to refine future direction and to cultivate leadership and momentum around the specific service direction. The project-service phase helps a young church develop its leadership capacity and service skills. This also lays the groundwork for long-term service commitments and the effective integration of service into ministry.

**Leadership planning.** For churches that plan to grow and sustain community service as a significant feature in their new church, leadership is a key issue. Substantial service will always require additional leadership. The lead pastor should never think he can complete both the work of church start-up and community service alone. This means the church-planting team needs to plan for and support leadership beyond skills for worship, children's ministry, set-up, and teaching. This additional leadership must be integrated into the team, but focused on providing leadership for community service.

This leader needs skills in pastoral and community work. He will also have an impact on the budget of the new church. A source where churches can find these leaders might include: second-career professionals, social service and nonprofit professionals, graduate students, or pastors with other service-type gifts. Their role may be defined under the title "outreach director," but regardless of the title leadership must grow to support service.

**Umbrella support.** An additional strategy used by some planters is to develop a second nonprofit that is chartered solely for community service. This second entity allows additional fundraising and can provide access to service grants.



# Compassion Planting: Service Power That Grows Healthy New Churches

Some umbrella organizations offer access to a service nonprofit — most commonly called a Community Based Organization (CBO) — to planters. This helps avoid additional administrative burden on the planter and lends a larger sense of credibility. These planters have a dual title when they start: pastor of the new church and director of the local nonprofit office for a national or regional organization. I do not recommend either of these approaches without expert support, since they can result in substantial administrative requirements and will not be effective unless established properly.

**Transitional moment.** Just like an airplane in its ascent makes the transition from takeoff at full power to cruising speed, new churches employing a service strategy also need to make this transition. The critical moment in the airplane is when the pilot powers down the engines to cruise. In the new church, the critical

moment is when the new church launch phase shifts to long-term church lifestyle. During this transition the church will either sustain service as a lifestyle or slip into an episodic approach where service happens at holidays or seasonally.

Intentional planning that ensures sustainable approaches to service from the beginning is critical to ensure that the church does not make commitments to the community they cannot keep, or when someone asks for resources that the church

cannot meet. Simple service approaches are the key to sustaining this transition. This same moment of transition often occurs when established churches try to shift from random community service to longer-term and more focused efforts.

**New timelines.** Engaging the community through service can occur within the traditional church-plant timeline or it can precede the traditional launch phase. Shifting timelines can impact the funding required for the launch, but effective community engagement can result in larger and healthier churches. The participation of sponsoring churches in the service activity can help speed the process while having an additional benefit by growing compassion among the sponsoring church. The process of needs assessment followed by intentional and focused service can go a long way toward developing a critical mass and substantial credibility.

For the  
generation  
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## BRINGING IT HOME

Planters must measure the value of any strategy by its fruit. In the case of service-powered new churches, this fruit can be seen in the quality of missional discipleship that is emerging as church-plant teams learn to serve their cities. The birth of new churches that have the ability to attract and win the unchurched, turn the tide of skepticism, and capture the energy of the emerging generations for Kingdom pursuits is fruit that churches need to seek. While we still need to learn several lessons about how to support service-powered new churches, these new churches offer us a laboratory for Kingdom creativity that may help turn the tide of decline among American churches.

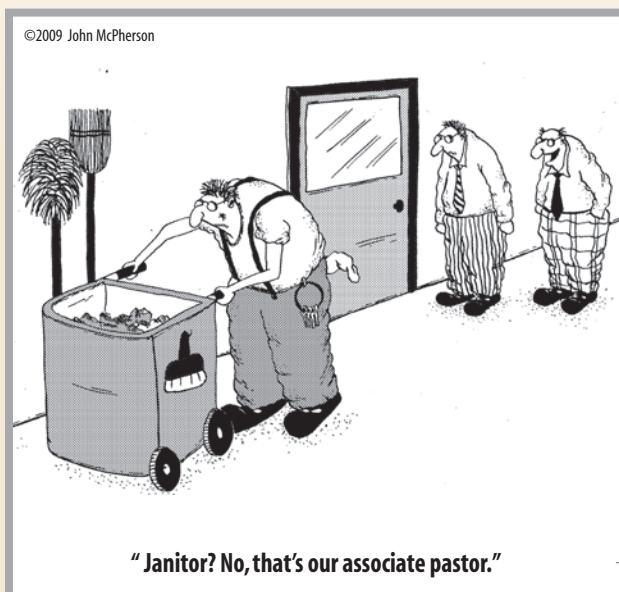
For the generation of emerging leaders, service is not really an option. In their view it is the normal expression of living out the gospel in a postmodern culture. Since these new planters are not the only ones with something to learn about how to meaningfully engage the culture, the best course is for us to join them in the journey by forming support networks who not only colabor, but also become colearners. 🌱



**DAVID MILLS**, Haymarket, Virginia, is a two-time church planter who leads Compassion by Design, and is the author of *Understanding Community Needs*, a manual for needs assessment.

## NOTE

1. CNN Report "Volunteer Service Among College Set," 2007 Cable News Network, and The Changing Lifeworld of Young People: Risk, Resume-Padding, and Civic Engagement, Friedland, Morimoto University of Wisconsin-Madison 2002. <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP40Friedland.pdf>







# GLOCAL

## Church Planting

By Bob Roberts, Jr.





istockphoto

## **I did not figure glocalization out**

**and start doing it. I gradually began to do the things outlined in this article, which led me to discoveries in society, God's Word, and myself.** I used to feel bad about not being classically trained until I realized movement leaders generally do not study movements and then start them. Leaders become engulfed in movements without realizing it at the time. I am not in a movement except for the only one I hope to be in — a global Jesus movement.

For the most part, church-planting movements are limited to tribes and nations. The only thing left is a global church-planting movement. One that is glocal — local and global combined.

### **GLOCAL IS ABOUT JESUS, NOT MOVEMENTS OR CHURCH PLANTING**

Forget church planting. Paul or others did not have a church-planting strategy for Jerusalem, Antioch, or anywhere else they went. I have looked, studied, and seen the same absence of a strategy in places around the world where awesome things are happening. The apostles did not come up with a plan and then start churches to reach lost people. It was the opposite. They were obsessed with Jesus Christ. He changed them, and the disciples then turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). When people were filled with Jesus, they began to plant churches.

Growth in the Early Church came because Jesus' followers lived out the gospel, not simply as a result of their response or strategy to evangelism. Early believers birthed the church because evangelism was taking place, and those churches would forever be evangelistic. Today we start churches to reach the lost, but we have it reversed. In modern society, we have enough technology to start a church without God, but is this church sustainable and transformative?

The alternative to church growth is to contemporize the church, which will reach segments of people and get them to attend church. But this will not necessarily make people disciples. As leaders, we need to ask ourselves, "How we are reaching people? Are we making disciples who are sustainable for the next generation? Or, are we just filling a one-generation guppy tank?"

Men in a remote place in the world where there is no church-planting movement do not accept Christ, then get up the next morning, and say, "We are going to start a church-planting movement." No, the gospel changes them. They get up the next morning and begin to share the gospel and people respond. People gather, and soon there is a church, then multiple churches, and then a movement. Jesus has to be



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the story, the success, and the strategy. He does not share His glory with anyone.

### **GLOCAL IS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, NOT THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION**

For the first few years of my pastorate, I believed if I could get someone in church and get them converted, somehow we could change the world. False. I discovered we can grow very large churches, yet not make disciples, let alone see any redemptive value to our churches. People will memorize verses, jump through most of our spiritual hoops, and still not have a faith that goes viral. We desperately need new metrics beyond baptisms. We should not stop counting baptisms, but we need to count much more and wait longer to determine if the person is growing in his or her faith.

Here is the difference. If I focus on salvation, I get a convert. If I focus on the Kingdom, I also get a convert; but more than a convert, I get a disciple. We need to ask, "What is the point of conversion? Is it to get to heaven, or is it radical transformation that leads to the reconciliation of all things?" The answer is obvious; it is both/and.

Our picture of a disciple is the Sermon on the Mount. Our message is the same as John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles: Repent, the kingdom of God (heaven) is at hand.

At NorthWood we say, "Kingdom in; Kingdom out." We base this on the premise that when the Kingdom gets inside us, it flows out of us. It is a divine flow. When the Kingdom is present, it is comprehensive and consistent — not driven by one's emotions, attendance, or strategy, but by the Spirit of God connecting us as ministers of reconciliation to whatever is broken.

Does the seed of the gospel of the Kingdom have the power to transform a person? Absolutely! Does the seed of the gospel of the Kingdom have the power to transform a city? Absolutely! History and testimony bear this out. The issue, however, is this: Are we getting people saved to a religion or transformed by the Spirit that ultimately leads to a world turned upside down?

The context must be the Kingdom, and according to John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul, people enter it through genuine repentance.

### **GLOCAL IS ABOUT THE DISCIPLE, NOT THE PREACHER.**

If we want a church-planting movement, it will be because the whole body of Christ gets on her feet, not just preachers and missionaries. If we focus on classically trained preachers, we will never have enough to facilitate a movement. One country has a saying for all new Christians, "Every disciple a church planter." Why not? Movements are out of control; that is how we know we have one. We will not get out of control until everyone has a chance to play.

I met with a man from another country who is Western in his thinking concerning the church. He told me about a ministry where a local business leader is seeing several of his employees come to faith in Christ. The business leader started a Bible study with his employees, which grew to over 100. The man telling me this story felt the businessman needed to bring in a minister who could handle the group, because leading the group might get over the business leader's head.

I told him, "No. You have just had something marvelous happen; a layman has started a church. Have him teach another

layman in his group what he did. As the group grows, give this new layman some of the people and start churches out of that one large group."

The Baptists and Methodists grew rapidly in the West because they depended on laymen and deacons to preach and lead because there were not enough preachers. The Assemblies of God has grown since its beginning because the Spirit spoke through anyone, not just preachers.

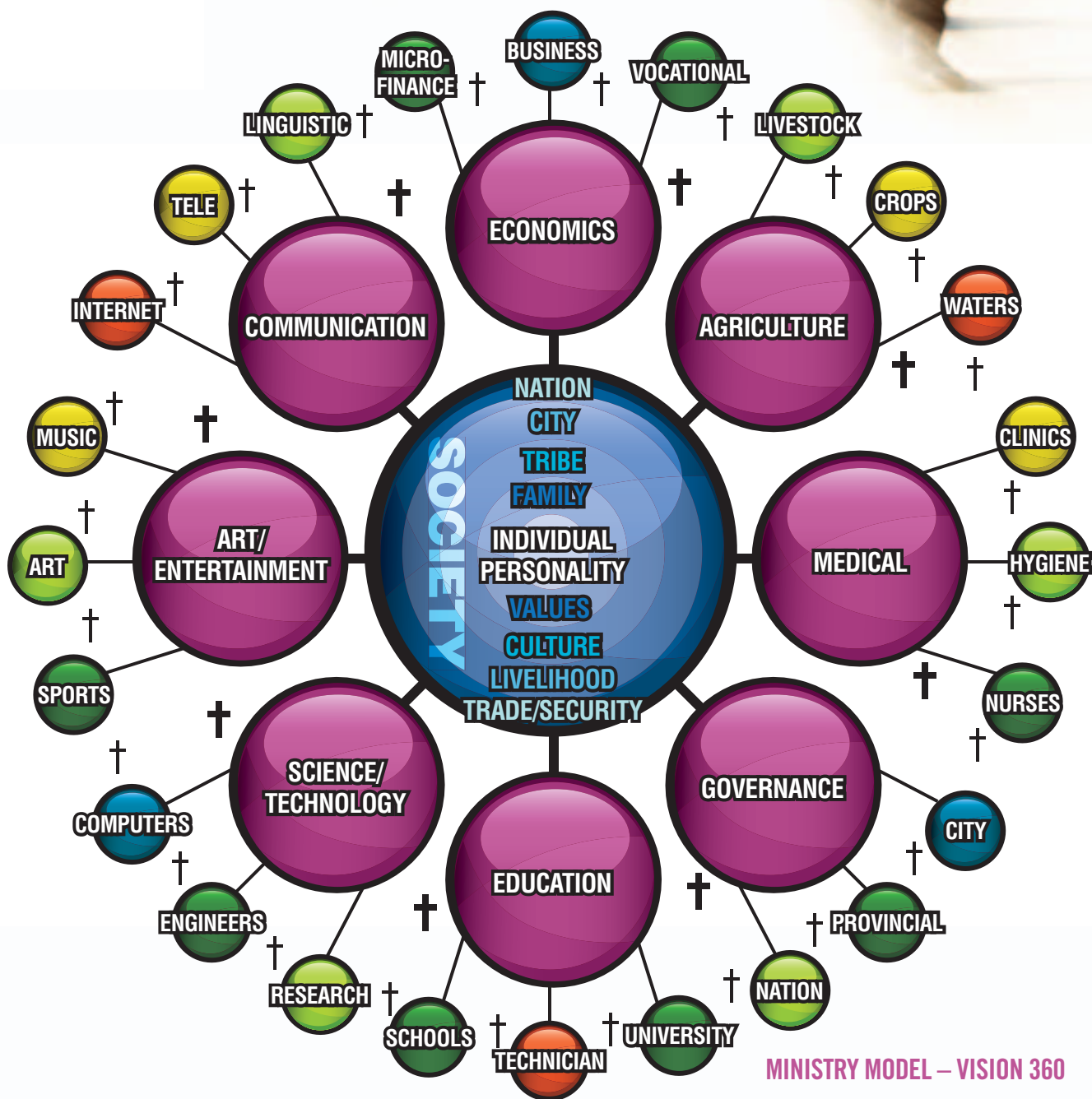
### **GLOCAL IS ABOUT THE SOCIETY, NOT THE CHURCH.**

When the gospel of the Kingdom gets into movement gear, it does so by infecting not the church or Christians, but a whole society. Abraham's promise was about a nation, and all nations are made up of domains of society. Depending on what you read, there can be 4 or 14 domains.

Because I am a pastor and deal with volunteers, I use a human resource map to determine the domains we use. That is how people are counseled when they go to human resource: agriculture, governance, communication, education,

**A lot of churches  
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childbirth.**





health, science/technology, economics, and entertainment/art. (See *Ministry Model Vision 360 sidebar*.)

We do not view religion as a domain. Instead, faith is present in every domain as disciples are present. Again, we have it reversed. We start churches and hope they will engage society. Our response should be to engage society through disciples

in each domain, and the church will emerge from the edges ultimately pushing back on the center. (My book *Glocalization* deals with this.)

When religion becomes a domain, it competes with the other domains in society. Discipleship, then, becomes a Sunday event/activity. When faith becomes present in each





domain, there is opportunity for viral growth and movement. Only when faith is segmented to a domain can it be constricted and not grow. Preachers and religious leaders do not control the faith, but they equip the faithful to live out the gospel. A person's No. 1 ministry is his job, not Sunday

**We are constantly coming up with new ways of growing our churches larger, while the church in the U.S., overall, is growing smaller.**

church activities. Ephesians 4 says the pastor's job is to equip and make the disciple the hero. Instead, we have reversed it. We have made the preacher and preaching more important than making disciples.

We are starting churches, and these churches are growing. Tragically, however, they are not making a substantial difference in their communities.

Several years ago some men approached me. They wanted to start 1,000 megachurches of 2,000 or more in the top 50 cities of the U.S. They believed if they could do this, it would transform these cities. I told them it wouldn't work. A little over 10 years ago there were just over 300 megachurches in the U.S. Today, there are over 1,300 megachurches, and numerically, there are less people in church today than there were 10 years ago. Percentage-wise, the statistic is even worse. Sometimes I am not so sure our megachurches (and I pastor one) are not megaparasites on the greater body of Christ. Megachurches tend to turn followers of Christ into consumers of religious goods and services. We are constantly coming up with new ways of growing our churches larger, while the church in the U.S., overall, is growing smaller. The only answer to that is church planting. The question is how will we plant? And, what will we plant? This is what glocal church planting is about.

### **GLOCAL IS LOCAL-CHURCH DRIVEN, NOT INSTITUTIONAL**

It is good, appropriate, and critical that organizations,

institutions, and denominations strategize church planting and missions. However, let us keep the incubator in the church. All movements are organic; there is no artificial insemination for church-planting movements. The greatest thing we can do is facilitate churches that are planting churches.

In my Glocal.net network we discovered that only 30 percent of our churches are reproducing churches. A lot of churches talk about reproducing churches and want to be a part of a network that reproduces churches, but they do not want to go through childbirth. Because of this, we restructured our network. To stay in the network, you have to plant or be planted out of NorthWood. The reproduction rate went up dramatically.

When you state what you want your DNA to be, good luck. When you determine your DNA through reproduction, it is yours. This is why we have planters come and stay at our church. They come because we have a DNA of multiplication, and we want our planters to catch that.

Each church needs to consider itself a church-planting center.

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Pastors need to stop thinking of themselves as pastors of a congregation to reach their community. Instead, they need to think of themselves as missionaries, with a base from which they will church the community, seeding it with the gospel.

The benefits to the local church that plants are innumerable. Young planters keep you relevant. Your ministry spans beyond one church to many. You become relevant for a long

time because planters 20 years younger than you call you nonstop. Your ministry is expanded beyond your life dramatically because these young planters are coming up behind you.

The greatest metric a pastor should be concerned about is how many new church plants came out of his church last year. Church planting should be as natural to a church as taking up the offering or baptizing people. A pastor's heart toward Kingdom ministry is not reflected in what he says or preaches about church planting, but rather in how many new churches he starts.

The greatest obstacle to church planting in the U.S. is not lost people; they do not care. It is not church members; they are for starting new churches and are proud when they do. The greatest obstacle is a pastor who fears someone will start a church too close to him.

**The Assemblies  
of God has  
grown since  
its beginning  
because the  
Spirit spoke  
through  
anyone,  
not just  
preachers.**



### **GLOCAL IS ABOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, NOT JUST MY GEOGRAPHY**

The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. A missionary church sends missionaries. When we start a church, we do not start it for a suburb or city, but for the whole world. We start churches for the world based out of Dallas, Portland, Chicago, Atlanta, and other places.

Because we are using disciples, not just preachers, we have a huge workforce. Also, we are engaging society, not just the church. This opens the door for everyone to engage the whole world. As a result, churches emerge out of the most unlikely places.

The old boundaries of home and foreign, national and international are gone. Our current economic crisis is the beginning of the leveling of the rest of the world with the U.S. economy. Who would have predicted 25 years ago that we would owe China \$500 billion. We are now interlocked.

I am convinced in the next 10 years every person on the planet will have heard the gospel. Why? Because we are connected like never before by air travel and the Internet. The challenge will not be getting the gospel out, but not letting our message get lost. If humanity without the Holy Spirit can connect with people on Facebook and spread Coke to the four corners of the earth, just think of what the Holy Spirit can do?

I am convinced the Great Commission will be fulfilled more by connecting with what God is already doing globally than in initiating what we want Him to do. I was looking at a world map and connecting the dots, not just from Dallas to the world, but from places that are connecting to Dallas from around the world. It is more like a net. It is what I heard Chuck Van Engen call polycentric missions — no beginning and end. We are all going back and forth and sharing.

We have no church-planting movements in the U.S. Though some would claim they are, I disagree. You have to get out of the U.S. to see these movements. Until a church-planting movement is out of control and sustained where these churches are transforming communities, we may have a little Bible study or a huge gathering, but no Jesus movement. When we do have a church-planting movement, it will probably come from outside the U.S. We will join someone else's movement because we are humbled, realizing we do not know it all.

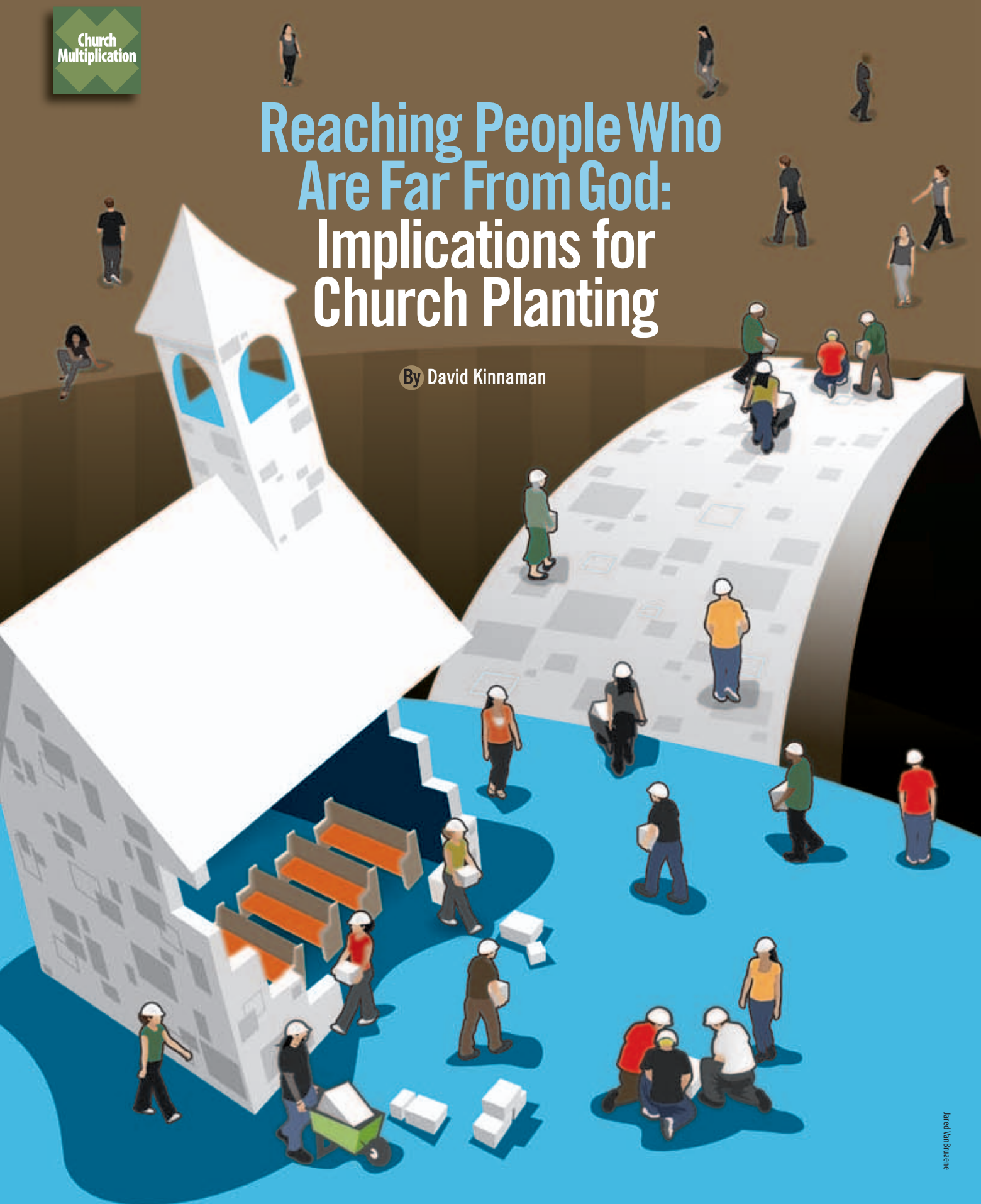
This is why those who speak at NorthWood generally are from overseas. We are learning more from pastors from the East than we are from here. It is going to be a new day, a new collaboration. The church is coming of age. No one will be an expert. The only expert we can hope to be is an expert learner. ☺



**BOB ROBERTS, JR.**, is senior pastor and founder of NorthWood Church, Keller, Texas. He has authored *Transformation*, *Glocalization*, *The Multiplying Church*, and his newest book, *RealTime Connections — How To Use Your Job and What You Have To Change the World* (spring 2009).

# Reaching People Who Are Far From God: Implications for Church Planting

By David Kinnaman







**M**y friend, Chris, started a church about 2 years ago. His vision is to connect with people who are far from God. At first the church worshiped on Sunday mornings in a theater. Aside from sticky floors and the rush to leave before movie showings began, that venue worked. Then Chris realized that teaching and singing in a theater were no longer working. The setup and teardown each week, as well as finding space for kids in the Century 16 theaters, left them searching for new space.

Some of the church's evangelism also caused controversy. When the church launched, Chris and other members visited bars and pubs to start conversations with patrons. It has been hard work for Chris, his family, and the other members who have stuck around. The church is doing well today and has reached many young adults. Yet, Chris admits it has been hard to get people who are far from God to visit, much less participate.

## CONTEXT FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Chris' story illustrates a larger reality that research at Barna Group is uncovering: Even though the proportion of non-Christians is rising in America, it is harder than ever to plant a church that reaches non-Christians.

People — particularly young people — express more hostility, doubt, frustration, and skepticism toward Christianity. They perceive Christians to be judgmental, hypocritical, and political activists. They also believe Christians have singled out homosexuality above other sins. They conclude that Christianity is old-fashioned, boring, and unintelligent, and that Christians are insincere and too focused on getting converts. They think followers of the Prince of Peace are unable to live peaceably among others.

These statements may sound harsh, but they spring from extensive research done with Americans, ages 16 to 29. These negative views are front and center in the minds of young people in our culture. In a decade, the perception of evangelicals has become *eight times less favorable* among young non-Christians when compared to the image held by boomer non-Christians.

One common

reaction young people have about the faith is that *present-day Christianity is no longer like Jesus intended*. Or, as Dan Kimball's book suggests, "They like Jesus but not the church." This is where we initially came upon the term *unchristian*. In our research we heard things like: "Christians go about things in an unchristian manner." "They have forgotten the point of what it means to be a Christian." "The faith has gotten off track with the teachings of Jesus." "Present-day Christianity has become a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy — it is distorted from its original intent."

## PUT OFF BY CRITICISM?

When Gabe Lyons of the Fermi Project and I first encountered these attitudes, we were surprised. Are young people right? Did not Jesus promise we would be persecuted and hated for following Him?

Yet, the question that nagged for several years was: What if they are reacting — not to our righteous lifestyles — but to our *self-righteousness*? What if we are not following Christ the way we should? Would that change the balance of culpability?

As we wrestled with this, Scripture passages became vivid reminders that, while we may be misunderstood, Christians do not get a free pass to offend their neighbors. We meditated on Romans 2:24: "The world blasphemes the name of God" (NLT)<sup>1</sup> because of hypocritical faith. And Colossians 4:5,6: "Live wisely among those who are not Christians" with "gracious and effective" (NLT) conversation.

While those outside Christianity may not always perceive us accurately, those of us on the inside of faith also have assumptions that undo our witness. Here are three unexpected, yet fascinating insights we learned. First, most non-Christians in America today have much experience in Christian churches and with Christians. Most non-Christians are actually *de-churched*. (See graph "Outsiders and Church Experience," page 104.)

We found that young non-Christians often communicated nuance and profound insight. They mentioned that sometimes someone who provided an entirely different, vibrant picture of what it means to be a Christian confounded their negative views of Christians. One comment was: "I know all you Christians are not bad, because I have had conversations with Christians I respect. Basically,

## Non-Christian Exposure

- Average of five Christian friends
- 65 percent have had a conversation in the past year with a Christian friend about faith.
- 53 percent have been approached by someone in the last few years to become a Christian.
- 38 percent said the last conversation was awkward, uncomfortable, compared with 14 percent who said it was friendly.

— Source: Barna Group | (c) 2009 | research among 16- to 29-year-olds





## Reaching People Who Are Far From God

I respect them because they respect me.”

These were exceptions to the rule of *unchristian* Christians.

### UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE FAR FROM GOD

Let me describe five research-based insights about those who are far from God, those looking at Christianity from the outside in.

First, we need to articulate that the idea of being far from God is not entirely accurate. It is probably a helpful way to describe our intent as church planters to reach people who are not just recycled Christians. We want to cultivate the spiritual lives of people who have little experience with or understanding of following Christ. This is a laudable motivation. Except, we need to keep in mind that all of us — pastor or not, Christian or not — are both infinitely far from God and at the same time incredibly close to Him. This theological tension reminds us that many of those outside the church are closer to God than we might think; just as many of us *in* the church may just be playing the part.

This raises a second observation about non-Christians: In our American culture, the idea that most people have little or no experience with Christianity is patently false. (See sidebar “Non-Christian Exposure,” page 103.) “While young people have less exposure to Christianity than did their predecessors, most young non-Christians have been around the *Christian block* at least once. The typical non-Christian young person says he has five friends who are Christians; two-thirds of them have had a recent conversation with a Christian about faith matters; half have been approached by someone in the last few years to consider becoming a Christian; and roughly four out of every five young non-Christians have been to a church in their past.

Despite the fact most non-Christians have been exposed to Christianity, a third research insight reveals that young

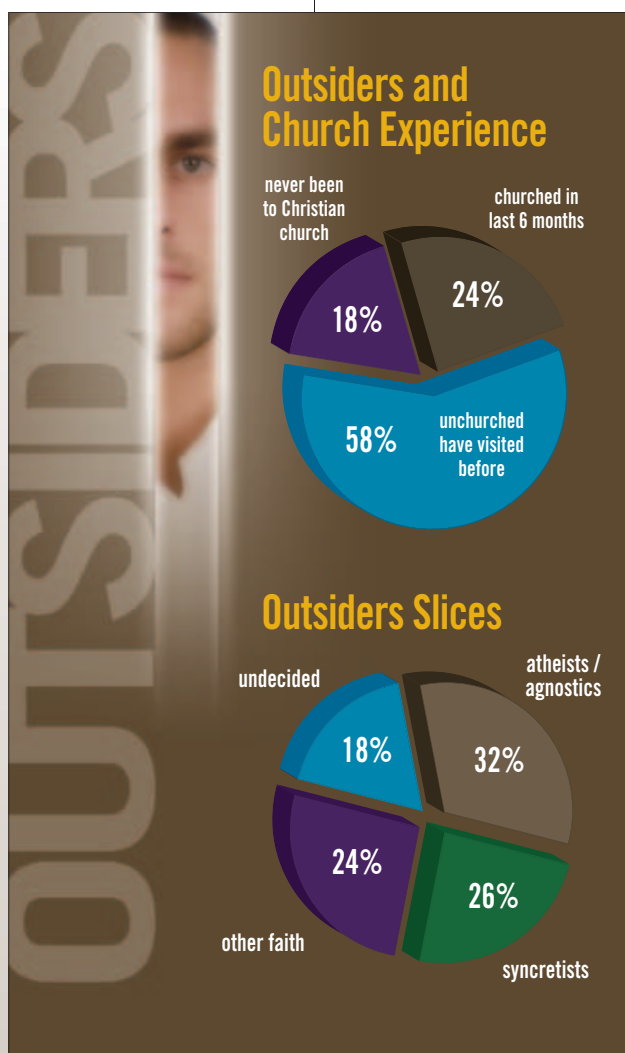
non-Christians come from diverse backgrounds and faith views. (See graph “Outsider Slices” below.) It is important to consider that perceptions of Christianity are most negative among those who are atheist or agnostic, compared to those who are from other faiths or who are syncretists (i.e., people who mix and match spiritual views and identities from various religious traditions). This means you need to work hard to understand people’s personal history to minister most effectively to them.

A fourth insight about young non-Christians is that, while many are spiritually minded, they are certainly less so than most of the young Christians we work with. In fact, while three-quarters of young Christ followers (73 percent) say their spirituality is a major or one of the most important priorities in their life, the same is true for just 30 percent of young non-Christians. (See sidebar “Priority of Spirituality,” page 105.)

Still, many young non-Christians and young Christians seem to overlap in their spiritual preferences. (See sidebar “Spiritual Preferences,” page 105.)

For instance, 67 percent of Christians say they look for faith that feels right to them personally; the same is true for 69 percent of young non-Christians. Similarly, there was overlap when it came to wanting forms of spirituality that “makes sense,” that “makes them stronger,” that can be “experienced,” and that “makes their life easier.” Of course, just because this is the type of faith people *aspire to have* does not necessarily mean this is the type of individualistic faith *we should cultivate*. In many ways, we should aim for quite the opposite.

Yet, we discovered one big area of difference speaks volumes about the gap between young Christians and non-Christians: 72 percent of young Christians said they want a faith that “helps them to connect with God,” yet only 26 percent of young non-Christians craved a similar experience. This

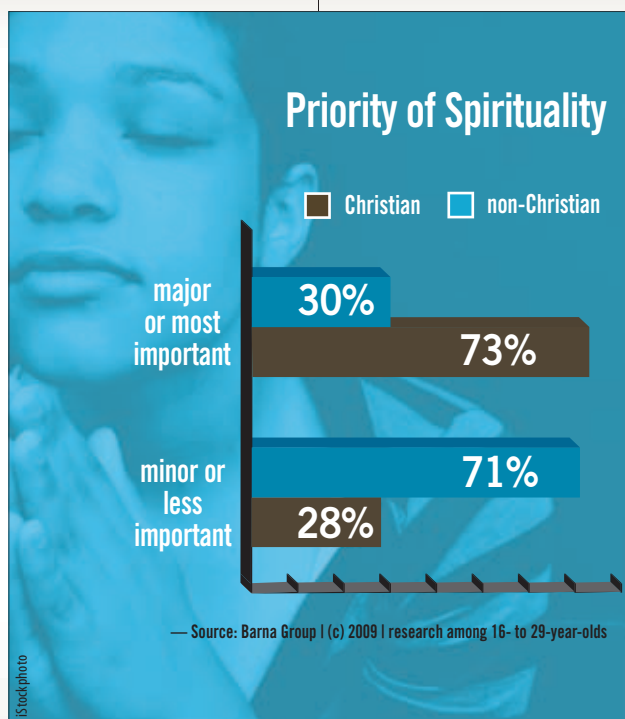


striking difference suggests that the one thing churches have to offer that transforms lives — a place where people can experience a living and loving God — inspires skepticism among the people we most want to reach. This is just one of the conundrums in trying to reach those far from God.

Notwithstanding their comfort with experiencing God, a fifth insight about young non-Christians is that their lives are not much different from young Christians. (See sidebar “Self-Perceptions,” page 106.) Our research consistently shows that young Christians are often more like *young non-Christians* than they are like *older Christians*. There is more that unites young people across faith groups than divides them.

What does this mean? Young people, regardless of faith affiliation, often share camaraderie, life challenges, language, experiences, heroes, and expectations. I believe this is why it is rare to see pastors in their 50s and 60s able to connect with the generation of those in their 20s and 30s. Older communicators can have a hard time connecting with the language and lifestyles of a generation who are members of a different tribe. This is also why many young people say they would rather hang with their peers who may not be Christian than to hole up in a Christian bubble with people they do not know well.

One perspective to take away from this research is that, while you do not have to like or welcome these changes, as a leader you do have to deal with these trends. The church is experiencing significant intergenerational tension, and this is affecting our collective



understand and value transformational teaching. It's just that we have to keep first things first. Your ability to communicate is secondary to the way you invest in young people.

**2. Invest in young Christians and young non-Christians through vocational discipleship.** Help them see and live out their skills and strengths in the realm of career, workplace, and vocation. More than 7 of 10 adults in America believe they are fulfilling their calling in life. The idea of calling cuts across religious

ability to reach young people who are far from God.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

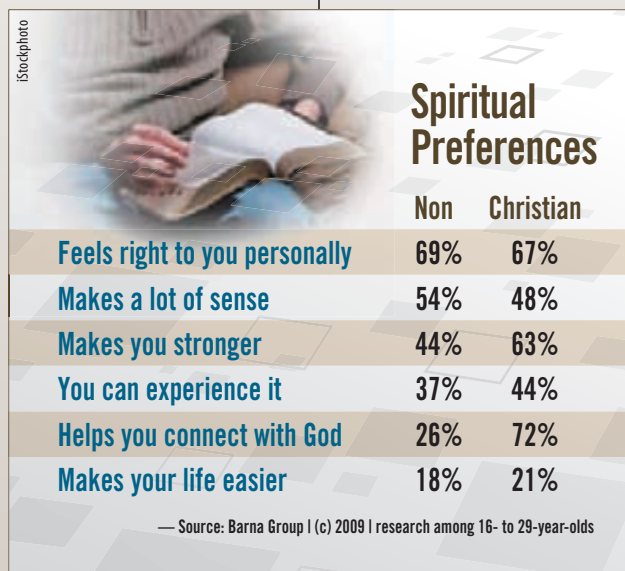
What can be done to initiate new congregations and minister effectively to a new generation? Here are some practical steps to consider:

**1. Develop a mindset that your vision is to serve and grow people rather than build a church.** Young non-Christians are not looking for an expert on the Bible that they come to hear once a week. Yet, many church leaders believe the most important way they can serve the discipleship needs of young adults is to get them to sit through the Sunday sermon once a week. As a son of a pastor, I

understand and value transformational teaching. It's just that we have to keep first things first. Your ability to communicate is secondary to the way you invest in young people.

lines and frames the idea that people want to make a difference. Your church plant can help young people connect the dots between their personal calling and God's kingdom.

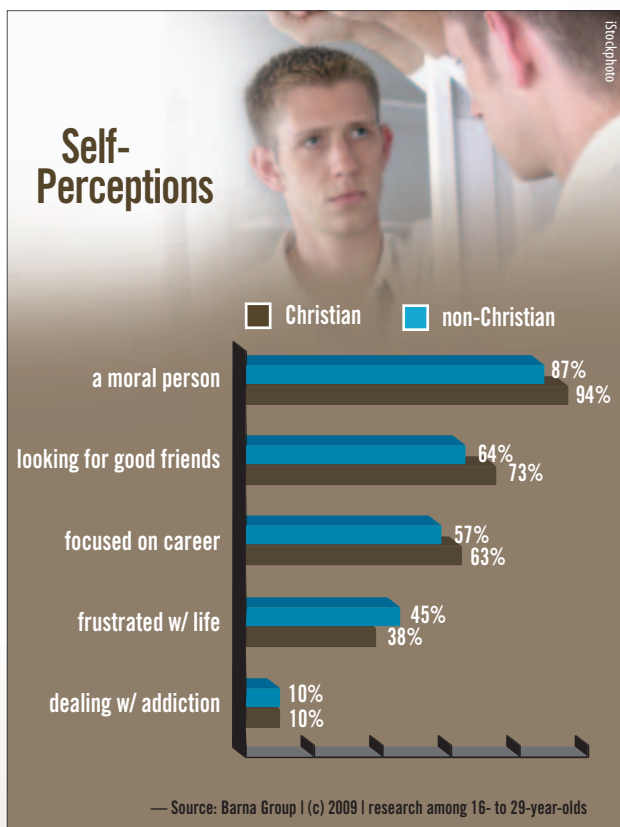
**3. Offer learning opportunities and courses that go beyond Bible classes.** This is a generation that despite having access to tons of information and content, has not learned as much as we would like about how to live. Churches can teach the next generation about everything from history to finances, from relationships to political engagement, from science to cultural







## Reaching People Who Are Far From God



exegesis. Consider how you can transform your congregation into a learning center so that young people can no longer say that Christians are uninformed and unintelligent.

**4. Provide young people with pathways to serve the poor and experience the world.** A young Christian said she was worn out with her church. When we asked why, it was not at all the self-indulgent, consumerist perspective one might imagine. She said, “I want to *do something*.” Pastors need to be sure we do not let this moment of global awareness and activism pass without opportunities to serve the poor and to dispense justice through Christ.

**5. Do not be afraid to tackle tough, controversial subjects.** Research shows many churches shy away from subjects like environmentalism, animal care, injustice, human trafficking, science and scholarship, political and cultural issues, technology, or even the gospel because they are afraid people in their church will misunderstand. Yet, this generation is asking tough questions and demanding transparent answers and leaders. Some churches addressing these issues are finding it difficult to retain some longtime members. Yet, these are churches that are also some of the most likely to reach young non-Christians who are far from God.

**6. Consider ways to deepen the life-on-life connections people make, particularly between generations.** Pastor, you can help

your congregation by cultivating interpersonal connections between older and younger people. You can create an environment in which relationships flourish, where you do not hoard control, and where the Holy Spirit has permission to work. Pray for ideas that connect the generations. Much of this starts in the way you, as the leader, model this. Are you honoring those older than you? Are you giving space and permission for young leaders to grow and share the stage?

### IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATING

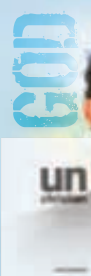
If it is harder to reach non-Christians, it is also more difficult than ever to teach and preach to them. How does a teacher of the Bible help point people toward a holy God, without creating the opposite effect of putting up barriers to Him? Here are suggestions from our interviews with the type of people who listen to your teachings week after week:

**1. You have one responsibility: maintaining the healthy balance of truth and grace.** Without truth, this generation continues to slip into moral and spiritual hyper-individualism. Without grace, the unique message of Jesus’ unconditional acceptance is lost to a works-based regimen. At the most basic level, your preaching and teaching need to provide both elements of Jesus’ character (see John 1:14).

**2. A related theme is self-absorption.** People cannot see themselves clearly, and they also cannot empathize with how other people see the world. Consequently, the church often perpetuates *us-versus-them* thinking, even though it is the only place in the universe where such categories should not exist. Christians need to be cultivating hearts for outsiders, just like Jesus did. Are you



## Understanding the New Apologists



A so-called **new atheism** has sprung up, offering a more scathing critique of Christianity and an increasingly aggressive

evangelistic approach to atheist thought. In response, many writers have responded to these tomes with their own apologetic for the church (for example: Dinesh D'Souza's *What's So Great About Christianity?*).

Yet, there is also another type of apologist for Christianity gaining traction. These authors and leaders are not responding directly to the claims of the new atheists; rather they are asking church leaders and Christians to think more carefully about the cultural moment, to understand more fully the favored role and prominence that Christianity has had in the West, and to listen more and talk less.

Consider some of the examples of the last few years:

Bell, Rob, and Dan Golden. 2008. *Jesus Wants To Save Christians: A Manifesto for a Church in Exile*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. This book explores the cultural context that America is not a Christian nation, and that instead Christians need to consider their role to be "exiles" in a strange land.

Bryant, Eric Michael. 2007. *Peppermint-Filled Piñatas: Breaking Through Tolerance and Embracing Love*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. Bryant works with Erwin McManus in Los Angeles. His book explores how Christians can learn to love and listen to a culture that is becoming more foreign.

Kimball, Dan. 2007. *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. This book considers some of the broad objections that young non-Christians have to Christianity.

Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. 2007. *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker. The authors explore many of the same objections of young "outsiders" from the perspective of the Barna research.

Merchant, Dan. 2008. *Lord, Save Us From Your Followers: Why Is the Gospel of Love Dividing America?* Nashville: Thomas Nelson. This humorous, edging-toward-irreverent, yet potent book was the product of a documentary produced by Dan Merchant, in which he interviews people about their experiences related to spirituality and Christianity.

Miller, Don. 2003. *Blue Like Jazz*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. This best-seller includes a powerful story about Don's experience by setting up a confessional booth at a public university; except the Christians apologized to visitors and asked for their forgiveness for the ways they had misrepresented Jesus' teachings.

— DAVID KINNAMAN

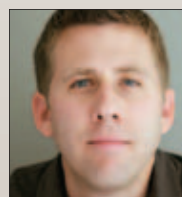
motivating people to fear the world and to condemn it? Or are you helping them catch a vision to lay down their lives — figuratively and literally — to save people?

**3. In reorienting people's perspectives, it is important for people to feel the weight of their everyday conversations and mundane relational choices.** How do their words and attitudes affect the people around them? Did you know, for instance, that one of the most common reasons that people become unchurched is because of the hypocrisy of churchgoers? While not always accurate, their critique has some merit. We need to help people understand the consequences of their unchristian behaviors, but also communicate that Jesus still loves us, despite our flaws.

**4. One theme of the New Testament that seems rare is the insider-outsider dynamic.** This is hard for Americans — a Christianized people with a rich Christian tradition — to fully comprehend. But Paul, living in a clearly non-Christian context, never defends his rights as a Christian. Instead, Paul accepts a sinful and broken world, while holding the people of Christ to

account. He is constantly writing in this dual role: an apostle (a leader of churches) and missionary (an apologist and evangelist to outsiders). He calls the Christian community to high standards and yet reaffirms that these standards do not apply to those outside Christianity (1 Corinthians 5). Since your preaching is heard by both Christians and non-Christians, you are both a leader of Christians as well as a missionary to unbelievers.

We have just scratched the surface of what it means to plant churches for people far from God. This endeavor may be harder than ever, yet it is also among life's most fulfilling activities. Just ask my church-planter friend, Chris. ☺



**DAVID KINNAMAN**, Ventura, California, is president of Barna Group. Check out more about the firm's research and cultural insight at [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).

# What is the **Church Multiplication Network?**

By Steve Pike



## Church Planting Opportunities

Just as the U.S. Interstate System led to the rapid development of strong communities nationwide, so the Church Multiplication Network can revolutionize the way the Assemblies of God creates communities of faith.



## In 1956, President Dwight D.

Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act that set in motion the creation of what we now call the U.S. Interstate System. Prior to the Interstate System, the United States was "a place where people seldom ventured far from home. When they did, they drove on narrow, two-lane roads that moved people and goods

slowly."<sup>1</sup> The visionary creation of this network of roads catalyzed a cascade of transformation that has fueled the economic growth and the rapid development of communities in every corner of this nation. The U.S. Interstate System is an example of infrastructure that can be deployed from a national platform to make life better for all Americans. It also illustrates the power and value of cooperation between different spheres of government.

The Interstate System could not have happened without a national vision, but neither could it have happened without the cooperation of every state and local government. Thanks to this system, Americans have more and better choices about where they can go, what they can buy, and how they can live.

The same could be said for our national power grid, water management systems, telecommunication networks, federal aviation system, and our military defense services. All of these have federal, state, and local components working together to make our lives better every day.

The Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network is analogous to these infrastructural systems deployed from a national platform. CMN is an emerging network of national systems that will catalyze the transformation of communities across this nation by facilitating the starting of thousands of vigorous churches that will help lost people know Jesus.

CMN is a strategic plan to do what is best done from a national platform to effectively equip, strategically fund, and innovatively network

national, district, and local assets to cooperate with God and join Him in His mission to build His church. Just as creating the U.S. Interstate System led to the rapid development of strong communities in every corner of this nation, so the Church Multiplication Network has the potential to revolutionize the way the Assemblies of God creates communities of faith among the "pre," "un," and "de" churchd across this land.


### ORIGINS OF CMN

Church planting has been the core activity of the Assemblies of God from the beginning. The initial group of approximately 300 people who gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 2–12, 1914, quickly added to their number as pioneer planters spread across America and the world driven by God's call and anointed by His Spirit. Existing denominational churches did not generally welcome their message, so they started new churches that carried the message of Pentecost

wherever they went. The Assemblies of God grew from a handful of congregations in 1914 to 909 by 1925 and 1,612 by 1929. By 1959, 8,149 congregations served in communities across America. The decadal pace of new church starts in the first four decades of this Fellowship resulted in a net gain of nearly 2,000 new churches every 10 years. But this incredible pace was not sustained.

The net gain in the number of churches was only about 500 during the 60s, 900 during the 70s, 1,500 during the 80s, and 900 during the 90s. In the first decade of this new millennium, the pace appears to be returning to the pace of the 1960s. The overall trend is one of rapid growth in the early years followed by inconsistent and generally much slower growth in more recent years. In light of the continued growth of the overall American population, it appears we are trending in the wrong direction at the wrong time.

To help understand what we can do to turn this trend back in a direction that honors God, it may be helpful to consider some why questions. Why were so many churches planted in the early years, and why has church planting declined severely in more recent times? It may be a matter of motivation and organizational structure.



Church planting has been  
the **CORE** activity of the  
Assemblies of God from  
the beginning.





## What Is the Church Multiplication Network?

The obvious need to establish churches that proclaimed a Pentecostal message in communities where no Pentecostal pulpit existed motivated the earliest planters. Organizational structures and processes were less developed, and starting churches was more simple and organic. Finding a community without a Pentecostal church was relatively easy. So the motivation was strong and the organizational impulse was simply find a place that needs Pentecost and start a Pentecostal church there. By the 60s most of America's 3,141 counties had at least one Pentecostal church, and the motivation to start new churches began to wane.

When Pentecostal churches ran out of new geographic locations in which to plant, the ugly head of territorialism began to rise. Resistance to starting new churches made church multiplication relatively rare and even abnormal. New churches were often the by-product of a church split. Since pastors often viewed starting new churches as competitive, the most common method for growing the church shifted from the norm of starting new churches to the new norm of growing the existing churches bigger and bigger.

Multistaff churches became the model most leaders aspired toward. *Church growth* became the buzzword, and church effectiveness was measured almost exclusively by the gold standard of noses and nickels. Pastors democratized and organized their churches around business principles. Larger and more sophisticated churches vied for the already convinced, and in many communities existing churches seemed to be content with playing an ongoing game of ecclesiastical musical pews.

David Olson's research provides hard evidence that this is indeed the state of the American church. From 1990 to 2006, the number of people attending a weekly worship gathering in an American church stayed virtually the same, while the overall population grew by 52 million. The percentage of Americans attending church each week dropped from 20.4 percent in 1990 to 17.0 percent in 2007.<sup>2</sup> This dismal *progress* occurred despite the growth of some megachurches to sizes never seen before. The frightening fact is: The church in America is failing to carry out the basic responsibility of God's church to go and make disciples. It is possible that this failure to do God's mission may be a direct result of a crucial flaw in our thinking about how the Kingdom expands. Our previous efforts at planting have tended to be geographically oriented. But the biblical impulse for Kingdom expansion is demographically oriented. God is not willing that any should perish. He loves all demographics and calls us to reach everyone, everywhere.

The resulting mission drift of the body of Christ in America has reached a point where many leaders are exerting leadership to do something about it. As one of his first actions as the newly elected Assemblies of God general superintendent in 2007, George O. Wood wrote a book, *Core Values*, in which he called on the Assemblies of God to "vigorously plant new churches." Additionally, Wood took dramatic steps toward lining up the organizational behaviors with the stated values by calling for the creation of the Church Multiplication Network. A team of over 50 leaders from across the nation worked over a 6-month period to develop the strategic plan for the Church Multiplication Network. In July 2008, CMN was formally launched.

### WHAT IS THE CHURCH MULTIPLICATION NETWORK?

The Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network is a set of strategically designed organizational systems deployed from a national platform built to support and accelerate starting new churches

everywhere and among all people groups living in the United States. Together these systems provide crucial, previously nonexistent, or hard-to-obtain resources to assist planters and those who send them. In order to best understand CMN it may be helpful to first consider what **CMN is not**:

1. CMN is not intended to replace the spontaneous work and power of the Holy Spirit in the planting process. The leadership of CMN clearly understands that "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

CMN systems will only be successful when those who utilize them are God-called and Spirit-anointed leaders who are starting new churches in obedience to God's plan.

2. CMN will not directly plant churches. Church planters plant churches. Parent churches multiply their Kingdom impact through planting new churches. Districts and CMN will function best as they provide support, resources, and networking for parent churches and planters.

3. CMN does not promote a one-size-fits-all approach to church planting. The need to reach people who are far from God in America requires a diversity of methodologies for starting new works. The models and styles will be God-birthed strategies created in the crucible of prayer and local knowledge of the context in which the new church will be born.

#### **CMN is:**

1. The organizational connecting point for any and all church starters and those who send them.

2. A federation of organizational systems deployed





from a national platform to leverage every organizational asset to maximize our collective ability to multiply the presence of God's kingdom in every American community.

3. CMN infrastructure is analogous to the national Interstate System and the power grid. Our systems are available to be accessed in a manner that benefits the planters, parents, and partners who are seeking to obey the Lord and build new church bridges to lost people. In the same way the Interstate System can be used to ship goods or go on vacation, the systems of CMN may be used at the discretion of those who utilize the systems.

### CMN SYSTEMS

As of this writing, the CMN systems are still in their build-out phase. When the organizational structures of the Church Multiplication Network are fully deployed, they will look like a coordinated set of systems that benefit everyone involved in the planting process. Here is a brief description of the emerging systems and what they will do.

**1. Discovery System.** Over 380,000 people between the ages of 13 and 18 attend an Assemblies of God church. God is calling some of them to plant new churches. We must discover who they are. The Discovery System is a set of intentional activities that will help us discover those God has called and connect them with opportunities that will help them clarify and confirm their calling. Activities of the Discovery System

may include things like networking church planters directly with children, youth, young adults, and established leaders whom God is calling toward planting. The Discovery System will identify a pool of potential multipliers and make them aware of the opportunities that starting new churches provides.

**2. Planter Development System.** Once we identify a pool of potential planters, the Planter Development System will help them connect with opportunities to grow in their understanding of where they fit in the church-planting process. This national organizational infrastructure will provide pathways for potential planters to work directly with one of our parenting "incubator" churches and/or one of the hundreds of new Assemblies of God churches being planted each year. We are also forming alliances with Assemblies of God institutions of higher education, Chi Alpha, and other organizations that develop young leaders. The connections will take a variety of shapes including but not limited to short-term learning encounters, medium-term internships, and long-term apprenticeships.

**3. Discernment System.** As the call of God toward planting becomes clearer, it is important for a potential planter to understand how God has wired him or her. The Discernment System of the Church Multiplication Network will provide at least four layers of discernment tools to make the wiring clear to the potential planter. Some will be called to provide catalytic leadership. Some will discover that their best

## BootCamp

### A Proven System for Producing Strong, Healthy, Reproducing Churches

**Church plants using a proven and intentional system have 90 percent survival rate** after 5 years. Assemblies of God churches that do not use an intentional system have a 50 percent survival rate.

BootCamp is an intense 4-day workshop that prepares people to plant new churches or revitalize existing churches. BootCamps equip planters to recruit and mobilize workers, communicate vision, and be strategic planners. The goal of BootCamp is to produce strong, healthy, reproducing churches. Attendees receive practical skills training under the guidance of a team of facilitators and coaches.

At BootCamp, we answer six important questions:

- ☐ **What does God want to do?** (What is His vision for the community?)
- ☐ **Who am I?** (How will my gifts, skills, values, and leadership style affect this ministry?)
- ☐ **What am I sent to do?** (What is my specific assignment in this community?)
- ☐ **Who will do it with me?** (How do I gather and recruit people to fulfill God's vision?)
- ☐ **How will we do it?** (What steps will we take to start a healthy church?)
- ☐ **How will we evaluate our progress?** (Are we accomplishing what God wants us to do?)

## 2009 BootCamps

### Illinois District BootCamp

September 7-11, 2009

Registration cutoff: August 7, 2009

### Rocky Mountain District BootCamp

September 21-25, 2009

Registration cutoff: August 28, 2009

### Potomac District BootCamp

October 19-23, 2009

Registration cutoff: September 19, 2009

### New York District BootCamp

November 9-13, 2009

Registration cutoff: October 9, 2009





## What Is the Church Multiplication Network?



### The Church Multiplication Network Matching Fund

**Starting a new church is a journey of faith.** Once you are confident God has called you to plant, you must discover how He will supply the resources you need to start a new church. Most important, you will need prayer partners and launch team members. You will need strategic connections in the community. And of course, you will need financial resources. This is where the Church Multiplication Network Matching Fund comes in. We base the Matching Fund on the idea that we can do more together than we can by ourselves. The Matching Fund provides a strategic way to make the most of your fund-raising efforts.

Here is how it works: Every approved Assemblies of God church planting project may apply for the Matching Fund one time during the planting process. A church can receive a maximum of \$30,000. The church must use funds in a manner that maximizes the start-up. Therefore, the funds are only available for planting projects that have not yet had their public launch event.

Here is what is happening so far as we work together to multiply the Kingdom.

- ☐ Church planting projects receiving CMN Matching Funds: **63**
- ☐ CMN Matching Fund churches that have launched: **49**
- ☐ Personal contacts with unchurched individuals: **102,962**
- ☐ Persons baptized in water: **378**
- ☐ Persons making a confession of faith: **2,301**
- ☐ Average number of people per church attending weekly: **73**
- ☐ Amount given to missions by Matching Funds churches: **\$349,186.33**
- ☐ Amount paid-forward by Matching Fund churches to start new churches: **\$189,887.81**

Find out more about the Matching Fund online at [cmn.ag.org](http://cmn.ag.org) or call 417-862-2781 to start the Matching Fund process.

contribution to starting churches will be support team members led by gifted lead planters. Others will realize they are best suited to serve as administrative leaders who work collaboratively with the lead planter to maintain organizational integrity as the church becomes a reality. Others will discover that their best contribution can be made as an intercessor or financial contributor.

**4. Training System.** Currently, the Assemblies of God starts over 250 churches every year. Every time a church is started,

the leaders of the plant learn principles and procedures that can be passed along to other leaders who are planting new churches in similar settings. The Training System will gather what all the new church planters have learned and pass this along to the next generation of planters. Currently, the Boot-Camp is the most visible manifestation of this system. But over the next few years other training events will be provided to maximize our collective ability to reach lost people.

**5. Coaching System.** A crucial part of many effective church plants is the support of a coach. A coach is a person who comes alongside to help. The CMN will work with districts and parent churches to assist in developing a pool of proficient coaches who can assist potential planters as they journey from the point of discovery through the launch of the new church. The CMN coaching system will develop a national coach certification process to provide a universal criterion for identifying the competency of coaches in one of the streams of coach training.

**6. Resources Development System.** New faith communities need a solid financial foundation to successfully launch. The CMN system will leverage the scale of this Fellowship to build partnerships and alliances that provide increased accessibility to much needed in-kind services and financial support for all manner of church multiplication. In addition to utilizing existing models such as those provided by the CMN Perpetual Matching Fund, AG Trust, district councils, and relational networks, the CMN fund development system will seek to develop and deliver new revenue streams from the following sources:

- Stewardship planning/training
- Sponsorship
- Major donor/planned giving
- Earned income strategies
- Event fundraising
- Private/public foundation grants
- Government contracts/grants

**7. Marketing/Communications System.** The Marketing/Communications System will help us tell the stories of what God is doing through all these new churches. These stories will provide inspiration, training, and information to help donors understand how their investment in planting is making a difference. The Marketing/Communications System will also assist planters by creating peer-to-peer networks to facilitate cross-pollination and collaboration.

### WHAT CAN HAPPEN?

As he looked back on his two terms in office, former President Eisenhower said of the Interstate System, "More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one would change the face of America."<sup>3</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, we know he was right. Studies of economic impact estimate that the Interstate System has had a positive

# 3 Year Statistics of OPENED/



# CLOSED

## CHURCHES

### 3 YEAR AVERAGE

	WATER BAPTISMS	GIVING	SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	CONVERSIONS
Closed	603	\$448,249	14,703	1,822
Open	1,593	\$738,645	17,144	4,141
Matching Fund*	154	\$147,495	1,890	692

### PER CHURCH AVERAGE

	WATER BAPTISMS	GIVING	SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	CONVERSIONS
Closed – Average	2	\$1,788	59	7
Open – Average	6	\$2,722	63	15
Matching – Average	8	\$7,375	95	35

### REPORTING TOTAL

	REPORTING	TOTAL
Closed	251	253
Opened	271	281
Funded	20	29

### 5 YEAR PROJECTIONS

	WATER BAPTISMS	GIVING
Closed	1,263	\$3,037
Opened	1,405	\$8,250
Matching Fund	2,500	\$18,436,833
75% of Goal for Matching Fund	1,875	\$14,438

\*Matching Fund  
churches only  
current data

impact of trillions of dollars on the U.S. economy. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved. The quality of life in thousands of American cities has been favorably impacted. America is a better place to live because of the visionary actions of leaders 50 years ago.

The CMN represents a similar kind of visionary leadership for the future of the Assemblies of God in America. Just as the Interstate System galvanized the assets of this nation, so the partnerships facilitated by CMN can change the face of America in a way that President Eisenhower could have never imagined. As each sphere of leadership — national, district, and local — works to synergize our resources, it is possible for us to see a wave of discipleship and anointed ministry that will change the spiritual landscape of this nation. 🌟

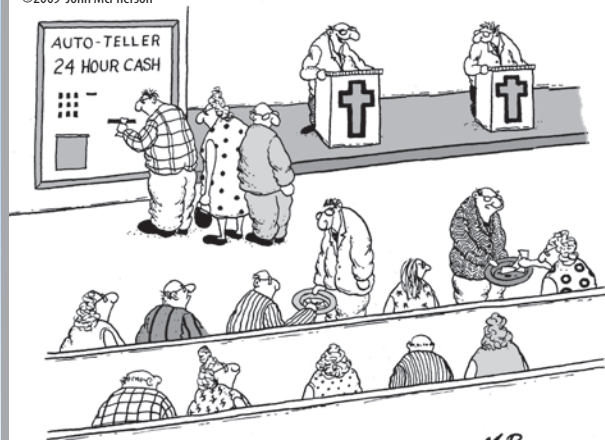


**STEVE PIKE**, director, Church Multiplication Network for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

### NOTES

1. Copeland, Larry, "U.S. Interstate System Marks 50 Years Today." *USA Today*, July 4, 2006.
2. David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).
3. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/densitymap.htm>.

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"Our donations have doubled since we had the ATM installed."







# Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Old Testament Promise

By EDGAR R. LEE

**I**t appears, in some quarters at least, our Fellowship is losing much of its passion for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. If so, we are tempted to blame the influence of an increasingly materialistic and sensate culture. But maybe

we who are responsible to preach, teach, and pastorally lead our people have become theologically deficient on the one hand, and perhaps

intimidated by non-Pentecostal and emergent theologies on the other. Are we deliberately and purposely planning preaching, worship services, and other ministries to perpetuate baptism in the Spirit and Spirit-filled living?

This article is the first in a series where Tim Enloe and I will present the best of recent Pentecostal theological reflection that clarifies and broadens the biblical foundations of our historic beliefs as well as practical suggestions to strengthen preaching and spiritual formation within local churches. In this article, I briefly review prominent facets of Old Testament teaching that ground Pentecostal doctrine and practice in the whole of biblical revelation.

### Old Testament Promise

What God has done in the New Testament, He began in the Old. The Old Testament was the first Bible of the Early Church. The Early Church used the Old Testament to support its understanding of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament also introduces the work of the Spirit of God whose identity and functions gradually emerge through its successive ages and come to fruition in the New

Testament.

"Old Testament pneumatology foreshadows much of what appears in the New Testament. It would be difficult to understand some New Testament passages if it were not for the light the Old Testament sheds on them."<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit as "the promised Holy Spirit." Before His ascension, Jesus said, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised" (Luke 24:49).<sup>2</sup> Peter picked up this theme in his inspired Pentecost sermon, "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Paul spoke of the "promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:14) and "the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13; more literally in NASB, "the Holy Spirit of promise"). While Jesus spoke about the Father as giver of the Spirit in the Gospels (see Luke 11:13; John 14:16), Peter's use of Joel indicates God first gave the promise of the Spirit through the great prophecies of the Old Testament (Joel 2:28,29; see also Isaiah 32:15; 44:3-5; Ezekiel 11:19,20; 36:26,27; 37:1-14; 39:29; Zechariah 12:10).<sup>3</sup>

A knowledge of the Spirit's work in the old economy aids our understanding of His work in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. This article

istockphoto

will focus on several key Old Testament narratives and prophecies that provide striking clues to His<sup>4</sup> work in the New Testament era.

## Moses and the Elders

Moses was the Old Testament prophet *par excellence*. His miracles during the plagues on Egypt and those manifested throughout Israel's wilderness wanderings attest the extraordinary way in which the Spirit of God worked through him. Yet, the role of the Spirit in his ministry is not revealed in the Pentateuch until Numbers 11. Here, the constant grumbling and complaining of the people had drained Moses of vitality and enthusiasm. In modern parlance, he was "burned out." Enervated and depressed, he cried out to the Lord, "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now ... do not let me face my own ruin" (11:14,15).

The Lord laid out a surprising and unexpected remedy, "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders. ... I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them" (11:16,17). The intended outcome? "They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone" (verse 17). We are intended to understand that Moses' exceptional wisdom and power had been mediated through him by the Spirit of God. Moses is a preeminent bearer of the Spirit.

God is showing that the same Spirit of God who rested on and energized Moses is inexhaustible and also available to be placed on a body of leaders other than Moses. And this without diminishing Moses' prestige or power (we assume Aaron and Miriam, both prophets, were also moved by the Spirit).

The Lord is specific about the role the Spirit is to play in the lives of these 70 elders. "They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will

not have to carry it alone" (Numbers 11:17). The Spirit will energize and guide their leadership functions to a greater degree of effectiveness and helpfulness.

Something else occurred which, by its inclusion in the narrative, is important in the experience of the elders. "When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again" (Numbers 11:25). The elders were not called to be prophets, nor did they subsequently, so far as we know, act in that capacity. Rather, the Lord chose to use a dramatic temporary experience of prophecy as a confirming

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**Spiritual passion is caught, not taught, so choose to be contagious by not being afraid of appearing weak or vulnerable before those you influence.**

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sign the Spirit had come upon the elders. The sign of prophetic speech was convincing to Moses, the elders themselves, and others who witnessed the event, or had the event reliably reported to them. The public experience in the camp of the (providentially?) tardy Eldad and Medad was a witness to the community, a proleptic mini-Pentecost (11:26).

## Saul and David

Saul's spiritual failures so sullied his

reputation we tend to overlook, or perhaps discount, the early work of the Spirit in him. The Lord chose Saul to be the first king of Israel, revealed His choice to the prophet Samuel, and then commanded Samuel to anoint Saul as king (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1). The act of anointing was symbolic of God's choice, and administered at God's direction guaranteed the coming of the Spirit in power.

After privately anointing Saul, Samuel gave him three signs to be fulfilled. The last of the three was, "You will meet a procession of prophets. ... The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you" (1 Samuel 10:5-7). The nature and order of the events that follow are significant. "As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart" (10:9). Later, when Saul met the band of prophets, "the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying" (1 Samuel 10:10).

The sacred historian carefully described God's work in Saul as accomplished in two sequential steps. First came a change of heart; second, the Spirit came in observable power and prophetic evidence reminiscent of the 70 elders.

Neither Saul nor the elders were called to be or recognized as prophets. But in each case, a temporary experience of prophecy was a sign of the Spirit's coming on them in power for their leadership tasks. Moreover, Saul experienced a definite two-stage experience of the Spirit. Saul's sins and apostasy over a 40-year reign do



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not invalidate the fact God chose him to be the first king of Israel and provided the necessary change of heart and the miraculous power to lead and deliver Israel.

Scripture also attests another remarkable work of the Spirit at the calling of David. Samuel, at the direct command of God, “took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1 Samuel 16:13). Unlike Saul, the Scripture does not say David was given a changed heart. Also, unlike Saul, the Spirit came upon David “from that day on.” So David, unlike other priests, prophets, and kings in the Old Testament, had the continuous presence of the Spirit in his life.

Even as a boy, David seems to have had a precocious and unusual relationship with God. Therefore, the Spirit, doubtless already at work within him, came on him in an observable and powerful way with no need to report a change of heart. And Goliath’s defeat — coming shortly thereafter in the narrative — publicly demonstrated the wisdom, passion, and power of the Spirit in David (1 Samuel 17). We see the continuity and importance of the Spirit in David’s daily life in his broken prayer after Nathan confronted him with his adultery and murder: “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11).

It is evident that the Spirit gifted David with a broad spectrum of abilities — as a warrior and military leader, an administrator, a musician and singer, a poet and prophet, an architect and builder (see 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Chronicles 28:12,19). David is one of the greatest men of the Old Testament, the harbinger of the Lord Jesus Christ who is identified as the “Son of David.” Saul and David, along with Moses and a host of other Old Testament greats, stand in the tradition of the great charismatic leaders of Israel, so called

because of the way in which the Spirit came upon them in dynamic power.

### **Bezalel and Oholiab**

The first definitive action of the Spirit on individuals recorded in the Old Testament is found in the Book of Exodus. It is included in the narrative prior to the Numbers 11 account of the Spirit’s work in Moses and the elders. The background for this event is the Lord’s directing Moses to build the tabernacle and its furnishings according to an exact plan (Exodus 25:8,9). But not only did the Lord give Moses a plan, He also provided Spirit-filled people for building and artistry: “See, I have chosen Bezalel ... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts — to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab ... to help him” (Exodus 31:2–6; see also 35:30–35).

For the first time, we learn that the creative Spirit grants wisdom and skill to particular persons for instructional and physical tasks facilitative of God’s redemptive plan. In this case, the spiritual gifts have to do with creative vision, craftsmanship, and the teaching and leadership skills to bring the vision to reality. It is not a long stretch from this account to Paul’s discussion of the so-called “mundane” spiritual gifts of Romans 12:6–8 (e.g., serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, showing mercy).

### **Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel**

Looking to the future, the prophet Jeremiah predicted, “The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts”

(Jeremiah 31:31,32). Jeremiah foresaw a deeper “conversion” than had yet come to God’s covenant people. (When the writer to the Hebrews cited this prophecy, like other New Testament writers, he said, “The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this” [Hebrews 10:15]).

Ezekiel spoke in similar terms, but connected Jeremiah’s anticipated soteriological work directly to the Spirit of God. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:26,27). Rather than emphasizing the charismatic power of the Spirit, these two prophecies focused on the soteriological power of the Spirit.

In the case of the prophet Joel, there is a remarkable continuity between his words and those of Moses. Consciously or not, Joel picked up on the prophetic motif found in the wish-prayer of Moses when he learned Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp: “I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” (Numbers 11:29). Looking toward the time of fulfillment, Joel uttered these words of the Lord, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28,29). While Joel was certainly not unconcerned about spiritual change among God’s covenant people, he foresaw a universal prophetic endowment for them. The emphasis of this crucial text, the foundational text for Peter’s initial prophetic address to the new covenant era, is charismatic — all God’s people are to become prophets.

### **Provision for the Future**

These salient features of Old Testament

## Recommended Books

The following books provide excellent background for study of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Most of the writers are classical Pentecostals; several come from charismatic and Third-Wave traditions with slightly different points of view. All are helpful.

pneumatology reveal several aspects of the Spirit's work that come into strong relief in the New Testament. Several points are particularly relevant to this series.

1. In the Old Testament narratives, the Spirit often came in powerful and experiential ways that we refer to as *charismatic*. The term comes from the word Paul used most often for spiritual gifts (*charismata*) and usually signifies in theological discussion the more obviously supernatural and experiential presence and work of the Spirit.

2. The narratives also provide hints of the soteriological work of the Spirit. By soteriological we refer to the spiritual renewal and sanctification, or maturity, of God's people. Remember Saul's "new heart" and David's unique experience with the Spirit "from that day on," as well as his concern that the Spirit not be taken from him as a result of his sin.

3. The Old Testament promises of the work of the Spirit in future times include both the *charismatic* and the *soteriological* concerns of the Spirit. Ezekiel directly connects the new covenant experience of personal salvation to the Holy Spirit. Joel, by contrast, sharply delineates the universal charismatic work of the Spirit as He pours out the gift of prophecy upon all God's people.

4. Both in historical narrative and prophetic promise, the charismatic endowments of the Spirit appear to be observable and experiential events, frequently accompanied by distinctive prophetic utterance. ¶

### NOTES

1. Anthony D. Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Mo.: Logion Press/Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 33.
2. Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).
3. See the discussion in Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 136, 137.
4. This paper will refer to the Spirit with masculine pronouns in accordance with traditional Protestant theology.

Bennett, Dennis and Rita. 1971. *The Holy Spirit and You: A Study-Guide to the Spirit Filled Life*. Rev. ed. South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge Publishing. An excellent and readable guide to baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-filled life by two influential pioneers of the charismatic movement.

Deere, Jack. 1993. *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: A Former Dallas Seminary Professor Discovers That God Speaks and Heals Today*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. A superb theological and spiritual chronicle of a cessationist's journey into the spiritual power of Pentecostal-charismatic faith. Deere is now associated with the so-called Third Wave and a part of the Vineyard churches.



Helping Others  
Receive the Gift

Enloe, Tim; et al. 2008. *Helping Others Receive the Gift: Insights on Spirit Baptism from God's Word and Personal Experience*. Springfield, Mo.: Access Publishing/Gospel Publishing House. An excellent practical guide to assist contemporary

Pentecostal-charismatic leaders to minister in ways that facilitate reception of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Hildebrandt, Wilf. 1995. *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers. A first-rate biblical-theological journey through the Old Testament teachings on the Holy Spirit. Must reading for every Pentecostal-charismatic minister.

Horton, Stanley M. 2005. *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*. Rev. ed. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House. A biblical theology of the Spirit from a beloved classical Pentecostal scholar which treats the teachings on the Spirit in canonical order.

Macchia, Frank D. 2006. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. A fresh exposition by an outstanding Pentecostal theologian that affirms the power and importance of Spirit baptism while attempting to engage, unify, and challenge contemporary discussion on the Spirit. Requires careful and judicious reading but rewards with powerful insights.

Menzies, William W. and Robert Menzies. 2000. *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. An excellent defense and presentation of the classical Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit that is carefully attuned to contemporary hermeneutical, exegetical, and theological issues.

Oss, Douglas A. 1996. "A Charismatic View," [pp. 239-283] in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today: Four Views*. Ed. Wayne A. Grudem. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. Probably the best compact discussion of the classical Pentecostal position on baptism in the Holy Spirit available. The doctrine is developed from a redemptive historical point of view.

Palma, Anthony D. 2001. *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Springfield, Mo.: Logion Press/Gospel Publishing House. The best all-around presentation and defense of the classical Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit with special emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

Peters, Michael. 2004. *The Case for Charismatics*. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing. An irenic but scholarly, clear, and effective response to John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos*.

Rea, John. 1990. *The Holy Spirit in the Bible: All the Major Passages About the Spirit; A Commentary*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House. An excellent discussion of key biblical passages about the Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments by an emeritus Regent Divinity School Old Testament professor.

Stronstad, Roger. 1984. *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson. A groundbreaking little book by a PAOC scholar who helped to kick off the discussion that Luke in the Gospel and Acts represents a unique and complementary charismatic theology.

Williams, J. Rodman. 1990. *Renewal Theology (Vol. 2): Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Christian Living*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. An excellent exposition of Pentecostal-charismatic theology by a leading charismatic, recently deceased, who last served at Regent Divinity School. The content of the original volume 2, often found in used bookstores, is now included in the one-volume edition.



# Practical Applications of Old Testament Pneumatology: Our Need for His Help

By TIM ENLOE

## Introduction

**S**urveying Old Testament encounters with the Holy Spirit reminds us of the Spirit's patience, ability, and wisdom. We read about some unpedigreed and even dubious characters that had profound supernatural experiences, and then led others to supernatural victory. As in the story of the turtle sitting atop a high wooden fencepost, one fact is obvious: Both the turtle and Old Testament leaders did not get there by themselves. The major Old Testament Spirit narratives speak to us on many levels of responsibility — first as individuals, then as leaders, and yet they also have universal implications. I want to reflect on some practical applications at each of these levels. I long that we desire to renew His transformation, power, and guidance in our lives and ministries.

## On a Personal Level

Zooming in on charismatically endowed individuals can be inspiring — but it can also get ugly. From Moses to Samson to David, bittersweet moments of personal victory and failure demonstrate this simple truth: Personal consecration can affect the duration of such an endowment.

Moses' tantrum at Meribah-Kadesh reveals that the residue of his previous murderous anger and tablet-smashing outbursts still lingered. Striking the rock brought a premature and geographically limiting end to his leadership. Disobedience can be costly, decreasing the time span of Spirit-empowered effectiveness.

The Gideon narrative is an example of a Spirit-empowered leader missing God, therefore missing God's best. This incident immediately followed a great victory. His



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pendant for Ishmaelite earrings snared him and all Israel into idolatrous worship (Judges 8:23–27). Gideon's story had a great first half, but holiness issues changed his biography to have a flavorless — even sour — conclusion.

And then there's Samson — half-Spirit empowered leader, half-unconsecrated pleasure addict. His story reminds us of God's grace despite human weakness. Samson's contradictory end of both victory and defeat leaves the reader wondering what could have been if only he had a deeper level of consecration.

God selected Saul as king at the insistence of Israel — even though a monarchy was apparently not yet the divine plan. Saul's commissioning includes both astoundingly precise prophetic interaction with Samuel and unique personal interaction with the Spirit of prophecy. Shortly after his coronation, he blatantly disobeyed God by sparing the Amalekite king, Agag. This began a cycle of God mercifully reaching out to a disobedient Saul, who seems to become more and more bent on his own destruction. Once again, a lack of consecration lowers the ceiling of what could have been.

King David is the clearest Old Testament prototype for the Messiah — a soft heart — but a vulnerable Achilles tendon. Note his fear of the Holy Spirit's possible departing following his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba: "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11, NASB).<sup>1</sup> This man after God's own heart knew there were consequences to sinful decisions.

At this point you may wonder, *How can any of us make it?* Certainly if Moses, who received both the original and duplicate copies of the Law — hand delivered on granite stationery — cannot finish the course, how can we? The new covenant demonstrates that Spirit-enabled moral change is more than possible; it is expected. Paul tells

us, "If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body you will live" (Romans 8:13, NASB).

The new covenant provisions of the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration and sanctification make what was once impossible now possible — even for leaders. Comingle that with an unfolding level of New Testament grace and mercy, and suddenly we have an opportunity to break the cycle and experience the fullest duration of our individual anointing.

### On a Leadership Level

Numbers 11 demonstrates a compelling truth: holy desperation at the leadership level — even when motivated by frustration and discouragement — can welcome a corporate encounter with the Holy Spirit.

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**Zooming in on  
charismatically  
endowed individuals  
can be inspiring  
— but it can also  
get ugly.**

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Moses — prophet par excellence, priestly mediator, and theocratic ruler — evidences a frustration we all face in ministry: leading people who are not always as committed to following as we are to leadership.

We can only surmise God's planned intentions in this story, but Moses apparently had to come to the end of his strength — or at least the realization of it — that led to the first recorded corporate outpouring of the Spirit. From Moses to Paul we are reminded that divine strength is perfected in our

weakness (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Moses gave his frustration voice when he prayed, "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness" (Numbers 11:15, NASB).

We can identify — at least to a lesser degree — with Moses' complaint to God, "This is all Your fault; I was happy tending my father-in-law's sheep when You called me into ministry." The overwhelming physical, emotional, and spiritual loads we carry can either cause us to crawl into our hiding places or trigger desperate prayer sessions that bring heaven to earth.

In Acts 4, the newly Spirit-enabled and persecuted apostles voice their desperation to God. Rather than conceding defeat or receding territory, their desperate prayer shook heaven which, in turn, shakes earth: "And when they had prayed, the place where they had been gathered together was shaken, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31, NASB, my emphasis).

The application is obvious: Do not be afraid to let your desperation out before God and before the people you lead. Authentic, unfeigned desperation can be a powerfully contagious motivator when appropriately communicated. Spiritual passion is caught, not taught, so choose to be contagious by not being afraid of appearing weak or vulnerable before those you influence. Why not allow your spiritual desires, even frustrations, to be transparently expressed in healthy ways?

The Holy Spirit will honor your sincere humility and dependence on Him. After Moses' desperate petition, he went from standing alone to having a corporate outpouring that empowered 70 Spirit-anointed helpers to ease his load. The Holy Spirit still desires to hear humble leaders cry out for His help.

## Practical Applications of Old Testament Pneumatology: Our Need for His Help (continued from page 121)



### On a Universal Level

On a nearly universal scale we see a divine premise to the Spirit's enabling: His power equips us to do what was previously humanly impossible. Whether the impossibility lies within the laws of physics or the sheer scale of the task, the Spirit helps us in our weakness and inability.

Moses, Joshua, Bezalel, Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Saul, David, the prophets, and many others found this to be true:

- Stuttering fugitive murderer becomes emancipator and covenant prophet with a flair for the dramatic.
- Protégé earns national trust and international respect when he proves his calling by demolishing a city's walls with several daily parades and trumpet blasts.
- Plowhand with variable humidity fleece mops up the battlefield with 300 men.

**Paul's reminder to the Corinthians of his *modus operandi* needs to be a clarion call to us: "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power."**

- Shepherd boy dismantles a giant foe that once mocked both the boy and his God after inserting a small pebble into the behemoth's head.

God seems to use the least likely in ways that are outside of their natural circumstances and abilities to ensure the rich contrast between the empower-er and empower-ee.

Often we follow our own naturally attainable plans by default, not stopping to verify whether we are being led from above. Then a second mistake frequently follows: We do not realize that a lack of Spirit dependence reaps a lack of Spirit intervention. We can easily get accustomed to operating without His help.

The following two questions have served me well in reorienting my need for the Spirit's enabling because they have distinct power to reveal who is behind my plans and actions:

**1. Differentiation:** What is the Holy Spirit leading me to do?

**2. Implementation:** Do I need His supernatural ability or can I manage this by myself?

Paul's reminder to the Corinthians of his *modus operandi* needs to be a clarion call to us: "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, so that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4,5, NASB).

Remember, when the Holy Spirit is upon us, we can do things we cannot normally do.

### Concluding Thoughts

Perhaps you — with me — have felt underpedigreed, undereducated, underfinanced, understaffed, or undersomethinged. Is the revelation of our inadequacy an admission of defeat or an opportunity for the Spirit's enabling?

If you are feeling frustrated like Moses or ill-equipped like Gideon, remember your weaknesses can be your greatest opportunities for His strength.

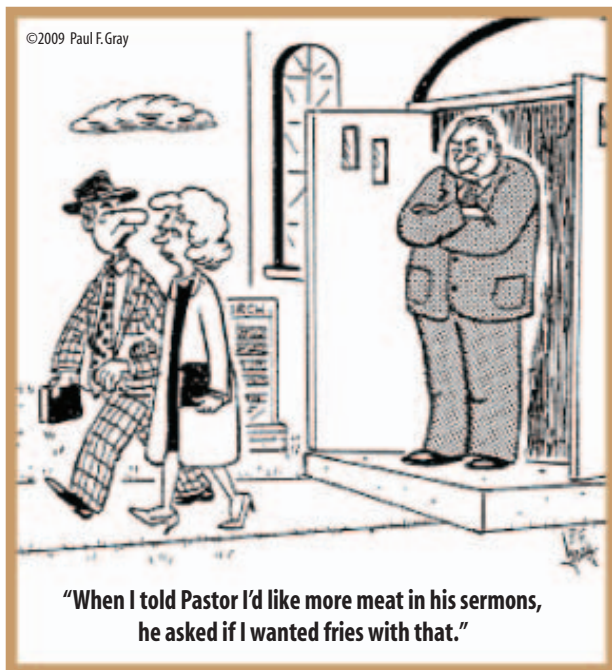
So, what is God leading you to do? Can you handle it without His help?

We must identify the divine goals and mandates on our lives, and then rely on the Holy Spirit's patience, ability, and wisdom to get the job done.

Perhaps some prayers of desperation will welcome His help even today. 🙏

#### NOTE

1. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)).







## Meeting the Needs of People With Disabilities Within the Church

**A**s churches grow and as new churches are planted, we will have more people with disabilities attending church. According to a 1997 census report, approximately 1 in 5 Americans have a disability. According to estimates made by the United Nations, over 650 million people worldwide have disabilities.

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A disability is defined as an impairment that limits a major life function such as seeing, hearing, walking, performing schoolwork, carrying objects, or working at a job. Some disabilities are a result of disease, trauma, or advancing age, while others are present at birth. Disabilities are part of the human experience. People with disabilities make up about 20 percent of the population in every nation.

Disabilities require us to consider the frailty and dignity of human life. In ministering to people with disabilities, we are reminded of our own vulnerability. Yet, people with disabilities also remind us of the high value of human life and the unique contribution every person brings to the church.

The guiding principle for addressing ethical issues related to disabilities must be our recognition of the sanctity of human life. The prenatal diagnosis of developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome makes the need for teaching within the church concerning the sanctity of human life critical.

About 90 percent of pregnant women given a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome choose abortion. Yet, upholding the sanctity of human life from the pulpit is just the beginning in helping persons with developmental disabilities. Many people with special needs, along with their families, desire to be included in the church but do not know how to proceed. We need to consider how we can make our churches welcoming to people with disabilities, even as we seek to understand the ethical issues related to disabilities.

### The Need for a Biblical Perspective on Disability

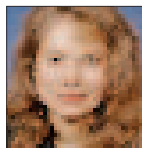
One way to meet the needs of people with disabilities, and their families, is to teach a biblical perspective on disability. The Bible teaches that every member of the body of Christ is valuable and worthy of honor; just as every part of our physical bodies has a special purpose. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head

cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Corinthians 12:21-23). In addition, the Bible teaches that each member of the body of Christ is related to the other members in such a way that "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). People with disabilities are an integral part of the body of Christ and belong in our churches.

Jesus taught His disciples how to treat people with disabilities. "When



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you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12–14). We are to make a special effort to reach those with disabilities. In addition, the Lord will bless those who show kindness to people with disabilities.

While the Bible teaches that God heals and the New Testament is filled with examples of Jesus healing people with disabilities, the Bible also teaches that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). We do not have the answer to why some people endure more suffering than others. We do know, however, that suffering came into this world as a result of the fall of mankind (Romans 5:12). God's original creation was good and free from suffering and disease (Genesis 1:31). In giving mankind a free will and the ability to choose good over evil (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15), God created a universe in which mankind's choice to sin led to the entrance of sickness and suffering into our world. Yet, Christians live with the hope that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Christians with disabilities along with their family members are able to comfort others with the comfort they have received themselves from God. Comfort from the Lord can overflow in a person's life in proportion to the suffering that person is experiencing (2 Corinthians 1:4,5). Ultimately, all believers, whether they have a special disability or not, must realize they are "jars of clay" with imperfections that need not hinder the display of God's power in their lives (2 Corinthians 4:7).

## **The Need To Uphold the Sanctity of Human Life**

In addition to teaching the biblical perspective on disability, pastors need to uphold the sanctity of human life. We uphold the dignity of an adult with a disability when we decry the abortion of unborn children with the same disability. In the Netherlands, doctors developed the Groningen Protocol to help physicians decide when to administer euthanasia to infants with disabilities. Of the 200,000 children born in the Netherlands each year, about 1,000 die during the first year of life. About 600 out of the 1,000 deaths

society by minimizing the benefit for people born with disabilities. Allowing mercy killing of infants with a certain disability sends a message to adults with the same disability that their life is worth less than the life of other members of society.

In 1989, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission issued a report entitled "Medical Discrimination Against Children," which documented a "quality of life" formula used from 1977 to 1982 at the Children's Hospital of Oklahoma that took into account the socioeconomic status of the child's family when determining what to advise parents about

## **The church can play an important role in upholding the sanctity of human life through pastoral care to individuals facing medical crises.**

of babies during the first year of life are preceded by a medical decision regarding the end of life. Fifteen to 20 of these infants are euthanized as a result of having a disability deemed to cause a very poor quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

One example of a disability for which infants are euthanized in the Netherlands is severe spina bifida. One of Britain's royal medical colleges, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology, is proposing that "active euthanasia" of infants with disabilities be permitted to spare parents the burden of raising such children. Yet, granting doctors the power to make a subjective decision on whether or not a life is worth living changes the very nature of medicine from care of the patient to a form of social engineering. Medicine becomes a way to maximize the benefit for

a simple life or death procedure for babies with spina bifida. The doctors gave well-to-do families an optimistic view of their child's future, which resulted in these families choosing the life-sustaining procedure. Poorer families



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were given a pessimistic picture of their child's potential, resulting in four out of five poor families agreeing not to treat their children. The failure to undergo the treatment resulted in the death of 24 babies.

Even adults who acquire disabilities later in life as a result of an accident are susceptible to how health-care providers portray their potential for rehabilitation. One of the dangers of legalizing physician-assisted suicide is that soon after an injury that results in a severe disability, patients usually go through a time when they wish they were dead. However, a few months or years later, most patients are glad they are alive. If during that critical phase when patients are first coming to terms with their disability, health-care providers cast a grim view of the patient's future in conjunction with the availability of physician-assisted suicide, many patients might make a choice for death, missing years of life they would otherwise enjoy once past the initial crisis.

Advocates for people with disabilities fear that emphasis on cost cutting in the health-care industry may pressure people to request lethal prescriptions when what they need is more support for living. Many people with disabilities who cannot care for their own physical needs can still live independently in their communities

if given enough support from society. In the absence of such support, people with disabilities may find themselves confined to nursing homes, living more limited lives, and being more susceptible to the desire for assisted suicide.

Even without the availability of physician-assisted suicide, people with disabilities sometimes experience discrimination within the health-care system. For example, people with disabilities sometimes feel pressured to sign do-not-resuscitate orders by hospital staff when they check into hospitals for treatment. Such pressure reflects an attitude among some health professionals that a life with severe disability is not a life worth living. The ethical concern is whether or not a profit-oriented health-care system could turn the "right to die" into a "duty to die" for some patients without an adequate social support network.

The church can play an important role in upholding the sanctity of human life through pastoral care to individuals facing medical crises. Pastors and chaplains visiting a patient whose injury has resulted in a permanent disability can reassure the patient that life still has purpose and value even after the loss of a physical ability. Pastors and chaplains also can help families cope with the changes and challenges brought by a loved one's

new disability. Pastors and ministries within the church can provide ongoing support to individuals living with disabilities and help them feel a sense of belonging in the body of Christ.

## The Need To Translate Ethics into Action

Within a church, the ethical stance that upholds the sanctity of human life can be translated into action by creating a welcoming environment for people with disabilities and their families. A church that teaches that children born with special needs are valuable members of society must be ready to provide care within the church programs for these children. The fourth largest unreached people group in the world is people who are deaf. Churches that provide sign language interpretation in their services are serving as missionaries to this people group.

Beyond making the church physically accessible for people with disabilities, there are many small actions church staff and members can do to make a church appealing to a person with disabilities. For example, train church staff members and ministry leaders to use people-first language when referring to someone with a disability.

People-first language means that the person is primary and the disability is secondary. A “person who uses a wheelchair” represents better word choice than “confined to a wheelchair.” Instead of saying “Mrs. Jones is disabled” say “Mrs. Jones has a disability.” The man “has multiple sclerosis” is preferred to the man “suffers from multiple sclerosis.”

In addition to using people-first language, be sure to welcome a person with a disability with a warm smile and speak directly to him, not his attendant or companion. Ask the person who has a disability if he needs assistance and the best way to assist. Do not make





assumptions about what activities he can or cannot do. Whenever possible, allow the person with a disability to sit alongside at least one companion. During the greeting portion of a church service, make sure the person with a disability is not ignored. If the person has speech that is unclear, politely ask the person to clarify what was said instead of pretending you understood him.

Pastors can train ushers to be sensitive to parents and their children with developmental disabilities. Perhaps these families would prefer to be seated in the back of the sanctuary near an exit, in case their child becomes disruptive. On the other hand, these families may desire a seat near the front of the sanctuary to ensure that the worship team captivates the child's attention.

Let parents request the seating they feel is most appropriate for their family. If ushers need to inform a family that their child has become too disruptive to remain in the service, train them to convey this message gently and nonjudgmentally, while offering another alternative for the child and parents, such as a room outside the sanctuary where they can view the service on closed-circuit television. Some church crying-room policies limit use of these rooms to younger children. If parents of an older child with a disability such as autism attend church regularly, develop a plan for meeting the needs of this unique family.

If a child with a disability will be attending a Sunday School class, consider recruiting an extra volunteer to be available in the classroom. This volunteer should work with the entire class instead of hovering around the child with a disability. Yet this volunteer should be ready to step in and assist the child with a disability when necessary.

Some pastors may desire to make ministry to people with disabilities a focus of their church. The church's ministry to women can organize support

for caregivers of people with disabilities. Churches with small-group ministries may choose to start a small group for those with a particular disability, including developmental disabilities. A larger church may purchase a wheelchair van to bring people with disabilities to the Sunday worship service. Churches may purchase Braille Bibles for people with visual impairment.

Churches of every size, including newly planted churches, can find ways to minister to people with disabilities. By reaching out and including people with disabilities in the life of a local

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### **Churches of every size, including newly planted churches, can find ways to minister to people with disabilities.**

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church, pastors are making their church more relevant to the needs of their community. A community will be more willing to embrace a new church when the community sees that a church cares for people and desires to meet practical needs. Thus, meeting the needs of people with disabilities within the church can lead to greater opportunities to serve all people within a community and shine the light of the gospel to a secular world. ¶

#### **NOTE**

1. E. Verhagen and P.J.J. Sauer, "The Groningen Protocol — Euthanasia in Severely Ill Newborns" *NEJM* 2005;352:959–62. <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/352/10/959>.



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**Remember that this season  
is about much more  
than your location on  
the globe.**



## I Miss My Family Desperately

**Q:** About 2 years ago we moved 1,500 miles away from our hometown for my husband to take a dream position at a multistaff church. He loves his job and feels fulfilled. I, on the other hand, am having a hard time. I miss my family desperately, and pray every day that we could move closer to home. My mother does not understand why we moved and frequently tells me how hard it is for her. I just found out I am pregnant and now feel more longing than ever to move home. When I observe close, extended families at church, I cry and question God. I feel stuck and miserable. What should I do?

**A:** I identify with your dilemma. My husband and I have been in the pastorate for 27 years. For 26 of those years we lived 1,500 to 2,500 miles from our hometowns. Moving away from my family was not something I ever longed for or would have chosen, and yet looking back I can enthusiastically say that God's plan was best. Not only did He equip us for what He called us to do; He brought blessings out of our obedience to His will.

The first hurdle is your will and your attitude. If you spend your time and energy longing for what you cannot have, a few things will happen:

1. You will be miserable.
2. You will begin to resent God and the ministry.
3. You will become a hindrance to your husband and his calling (not in your best interest in the long run).
4. You will fail to experience the wonderful blessings right at your doorstep.

Instead, put your energy into submitting to God's will for you today and passionately pursuing His agenda for you.

Submitting your will means you maintain an attitude of obedience,

remembering that life is made up of seasons, all designed by God to produce fruit in your life. Remember that this season is about much more than your location on the globe. It is about what God wants to teach you, where He wants to use you, and what He wants to do through you. If you spend your time and energy on the alternatives, you could well miss what is right in front of you.

There are some amazing opportunities that come from crossing geographical (and cultural boundaries) as we minister. If you let it, your horizons will be expanded along with your view of the world. Become a student of the area in which you live and your new culture. What makes people tick? How do they celebrate? What makes them laugh? How do they love? What's special about your part of the country?

Be open to new relationships that have the potential to become family-like. There are loving people in every congregation, but stronger connections are more likely to happen when close family is not in proximity. My children love their biological grandparents, but they have "aunts and uncles" in all the places we have lived. Aunt June potty trained our son. Miss Sue rocked our colicky baby daughter. Even though



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our children are now grown, Richard and Gloria still remember each birthday, Christmas, and major holiday by sending gifts.

One of the greatest advantages you will find if you stick it out is the personal growth you will experience. You will become more independent, and thus more confident as you discover new things about yourself. Your relationship with your husband can become stronger as you rely on one another. When your baby comes, your family will have a strong bond as you focus on your nuclear family.

Besides, new advances in communication technology have made huge inroads in eradicating the relationship challenges that come with geographical distance. Inexpensive technology like Internet communication, social networking, Skype, text-messaging, web cams, and cell phones all help keep our loved ones close and accessible.

You can still involve your parents and siblings in the passages of your life. Have your family join you for the birth of your baby. Plan ways to involve your relatives in birthdays and family events. Plan ahead for trips home. You will enjoy and appreciate your family much more during these times. Remember that closeness is a matter of the heart. It is not about proximity and availability.

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**Be open to new relationships  
that have the potential  
to become family-like.**

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I feel passionate enough about the next thought to be bold in expressing it. Please let your mother know it is not helpful for her to express her grief to you in ways that trouble you or exert pressure on you. It places you in an impossible position — between your joint calling with your husband and your immediate family. Tell Mom firmly that you do not mind knowing that she misses you, but that her positive, upbeat attitude about your life would be much more helpful. Let her know this is the best way she can be supportive of you and your marriage.

This season of your life may last for a short time or for a longer duration. God's plan is securely rooted in what is best for you. You could continue to proclaim your misery and demand change. However, I believe you will miss out on the gifts God wants to give to you through your obedience.

If you choose obedience, it's okay to have a good cry once in a while and think about how much you miss your extended family. Have a good cry, wipe your tears, and then focus on the tremendous opportunities before you. ☺

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Joseph Hillary King  
(1869-1946):

## *"A Lofty View of the Atonement"*

**J**oseph Hillary King was one of the most gracious and judicious of all early Pentecostal leaders. While he was convinced, like most theologians, that his views represented the best and clearest expression of Christian faith, he always showed respect for those with whom he disagreed. He was sometimes discouraged by the fact Pentecostal believers seemed uninterested in careful theological thinking, preferring emotional experience to doctrinal clarity. But King felt called by God to a ministry of explaining Pentecostal beliefs, and he remained faithful to that task even when his work seemed underappreciated.

As a child, King grew up in a part of South Carolina that was a spiritual wasteland. A traveling evangelist exposed him to the gospel, and he was converted at age 16. While attending worship at a nearby Methodist church several

months later, he experienced a marvelous encounter with God that filled his heart with "light, love, and glory." He was convinced that he had been fully sanctified by God's Spirit; but, when he told his mother, she replied: "Oh, you know you are not sanctified." Whatever his mother may have thought, King was convinced God had done something special in his heart, and he treasured the experience for the rest of his life.

Experience was important for King. He once said, "My experience is my creed." But at heart, he was a logical thinker in matters of faith. In fact, reason led him to Pentecostal faith. G.B. Cashwell, who had

just returned from the Azusa Street Mission revival, was preaching in the area. King listened intently and critically to Cashwell's message about tongues as the sign of the baptism in the Holy

Spirit. King's initial reaction was to criticize Cashwell's views as mistaken, but he also felt compelled to think the issue through logically. After 2 days of intensive Bible study, thinking, and prayer, King reversed his initial judgment

and became convinced that Cashwell was right. The next day he went back to Cashwell's services, freely admitted that his earlier thinking had been mistaken, and received the baptism in the Holy

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**Joseph Hillary King  
was one of the  
most gracious and  
judicious of all early  
Pentecostal leaders.**

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Spirit with the accompanying evidence of speaking in tongues.

King was a church leader long before becoming a Pentecostal. He had been ordained in the Methodist Church in 1891, and for the first 7 years of his ministry he was a “circuit walker” (since his parishes were too poor to afford a horse) for a number of adjacent congregations in the region where Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina meet. By the late 1890s, however, King was beginning to feel restrained by the formality of the Methodist Church. In 1898, he switched his allegiance to the more lively Fire-Baptized Holiness Church (FBHC), and within 2 years he became the leader of that small denomination. Following his own Pentecostal experience, King led the FBHC into the Pentecostal fold, and he later helped the FBHC merge into the larger Pentecostal Holiness

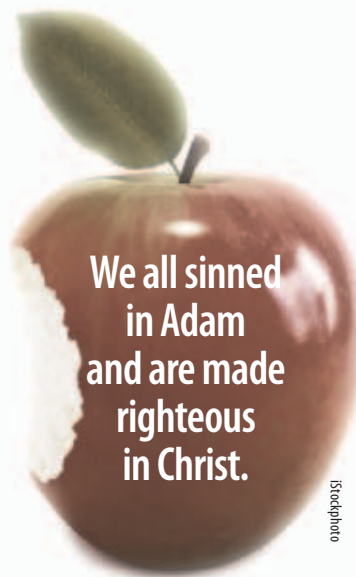
Church (PHC). King, who had obvious administrative talents, was soon pushed toward the leadership of the PHC, serving as general overseer from 1917 until 1941.

The selection that follows is taken from King’s first book, *From Passover to Pentecost* (1914). This book was written in part to refute what King saw as the erroneous thinking of William Durham and his new finished-work theology. King was a Pentecostal holiness believer, and he affirmed the doctrine of second-work sanctification. The specific passage reproduced here, however, does not focus on Durham, but on King’s own understanding of sin and the Atonement. King

had a deep and rich understanding of the Atonement that can enrich anyone’s understanding of the work of Christ. This passage also reflects King’s gracious and loving view of God. Among other things, he suggests that the wideness of God’s love may make it possible for people who have never heard about the historical Christ to somehow encounter the essential Christ in a way that can result in their redemption. He was not sure this was possible, but he clearly hoped it might be. In any instance, he believed that God’s grace was larger and more embracing than anyone could ever fully understand.



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**In every unsaved heart sin exists in a twofold manner.** There are sins and sin.

The former refers to acts, the latter to condition. Sins are actual; sin original. Sin is inherited; sins are committed. The former descends to us by transmis-

sion from Adam’s fall; the latter are acts of disobedience against God’s law. Sin separated us from God; sins bring His condemnation upon us. Sin is a principle; sins are practical. Both are intimately related. Sin is the root; sins are the fruit. Sin is the fountain; sins the stream flowing from it. Sin is the lawless seed; sins are the lawless deeds. Sin is the parent; sins are the offspring. Sin

is Adamic; sins are individual and personal. Sin is called the *Old Man*; sins are designated as transgressions.

In harmony with the foregoing we affirm that all who are born after the Fall are born in sin, or with the principle of sin in them. We sinned in Adam in the Garden. We were in him potentially when he disobeyed. Every soul was in the first man germinally when he was made. God breathed a part of himself into the body of clay, creating the man, and in that divine inbreathing the human race was germinally given birth. We being potentially in Adam the head of the race, we participated in his sin of disobedience. “Wherefore

as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "For that all have sinned" in the original is more *emphatic*: "In whom all have sinned," that is, in Adam the first. We sinned in him and we fell with him into death and ruin. God viewed the race in Adam when he sinned and looked upon that act as the act of the whole human family. Hence each one received the effect, and experienced the result of his and their disobedience.

The condemnation of Adam's sin has not been imparted to everyone born into the world, but only the effects of his transgression have been transmitted to us. The effect of his sin upon himself was the sense of guilt, and planting of the principle of sin in his nature, but the effect of his sin only has descended to everyone born of him, planting in them the same principle. Why not the guilt of his act be transmitted to all his vast offspring? Because of the atonement of Christ placed beneath man's feet the moment he sinned, securing him from instant death, and damnation in hell. The Atonement, virtually offered from the foundation of the world, and including all in its provisions, was unconditionally applied to Adam at the moment of his sin, not in the removal of its guilt or effects, but in keeping him out of eternal punishment which he had merited, and granting him the privilege of living on earth and propagating his seed. The Atonement at one stroke removed the guilt and condemnation of Adam's sin from the whole human race, so no one is under obligation to go to hell for that sin. As Adam was exempted from instant eternal punishment for his first sin through the unconditional application of the Atonement, so all his posterity was exempted from the like consequences by the same gracious means. No man has to go to hell because of Adam's transgression. Adam was given



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**We affirm that  
all who are born after  
the Fall are born in sin,  
or with the principle  
of sin in them.**

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a second probation and permitted by the Atonement to live and find the way back to God. All his posterity have the same opportunity through the same probation granted us (not in the next world) of escaping from sin's consequences through Christ, and obtaining the favor and peace of God. ...

Romans is the Atonement epistle. The fifth chapter is the greatest discussion of the Atonement in the Bible. It requires study to understand, and understanding to appreciate it. What may we learn from this most profound discussion?

**1. The Atonement is parallel to the Fall.**

The Fall is universal. Sin touches every living being. Not one has escaped. Wherever man is found, sin is found. Wherever sin is found, there is some vague idea that there is some power that can remove it, or that there is some way to escape from its consequences. The Atonement covers all the ground of sin. Millions know nothing of it, historically. Yet every one is mysteriously touched by the Atonement in that aspect of it which is unconditionally applied. There may be those who have

the essential Christ that know nothing of the historic Christ. They may have pressed, in heart, up through the mist of heathenism, and prayed to the God that made the heaven and earth, and in this way touched the Christ and found peace. We do not know this to be true, but we infer the same from certain statements in the Word. Christ "enlightens every man that cometh into the world," addressing them through Creation, and through the written Word, to those who have it. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

All this shows, indirectly, the effect of atonement upon heathen hearts, preventing the absolute erasure of every trace of the divine image from their being, and opening a way whereby truth may find its way into their conscience and reason.

We all sinned in Adam and we are made righteous in Christ. This is in a representative sense. We were germinally in Adam when he sinned, and his sin was attributed to every soul in him. All were regarded as participating in his act.

The Atonement in its virtual institution preceded the sin and fall of man. It was in this respect an accomplished fact in the mind of God. And every one in Adam was potentially in the Atonement before the first sin, and because of this, Adam was prevented from dropping into the abyss of eternal night, the moment he sinned. And also those germinally in him, being



potentially in Christ, at the same time, were delivered from the guilt of the first sin, and its obligatory punishable demerit. In this sense they are made righteous. All condemnation was removed as a result of their germinal participation in the Edenic transgression. The transmissible effects of the sin were not cut off; therefore its depraving influence flows on through the channel of human generation throughout the whole world. This will continue till the final removal from the world of all the effects of the Adamic sin in the Edenic restoration, through Christ's coming and reign. The Atonement will erase every trace of the fall from the whole creation.

**2. We all died in the first sin.** This referred to death spiritual, and partly mental. Death is nothing more than separation from God. We were severed from Him in Eden, and died. The death of the body is only an indirect result of the fall. It was not in an immortal non-perishable state before the entrance of death into the world. The tree of life

was that which ministered to the non-perishable preservation of the body in Eden. When Adam sinned, God thrust him out of the Garden, and placed a flaming sword around the tree of life to keep man from eating of it, and living forever, that is, preserving and perpetuating his physical existence upon earth forevermore, in the misery of sin in his soul and spirit. His body began to decay at once when he was driven from the Garden. The decaying would go on till the body would succumb, and this we call death. It is only the end of death's work. If man had not sinned, his body would have been lifted to the plane of absolute nondecayable existence when we should have been translated to a higher life. This would have been done when his Edenic probation ended.

The Atonement will deliver, or has provided for deliverance from death spiritual, mental and physical, and all decay in the world around us. All born of Adam will be raised from the dead, to die no more, in the sense of death in this sphere of existence. They shall be

made alive physically in Christ in the resurrection. The spirits of the wicked will remain in death eternal, because they refused to let it be removed from them in this life. The saved chose to accept the Atonement in its removal of sin here, and they will be placed beyond its possible recurrence in glorification. The bodies of the saints will also be glorified as a result of the provisions of the Atonement for its being lifted to a state of eternal nondecaying existence before the fall — the same being applied to it in and after the resurrection, which will be its glorification.

**3. The Atonement exceeds the effects and limits of the Fall.** It was instituted before the Fall, in anticipation of its full extent, and so the Atonement must not only cover all the ground of the fall, but it must go beyond, and cover all the original infinite purpose of God in the creation of man and all things from eternity.

### King's "Original Wisdom" for Today

King believed God's grace and mercy were wide, extending well beyond the body of believers to impact everyone positively in some way.

1. King suggests that the Atonement has to some degree positively affected every human being, even to the point of making it possible that some "heathen" might be able to find peace with God apart from knowledge of the historic Christ. What do you think?
2. How badly do you think the world has been deformed by sin? How much goodness remains in creation despite the Fall because of God's atoning grace?
3. King asserts that "the Atonement exceeds the effects and limits of the Fall." Do you agree? What might that mean if it is true? 🌀



Joseph  
Hillary  
King

Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center



## Should Your Church Consider a 401(k) Plan?

Despite apparent similarities in 403(b) and 401(k) plans,  
some important differences remain.  
Which plan is right for your church?

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### Background

In 2004, the IRS published proposed regulations that provided the first comprehensive guidance on the administration of 403(b) retirement plans in 40 years. The IRS was prompted to act as a result of the massive noncompliance it uncovered in field audits of 403(b) plans. Following publication of the 2004 proposed regulations, they received comments and held a public hearing.



The regulations were adopted as final regulations in 2007, and were to take effect on January 1, 2009, for most tax-exempt organizations. However, at the end of 2008, the IRS unexpectedly postponed the regulations for an

additional year, meaning that churches and other charities have until December 31, 2009, to comply.

**Key point.** *The Assemblies of God Ministers Benefit Association Select Retirement Plan is a 403(b) plan.*



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**Key point.** *The new 403(b) regulations state that “in the case of a section 403(b) plan maintained by a church-related organization for which the authority to amend the plan is held by a church convention (within the meaning of section 414(e)), [the final regulations] do not apply before the first day of the first plan year that begins after December 31, 2009.”*

The regulations impose new administrative requirements on churches and other providers of 403(b) plans, and this has caused many church leaders to ask if their church should switch its employee retirement plan from a 403(b) to a 401(k) plan. After all, 401(k) plans are by far the most popular employee retirement plan, with nearly 50 million participants and \$2.5 trillion in assets. Further, many lay church leaders are familiar with 401(k) plans because of their dominance among for-profit employers, but know little if anything about 403(b) plans. This has caused many lay church leaders to suggest that their church avoid the requirements of the new 403(b) regulations by

simply switching to a 401(k) plan. But is this a good idea? What advantages, and disadvantages, would be realized by such a change?

**Resource.** *The application of the new 403(b) regulations to churches and other religious organizations is addressed fully in chapter 10 of Richard Hammar’s 2009 Church & Clergy Tax Guide. To order, call 1-800-222-1840.*

## See pages 136-7 for a side-by-side comparison of 403(b) and 401(k) plans.

### 403(b) and 401(k) Plans — Similarities and Differences

The Assemblies of God Ministers Benefit Association Select Retirement Plan is a 403(b) plan. In most respects, 403(b) and 401(k) plans are similar. In recent years, the differences between these two kinds of retirement plans have narrowed considerably to the point that many regard 403(b) plans as “401(k) plans for non-profits.” This perception is especially true for “church plans,” which generally are exempt from the complex administrative requirements imposed by ERISA on 401(k) plans.

However, some important differences remain. The main similarities and differences between these forms of retirement program are summarized in the table on pages 136-7.

**Key point.** *There are different kinds of 401(k) plans available to employers, including traditional 401(k) plans, safe harbor 401(k) plans, and SIMPLE 401(k) plans. Different rules apply to each. For tax-favored status, a plan*

*must be operated in accordance with the applicable rules. Therefore, it is important that the employer be familiar with the special rules that apply to its plan to ensure that it is being administered in accordance with those rules. This article will only address traditional 401(k) plans, since these are the most common.*

**Key point.** *One possible advantage of a 403(b) plan is that this is the primary retirement program for churches. Some future congressional efforts to enhance church retirement programs may be limited to amendments to section 403(b), since it would make no sense to amend a provision (section 401(k)) that overwhelmingly applies to for-profit employers.*

### Conclusion

Consider the following points before converting your 403(b) plan to a 401(k) plan:

- As the table illustrates, 403(b) and 401(k) plans are substantially similar. Yes, there are new administrative burdens that will apply to 403(b) plans by the end of 2009. But, there are administrative responsibilities in maintaining a 401(k) plan, too. These include monitoring compliance with participation rules, contributions, vesting, non-discrimination, investments, disclosures to employees, reporting to the IRS, and distributions. To be sure, many or all of these responsibilities can be transferred to a third party provider, but at a minimum the church (employer) has fiduciary duties that cannot be transferred.

- There are a few advantages that 403(b) plans have over 401(k) plans, as the table indicates.

- The administrative responsibilities that will apply to 403(b) plans by the end of 2009 should not be overstated. Most denominational pension plans, including the Ministers Benefit Association, are prepared to assist affiliated churches in meeting these obligations. In fact, most have already done so. ☺







## 403(b) and 401(k) Plans — Similarities and Differences

Note: This table contains general comparisons only. For specific information refer to your tax advisor.

Feature	403(b) plan	401(k) plan
TRUST REQUIREMENT	No.	ERISA requires plan assets to be held in trust. Church plans not subject to this requirement unless they elect ERISA coverage.
ELIGIBLE EMPLOYERS	Most tax-exempt employers (including schools and churches).	Most for-profit and, since 1997, most nongovernmental nonprofit employers, including churches.
INVESTMENT OPTIONS	Annuities, custodial accounts (mutual funds), church retirement income accounts.	Annuities, custodial accounts (mutual funds).
EMPLOYEE DIRECTED INVESTMENTS	Permitted.	Same as 403(b) plans.
TAX BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants do not pay tax on allowable contributions in the year they are made. Taxes are not paid on allowable contributions until a participant begins making withdrawals from the plan, usually after retirement.</li> <li>Earnings and gains on amounts in a 403(b) account are not taxed until they are withdrawn.</li> <li>Participants may be eligible to take a credit for elective deferrals contributed to a 403(b) account.</li> </ul>	Same as 403(b) plans.
HOUSING ALLOWANCE AVAILABLE FOR RETIREMENT DISTRIBUTIONS	Yes, but only if pursuant to "official action taken by the employing church or other qualified organization before the payment is made."	Same as 403(b) plans.
CONTRIBUTION LIMITS	The lesser of (1) section 415 the limit on annual additions, or (2) the section 402(g) limit on elective deferrals. For 2009, the limit on annual additions is the lesser of \$49,000 or 100 percent of includible compensation for the most recent year of service, and the limit on elective deferrals (a limit on the amount of contributions that can be made through a salary reduction agreement) is \$16,500.	Same as 403(b) plans.
EFFECT OF EXCESS CONTRIBUTIONS	Excess contributions (in excess of the limits on annual additions and elective deferrals) subject to tax.	The entire plan may be disqualified.
PAYOUT METHOD	Lump sum, installments, or annuities.	Same as 403(b) plans.
ROLLOVERS OUT	Participants may roll over to another employer's 403(b), 401(k), or 401(a) plan.	Same as 403(b) plans.
ROLLOVERS IN	Participants may roll over in from another employer's 403(b), 401(k), or 401(a) plan.	Same as 403(b) plans.
15-YEAR CATCH-UP PROVISION	<p>For employees with at least 15 years of service with a church, school, or certain other charities, the limit on elective deferrals to a 403(b) plan is increased by the least of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$3,000;</li> <li>\$15,000, reduced by increases to the general limit allowed in earlier years because of this rule; or</li> <li>\$5,000 times the number of years of service for the church or charity minus the total elective deferrals made by the employer for earlier years.</li> </ul> <p>All years of service by a minister of a church, or a lay person, as an employee of a church, a convention or association of churches, and some church-controlled organizations, are considered as years of service for one employer.</p>	No similar provision.
ADDITIONAL \$5,500 CATCH-UP DEFERRAL	Available for participants who are 50 years of age or older.	Same as 403(b) plans.

Feature	403(b) plan	401(k) plan
<b>DISTRIBUTIONS WITHOUT PENALTY</b>	Generally, a distribution cannot be made from a 403(b) account until the employee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reaches age 59 1/2;</li> <li>• has a severance from employment;</li> <li>• dies;</li> <li>• becomes disabled; or</li> <li>• in the case of salary reduction contributions, encounters financial hardship.</li> </ul>	Same as 403(b) plans.
<b>MINIMUM REQUIRED DISTRIBUTIONS</b>	Participants must receive all, or a minimum specified by law, of their interest accruing after 1986 in a 403(b) plan by April 1 of the calendar year following the later of the calendar year in which they become age 70 1/2 or the calendar year in which they retire.	Same as for 403(b) plans.
<b>ERISA COVERAGE</b>	No, unless coverage is elected.	Generally yes, but church plans are exempt (churches can voluntarily elect coverage).
<b>FORM 5500 FILING REQUIREMENT</b>	Not applicable.	Form 5500 must be filed annually. Church plans not electing ERISA coverage are exempt.
<b>AGGREGATION</b>	Contributions to a 403(b) plan generally are not combined or aggregated with contributions to a qualified plan in applying the section 415 limit.	Same as 403(b) plans.
<b>FICA TAXES</b>	Income taxes not paid on elective deferral (salary reduction) contributions to the plan, up to the allowed limits. But, FICA taxes are paid on elective deferrals into the plan. FICA taxes generally not paid on account earnings, or on permitted distributions.	Same as 403(b) plans.
<b>SELF-EMPLOYMENT TAXES</b>	IRS Publication 517 instructs ministers, when computing self-employment taxes: "Do not include . . . contributions by your church to a tax-sheltered annuity plan set up for you, including any salary reduction contributions (elective deferrals), that are not included in your gross income."	Possibly the same as 403(b) plans.
<b>ADP</b>	Church plans exempt from antidiscrimination rules that are designed to prevent discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees.	Annual non-discrimination testing required to ensure the plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees. Church plans generally exempt.
<b>SECTION 404 DEDUCTION</b>	Not applicable.	For-profit employers can claim a tax deduction (subject to certain limits) on contributions they make to an employee's plan.
<b>ROLLOVERS IN</b>	Participants may roll over in from another employer's 403(b), 401(k), or 401(a) plan.	Same as 403(b) plans.
<b>FICA TAXES</b>	Income taxes not paid on elective deferral (salary reduction) contributions to the plan, up to the allowed limits. But, FICA taxes are paid on elective deferrals into the plan. FICA taxes generally not paid on account earnings, or on permitted distributions.	Same as 403(b) plans.
<b>SELF-EMPLOYMENT TAXES</b>	IRS Publication 517 instructs ministers, when computing self-employment taxes: "Do not include . . . contributions by your church to a tax-sheltered annuity plan set up for you, including any salary reduction contributions (elective deferrals), that are not included in your gross income."	Possibly the same as 403(b) plans.
<b>ADP ANTI-DISCRIMINATION TESTING</b>	Church plans exempt from antidiscrimination rules that are designed to prevent discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees.	Annual non-discrimination testing required to ensure the plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees. Church plans generally exempt.
<b>SECTION 404 DEDUCTION</b>	Not applicable.	For-profit employers can claim a tax deduction (subject to certain limits) on contributions they make to an employee's plan.

## How Do You Minister to “Joe” Student?

Every pastor who wishes to reach students needs to engage in environmental scanning to determine his approach for university ministry.



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**Think of the college students near your church.** In what ways are they unique? What difference does this make?

Not every student is alike, and every college is not the same. The profile of the typical student can vary greatly from one campus to another. This requires a unique approach for effective student ministry. This affects where and when your student meetings occur, and what type of meetings you have. Do you focus on apologetics, on nonjudgmental dialogue, or on social functions? A one-size-fits-all,

works-in-every-situation, or unadorned model of university ministry is a myth.

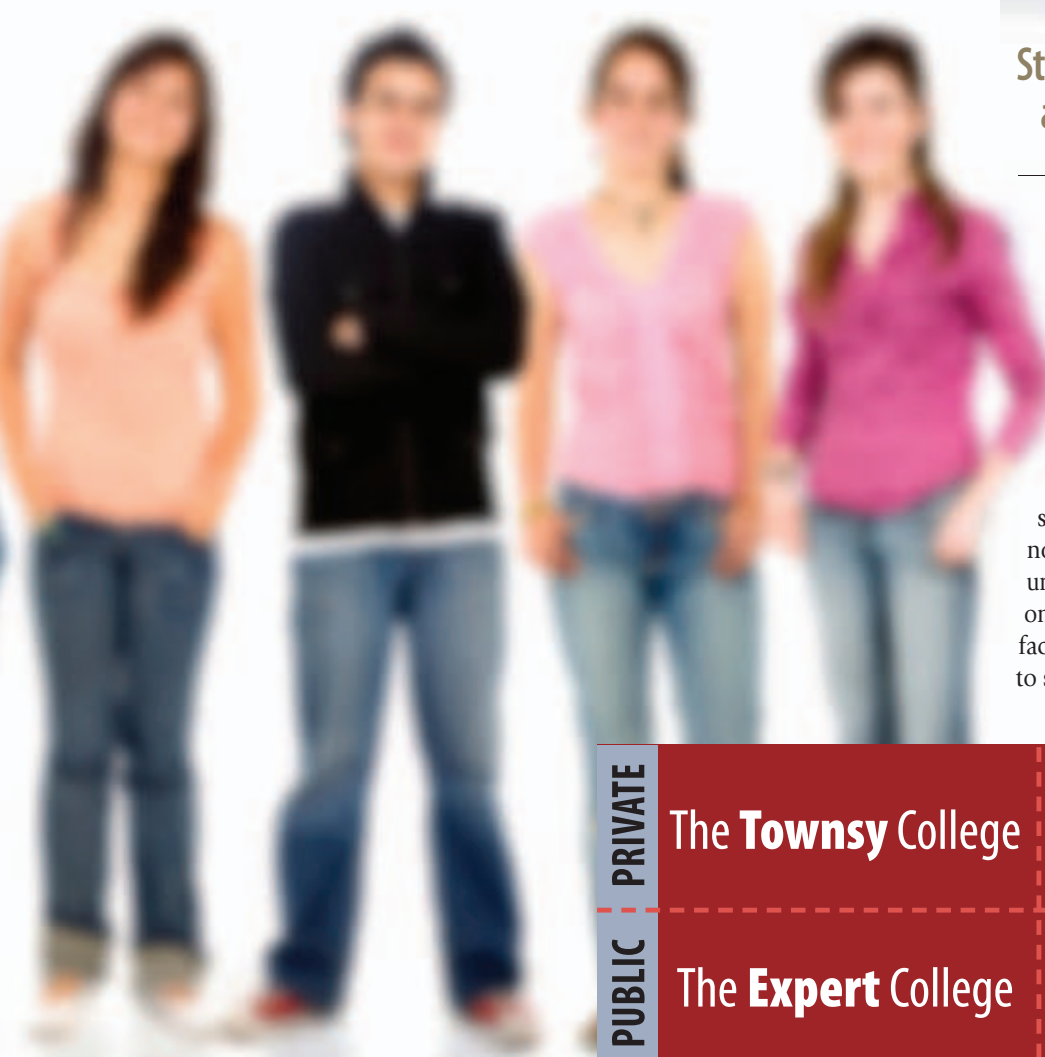
Every Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship group subscribes to the same philosophy of ministry: We seek to create a community of Christian students on each campus that carries out worship, prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism. However, every Chi Alpha group within a district or within the same urban area will express its community life in a unique manner. This reflects the leader's awareness of the unique demographic of the university he ministers on. This means every pastor who wishes to reach the



**Students at less elite schools are more passion-driven.**

students near his church with the gospel needs to engage in environmental scanning to determine his approach for university ministry.

Start by asking: Is the college a public or private institution? Is it a commuter or residential university? Is it highly selective, moderately selective, or nonselective? Is the college in an urban setting or a college town? Each one of these demographics is a crucial factor in determining your approach to student ministry.



PRIVATE	The <b>Townsy</b> College	Joe College
	The <b>Expert</b> College	The <b>Elite</b> College
PUBLIC	COMMUTER	RESIDENTIAL

First, why make a distinction between public and private universities? This is primarily an issue of accessibility. Chi Alpha has a legal right to organize on a public university, but it cannot make that assumption on a private college campus. It normally requires a miracle of favor to gain student group status at a private university.

Why is selectivity a factor? Some universities are so academically elite that 80 percent of the student body will be either the valedictorians or in the top 5 percent of their high school graduating class. Other schools offer remedial English courses to assist students with reading their assignments. At an academically elite school, you will find very intelligent students who also demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence, meaning they are quite socially adept. Academically elite students appreciate a more cerebral approach to their faith, while students at less elite schools are more passion-driven. Most schools fall along a continuum somewhere between being highly elite and nonselective.

I will unpack this for you with the table on page 139. Each quadrant is uniquely named, and I will suggest the challenges and opportunities each presents.

### THE TOWNSY COLLEGE

This is a publicly funded state university with less than 40 percent of the student body housed on or near campus. Most students commute to school. This profile also includes the 2-year community/junior colleges. Often, you will notice these students attended high school next to the college. This is why I call them a *townsy* — they are from the



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## Academically elite students appreciate a more cerebral approach to their faith.

same vicinity as the college. This is a challenging student to reach. If he is a Christian student, he already has a home church. He maintains his friendships from high school and church. He does not feel a need to establish community on the university because this need is met elsewhere. He treats the college as if it were a part-time job. He drives to campus, goes to class, and then leaves for the day. This makes nighttime programming difficult to pull off successfully.

Many Chi Alpha groups have found success in offering meals and meetings over lunch, i.e. bag lunch Bible study discussions or prayer cells. If you are going to intersect the lives of these students, you need to do it on campus between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

### THE EXPERT COLLEGE

This is a privately funded college with a small portion of the student body housed on or near campus. There are many of

these small colleges in the United States, and they each specialize in an academic discipline. For example, there are colleges for disciplines like pharmacy, business administration, aeronautics, art, music, theater, or information technology. Non-traditional students (these are students at a life stage beyond the traditional 18-22-year-old, single student) frequently comprise a major

percentage of the student body. Many of these students study their coursework online. The lack of a visible college community life is readily apparent. These demographics make these schools challenging to minister on.

One notable exception to this is my wife Sally's successful ministry at Georgetown University School of Medicine. All the students are graduate students or Ph.D. students preparing for careers in medicine or research. The school does not provide housing. Sally created what these students needed — an opportunity to experience Christian community and take a break from the demanding rigors of their studies. She prepares a homemade supper and offers a 60-minute, weekly meeting dedicated to food, fellowship, a short Bible lesson, and brief worship. She organizes medical mission trips and community service projects where the students get practical experience in caring for the needy. The students appreciate her service and love, and testify to the significant



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# Reach Your Community

spiritual impact in their lives as a result of this unique campus ministry model.

**JOE COLLEGE** is the conventional public university with over 70 percent of the student body housed on or within walking distance of campus. These are major 4-year state universities. Chi Alpha is on 250 universities in the United States and probably 80 percent are public, residential colleges. Why? Several reasons. Most obvious, the majority of college students attend these colleges. Since they are residential, student community life and school spirit are high. A higher percentage of Christian students also attend these schools (in much greater numbers than the low percentage of Christian students who attend *Elite* colleges). Organized Christian ministry is more prevalent and permitted on these schools.

The *Joe College* profile lends itself to community building and the religious seeker mind-set. This gives university ministries, like Chi Alpha, a tremendous opportunity to present the gospel to the largest numbers of students in one place. A friend of mine views *Joe College* as a high-yield mission field. You have thousands of students from all over the world living side-by-side, and they are sincerely interested in developing their spirituality. It is a golden opportunity for ministry. It has captured my heart and vision for over 35 years. Presently, Chi Alpha offers many venues of training to equip people in reaching this mission field.

**THE ELITE COLLEGE** This is the private residential university. They are known for their academic selectivity, notoriety, research, and worldwide influence. They excel in political science, medical research, business management, social science, engineering, and research. They are clearly the most

influential universities. Their names are recognized around the world: Harvard, MIT, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Penn, Stanford, Georgetown, Duke, Rice.

Typically, a small percentage of Christian students enroll in elite colleges. Christian organizations, like Chi Alpha, do not have a legal right to access these schools. It takes a miracle of favor every time Christians are permitted to establish a student ministry on one of these campuses.

However, can you imagine a more strategic mission field? The best firms recruit elite students. Companies select these students for the most influential assignments. These students have the inside track on whatever career they pursue. When you reach these students for Christ, you leverage the kingdom of God into the inner circle of human power.

Over the past few years Chi Alpha began experiencing greater success at the Elite universities. It is beneficial when the campus minister has earned a graduate degree. These students enjoy in-depth seminars where they can begin to integrate their Christian faith with their career choice. They respond positively to community service projects and foreign travel. They would love to meet a Christian mentor whose career matches their aspirations. And they are driven more by personal ambition than by emotive passion.

Despite the uniqueness I have highlighted, common factors are true among all students. Every student responds to sincerity and love. Students earnestly seek authentic friendships with their peers and with mentors. Students care about spirituality. And they want to be taken seriously and treated with respect. And most important, the gospel works powerfully in the heart of even the most skeptical student. So scan the environment of your college and then reach out in love to your students. Be confident that Christ's transforming love will find a place in their hearts. ☉

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## • SOURDOUGH, AK •

Chapter Three

# PRAY OR PREY

**P**astor Mack woke with a start. The vague impression of a big, snarling Alaska gray wolf chasing him lingered around the edges of his consciousness. A feeling of anxiety persisted as if an unknown danger had transferred from his dream world to his present reality. Even after getting dressed and having a good breakfast conversation with his wife, Annie, Mack could not shake the anxious feeling.

Pastor Mack just could not seem to get going and arrived a bit late at the church. He realized his secretary, Bertha, was already there and deep into her work. He hung up his coat and greeted her with his usual, "Good morning, Bertha, how are you?"

"I'm just dandy," she responded, while waving an envelope at Mack, "but I don't know how you'll be feeling after reading this letter."

She extended the envelope to Mack, who hesitated momentarily before accepting it.

Bertha continued, "Somebody done slid it under the door, and it don't say who it's from. I know 'cause I checked it." Bertha then gave her gum several good solid smacks while pointing at her desk lamp. "Held it up to the light."

Mack's heart sank. He had been the recipient of anonymous nasty grams before. He reluctantly ripped open the envelope, and glanced at the end of the

---

**Mack's heart sank.  
He had been the recipient of  
anonymous nasty grams before.**

---

letter. Sure enough, it wasn't signed, just as Bertha had said.

*Oh, boy*, he thought, *stand by to repel boarders*.

It was one of those *but* letters. "Pastor, I love you, but. ..." It contained

the usual stuff about how God had revealed to the writer that Mack had a secret sin in his life and, if he didn't repent, God would judge him. Beside that, he was a poor preacher, and the way he conducted the services was always quenching the Spirit. After repeated assurances of the writer's love, the letter closed with, "My friends and I will continue to join our hearts and hands in prayer for you."

*Yeah*, Mack fumed, *I'd like to join my hands, too — right around your scrawny neck!*

After he fantasized for a few minutes about the dire consequences he would like to inflict on the unknown writer, he bowed his head and simply said, "Lord, help me deal with this and learn from it."

Bertha opened Mack's door just as he tossed the now wadded-up letter toward the trash can, which he missed. Bertha watched it roll across the floor. "Ya got a call on line one. It's Pastor Thor," she said while bending down to retrieve the errant paper ball from under Mack's couch. She then stood up, and gracefully lobbed it across the room and directly into the trash can. "Nothing but net," she said, while giving her gum a smack and exiting the office.

Mack picked up the phone and pushed the button for line one.

"Hello?"

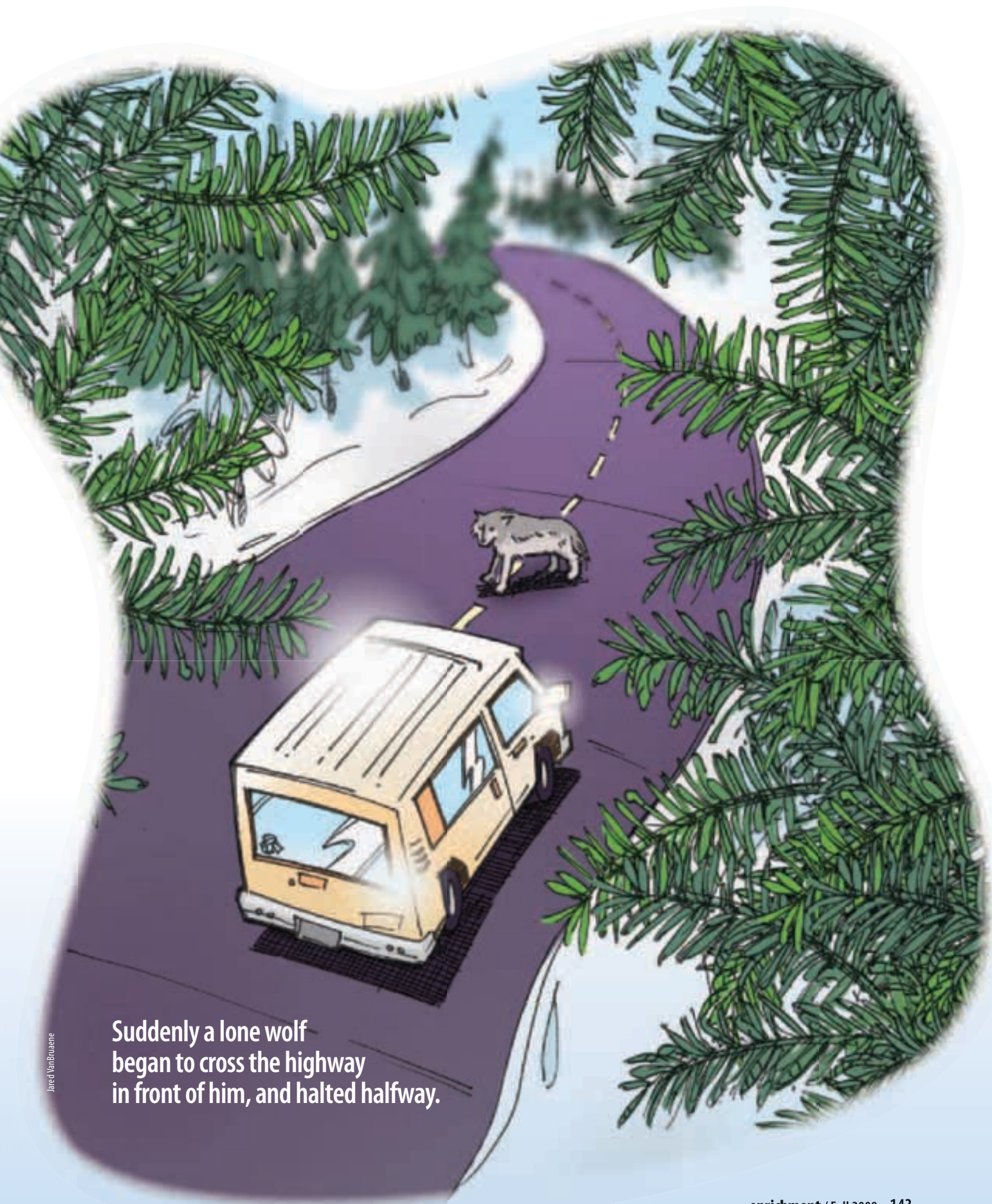
"Hiya, Mackie! How's God's man of faith and power today?"

"To tell you the truth, if I tried to cast a mountain into the sea, it'd probably fall on my head," Mack replied flatly. He then gave Thor a brief synopsis of the love note he'd received.

"Sounds like you need a shoulder to cry on. Got time for lunch today?" Thor inquired.

"Well, I'd like to, Thor, but I'm trying to catch up on things and. ..."

"Aw please, Mackie! The women's



Suddenly a lone wolf  
began to cross the highway  
in front of him, and halted halfway.





ministry is having a tea party here today and everything's pink." He sighed heavily. "Seriously, I'm 'bout to toss my crumpets."

Mack chuckled, "Okay, then. But you're buying."

"Great. I'll meet'cha at the North Slope at noon. Oh, and make sure ya bring yer letter, Mackie. I wanna see it."

Puzzled, Mack hung up the phone and eyed his trash can with suspicion. *As far as I'm concerned, that note's right where it belongs*, he thought. Nevertheless, to honor Thor's request, Mack retrieved the malicious missive.

A few hours later, Mack and Thor found themselves pulling into the restaurant parking lot at the same time. The two walked together into the 'North Slop' as people not so affectionately called it.

Amy, the waitress recognized them from the Ministers Only Breakfast, aka the M.O.B., and seated them at the front window. "Maybe you guys will give this place some class," she said, with her tongue firmly in her cheek.

When she returned with the coffee they ordered, Thor inquired about the "Blue Plate Special."

"Well," Amy drawled, "I keep telling the owners they're gonna get sued for false advertising 'cause the plate ain't blue, it's brown, and it ain't a plate, it's a bowl, *special* depends on whether or not you like stew."

Amy looked at them expectantly. "Wanna try it?" she asked.

They both nodded and Thor replied, "How could I pass up the Brown Bowl Ordinary?"

As Amy departed with their orders, Thor wasted no time getting to the heart of the matter. "Did ya bring the letter?" he asked.

Mack took the wrinkled paper out of his pocket, and slid it across the table. Thor read it carefully then threw it on the table, giving it a slap with his hand.

"Cain't believe they had the nerve to sign this 'A Concerned Friend'. That's

like the so-called 'Blue Plate Special' ... claims to be one thing, when it's really another."

Thor stretched his arms and sighed before continuing. "Nope this ain't no letter from a friend. It's a note from a troublemaker and that makes it a blessing."

---

***As far as I'm concerned,  
that note's right  
where it belongs,  
Mac thought.***

---

Mack set his coffee cup with a clang. "A blessing? How do you figure?"

"'Cause it lets ya know something's going on in your church. It's sorta like the devil done tipped his hand. Ya see, Mackie, it's clear to me that this here letter-writer is settin' out to create some dissention in your flock. I mean, they flat-out threatened you here that if you didn't change yore ways, there'd be spiritual ... what's that word they used?"

Mack supplied the answer. "Repercussions."

"Yeah, them things. Now, I figure if they took the time to write *to* you, then they undoubtedly took time to talk *about* you. Or at least they will soon. But like I said, now you've been tipped to it."

Thor took a sip of his coffee before

concluding, "And ya know what they say, 'Fore-warned is four-eyed.' "

"I think you mean 'Fore-warned is fore-armed.' " Mack corrected.

"No, I mean 'four-eyed'. This here letter oughta make you put on your spiritual glasses, so you can see through the smoke. See, somewhere in your congregation, Mackie, there's a mighty big tongue on fire, and it's spitting Hades flames."

Thor took another big swallow of coffee, leaned in close and squinted his eyes before continuing. "Now, speaking as one with experience, let me tell you, yore best response to a fire is to bring in the brimstone."

"Brimstone?" Mack inquired.

"Brimstone! You know, fight fire with fire!" Thor said, sitting back in his seat.

"Lemme tell ya a story," Thor continued. "'Bout 2 years ago I had me a delegation show up at my office, two women with their husbands — mousey-spouseys, I called 'em. They started off pretty much just like your letter. Said I wuz quenching the Spirit, not giving them the freedom to worship the way they wanted."

Thor gave a little snort as he continued, "Well, they yammered on 'bout how they was more spiritual than me, and how I was deaf as a post when it come to hearin' the Lord speak. And I just sat there saying nuttin', until one of them reckoned as how I had a religious spirit, and they had come to cast the devil out of me."

Mack shook his head in disbelief.

"Straight fact," Thor flatly stated.



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**TORRY "MOOSE" MARTIN** is a former Alaskan and an award-winning Christian comedian and author who currently resides in Sparta, Tennessee. He also writes for *Adventures in Odyssey* produced by Focus on the Family.





**He was going to need a special anointing from God to identify the wolf in sheep's clothing that threatened to harm his flock and its shepherd.**

"Well, that was just more than I could take, and I had me a Popeye moment. Ya know, 'That's all I can stand, an' I can't stand no more.'"

"Did you grab yourself a can of spiritual spinach?" Mack joked.

"Naw, I didn't need no spinach. Sumthin' just rose up in me, and I got up, leaned over my desk and said, 'The Bible says that rebellion is the same as witchcraft, and I can tell as sure as I'm sitting here, that ya'll are a rebellious bunch. Now you witches better git outta my sight right now, or, by all that's holy, I'll do some casting out myself.'"

A smile crept over Thor's face as he

remembered the ensuing scramble.

"I have to ask, did you ever see them again?"

"Nope, and just between us and..." he gestured upwards, "You-Know-Who, I gotta admit I didn't handle that very good. I did eventually have a chance to apologize to them, but they never did darken my church door again."

Silence reigned until Thor said, "Mack, there ain't much you can do to avoid these personal attacks, or to prevent predators from a-comin' into your flock 'cept to pray. Pray for patience; pray for discernment; pray that the work of the evil one will be showed up

afore he can do any harm."

"So basically it's pray or become prey," Mack mused.

Thor paused and briefly looked at Mack. "Now that there's a sermon title and I'm stealing it. Pray or Prey." Thor jotted the sentence down on a napkin. "My congregation's gonna think I'm pretty smart for that one, so don't you be out in public owning up to it as yours," Thor teased.

After saying their good-byes, Mack got into his car and headed back to his office, and as he drove, he continued to think about the events of the day: his dream, the letter, and finally, his lunch with Thor.

He was only a few hundred yards away from the church, when suddenly a lone wolf began to cross the highway in front of him, and halted halfway. As Mack skidded to a stop, it seemed as if the wolf looked at him defiantly, straight in the eyes, then sauntered off.

In that moment, Mack somehow knew in his spirit that he had not received his last anonymous letter. He also knew he was going to need a special anointing from God to identify the wolf in sheep's clothing that threatened to harm his flock and its shepherd.

Mack parked his car in the church lot, and got out to head toward the building. *Forewarned is four-eyed; Pray or be prey*, he thought as he walked, recalling Thor's wisdom.

He opened the door to the sanctuary and climbed the stairs up to the balcony, which he considered to be his personal prayer closet when services were not going on. As he took a seat on a pew, he couldn't help but feel thankful for a good friend like Thor who reminded him that God had the answer for spiritual wolves, whether they were in sheep's clothing or not. With that in mind, Pastor Pickens closed his eyes, bowed his head, and began to pray. 🙏



## Working With the Creative Genius

**Q:** I have an unbelievably creative staff member but her disorganization drives me crazy. How do I work with creative people who do not have administrative or organizational skills?

**A:** When God puts our personal gifts together, He frequently does not give administrative and organizational gifts to off-the-chart creative types. Scripture teaches that we are parts of the same body of Christ. Some are the hand; some, the foot, the eye, the arm, the heart, etc. Those who have administrative gifts think the world needs to function like

them. If this were the case, the world would be organized, but very boring.

We need the creative genius God gives the church through musicians and

youth and children's pastors. At the same time, we grouse about the creative genius' lack of organization and administration abilities. We want both gifts in one package.

I suggest you find ways for your creative people to flourish in their assigned roles, while not leaving the church at risk with their disorganization.

• **Talk to them.** Do not assume they are aware of your displeasure with their disorganization. They do not think like you think.



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- **They do have gifts.**

Ask them to tell you what they believe their gifts are and how they best can express them within the community of faith.

- **Ask them where they think they could use some help.**

Do this even when you do not have money to pay for more administrative help. Get creative people to articulate their problem. If they cannot identify their weaknesses, then you may need to do so for them.

- **Maximize the value of their creativity.**

When possible, arrange administrative support for them. I suggest you make this available at the beginning of Zemployment. The creative mind often needs the support of the administrative mind. Provide that support at the outset to better maximize the value of their creativity.

- **Creative people ask, "Is there a problem?"** Acknowledge the gift of their creative minds while challenging them to recognize their shortcomings in organization. It is easier for an administrative-type person to recognize lack of creativity than for creative-type people to acknowledge lack of organization. Often creative people do not even see lack of organization as a problem.

They must be able to do three things:

- **Identify their shortcoming in administration or organization.** Ask staff members to articulate what they define as a shortcoming.

- **Articulate how their shortcomings might play out.**

## God frequently does not give administrative and organizational skills to off-the-charts creative types.

In other words, if they tell you that organization is their shortcoming, they need to be able to tell how it might manifest itself when planning a youth outing that requires parent permission forms. They might not have all the forms, and yet they conduct the outing anyway.

- **Articulate what might be the consequences of their shortcoming manifesting**


**itself.** They may say that if an accident occurs with a student who did not have a parent permission form, the church is liable for a lawsuit.

Consider personal development. Help creative people see your concern for them as further development of them. Consider sending them to a conference that focuses on order and organization. Their DNA is set, but you want them to grow and develop personally outside of their creative side.

Maintain an attitude of acceptance when dealing with creative people. They may never match your expectations. At the same time they will do things for your ministry that your black-and-white-straight-line-policy-procedure mind cannot fathom.


Do not get into a situation where a staff person with a creative mind sets you up for perpetual frustration. Clear that during the hiring interview. Go into the employment relationship with your eyes open. While the staff member is with you, be sure she understands that you value her. At the same time, make sure she knows you expect her to play by the same rules everyone else plays by. Set your expectations, and then make sure you and the staff member live by them.

While you express gratitude for these creative types, I encourage them to value people like you who read to this point in an article. They laughed after the title and moved on to something more fun. ☺



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## What Do You Do When You Can't Do Anything?

RON IWASKO, Springfield, Missouri

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt you were in a situation where there was no way out? Circumstances of life sometimes seem to bring us to a dead-end street. When it seems there is no way out, God can make a way.

### MESSAGE

1. **Israel at the Red Sea** (Exodus 14:21)
  - a. The Israelites were there because God put them there (verse 2).
  - b. Solution: "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand" (verse 16, KJV).
  - c. Lifted hands mean many things — supplication, praise, surrender, authority. Some say, "Throw up our hands." God says, "Lift up your hands."
  - d. If God put you there, move forward in Him.
2. **Jonah in the belly of the fish** (Jonah 2:1–10)
  - a. Jonah was there because he put himself there.
  - b. Solution: Lifted up his voice in prayer of supplication (2:9). William Cowper tried suicide nine times before he wrote, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."
  - c. You may be in a situation of rebellion against God. You have gotten yourself in a place that seems a dead-end street. There is a way out: a prayer of surrender.
3. **Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail** (Acts 16:22–24)
  - a. Paul and Silas were there because the world placed them there.
  - b. Solution: Voices lifted in praise (verses 25,26).
  - c. The world may try to shut you up or shut you in, but lift up your voice in praise to God who reigns on high.

### CONCLUSION

You may be in difficulty because (1) God put you there; (2) you put yourself there; (3) the world put you there.

Way out: (1) Lift up your hands; (2) lift up your voice in prayer; (3) lift up a song of praise.

"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NKJV).

## Live in the Light of Integrity

TEXT: Proverbs 11:3

### INTRODUCTION

Our English word *integrity* means firm adherence to a code of moral values. The Hebrew word often translated *integrity* in the Old Testament means "complete." The person of integrity is complete in honesty and ethics and in all aspects of his relationship with God and man.

### MESSAGE

1. **Spiritual integrity**
  - a. This kind of person does not "use" God for personal advantages. He serves Him because it is right.
  - b. This kind of person does not abandon his faith because of reverses. Like Job, he "holdeth fast his integrity" (Job 2:3, KJV).
  - c. This kind of person is conscious of his responsibility to God no matter how human standards of behavior change.
2. **Family integrity**
  - a. This kind of person is faithful to one partner for life.
  - b. This kind of person takes parenthood as a God-given responsibility.
  - c. This kind of person will not allow materialism to destroy the family's spiritual life.
3. **Business integrity**
  - a. The word of this kind of person will be "as good as his bond."
  - b. This kind of person will give an honest day's work for a day's pay.
  - c. This kind of person will not search for loopholes to evade honest dealings.
4. **Social integrity**
  - a. This kind of person treats others as human beings, not trying to take advantage of their friendship for personal advancement.
  - b. This kind of person will always keep a confidence.
  - c. This kind of person will not help tear down the reputation of another through gossip and innuendos.

### CONCLUSION

Though integrity has become a vanishing value in our society, it will always characterize the life of a believer who lives in the light of integrity.



## Divine Healing

### INTRODUCTION

Divine healing has its source in God himself as outlined in Scripture. We have strong support for believing in the doctrine and ministry of divine healing.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. God healed in the Old Testament.

- a. Abimelech, his wife, and maidservants (Genesis 20:17).
- b. Israelites, as Jehovah Rapha (Exodus 15:26; 23:25).

- c. Miriam, healed of leprosy (Numbers 12:13).
  - d. Those bitten by serpents (Numbers 21:8,9).
  - e. Widow's son, who was revived (1 Kings 17:21,22).
  - f. Naaman, healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).
  - g. Hezekiah, whose life was extended (2 Kings 20:5,6).
  - h. David who believed in healing (Psalm 103:2,3).
- 2. Jesus is a Healer.**
- a. Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus (Isaiah 43:5).
  - b. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy (Matthew 8:16,17; 1 Peter 2:24).
  - c. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).
  - d. The four Gospels record 41 distinct instances of physical and mental healings.
  - e. Countless healings took place (Matthew 4:23,24; Acts 10:38; John 21:25).
- (One-fifth of the Gospel accounts are devoted to Jesus' healing ministry and the discussion occasioned by it. Out of 3,779 verses, 727 relate specifically to healing of physical and mental illness and raising the dead.)
- 3. Jesus' followers ministered healing.**
- a. The twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:1,13; Luke 9:1,2; Hebrews 2:3,4).
  - b. Seventy appointed (Luke 10:1,9).
  - c. Peter and the cripple (Acts 3).
  - d. The Jerusalem Church (Acts 4:29,30; 5:12–16).
  - e. Stephen (Acts 6:8).
  - f. Philip (Acts 8:5–7).
  - g. Ananias (Acts 9:12,17).
  - h. Paul (Acts 14:3,8–10; 19:11,12; 28:2,9; Romans 15:18,19).
- 4. Healing is a part of church life and ministry.**
- a. Included in the Great Commission (Mark 16:15–20; John 14:12).
  - b. Linked with the Communion service (1 Corinthians 11:29,30).
  - c. Listed among the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9,28,30).
  - d. Instructed by James (James 5:14–16).
- 5. Modern church history and experience testify to healing.**
- a. Countless cases are recorded.
  - b. Doctors are confirming many healings.
  - c. Pastors, evangelists, and missionaries are witnessing healings. (John Wesley, in his journal, records about 240 cases of healing in answer to prayer.)
  - d. Members of your congregation testify to healing.
  - e. You have been healed personally.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus is our Healer. He healed in the past, is healing in the present, and will heal in the future (Hebrews 13:8). The final great manifestation of His healing power will be the destruction of sickness, pain, and death forever (Revelation 21:4; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

For additional sermons, visit <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>.  
Look under Resources for Practical Ministry.

## Daniel — the Man of Dedication

**TEXT:** Daniel 6:1–28

### INTRODUCTION

No one lives for God without being persecuted. No one lives for God without being misunderstood and criticized. A simple formula for a successful Christian life is: (1) Dedication, (2) Devotion, (3) Discipline, (4) Determination. Daniel had all these.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Daniel's disposition (verses 1–5)

- a. Preference (verses 1–3). He was chosen above others because of his excellent spirit. He pleased God.
- b. Perfection (verses 4,5). Not sinless perfection — he pleased God in his living (Matthew 5:48).

#### 2. His difficulty (verses 6–9)

- a. The scheme. If anyone obeyed or served any other king, he would be punished. This was an effort to destroy Daniel. Persecution will come to all who live for God (2 Timothy 3:12).
- b. The signing. The king, not fully understanding the motive behind the plan, signed his name. The order could not be changed. Stop praying or face the lions? What a choice.

#### 3. His decision (verse 10)

Note the steps of Daniel in his praying:

- a. "He went into his house" — private praying (Matthew 6:6).
- b. "His windows being opened" — he was not ashamed.
- c. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day." See James 5:16.
- d. "He prayed and gave thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Prayer is more than asking — it's thanking.
- e. "As he did aforetime" — daily prayer (Psalm 55:17).

#### 4. His danger (verses 11–17)

- a. Plan disobeyed (verses 11–15). Because Daniel prayed, he broke the king's law. The only time we disobey man's law is when it keeps us from serving God.
- b. Punishment (verses 16,17). Daniel was cast into the den of lions. He could have given up and not prayed. But God was first in his life (Matthew 6:33).

#### 5. His deliverance (verses 18–28)

- a. Problem (verses 18,19). The king could not sleep. He knew Daniel was a godly man, but he could not change his decree.
- b. Protection (verses 20–22). The angel closed the mouth of the lions. God does protect His people. See Psalm 91.
- c. Punishment (verses 23,24). Those who made the scheme to destroy Daniel were thrown in the den of lions and destroyed.
- d. Prosperity (verses 25–28). God made Daniel as well as the kingdom of God prosperous.

### CONCLUSION

At times living for God may seem hard. But living for Satan is much harder. To live for God requires daily decisions. It requires daily devotion, daily discipline, daily determination. Daniel did not let others influence him. He made a personal choice to live for God. Do not allow family, friends, or pleasure to keep you from living for God.

### Launch: Starting a New Church From Scratch

NELSON SEARCY AND KERRICK THOMAS

(Regal, 223 pp., paperback)

In an age of quick fixes, instant gratification, and the search for the right formula for just about everything, this volume connects the necessary church-planting dots without a lot of superfluous information. Concise and to the point, the authors provide an excellent guide to the critical process of planting a church from scratch that is structured for effectiveness for the Kingdom.

By dividing the book into three sections, the authors tackle the primary stages needed for planting a new church. First, the Foundation section encompasses such critical issues as the various calls God gives to His followers, including the call to plant a church. The strategic plan and financial backing for the new church are also addressed.

Second, the Formation of the new church section includes the main concerns of building

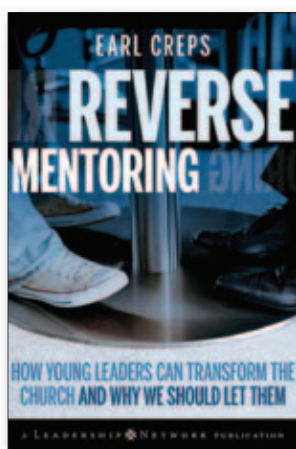
a staff, planning the first service, and developing the launch team.

Third, the Implementation section addresses the importance of reaching people, building effective systems, and becoming a stable, successful church. There are enough principles in this volume to establish an effective structure for the new church and enough stories to illustrate the ideas in a clear and understandable way.

Many church-planting books

develop a comprehensive approach to methodologies and techniques for the potential church-planting pastor. Searcy and Thomas have provided a church planters training course in a one-volume document that will be an asset to anyone wishing to learn about or prepare to plant an effective new church.

—Reviewed by Stephen R. Tourville, D. Min.,  
superintendent, Penn-Del District of  
the Assemblies of God, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.



Reverse Mentoring

### Reverse Mentoring

EARL CREPS

(Jossey-Bass, 240 pp., hardcover)

Earl Creps' second significant book, *Reverse Mentoring*, has clearly established him as a Pentecostal leader who convincingly speaks to all Christian traditions. Creps is not only read, but also heard. His books are not ideas that are merely debated or discussed. Creps has listened to younger leaders across the nation and this grass-roots common sense percolates onto our radar screen as reasonable.

This book is critical to established leaders today because the gulf between younger and established leaders is increasingly obvious. "How can we narrow this discontinuity

between generations of leaders?" is not an idle question. *Reverse Mentoring* is a roadmap to help established leaders recognize and empower younger leaders' Spirit-driven creativity; and in the process be empowered themselves.

Creps argues that vitality in North American Christianity does not need a new fad or some cool image readjustment; we need hearts of leaders, of all ages, taking seriously how we will most effectively proclaim the gospel. We need leaders who will build communities of Jesus followers to fairly represent Him to our culture. Creps gives us hope that this daunting task is yet feasible.

—Review by Byron D. Klaus, D.Min., president,  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary,  
Springfield, Missouri.



## The Multiplying Church

BOB ROBERTS

(Zondervan, 192 pp., hardcover)

It seems like a book on church planting is born every day as the American church wakes up to the challenge of the growing mission field located inside these United States. In *The Multiplying Church*, Roberts adds much needed clarity to the questions of why and how we need to plant more churches. He says it's time to stop just planting any kind of church and start multiplying the right kind of churches. He then describes what multiplying the right kind of churches looks like.

Roberts is definitely worth learning from. He writes as a practitioner, pioneer, visionary, and passionate proponent of carrying out the mission of Jesus through church multiplication. His accumulated experience and wisdom provide a powerful resource of knowledge that he draws on to make *The Multiplying Church* a one-stop shop for leaders interested in creating a culture of multiplication within the context of their sphere of leadership. A refreshing feature of this book is that Roberts' sage mega-pastor advice is applicable regardless of the size of the church or organization you lead.

Like me, you probably will not agree with everything Roberts says and his stream-of-consciousness writing style made me feel a little bit like a hockey puck being knocked around in his brain. Nevertheless, this book is a must read for anyone with a desire to move beyond viewing church multiplication as an activity he philosophically affirmed to an organizational lifestyle to aggressively pursue.

—Reviewed by Steve Pike, director,  
Church Multiplication Network for The Assemblies of God,  
Springfield, Missouri.

## Success Kills

WAYDE GOODALL (New Leaf Publishing Group, 160 pp., paperback)

At a time when society defines success by money, fame, and power, it is important to embrace a biblical definition of success. *Success Kills* is a refreshing reminder that our lofty titles

and bank accounts are not as important as radical obedience to God. Too many people are focused on building careers when God places a higher priority on developing character.

Within the church, the pressure to be successful has led many leaders down a slippery slope. *Success Kills* provides practical advice for avoiding that hazardous path. It also challenges readers to recognize that God's favor is more important than living up to others' expectations.

Using real life anecdotes, the author illustrates his main points with precision and in a compelling way. This is a book I can recommend without reservation.

—Reviewed by Hal Donaldson,  
founder and president,  
Convoy of Hope, Springfield, Missouri.

## Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

RUTH HALEY BARTON

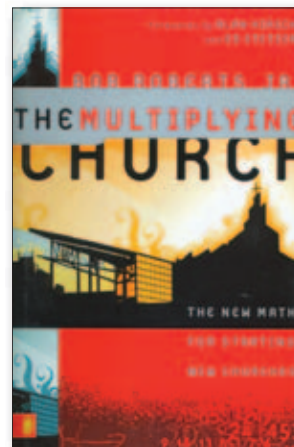
(InterVarsity Press, 229 pp., hardcover)

Ruth Haley Barton describes the soul as "the 'you' that exists beyond any role you play, any job you perform, any relationship that seems to define you, or any notoriety or success you may have achieved. It is the part of you that longs for more of God."

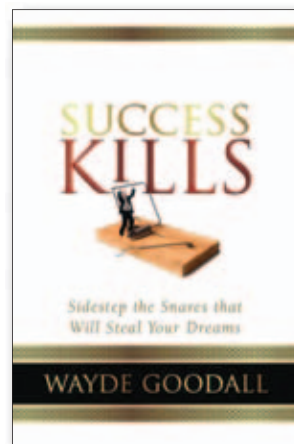
Is it possible to have success in our ministries and loss in our souls? It seems we can, for Jesus warns us against *gaining* everything and yet *losing* our souls. Performance-oriented drivenness, or simple activism, will leave us empty and longing for more. From the first chapter, "When Leaders Lose Their Souls," Barton challenges us to lead from the soul — the place of personal encounters with God.

This book takes an in-depth look at Moses' private encounters with God and how his soul was strengthened in solitude. Moses led from that strength, and his leadership strategy consisted of seeking God in solitude and then obeying what God revealed to him. While this may seem like a simple plan, you will discover the profundity of its simplicity. You will be challenged to new depths of

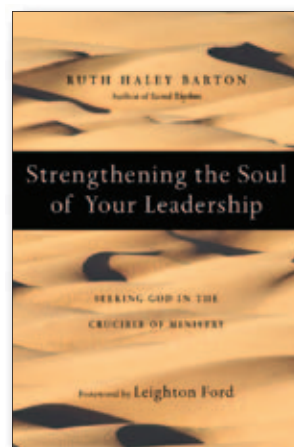
- experiencing solitary, transforming times with God



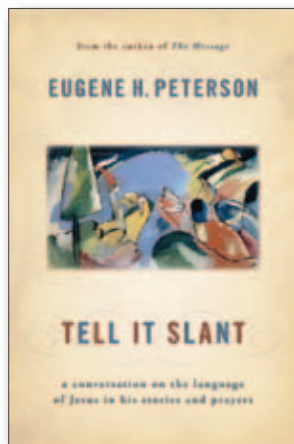
The Multiplying Church



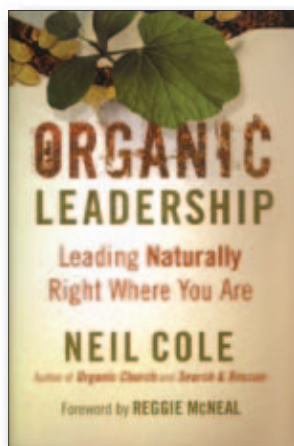
Success Kills



Strengthening the Soul  
of Your Leadership



**Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers**



**Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are**

- paying attention to God's work in and around you
- understanding your calling
- living and flourishing within your God-given limits
- recognizing the signs of being depleted
- establishing healthy rhythms of work and rest, silence and word
- leading through intercessory prayer
- facing the loneliness of leadership
- cultivating spiritual leadership community
- discerning God's will together

Consider reading this book with your leadership team. There are many books that help sharpen our leadership skills, but this one brings challenging insights to strengthen our souls which will *transform* our leadership.

Reviewed by Kerry Clarensau, pastor's wife, Wichita, Kansas, and leadership development coordinator, national Women's Department.

## **Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers**

**EUGENE H. PETERSON**  
(*Wm. B. Eerdmans, 287 pp., hardcover*)

Language, especially the language of story and prayer, is the central focus of Eugene Peterson's recent book, *Tell It Slant*. In Peterson's words, "Too often the living Word is desiccated into propositional cadavers, then sorted into exegetical specimens in bottles of formaldehyde." On the other hand, story and prayer are the core language of both our humanity and the Scriptures. It is also the language that Jesus mastered.

Peterson first focuses on 10 stories Jesus told on His way through Samaria on a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51 through 19:44). Here the focus is not on teaching (common to Matthew) or on preaching (common to Mark). Luke instead focuses on a third kind of language — the language of story, of ordinary conversation somewhere between Galilee and Jerusalem. This is the language that draws both His traveling companions and skeptical Samaritans into engagement with Kingdom life between Sundays, so to speak.

The second part of the book immerses the reader in the language of prayer. Peterson asserts continuity here: "I want to insist that the language of Jesus in His prayers is neither

less nor more of himself, soul and body, than in His stories." To illustrate, Peterson explores six of Jesus' recorded prayers, one chapter at a time. This is followed by a seventh chapter on praying in Jesus' name in which Peterson contends: "Language is sacred. All words are holy. But when they are torn out of the story that God speaks into being and then used apart from God, language is desecrated."

—Reviewed by James T. Bradford, Ph.D.,  
general secretary for the Assemblies of God,  
Springfield, Missouri.

## **Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are**

**NEIL COLE** (*Baker Books, 320 pp., hardcover*)

Cole's follow up to *The Organic Church* addresses leadership development from the framework of the simple church movement. His first section takes on the outside-in leadership model by scrutinizing ecclesiastical assumptions that originate in modern business theory rather than Scripture. Cole's purpose is to help Christian leaders realize that hierarchical leadership paradigms are not the best way to reproduce disciples.

In later sections, Cole proposes an organic model emphasizing a relational, inside-out approach to leadership, which allows believers to share ministry with one another. The author wisely observes that leadership development is ultimately about discipleship. If the church does not reproduce disciples, it cannot create leaders.

*Organic Leadership* helps pastors acknowledge the problem of authoritarian clergy and passive laity. Institutionalized business models of leadership that have infiltrated churches have exasperated this problem. As a solution, Cole encourages mentors to empower emerging leaders by relational, incarnational mentoring — helping others learn naturally from their mentor's character and from their own life experiences. Pentecostals will appreciate Cole's desire that mentors cooperate with the Spirit's work in people's lives and remain dependent on God.

As a pastor, this work has challenged my conception of church leadership and discipleship. I found some of Cole's assertions less definitive than others, particularly regarding the structure of the Early Church. Perhaps passages like Acts 15 suggest a more centralized

religious institution than Cole acknowledges. Still, the book is well worth the read for its fresh perspective on not only leadership development, but the nature of the church.

— Reviewed by Nathaniel Rhoads, senior pastor,  
Word of Light Fellowship, Winnemucca, Nevada.

## ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church

MICHAEL FROST AND ALAN HIRSCH

(Hendrickson Publishers, 204 pp., paperback)

The title suggests a revolutionary, almost counter culture book, but it is in fact a reasonable call for the church to return to its mission by getting back to Jesus. To *ReJesus* the church is to reconfigure it, and “recalibrate its mission, around the example and teaching of the radical rabbi from Nazareth.” The implication is that the institutional church — the religion of Christianity — has drifted far from what Jesus intended it to be.

The overriding theme of the book is the centrality of Christ. Out of our understanding

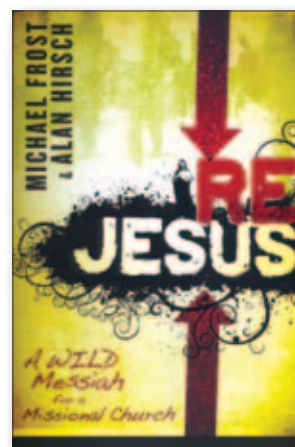
of Him flows our response in personal discipleship and in the way we do church. A reexamination of Jesus’ teaching is essential to getting us back to our core mission.

One of the more helpful chapters is an examination of Jesus’ perspective of the church compared to Paul’s teaching on the church in Ephesians. One of the more intriguing chapters traces the drift from Jesus as illustrated in artists’ portraits of Him over the centuries.

The book is made less readable by the use of frequent quotations, some quite lengthy, which sometimes seem to interrupt the flow of thought rather than contribute to it. Also, the term *Little Jesuses* could be offensive unless understood in the context of Christlike behavior. Even then the reader may disagree with the notable persons given that designation by the authors.

In spite of these limited drawbacks, the appeal to *ReJesus* the church is a challenge worth taking.

— Reviewed by Warren D. Bullock,  
senior pastor, Northwest Family Church,  
Auburn, Washington.



ReJesus: A Wild Messiah  
for a Missional Church

## Stanley M. Horton: Shaper of Pentecostal Theology

LOIS E. OLENA (Gospel Publishing House, 318 pp., paperback)

Stanley Horton has made an important impact on the modern Pentecostal movement. He is known throughout the church world as the foremost theologian of the classical Pentecostal revival. Lois Olena, working with Raymond Gannon, has sought to provide a comprehensive accounting of the life and ministry of Horton.

Horton graduated from high school in 1933 at age 16. He completed a bachelor’s degree at the University of California, Berkeley, in chemistry and worked as a research scientist for a short time. While at Berkeley he received his Pentecostal baptism. Horton believed that God was calling him to prepare for a Bible teaching ministry. Consequently, he enrolled at Gordon Divinity School (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary). He then earned a S.T.M. at Harvard Divinity School. Later, Horton earned a Th.D. at Central Baptist Seminary, Kansas City.

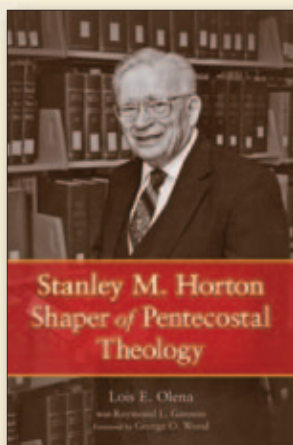
Stanley married Evelyn Parsons in 1945 — and began his teaching ministry at

Metropolitan Bible Institute in North Bergen, New Jersey. In 1948, the Hortons moved to Springfield, Missouri, to teach at Central Bible Institute — where he taught for 30 years. He then taught for 6 years at the newly formed Assemblies of God Graduate School (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary). In 1991, AGTS honored Horton at his retirement by naming him Distinguished Professor Emeritus.

Horton became best known as a prolific writer. For more than 25 years he wrote the Adult Teacher Sunday School lessons for the Gospel Publishing House. He wrote numerous books, including, *What The Bible Teaches About the Holy Spirit*. He served as coeditor of *Full Life Study Bible (Life in the Spirit Study Bible)*. Through his writing, his theology faithfully reflected the mainstream teaching of the Assemblies of God.

The story of Horton’s life is a walk through modern Pentecostal history. He is an authentic reflection of the very ethos of the Pentecostal revival. This fascinating story will appeal to young and old, to scholar and neophyte.

— Reviewed by William W. Menzies, Ph.D., longtime  
Assemblies of God educator and missions consultant,  
Springfield, Missouri.





### BGMC Offers Free "E-LIFE" Online Resources

**In 2009, the national BGMC office launched an E-LIFE Web site for leaders.**

BGMC's focus is to help kids reach *their world* through E-LIFE and to reach *the world* through BGMC. The revised E-LIFE Web site provides numerous lessons and resources to teach kids how to be a witness in their schools and communities.

The goal of E-LIFE is to challenge each child to be a missionary where he/she lives by living out five basic commitments:

- To *seek* the Holy Spirit's help in helping others
- To *show* kindness and friendship to others, so they can live out the characteristics of Christ
- To *share* the story of Jesus
- To *invite* others to know Christ and to invite them to church
- To *invest* in the lives of others (mentorship)

Each lesson on the E-LIFE Web site focuses on one of these five basic commitments. The 5-minute lessons are ideal for any children's ministries setting. For more information, visit [www.elife.ag.org](http://www.elife.ag.org).



### BGMC Launches Web Site for Kids

**BGMC has launched a new Web site just for kids.** The Web site is designed to teach kids about BGMC and missions, and to teach them how to "Pray, Give, Go."

BGMCKids can be used at home and in churches. The Web site has information and stories from kids and missionaries around the world. It's full of resources that challenge kids to grow spiritually and to become more involved in missions.

The Web site enables kids to do virtual world travel through videos, photos, maps, flags, stats, stories, and reports about other nations and world ministries. Also, the Web site enables kids to share with other kids what they are doing for BGMC and missions.

To learn more about BGMCKids, visit <http://www.bgmckids.ag.org>.

### Assemblies of God Bible Sunday

**Dec. 13 is Bible Sunday in the Assemblies of God.** This year's theme is "In the Footsteps of Paul." On this Sunday churches and individuals give offerings to help provide the *Fire Bible* for overseas pastors and lay workers.

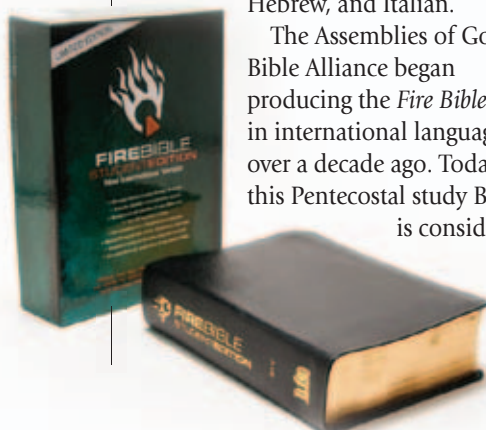
This year's focus will help provide the *Fire Bible* in the languages spoken in the countries where the apostle Paul traveled on his missionary journeys: Arabic, Greek,

Hebrew, Italian and Turkish. The Arabic and Turkish *Fire Bibles* have been completed. The focus on December 13 will be to provide the *Fire Bible* in the three remaining languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Italian.

The Assemblies of God Bible Alliance began producing the *Fire Bible* in international languages over a decade ago. Today this Pentecostal study Bible is considered

by church leaders around the world to be a one-book survival kit for national pastors, equipping them with extensive notes on the Spirit-filled life, study helps, a concordance, theme articles and maps. The *Fire Bible* is currently available in more than 30 language editions with another 30 languages in development.

Free Bible Sunday theme materials including DVD, poster, brochure, and bulletin insert are available to churches upon request from Assemblies of God Bible Alliance. For more information or to order materials, visit [www.biblealliance.org](http://www.biblealliance.org) or call 1-800-532-0440.



## Spark A Passion For God In Your Teens

**Kindle the flame of godly passion in your youth** with *Fire Starters: One Year Devotional through the New Testament*. This relevant guide is designed to help young people read and study through the New Testament in 1 year, regardless of when and where they start. Each devotion includes four sections: Think, Respond, Pray, and Act. With provocative questions, teens are challenged to think deeply about Scripture and then apply it to their lives in tangible ways. *Fire Starters* provide 10 to 20 minutes of daily study. It's perfect for using with the *Fire Bible Student Edition* (#73JV1885), but any Bible version will do.

Use *Fire Starters* for

- Graduation gifts
- Small groups
- Discussion starters
- Special recognition and rewards
- Promotional gifts

However you use it, *Fire Starters* is sure to spark new godly passion in your youth. Hardcover, with ribbon bookmark (#02JV0450).

For more information and to download a sample *Fire Starters* devotion, visit [www.gospelpublishing.com](http://www.gospelpublishing.com).

## Celebrate Discipleship All Month Long

**September is national Discipleship Month**, and national Sunday School Day is Sept. 27. Use this occasion to celebrate discipleship, highlight discipleship opportunities, and recognize those who volunteer each week as they disciple people in your church.



The discipleship theme for 2009 is "All You Need to Grow." The Assemblies of God Discipleship Ministries Agency has tools to help you promote and celebrate discipleship in your church. For media helps, ads, sermon outlines, and to learn how you can celebrate discipleship with your church, visit [www.discipleship.ag.org](http://www.discipleship.ag.org).

## 2009 CMA Regional Conferences

**The National Children's Ministries Agency announces its 2009 CMA regional 2-day and 3-night conferences.**

The regional conferences will meet the growing need for on-the-field training in children's ministries. CMA regional events combine elements of a large-scale national event with the

intimacy of a small-group training session. These events will help attendees grow personally and professionally.

Regional conferences will be held in Baltimore, Md., Sept. 30–Oct. 2, 2009, and St. Louis, Mo., (Oct. 5–7, 2009). Conference speakers include Rod Loy, Kevin Geer, and Gregg Johnson. For more information, visit the CMA conference Web page at [www.cmaconferences.com](http://www.cmaconferences.com).

## AGTS Adds Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies

**Byron Klaus, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, announced that AGTS has been approved to offer a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies** beginning with the June 2009 semester.

The newly approved Ph.D. is the

## Youth Pastor Alert

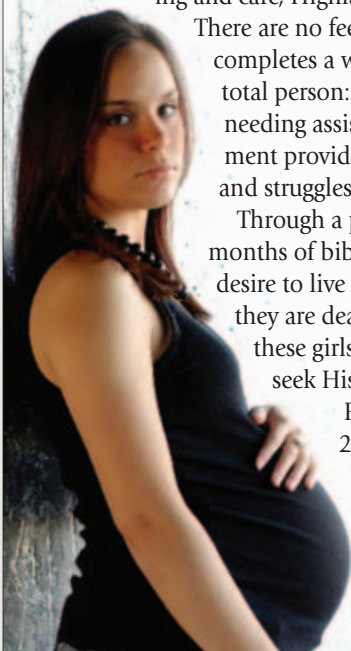
**H**ighlands Maternity Home, the most trusted name in teenage pregnancy care since 1964, and one of the nation's only Pentecostal homes for pregnant girls, is expanding. This ministry, a member of the Assemblies of God Family Services Agency, has opened its doors for teens with eating disorders as well.

If you have a young girl in your church or youth group who needs counseling and care, Highlands can minister to her and her family.

There are no fees associated with her stay. Each girl completes a well-rounded curriculum that ministers to her total person: spirit, soul, and body. Because most girls needing assistance are undisciplined, a residential environment provides constant care and attention to their needs and struggles.

Through a personal relationship with Jesus and several months of biblical counseling, the girls often commit to and desire to live a new life by the Lord's standards. Whether they are dealing with a pregnancy or an eating disorder, these girls have an opportunity to know the Lord and seek His will for their future.

For further information call AGFSA at 1-501-262-1660 or the Highlands pregnancy hotline 1-800-235-0652. Highlands, along with Hillcrest, is located on the Assemblies of God Family Services Agency campus in Hot Springs, Arkansas. For resources and further information, visit [www.agfamilyservices.org](http://www.agfamilyservices.org).



third doctoral degree offered by AGTS, following the Doctor of Ministry and the Doctor of Missiology. The Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies is the first independently offered Ph.D. by any AG educational institution.

"A Ph.D. is the standard of doctoral excellence," Klaus states. "To have achieved that is a significant feat, and it demonstrates the commitment of AGTS to excellence in graduate theological education."

Klaus explains that the degree's focus will be on equipping missiologists for research, teaching, and missional praxis (putting skills/ideas into action) in an increasingly complex multicultural world. It will also give credible voice to scholar practitioners, missionaries, and national leaders.

To learn more about the new Ph.D. contact Delonn Rance or Warren Newberry at 1-800-467-AGTS (2487) or e-mail to [wnewberry@agts.edu](mailto:wnewberry@agts.edu). For more information about AGTS, visit <http://agts.edu>.

## Student Leaders Conference

**The second annual Student Leaders Conference** will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Springfield, Mo., Nov. 12-15, 2009. Approximately 75 student leaders, four from each of the 18 endorsed Assemblies of God residential colleges, are expected to attend.

This 3-day conference will augment the leadership training the students are currently receiving at their institutions, as well as broaden their perception of the other endorsed schools. Daily sessions will provide opportunities for students to share ideas and improve their ministries. Students will also meet with Assemblies of God executives who will encourage them to remain faithful in their ministries within the Assemblies of God after they graduate.

The conference is sponsored by The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education.



## 2009 National Girls Ministries Week is Sept. 13-19

**The 2009 National Girls Ministries annual theme is "Shine Like Stars,"** encouraging girls to "become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe," (Philippians 2:15, NIV). NGM offers resources to help church leaders mentor girls with God's truth in the midst of the 21st-century culture where biblical standards are often misunderstood and ridiculed.

The annual Theme/Sleepover packet contains promotional plans and resources for national Girls Ministries Week, a Sleepover planning guide (Sept. 25,26), and a new catalog. If you have not received your packet, contact the national Girls Ministries Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 4074, [ngm@ag.org](mailto:ngm@ag.org), or download materials at [www.ngmevents.ag.org](http://www.ngmevents.ag.org).

## 2009 Nationwide Girls Ministries Sleepover/Coins for Kids

**The annual Nationwide Girls Ministries Sleepover/Coins for Kids is Sept. 25,26.** This year's theme, "Called to Stardom," is based on Philippians 2:12-18 (NIV) where Paul encourages believers to continue to pursue their relationship with Christ so they are ready to be a part of the plan He has for their lives. Girls will be able to participate in various artistic expressions. The Nationwide Sleepover is a way to start your new Girls Clubs year and introduce visitors to Jesus and your church.

Girls Clubs give toward the annual Coins for Kids offering during this event. All funds collected this year go to Project India—Rescue, Foster Care, Education. Funds will help build a rescue center in the New Delhi slums. This center will provide a home for abandoned women and their children, nutritional food, as well as education for other children living in the slums. All Coins for Kids funds sent to the national Girls Ministries Department will be included in your church's BGMC giving.

Every church reporting Girls Ministries on the Annual Church Ministries Report will receive a combination annual Theme/Sleepover packet. If you have not received your packet, contact the national Girls Ministries Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 4074, or visit [www.ngmevents.ag.org](http://www.ngmevents.ag.org) for a downloadable version.

## National Girls Ministries Web Site Offers Free Resources

**If you are concerned about the girls in your community and church,** the National Girls Ministries Department has resources to help you. Resources are also available to help parents raise godly girls.

A Girls Ministries promotional video is available as a free download. Girls Clubs can emphasize missions with the downloadable Coins for Kids video. Leaders can listen to podcasts on leadership, parenting, and social concerns. Lesson guides for topical discussions are also available.

To view and download these resources, visit [www.ngm.ag.org](http://www.ngm.ag.org).



## Riggs Scholarship and Next Generation Fund Applications Available

Last year AG Trust launched The Riggs Scholarships and The Next Generation Fund to financially assist students who attend an Assemblies of God college or university.

The Riggs Scholarships include two scholarships of up to \$30,000 each (awarded over a 4-year period). They are awarded to one male and one female

high school graduate who will attend an Assemblies of God endorsed institution of higher education. For those who apply, 10 students are selected to compete for the top scholarships. The eight students not chosen receive one-time \$5,000 scholarships to be awarded over the first two semesters they are enrolled in an AG school.

The Next Generation grant is a ministerial incentive program created to attract and retain ministers in the Assemblies of God. The AG Trust will use money to

help retire educational debt for individuals who provide 5 years of consecutive full-time ministerial service as an Assemblies of God credentialed minister in an approved Assemblies of God ministry. The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education will award up to \$24,000 to each selected recipient, to be distributed over a specified time to the recipient's approved lending agencies.

For application forms and additional information, visit [www.aogtrust.org](http://www.aogtrust.org) or [www.agtrust.org](http://www.agtrust.org).



## Mission: 20/20 — The Optical Focus of Healthcare

**M**illions of people around the world cannot see well. By the year 2020, it is estimated this number will climb to over a billion people. Not only do these people have impaired sight, they do not have access to optical care.

MISSION: 20/20 is the optical focus of HealthCare Ministries. Optical care is an important part of our medical evangelism.

HCM optical teams bring eyeglasses and basic eye care to parts of the world where many have no hope. When HCM staff gives people eye care, they also explain God's saving grace. Many accept Christ during these encounters.

HCM's goal is to deliver 2 million and 20 glasses to people who need them by the year 2020. Your church can donate gently used eyeglasses for MISSION: 20/20 or send a financial gift to help with this mission. For a promotional packet that explains ways your church can be a part of MISSION: 20/20, including a donation drop box for eyeglass collection, contact us at [mission2020@healthcareministries.org](mailto:mission2020@healthcareministries.org) or visit [www.healthcareministries.org/mission2020](http://www.healthcareministries.org/mission2020).

## AGWM Global AIDS Partnership — Extending a Hand of Compassion

Statistics for 2007 show that 33 million people were living with HIV, 2.7 million were infected that year, and 2 million people died from the disease, which has no known cure.

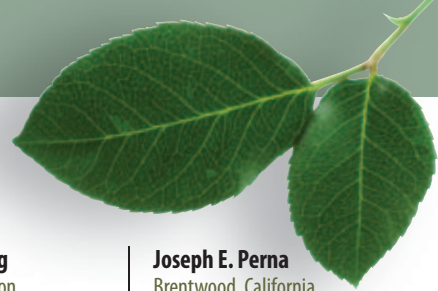
This pandemic is affecting all areas of the world — especially Russia, Africa, India, China, and parts of Latin America. In many parts of Africa, people cannot dig graves fast enough to bury people dying from the disease. Children are being orphaned as both parents succumb to the disease. We must reach out with Christlike compassion to this segment of society that people refuse to touch.

Global AIDS Partnership is an AGWM resource and response team, with representatives from all regions of the world, serving to assist missionaries and national church partners who are ready to engage in HIV/AIDS ministry.

GAP serves as a resource center for HIV/AIDS information and materials by providing complete, easy-to-implement training materials in multiple languages to begin an HIV/AIDS ministry. It also offers training seminars for missionaries and nationals preparing for HIV/AIDS ministry, along with medical and technical assistance. The ministry also consults with each AGWM region to assess needs and determine the most appropriate HIV/AIDS response.

For more information, call 1-417-866-3500, or visit [www.globalaidspartnership.org](http://www.globalaidspartnership.org). 





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## We Are Here To Help

Imagine the opportunity that is before us if we take multiplication to the next level.

**I**n 1990, there were 11,353 American Assemblies of God churches with 2,181,502 adherents (an average of 192 adherents per church). At the end of 2007, there were 12,362 Assemblies of God churches with 2,863,265 adherents (an average of 231 per church). In the 17-year period between 1990 and 2008, 4,174 Assemblies of God churches closed and 5,359 were started. Imagine the tragedy if those new churches had not opened. We would be a Movement of only 8,203 churches, and we would have reached 801,408 less people. Imagine the

opportunity that is before us if we take multiplication to the next level.

This issue of *Enrichment* journal presents ideas from the leading American advocates of church multiplication. Ideas are good, but ideas that stay on the pages of a journal end up simply being ink on paper. If we take these ideas, however, mix them with the call of God, surrender our plans to His plans, and begin to act with intention to obey His voice, then we may see the church in America reflect the biblical description of a prevailing church.

The word *convergence* conveys the power of these church multiplication ideas when we act on them. Convergence describes the coming together of smaller streams into a great, irresistible river that is capable of carving out canyons and moving mountains. Convergence is what may be happening today in the American church. Consider the following streams that appear to be merging in our time and place.

**Pentecostal revival** — today, church movements that espouse a Pentecostal message are the largest and fastest growing.

**Postmodern culture** — the Pentecostal message is a powerful gospel bridge to those whose worldview has been shaped by postmodern ideas.

**Economic challenge** — universally, there

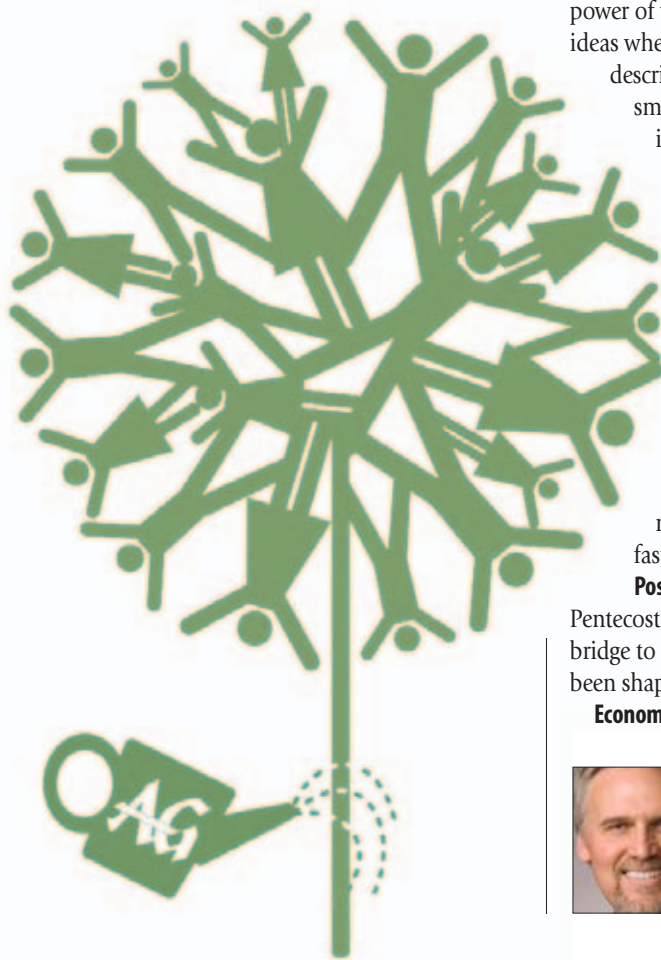
is a new openness to finding meaning in more substantive places than our personal statement of net worth.

**Collaborative organizational alignment** — the role of the national and district offices are shifting from top-down orientation to a commitment of collaboration between local, regional, and national strategies.

When we consider the opportunities these converging streams create, the possibilities are incredible. The Assemblies of God is uniquely positioned by God to successfully transmit the gospel to postmodern people living in stressful economic times. And starting new, vigorous faith communities is the best vehicle for conveying the greatest news in the universe. Building bridges to lost people through starting new faith communities must become the priority of every leader in the Assemblies of God.

The Church Multiplication Network believes church multiplication must happen at the local level. We collaborate with church multipliers to effectively equip, strategically fund, and innovatively network new faith communities. In other words, we are here to help. A holy determination to fulfill the Great Commission drives us to come alongside you to maximize your impact. We believe that together we can leverage the convergence of all these seemingly unrelated and perhaps even contradictory streams and be part the greatest opportunity for evangelism the world has ever seen.

God is calling the Assemblies of God to provide leadership in these last days. Let us join Jesus on His mission. He is building His church and nothing will stop Him. The promise of the Church Multiplication Network is simple. As you step out in obedience to follow Jesus where He leads, we are here to help. ☪



**STEVEN M. PIKE**, Springfield, Missouri, director, Church Multiplication Network for The General Council of the Assemblies of God