

BRETT ANDREWS, DALE SPAULDING,
& SEAN CRONIN

A large, stylized outline of a house with a gabled roof, rendered in a light tan color. The outline is centered on the cover and serves as a frame for the title and subtitle. The background is dark blue with scattered white dots, resembling a starry night sky.

LAUNCH STRONG(ER)

*When Disciple Making Fuels
Church Planting*

A large, intricate decorative graphic at the bottom of the cover, composed of multiple overlapping, swirling lines in a light tan color, resembling stylized clouds or a floral pattern.

foreword by
TODD WILSON

Launch Strong(er): When Disciple Making Fuels Church Planting

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Foreword

I'm excited that you've chosen to read *Launch Strong(er)* by the team at Passion for Planting. I co-founded Passion for Planting fifteen years ago because my colleagues and I saw the need for churches to start more churches. The population was rising and so was the number of churches shutting their doors. Without a doubt, we needed more churches to reach the increasing number of people who didn't have a relationship with God or a local church.

What I didn't fully appreciate at the time, however, was the need to start new churches that are fueled by their disciple-making efforts rather than their programs. When new churches develop from their efforts to make disciples who make disciples, multiplication ensues. More disciples are made and more churches are planted. However, when the focus is just on programmatically planting more churches, we oftentimes end up with new churches that lack multiplication in their DNA.

Surveys show that only one in four new churches reproduce. Imagine the impact to the human race if three of four adults never had children. What if our consumer and programmatic approach to church is our biggest limitation to multiplication? It seems that the current prevailing models and approaches are producing consumers rather than disciples, and this dramatically hinders our dreams of multiplication. That's why I'm excited you're reading this book, because it will help you think through what you can do to start a healthy multiplying church that's powered by its efforts to make disciples who make disciples.

As the CEO of Exponential, I see church trends both here in the United States and around the world. In the West, we've become somewhat addicted to personalities and programs. This is, in part, driven by a financial model that relies on producing services to attract a crowd. People connect with these churches for many of the right reasons, including good preaching, great family programs, and relational connections. But we should not be surprised when this leads to church cultures characterized more by consuming than by mobilizing. While I'm not against great preaching and programs, we must shift our priority and focus to launching churches that are focused on disciple making. *Launch Strong(er)* aims to alter our vision from starting a new church to starting a reproducing church dedicated to and driven by its efforts to equip believers to multiply.

Coming to you from the minds of engineers and the hearts of pastors, this book doesn't just offer theory about how disciple making can fuel church planting, it offers sound advice on how to infuse disciple-making practices into every aspect of your church-planting strategy. You'll also find tools and resources at the end of each chapter to help you develop that strategy and get your vision out of your head and onto paper.

If you're looking for a book that's going to offer you the secret to starting a fast-growing church, this is not the book for you. However, if you're interested in being challenged, inspired, and equipped to start new churches that arise from efforts to make disciples who make disciples who plant churches that plant churches, keep reading. I think you'll be glad you did.

—Todd Wilson, Exponential Co-Founder, President and CEO

CHAPTER 1

Setting the Stage

In 2016, we published *Launch Strong (A Planning Guide for Becoming a Multiplying Church)*. The book introduced church leaders to the six steps of planning and focused specifically on how to develop a plan to multiply as a church. Since writing *Launch Strong*, we've started more churches and learned a thing or two from Scripture and church planters along the way. What we have learned in the school of Hard Knocks, we pass on to you in the pages ahead.

In this book, you will discover both lessons and tools. Lessons teach you how to build a house, but without tools, little will be accomplished. Our prayer is that God will use these lessons to sharpen your wisdom and that He will use the tools to turn His dream for you into a reality. This book is a Passion for Planting resource, after all!

*“A person’s heart plans his way, but the
Lord determines his steps.”
—Proverbs 16:9*

Systematic Thinking

As a former engineer with The Boeing Company, I (Dale) was trained in the discipline of thinking systematically. I'm wired as a planner, and from my experience, I've seen how great systems help

an average plan flourish. Why? Because God is a God of order, and systems promote order.

“But everything is to be done decently and in order.”

—1 Corinthians 14:40

I’m such a planner that I created a spreadsheet to organize family road trips when my children were younger. I’d plan out where and when we’d make pit stops and which family member was responsible for getting food, pumping gas, and washing the windows. Dale Earnhardt’s pit crew had nothing on my crew. We were a well-oiled machine: effective, efficient . . . but a bit frustrated. You see, my wife and kids weren’t big fans of my regimented travel schedule and asked if we could just relax and go with the flow. We were on vacation after all. While it pained me a little to let go of my detailed schedule, I knew it was the right thing to do.

One thing I didn’t give up on these road trips was my AAA TripTik. Before the days of GPS, we used maps to navigate. A TripTik was a map with the best route highlighted. Without a map and directions telling us which highways to take, we would’ve never reached our final destination, at least not in an efficient manner. That’s what this book is all about: mapping out directions that will help get you to a future destination—the vision God has given you.

As a church planter, you can’t go with the flow; you’ve got to direct the flow in the direction of your vision.

When planting a church, you shouldn’t just go with the flow. That would be like trying to drive from New York City to Los Angeles without directions. If you have a keen sense of direction, you may eventually get there, but you’ll undoubtedly take some wrong turns and waste a lot of time and ener-

gy along the way. As a church planter, you can't go with the flow; you've got to direct the flow in the direction of your vision.

As a church leader, you have a God-given vision for where He wants you to go. Like Moses leading the Israelites to the Promised Land, your job is to guide and direct your church or launch team toward the future you've envisioned. God has entrusted you with the vision and resources you need. It's your job as the leader to allocate those resources to the critical growth path. That's how you'll build momentum.

God has infinite resources, but He's entrusted you with finite resources. He's given you these limited resources (time, energy, people, money, etc.) to accomplish a goal. Your job as a leader is to direct those resources toward that goal, that destination, that vision. When all your resources are aligned and headed toward a common destination, momentum will result.

That's why even though this book isn't primarily about planning, we still want to help you develop a plan for how you'll utilize the resources God has given you to fulfill His mission for your church. While you may not need a detailed blueprint and schedule for your next family road trip, it will be helpful to think through your strategy for how you're going to pursue the vision God has given you with the people He's placed under your care. Whether we like it or not, leadership requires some amount of planning. Without it, chaos results, not momentum.

Think about Creation for a moment. God designed the universe perfectly. Sin crashed the party, and yet God still continues to reveal His divine nature and eternal power through what He has made. Consider how the earth makes a single rotation every 24 hours—ever since Creation. Not 25 hours, not 23.9 hours, but every 24 hours on the dot. You can literally set your clock by it!

The God who designed the world designed His church with order, despite the chaos of fallen people and a fallen world. Even

as my garden produces tomatoes, beans, and cucumbers according to God’s plan, as the gardener I must plan and work against the fallenness of the world or my garden will produce more weeds than fruit.

Now, reflect on 1 Corinthians 12. The apostle Paul describes the church in this chapter as a body, a body that’s comprised of various parts, or systems. In order for a human body to function properly, these systems (muscular, skeletal, endocrine, respiratory, nervous, reproductive, circulatory, etc.) need to work together. Even the systems themselves are comprised of smaller interconnected parts that must work together for the system itself to exist and function properly.

Like our bodies, healthy churches have healthy systems operating in harmony.

Like our bodies, healthy churches have healthy systems operating in harmony. Church systems help churches reach lost people and fulfill the Great Commission. Systems add tremendous value as they allow us to implement repeatable processes with excellence. After all, doesn’t the greatest news of all time deserve our best and most dynamic systems?

“God is a God of systems and predictability and order, and God honors planning.”
—Andy Stanley, North Point Community Church

Developing these healthy systems is perhaps even more critical now than in past decades. The church-planting landscape has changed. Launching large with 200+ attending on opening day and then rapidly gaining momentum is becoming the exception rather than the norm. It used to be that a church planter could move into a community, organize outreach events, implement a

marketing campaign, and draw a sizable crowd. Those methods worked to attract people because of the social, religious, and other cultural dynamics of the late 20th century.

What will work in the future, only God knows. However, in a world that is changing every nanosecond, our approaches must stay as fresh and flexible as tomorrow's newest technological innovations.

If we are going to “make disciples of all nations” in tomorrow's world, church planters must see themselves and their work through new eyes. No longer can church planters simply be like settlers who would move into a new town someone else had established, following old norms that worked for generations in the old country. Church planters now must learn to think like pioneers.

God is building a new thing in your new church. Pioneers do not simply follow old norms. Church-planting pioneers must learn how to hear the Good Shepherd's voice and follow it. Hearing the Good Shepherd's voice, the next generation planter will need to learn how to develop simple plans, simple strategies, and simple training tools that allow ordinary people to *go and make disciples who make disciples who start churches that start churches*.

Church-planting pioneers must learn how to hear the Good Shepherd's voice and follow it.

A Kingdom Vision

Consider this: Two churches start. Church #1 launches with 300 people, but experiences little to no conversion growth. Church #2 starts with 50 people, 20 of whom didn't know Jesus previously but now do. Which church plant do you consider more successful? Which church reflects your vision?

To be clear, launching large is great. We like that model. When New Life Christian Church started in 1993, we used the launch

large philosophy. However, our goal in starting new churches is what Jeff Christopherson describes as churches planted “from evangelism, not for evangelism.”¹ What we’ve seen is that many “launch large” church planters, hoping to reach a lost city for Christ, often turn into Black Beard, the church pirate—capturing Christians from other churches with flashy new church programs and experiences while gaining few, if any, new Christ followers.

Make disciple makers who make disciple makers who start churches that start churches.

This brings us again to why we wrote *Launch Strong(er)*. Ten years ago, the call was, “Go start churches that start churches!” We believe in that call more than ever. In helping start hundreds of churches in the last fifteen years, we’ve discovered that the best way to reproduce churches is to think small and focus small. Make disciple makers who make disciple makers who start churches that start churches. This is God’s vision for launching stronger.

C. Peter Wagner’s axiom still serves as our rallying cry: “The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”

For most of New Life’s history we were driven by the evangelistic challenge of the Great Commission. Priority one for us was starting as many churches as possible as quickly as possible to reach as many lost people as possible. However, “as quickly as possible” felt more like we were in a snail’s race, and “starting as many churches as possible” felt more human than supernatural. Why weren’t we seeing the kind of rapid reproduction found in Acts?

The answer to that was clear: we weren’t reproducing disciples. Every method we used to make disciples did not produce

the John 15 fruitfulness we expected. What was wrong? Being the tough, never-say-die soldier Brett is, we made a bold decision.

We quit. We quit forcing discipleship. Every discipleship approach we took did not produce the fruit we believe comes with staying connected to the Vine. It felt more like we were trying to take down Goliath while wearing King Saul's armor. So we took off the armor, prayed, studied, asked questions, waited, and then God answered.

The answers we discovered waiting for God's power and direction are contained in this book. The vision for planting reproducing churches by reproducing disciple makers compels us to update this book. If you are ready to remove Saul's armor and accept God's tools for victory, we have written this for your encouragement and inspiration.

Where We're Headed

In *Launch Strong(er)* we want to present the following proven strategies that are critical to the church-planting process, which can and should support your church's disciple-making efforts. Let's not just view these strategies as a means to starting a church, but as road maps directing your efforts to make disciples who make disciples:

- Prayer Team Strategy
- Disciple-Making Strategy
- Fundraising Strategy
- Launch Team Development Strategy
- Staffing Strategy
- Ministry Teams Strategy
- Outreach Strategy
- Community Networking Strategy
- Marketing Strategy
- Leadership Development Strategy

- Assimilation Strategy
- Church Multiplication Strategy

Whether God is calling you to plant a church that launches large or a series of multiplying micro-churches, you will benefit from developing these strategies that will steer your ministry efforts in the same direction. These strategies don't have to be complicated tree-killing monstrosities. Think of these strategies as tools that help you seek God's vision for your church and get that vision out of your head and onto paper.

The discipline of developing these strategies will help you align your will with God's. It can also help you gain the clarity you're seeking if, and only if, you take the time to hammer them out and write them down. Plus, once your vision is out of your head and on paper, you can share the strategies with your team and implement them together.



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CHAPTER 2

Rethinking Our Priorities

“Gentlemen—this is a football.”

—Vince Lombardi, Coach, Green Bay Packers

“**W**hy are you starting a new church?”
“Don’t we have enough churches already?”

When starting New Life in the Washington, D.C. suburbs thirty years ago, we heard all the objections:

- Why start new churches when so many existing churches need preachers?
- Wouldn’t the money be better spent growing existing churches?
- Can new churches have the same momentum and ministries as a larger, existing church?
- Isn’t a church of 500 more effective than five new churches of 100?

*“Don’t we
have enough
churches
already?”*

What if these are the wrong questions, the wrong priorities, and the wrong assumptions?

Every church planter has to answer the same questions. Sometimes from critics. But there’s a reason it’s often said that you will never discover the right answers by asking the wrong questions.

When someone asks, “Why are you church planting?” The best answer is always “Obedience to Jesus”:

- Obedience to Jesus' personal call on your life to start a new church.
- Obedience to Jesus' commission to "Go and make disciples of all nations . . ." Jesus told us to make disciples who make disciples. What happens when people make disciples? They start new churches.
- Obedience to follow Jesus' heart for lost people. It is still true that there is no more effective means of reaching lost people than starting new churches.
- Obedience to Jesus' vision for the church to reach every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Where's the Vision?

We cannot escape the results of our thoughts. Small faith never produces God-sized harvests. William Carey, the father of modern missions, famously said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." The time has come to do just that.

*Small faith
never produces
God-sized
harvests.*

Launching stronger means finding fresh vision. It means seeing the church of the future and expecting greater things from God and attempting greater things for God. It means dreaming of church-planting movements, starting more new churches, and focusing daily on making more disciple-making disciples. This will demand fresh Biblical thinking, deeper commitment to prayer, and new and ancient strategies for multiplication in the warp and woof of church work.

For instance, picture starting a church. What is the first image that comes to mind? For most 20th century church planters in America, the first image is a Sunday morning gathering—a

group of family and friends singing, listening to a sermon, giving money to the offering, then popping the mint into the mouth to avoid the humiliation of bad breath during fellowship hour. Acts 2 shows us that starting a church with a time of worship and preaching is not a terrible plan. Apparently, God can work with that. However, a temple meeting does not a church make! Immediately, temple teaching turned into people being baptized, meeting daily in homes, being disciplined through Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer—resulting in increased joy and evangelism!

Is the power and multiplication of the church in Acts an anachronism, or is she God's vision for the church of every generation? As any middle schooler might say, "Duh! It's for every generation!"

If we will do what they did, perhaps we can become what they were. We believe that Acts-like multiplication begins with an Acts-like focus on disciple making!

Disciple-Making Shift

When the Baseball Hall of Fame elected their first inductees on February 2, 1936, a new conversation began on sandlots, in offices, and on streets all around the world. Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, Christy Mathewson, Babe Ruth, and Honus Wagner were now "Hall of Famers." Nearly a century later, youngsters pick up a bat every spring and wonder, *Could I ever make the Hall of Fame?* Every year, seamheads wonder, *Who will make the Hall next?*

If a Hall of Fame for church-planting multiplication is ever created . . . well, that would be weird. But, if it were, Ralph Moore would certainly be in the inaugural class. Before most dreamed of starting a church-planting movement, Ralph was living it. Now, we look at his example and wonder, *Could I lead a multiplication movement?* and *Who will be next?*

What differentiates Ralph from other leaders, however, is his vision for multiplication. When Ralph starts a spiritual conversation, he doesn't just see someone carrying hurts and hang-ups, he sees much more. He sees a lost person who needs Jesus—but he sees more than that. He sees a future disciple maker—but he sees still more. Ultimately, Ralph sees God's future and thinks, *This person is my next church planter!*

Do you see the shift? From seeing potential “congregants” to seeing potential church planters. From merely making disciples to a hunger for making disciple-making disciples!

Their disciple-making shift is simple: Every Timothy needs a Paul.

The Timothy Initiative exists to advance God's kingdom. From the most populous cities in India to the most remote villages in the Nepalese Himalayas, The Timothy Initiative multiplies disciple-making churches around the world with a new vision for church planting. Their disciple-making shift is simple: Every Timothy needs a Paul. With that principle, they train to reproduce on four levels:

1. Every believer is a disciple
2. Every disciple is a disciple maker
3. Every disciple maker's home is a potential church
4. Every church is a potential church-planting training center

The skeptic will say, “So, big deal! What's so new about that?” Nothing, really. That plan is as old as the book of Acts. It is as radical as 2 Timothy 2:2: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Yet, what makes disciple-making movements (DMMs) and church-planting movements (CPM) distinct is their disciple-mak-

ing shift from simply making disciples to making disciple makers who will start new churches. When New Life started in 1993, our vision was to start a church that would make disciples. If the church grew in number, and seventy percent of our members developed discipleship disciplines to grow into spiritual maturity, we felt we would be a shoo-in for the Church Planting Hall of Fame.

Today, DMM leaders are committed to a greater vision than merely producing self-feeding spiritual young adults. The new discipleship shift means discipling people until they are seeing their spiritual grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Just as the farmer sees the seeds for future harvests in the present harvest, so the disciple-making church planter sees God birthing new churches in every disciple.

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Attitude Shift

In the 1950s, church planting in America meant three families meeting in a home because it was too far to drive to their denomination's closest church. If that church was wildly successful, ten years later their little band included fifty active members and the ownership of a 100-seat cross-shaped building with blood-red carpets. Celebrating their 25th anniversary, everyone gave thanks that their church had reached 200 people—one of the largest churches in town.

In the 1980s, church planting in America radically shifted. “If your church cannot break the 200-attendance barrier by your first anniversary, chances are good that you never will,” the experts

said. *How can we start a church for us?* turned into *How can we start a church that blows through growth barriers so we can reach as many lost people as possible?* Willow Creek opened, and a year later 1,000 people attended every week. Marketing campaigns created the new “insta-church”: Make these calls, send these cards, do these events, and *poof!* 500 people will show up your first Sunday.

Those were amazing times. I have a friend who started a church that reached nearly 850 people on opening Sunday. It continues to be the lowest attended Sunday in that church’s history. (Is it any wonder so few people *like* my friend? We suspect he must not have a very rich inner-life.)

The American attitude toward church planting since the 80s has been: *I want it big. I want it fast. I want it now!* Here’s the problem: there aren’t many leaders capable of starting “big, fast, now” churches. As the story of the turtle and the hare reminds us, while everyone admires the flash and speed of the hare, most find the turtle’s pace more doable.

The church-planting attitude shift is away from the hare and toward the turtle. No longer do we strive for “big, fast, now.” Instead, we focus on small, steady, waiting on the Lord. No longer do we count and think, *How big can we be opening Sunday?* Now, our focus is: *How many disciple-making disciples can we make this week? This month? How many people will ask a neighbor, “How can I pray for you?” How many baptizers will be baptizing friends this year?*

We have called for a shift from big to small, from quantity to quality, from big Sunday gathering to personal, daily disciple making.

“Isn’t it amazing how much these churches can accomplish without the power of God?”

Prayer Shift

“Isn’t it amazing how much these churches can accomplish without the power of God?” Thus observed a

Chinese missionary after visiting some of the largest churches in America. What a contrast with the church in the book of Acts where “Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

“You do not have, because you do not ask God.”
—James 4:2 (NIV)

Six hundred years before Christ came, God’s people were as faithful as a brothel of prostitutes (and probably less spiritual). Like Godly church planters today, Habakkuk grieves for God to renew God’s spirit in the land. He prays: “Lord, I have heard the report about you; Lord, I stand in awe of your deeds. Revive your work in these years; make it known in these years. In your wrath remember mercy!” (Hab. 3:2).

In the 5th century BC, Nehemiah reads the report from Jerusalem. “God’s city wastes away in ruins. Wild animals roam the streets. The temple is a monument to humiliation.” Nehemiah fasts and prays, “Please Lord, give your servant success” (Neh. 1:11).

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested. In response the church prays for boldness, and God answers in an earthquake.

God’s work is too great to be accomplished with flesh and blood alone. Satan’s fight with the kingdom is too intense to be won with human weapons alone. “Why do so many churches fail to get off the ground?” some wonder. Most of the time in this generation, we do not experience a failure of personal talent, desire, or planning. Often, failure is the result of trusting in the flesh, not in the power of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, and prayer.

The church planter must remember that he is not very impressive in the grand scheme of things. We are made of dust. That should keep us grounded because as the word “humility” reminds us, we are “from the earth.” Yet on his knees, the church plant-

er discovers the partnership with God that he was made for. In prayer, the church planter moves from merely being a soldier used by God to being a son drawing close to his Father. As Hudson Taylor said, “When we work, we work; when we pray, God works.”

*“Prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them;
outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world.”*
—E.M. Bounds, *Methodist minister and Civil War chaplain*

Throughout Scripture God shows us His response to prayers. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–30, James 5:13–18, and the entire book of Acts. Remind yourself that God delights in the prayers of His people and specializes in doing the impossible when we ask.

If the most important ability of a disciple is to hear Jesus’ voice and obey (John 10:27), then the most important church-planting discipline is learning to connect with God and to align our will to His.

Commit yourself to prayer and fasting, and don’t be surprised by distractions. Satan and his minions will do all they can to keep you off your knees. Then, surround yourself with prayer partners. Be accountable. Prayer is the first step in the church-planting process. If the most important ability of a disciple is to hear Jesus’ voice and obey (John 10:27), then the most important church-planting discipline is learning to connect with God and to align our will to His.

Calling Shift

Americans love strategies and systems. That’s not all bad. Strategies and systems fueled the industrial revolution, took us to the moon, and allow me to text my son at midnight, “Have you been beaten and left for dead on the side of the road again?” And systems

and strategies are great for church planters! (One reason we started Passion for Planting is because most church planters are preachers and pastors, not systems engineers and project managers!)

Every road that leads into Jerusalem leads out of Jerusalem. Systems and strategies can sharpen the ax to make our work more effective. However, systems and strategies cannot replace clarity of call and the discipline to listen to and follow God's voice.

Again, we look to Scripture. We discover that God looks for the right people. God calls the right people, and then those people trust in God—not in plans.

Years ago, I (Brett) went through a critical season in ministry. As the old song goes, my prayer was, "There's just one thing I'd like to know . . . Should I stay or should I go?" I reached a point where I questioned my competency to lead the church further. What holds the trump card: calling or competency? (How would you answer that question?) After a couple weeks of prayer, fasting, and seeking wise counsel, my conclusion was that God had not released me from my calling; therefore, He would develop my competency. Clarity of calling from pre-launch days gave much-needed wisdom twenty years later.

"It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it."

—A.W. Tozer, Pastor and Author

I (Dale) experienced hearing God's voice in my calling to a church-planting ministry which ultimately led to my life's purpose. It was in September 2012 on a Sunday morning when God spoke to me (and interestingly my wife at the same time) when the preacher, after reading from Matthew 4, said, "When are you going to cast away your nets and follow Jesus?" I didn't immediately walk away from my "net," but that day set into motion the

steps that ultimately led me to end my career as a senior software quality engineer and technical fellow at The Boeing Company to dive into the deep end of church-planting ministry.

I didn't fully comprehend the magnitude of the task at hand (I could barely spell "church planting"), but I trusted God's calling on my life. The same is true for anyone called to plant a church. God won't call you to plant a church once you have all the right answers and are fully prepared to answer His call. He'll call you to see how you respond to His voice. Then, after you've wrestled with that call and surrendered your will to His, He'll equip you to pursue that calling.

"God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called."

—Christine Caine, Author

Dream to Launch Thinking

One question birthed the dream for church planting at New Life:

If you could do immeasurably more for the glory of God, what would you do?

"If you could do anything for the glory of God—and know that it couldn't fail—what would you do?" Dream! God is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine! If you could do immeasurably more for the glory of God, what would you do? Next question: Why don't you do it?

Let your dreaming begin! Allow that dream to spark a vision. One that will lead you to develop all the strategies you'll use to turn your dream into God's reality.

Within those strategies will be the "how to" tasks needed to see your strategies come to fruition. At Passion for Planting, we help planters do what most pastors weren't trained to do in seminary: develop a Launch Plan. This plan is a comprehensive check-

list that serves as a roadmap guiding planters from their dream to delivery on Opening Day—and beyond!

If you struggle to move cloudy dreams into concrete visions, strategies, and plans, relax! You're not alone. Our calling is to walk with you through the vision-to-paper process. Here are the documents we recommend creating to help you turn your vision into an executable plan.

<i>Thinking</i>		<i>Document</i>
Dream to Vision	→	Launch Vision
Vision to Strategy	→	Launch Strategy
Strategy to Plan	→	Launch Plan

Eyes glossing over? Breathe. We have good news for you. As God gave Noah a plan to build the ark, at Passion for Planting, we have everything you need to develop your strategies and their underlying tasks. For the sake of the kingdom, we've developed templates for each of these documents (see Tips section below). These won't give you all the right answers, but they'll ensure you know all the right questions to ask.

These foundational church-planting documents are called different things by different denominations and church-planting organizations. The table below attempts to clarify the terminology and purpose of each of these core documents.

Launch Vision	Launch Strategy	Launch Plan
AKA Prospectus	AKA Proposal	AKA Checklist
Big Picture	Comprehensive	Detailed
Colorful and Compelling	Content Driven	Date Driven
Quick Read	Detailed Read	Project Management
Graphic and Image Heavy	Text and Data Heavy	Online Functionality
Stories	Strategies	Tactics
Vision and Mission Focus	Goal Focus	Task Focus
Attract Launch Team	Embed DNA in Launch Team	Engage Launch Team
Donor Attraction	Donor Commitment	Donor Assurance

The greatest churches are yet to be started. God wants to create a new thing through you! As Will Mancini reminds us, “God is always doing something cosmically significant, and locally specific in your church.”² Don’t settle for planting someone else’s church. God entrusts you with His vision, so determine your priorities, develop strategies, and make plans that will turn His vision into your reality.

Don’t just hope your vision into existence; pray it, plan it, and plant it into existence. With God’s help, you’ll be able to make disciples who make disciples who plant churches that plant churches.



FREE Launch Vision Template

<https://church-planting.net/download/6473/>

FREE Launch Strategy Template

<https://church-planting.net/download/3087/>

FREE Launch Plan

<https://planterplan.com>

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Calling and Preparation

“Put first things first and we get second things thrown in: put second things first and we lose both first and second things.”³

—C.S. Lewis, *Author and Theologian*

Every church planter should read the book of Nehemiah devotionally. Agonize with Nehemiah in prayer. Watch how he waits for the Lord. Observe how God provides. Appreciate his wise organization and delegation of duties. Identify with his discouragement, his courage, and his resilience. Celebrate with him the work being completed for the glory of God.

Then, notice one more thing. Nehemiah’s story begins in Chapter 1. Please, send us a correction if we have this wrong, but Nehemiah’s journey does not begin in Chapter 2 as he surveys the condition of Jerusalem in the dark of night. Neither does it begin with him boasting to all his friends about his special, God-given vision to do what no one else has been able to do. No. Before the king asks him what’s wrong, before he recruits a team, before he makes a plan, Nehemiah gets a call.

“Put first things first,” C.S. Lewis reminds us, “and we get second things thrown in.” Like Nehemiah, your church-planting journey begins in Chapter 1, the “calling” chapter. Clarity on calling is so powerful—impatient as you might feel to get to action. You must live in Chapter 1. Nehemiah lived in Chapter 1 for months. Do not skip to Chapter 2. Or 3.

Clarity on calling is too important to be economized. It is worth taking time to pray, meditate, and seek the wisdom of others to gain clarity. Paul wrote, “Let each one live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him. This is what I command in all the churches” (1 Cor. 7:17). If God is calling us to work, He has things planned in advance for us to do.

Clarifying calling requires more than sandbox-level spirituality. Os Guinness defined calling this way: “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to His summons and service.”²⁴ Clarifying calling is hard work, but the payoffs are priceless.

Clarifying calling requires more than sandbox-level spirituality.

Joe (not his real name) could not have been more excited about church planting. He wanted to reach lost people. He believed it was easier to give birth (i.e. start a new church) than to raise the dead (i.e. revive a declining church). Inspired at Exponential Orlando, he knew he wanted to start a new church in a big city. Unfortunately, he skated over Chapter 1, moving quickly into Chapters 2 and 3. Well-connected, he found financial sponsors. Exceptionally gifted in personality and leadership, church-planting organizations were ready to embrace him. Sadly, having skipped Chapter 1, he wasn't ready for Chapters 4 and 5 (those are the “Opposition” and “Discouragement” chapters). The crowds didn't grow. The pride-feeding stories didn't emerge. Within months, when a big church back home called, he and his wife abandoned their hard field for greener pastures.

Fortunately, for every “Joe” there are at least three Nehemiahs. The difference is clarity of calling. Every church planter walks through Chapters 4 and 5 of Nehemiah. Every planter dreams,

only to experience the threats to the dream or even the death of the dream. Sometimes, the only thing that gets us to Nehemiah 6 is our confidence in what God did in Chapter 1. “God called me! To this, I have been called! God has not released me from the call! God, I will be faithful. I know that You will be faithful!”

How Do I Discern “The Call”?

The Bible describes at least two kinds of calling: primary calling and secondary calling. According to Jesus’ Great Commission, our first calling is to be a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples of Jesus. As Jesus said in John 10:27, our first calling is to be in relationship with Him as sheep listening for the Shepherd’s voice and obeying. Our first calling is to follow the Good Shepherd. We are sheep in His care, not simply soldiers being used to fight battles.

*We are sheep
in His care,
not simply
soldiers being
used to fight
battles.*

Our secondary calling is more specific. Secondary calling is Nehemiah 6:3: “I am doing important work and cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” Secondary calling is John Knox saying, “Give me Scotland, or I die!” Remember as Os Guinness says, when God’s calling is clear, “everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”

Because God is sovereign, He knows every hair on our head, every thought before we say it, and every dangling participle before we dangle it! Of course, that also means that before God formed the prophet Jeremiah in the womb, He knew him. Before Jeremiah was born, God consecrated him and appointed him to be a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5). In the same way, God has made

each of us for great callings (notice the plural). Some He calls to be teachers; others He calls to be homemakers; others, sewer cleaners.

Generally, everyone is called to be a disciple who makes disciples. But more specifically, are you called to be a disciple-making disciple maker who starts churches that start churches? Can you say, “I must reach lost people by planting a church-planting church, or I die!”?

Years ago, Dr. Charles Ridley studied church planters with a track record of healthy church plants and constructed a list of thirteen traits they held in common. Read them slowly. Appreciate that while each trait is valuable, the top six traits are considered “knock-out factors.” These are the “must-haves,” the essentials, the Velveeta without which there is no decent grilled cheese sandwich.

Here is Dr. Charles Ridley’s list:

1. Visioning Capacity
2. Intrinsically Motivated
3. Creates Ownership of Ministry
4. Relates to the Unchurched
5. Spousal Cooperation
6. Effectively Builds Relationships
7. Committed to Church Growth
8. Responsive to Community
9. Utilizes Giftedness of Others
10. Flexible and Adaptable
11. Builds Group Cohesiveness
12. Resilient
13. Exercises Faith

For a deeper personal assessment, take some time to evaluate yourself on each of these traits. You can learn more about each of them at: <https://church-planting.net/church-planter-assessment/>.

The genius of Dr. Ridley’s list can be seen in its breadth of acceptance and its years of endurance. His list is not model-restricted or context-restrained; it is widely used across denominational and theological lines, and the longer planting organizations use it, the more credibility they give it. Since every planter faces similar challenges to faith and leadership, these characteristics can help any planter clarify their calling.

At Passion for Planting, for instance, in our “Nehemiah 1” stage, candidates enter a rigorous assessment process to help them explore their callings, gifts, and passions. The win, after all, is not to prove that everyone should be a formal, lead church planter. The win is to listen to God’s leading. The win is to clarify God’s calling and identify practical next steps for each candidate to take in order to pursue the work God has prepared in advance for them to do.

At this point, nothing less than brutal honesty will work. Where is the tangible evidence of Dr. Ridley’s thirteen common characteristics in your life? Don’t just guess. What does your recent past tell you about how you are doing at the task of making disciples who can make disciples who can plant churches that plant churches?

For example, discern your aptitude for visionary capacity. What things have you started from scratch? What ministries have you initiated? What small group have you grown? What teams have you led? As the old joke goes, “If at first you don’t succeed, skydiving may not be your thing!” If you don’t have a track record of starting things and succeeding, starting a new church is not the first big leap you want to attempt!

If you don’t have a track record of starting things and succeeding, starting a new church is not the first big leap you want to attempt!

Self-discovery is an important part of uncovering your calling, but discovering that you don’t have a perfect track record does not

disqualify you forever. It may just be that you need to develop your ability to hear God's voice and further your ability to lead others in following God in smaller ways before jumping from 20,000 feet.

Since the core of church planting is making disciples and baptizing them, assess your history of reaching lost people. Faithful in little; faithful in much. Our friend Jeff's disciple-making impact literally extends to dozens of generations and tens of thousands of disciples. While Jeff has worked for the government all his life, he focuses on daily faithfulness in disciple making. So passionate about lost people, he may baptize ten people before finishing his Cheerios. Every day he shares the gospel. He's developed the passion and skills necessary to share Jesus with people waiting in line at the grocery store, with servers at restaurants, and anyone fortunate enough to sit next to him on an airplane. Rare is the person who meets Jeff and does not also hear about Jesus. Faithful in little. Faithful in much.

You may not have the same fire for personal evangelism as Jeff, but if your only success in evangelism is the "A" you received on your seminary paper assessing differences between Barnabas-style evangelism and Epaphroditus-style evangelism, you may not be ready to reproduce yourself as a disciple-making disciple.

Church planting is for everybody. However, leading a new church is not. Jesus did not call only rock stars to be disciple-making disciples or to be part of a church plant. However, discovering the role He is calling you to demands an honest assessment of who you are and how God has set you up for success.

One way to discern calling and readiness for disciple making and church planting is to walk in the shadow of a disciple-making disciple. If God is calling you to plant, whom has He sent to disciple you in being a planter?

Who Is Discipling You to Church Plant?

Shodankeh Johnson is the Obi-Wan Kenobi of disciple making in Sierra Leone. Through the movement he leads, millions have come to faith in Jesus and tens of thousands of churches have been started. His disciple-making map is now extending into the United States. How has Shodankeh's church multiplied so many disciple makers and reproduced so many new churches? First, Shodankeh would say, "Let me tell you about our daily, weekly, and monthly disciplines of hours in prayer and weeks of fasting." Then, he would recount stories of suffering and persecution where God turned weakness into victory. Eventually, he would share one irreplaceable factor: he sees in every disciple the seeds for a new church plant.

When David Young, the affable Nashville pastor and author, visited Shodankeh several years ago, he wanted to see the truth on the ground. Was Shodankeh just another missionary who knew the stories to tell to raise funds from America, or was he the real deal? What David discovered exceeded his expectations. He saw God at work doing more than most seminary graduates could ever ask or imagine, but he was even more impressed with the disciple makers leading the charge. They weren't sophisticated. They weren't elite professionals. They weren't even denominationally ordained clergy. Reminiscent of another famous disciple maker's disciples, Shodankeh's champions were ordinary, (sometimes) uneducated people: taxi drivers, airport security guards, soccer coaches, moms, dads, school teachers, businessmen and businesswomen, and even teens! What made them special, as David clearly saw, was that they were disciple-making church planters first.

In Luke 6, Luke records what may be Jesus' quickest parable: "Can the blind guide the blind? Won't they both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39). Two questions. One lasting image. Can't you imagine

each disciple turning his head, bending his ear a little closer so as not to miss the lesson. “A disciple is not above his teacher,” Jesus whispers with a twinkle in his eye, “but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:39–40). Do you know who is most committed to that principle? The world’s greatest athletes! Tiger Woods has a golfing coach. The best hitters have hitting coaches. The best pitchers have pitching coaches. This is not because they are bad, but because the principle is true: everyone fully trained will be like his teacher. Without a mentor, you’re walking blindly!

Too many church planters fall into a pit of despair in the early years because they have been walking blindly.

Too many church planters fall into a pit of despair in the early years because they have been walking blindly. Flushed with pride, ideas, and an independent spirit—and not wanting to be slowed down by accountability—they plant alone. However, just as Paul and John Mark needed a Barnabas, and as Titus and Timothy needed a Paul, every church planter needs a disciple maker. If Paul was not the excep-

tion, neither are you!

One popular process for disciple making is the “MAWL” method:

- *M: Model*—You watch your disciple maker.
- *A: Assist*—You do things together.
- *W: Watch*—Your disciple maker watches you, following up with encouragement and correction.
- *L: Launch*—Your disciple maker releases you to make disciples.

Looking for objective facts to affirm your calling? First, do you have a disciple maker or church planter who has modeled how to make disciple-making disciples? God took eighty years to prepare Moses for forty years of leadership, and the Bible says that no leader in Israel has ever arisen greater than Moses.

Second, do you have a disciple-making church, group, or organization that has affirmed your calling? Most people overestimate their abilities. Pastor and author Bob Russell once observed that on a scale of one to ten, most preachers rate themselves a notch or two higher than objective listeners would. When church planters launch with the support of a multitude of counselors who have affirmed them, they can be confident in their calling.

One more word before we leave this point: you don't have to be a superstar. In fact, if the church is ever going to reach her redemptive calling to "go make disciples of all nations," there will always be a need for many regular Joes to get the work done! God specializes in using ordinary, uneducated Galileans and Sierra Leoneans. God can use you.

Have You Learned to Hear God's Voice and Follow?

"My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me."

—*John 10:27*

If you were to make a list of the most critical abilities and disciplines of a successful church planter, what would your list include? (Okay, cheater. "Dr. Ridley's list!" you say.) Biblically, is there any more important trait than the ability to hear God's voice, follow, and help other people to follow? If Jesus builds the church (and He does), and He is the head of the church (and He is), and God makes it grow (and He does), then the best way to let Jesus build the church is to listen to His voice, follow His paths of righteousness, and lead others to follow Him as well. If you can do that,

you can lead a church plant. If you can't, you will rely on human ingenuity and be cursed to futilities of the flesh.

Are you called to plant? Are you prepared to plant? Jesus said,

The best preparation for church planting is to hear Jesus' voice as He leads you to be faithful in the little things today.

“Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much” (Luke 16:10). The best preparation for church planting is to hear Jesus' voice as He leads you to be faithful in the little things today.

Rick Warren once called Ying Kai, “The greatest disciple maker since the apostle Paul.” (Hyperbole? Ying would say it is.) Through Ying and Grace Kai's disciple-making and church-planting work in Asia, literally hundreds of thousands of churches have been started. However, few people have ever heard of Bill Smith. Bill was Ying's mentor in Asia. As I (Brett) write this, Bill continues to mentor and train disciple-making movement leaders in Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe, and every year he works with church planters trained by Passion for Planting.

Bill was not always a globetrotting disciple-making movement leader. During the Vietnam War, Bill was a pilot. In his early twenties, he realized he had achieved every interesting goal he had set for himself. It was time to turn the page. He prayed, “God, what do you want me to do? Where do you want me to go?” Theologized in a cessationist background—the belief that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit ended with the death of the original apostles—Bill wasn't looking for a voice from God. But after repeatedly appealing to God's throne, Bill received a clear answer from God: “No.” Can you imagine praying, “God, tell

me what you want me to do with my life!” only to hear God say, “Nope. Not gonna do it.”

What? Bill thought. Then God clarified. “Bill, the United States Air Force entrusts you with a one-million-dollar aircraft because they know if they say, ‘Go here,’ you will go there. And if they say, ‘Go there,’ you will go there. They know if they tell you ‘Go there,’ you are not going to get up in the air and then decide, *Maybe I’ll go where they want me to go, or maybe I will go to Timbuktu.*”

“Bill,” God continued, “I have given you something much more valuable than a C-47 aircraft. If you want Me to tell you where to go, first you must agree to go where I tell you before I tell you.”

For the first time, Bill knew his ears were clogged from hearing God’s voice because he was not pre-determined to obey it. He was pre-determined to keep his options open.

What is the single most important trait for church planting? The ability to let Jesus build the church because you can hear His voice, follow Him, and lead others to do the same.

What unclogs your ears so you can hear Him? A predisposition to obey—to go where he says, “Go!” and go when He says, “Go!”

What’s the best preparation for church planting? Being faithful in little things—listening, obeying, and helping others do the same, right now, wherever you are.

How can you know you are called to church plant? When others can affirm that you listen to the Good Shepherd’s voice, that you follow, and that you lead others to follow His voice.

Confirming Your Calling: See Yourself Clearly

My (Brett) son was the best hitter on his high school team his last two years of varsity baseball. In one game he hit three home runs.

One umpire (who had worked several of his games) asked me if my son had hit fifty home runs that season because every time he saw my son play, he hit another home run.

What made my son such a good hitter? Besides constant conditioning, he was a student of his swing. He videoed every at-bat to analyze his strengths and weaknesses, and then he made adjustments.

Since we've seen a few positive ways to help you identify your calling and preparation for planting, it's now time to look at the flip side. But don't be discouraged! This is a way to assess, check, and adjust to better prepare for successful disciple making and church planting.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain . . ."

—*John 15:16*

First, check your motives. Jesus' high calling for His people is fruitfulness. Can you honestly critique your motives for planting a church? Here are some of the wrong reasons to plant a church, identified by Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im in *Planting Missional Churches*. If any of these describe you, what does that mean? Is it disqualifying, or is God saying, "Adjust your swing, batter"?

- You want to preach but no one will give you an opportunity.
- You're frustrated where you are because you can't do what you want.
- You can't get an invitation to pastor an established church.
- You need to get some experience and church planting seems like a good opportunity to practice ministry skills.

- You're dreaming of something big to boost your own reputation or ego.
- Church planting is popular and someone else asked you to do it.

If any of these statements identifies you, your calling to church plant may be a tad confused. Since the heart is deceptive above all things, how can you trust your objectivity? As my Mom used to say to me (Brett), “the only person you are kidding is yourself!” We recommend that every church planter look for wisdom in a multitude of counselors. “Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 15:22).

For this reason, quality church-planting organizations always ask a potential planter or plant team member to walk through an assessment process. Godly assessors graciously help potential church-planting teams to see their hearts, their heads, and their histories. This 360-degree God's-eye-view is like giving potential planters a video of their swing. Not only do they see a “go” or “no-go,” they also gain clarity on how God has already prepared and equipped them, as well as insight for how to become a better hitter.

Next, check your marriage. Starting a church is an invitation to heightened spiritual warfare. Satan often looks for the most vulnerable spots in a marriage or family, maneuvers his troops, and attacks at an angle where he can do most damage. While Satanic attacks cannot be stopped, they can be resisted with solid preparation. That's why assessment not only affirms the calling of a planter but also helps the planting couple see their strengths, weaknesses, hurts, and vulnerabilities through new eyes. As they say, “The same sun that melts butter hardens clay.” The same church-planting experience that Satan uses to destroy homes, God can use to build homes. Resist the temptation to diminish your spouse's role

in the church plant. There is a reason Dr. Ridley described “Spousal Cooperation” as a knock-out factor for the church planter.

Like any serious exam, the assessment process can scare the nails off your toes. However, couples who work through the process often leave refreshed and encouraged. Be aware: the focus isn't just on determining whether leaders have the chops and calling to plant churches, it's also on helping candidates understand their strengths, weaknesses, gifts, and pain points. The purpose is to help people align themselves and their purposes with God's purposes for their lives. Assessment makes a great tool to nurture growth and to help leaders recruit and develop a team if they plant—or to cooperate with God in another area if they aren't called to plant.

So what should you look for in an assessment? Look for an assessment that will enhance your understanding of how God has prepared you to serve Him—whether the answer is to be a church planter, a church-planting team member, or some other significant role. Also, find an assessment process that is rigorous, but positive. We have seen assessment centers that pride themselves in their harshness and adversarial nature. Speaking the truth alone is defeating. Speaking the truth in love builds up. Find an assessment committed to caring for you and leading you to discover God's calling for your life.

If you've been called to plant, other godly leaders will be able to see that calling in your life.

If you've been called to plant, other godly leaders will be able to see that calling in your life. Participating in a formal assessment process, like the one we offer at Passion for Planting, will allow godly leaders who love you and want to help you prepare for God's calling on your life to help you affirm His calling.

Confirm Your Calling Through Training

Church planters are a passionate bunch. We're not surprised that once inspired to plant, the temptation is to immediately dive into the deep end of the pool. If that is your temptation, just remember all the young men and women who go to college, fall deeply into "like" with their "soul mates," and immediately begin dreaming of a life lived happily ever after.

The heart fills with passion and life suddenly moves from black and white to HD. Colors are brighter, sounds are clearer, sense of taste is enhanced, and they know that marriage is inevitable. Red flags? Sure, there may be some; but have you ever noticed how hard it is to see red flags when you're wearing rose-colored glasses? Diminishing all warning signs, they reason, *Our love is stronger than death! Others may have trouble, but we have something special. Love will keep us together!*

Now, imagine this couple walks into your office. "We want to get married! Quickly! Our love is so real! We can't wait! Would you marry us?" As a wise pastor, you would say, "I am honored to perform your wedding ceremony. But marriage is sacred. It is too important to be rushed into. I will marry you, after we walk through premarital counseling."

Why would you be so insistent? Because marriage is God's work. And you know from years of ministry that marriage is hard—much harder than it feels to romance-blinded couples.

At Passion for Planting, we see many church planters infatuated with church planting. They've read the books, they've attended the conferences, they've imagined themselves in the dramatic victory narratives. In our friend, John Worcester's, words, "Church planters are all drunk on their vision." Drunk on vision, filled with passion, and ready to run! The vision and passion are great, but

they don't prepare the planter for all the potholes and pitfalls on the road ahead.

Simply put, planters don't know what they don't know.

At a recent church-planting boot camp, a young planter came hungry to launch quickly, fully convinced that he was ready. "What have you done to prepare to launch?" we asked.

"I've already booked a country club for Sunday morning worship," he confidently responded.

"Anything else?"

Nope. That was it. He had a place to meet. What else could he need: Plans? A core team? Systems? Disciple-making disciples? Clearly, he didn't know what he didn't know.

Throughout the week, his perspective grew. As guest speakers instructed and challenged, his vision increased. His wisdom deepened. Gradually, he began to appreciate the value of ground-work and preparation. Then, when asked about timelines for planting, he steadily moved his timeline back. He left our training changed, not frustrated but breathing a sigh of relief. If he had rushed ahead, he acknowledged, he would have committed countless errors, but more preparation on his part would mean a more God-honoring start.

*"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I
will spend the first four sharpening the axe."*

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States

If you sense a calling to plant a church, one of the first principles to embrace immediately is that some of the worst mistakes made in a church are made before launch Sunday. Some of the most difficult failures to overcome will be those made before the first sermon is preached. The culture you create in the pre-launch

stage will set you up for either fruitfulness or frustration. Give God time. Be patient. Slow starts lead to lasting legacies.

In the preparation stage, invest time in boot camps and a residency. Boot camps and residencies for church planting are like premarital preparation for marriage. Premarital counseling cannot guarantee a successful marriage, but it can give couples the tools, perspective, and relationships to help them navigate the inevitable tough roads that lie ahead. At Passion for Planting, an organization started by church planters for church planters, we work in the trenches with new church planters as well as planters we've been walking with for five, ten, or twenty years. Through our boot camps, residencies, and other resources, we do our best to help planters learn from the mistakes and successes of those who have walked the journey already.

Boot camps and residencies for church planting are like premarital preparation for marriage.

“The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in combat.”

—Richard Marcinko, U.S. Navy Seal, Author

Another route many planters find helpful is what we call “cohort training.” A cohort is a small group of five to ten potential planters who walk with each other on a ten- to twelve-month preparation journey. Some call these environments “Learning Communities,” “Church Planter Residencies,” or “Planting Collaboratives.” The best cohorts are connected to churches with a strong track record in starting new churches. They are structured to lead prospective church planters in a well-rounded curriculum for preparation. While college and seminary training can be helpful for planting, church-planting churches stay on the cutting edge of church-planting movements.

The structured learning environment of a church-planting church gives the planter training in “the latest and the greatest” ministry methods in the context of “iron-sharpens-iron” relationships with fellow church planters. The bonds developed among these planters in this intense environment often result in friendships and partnerships that last a lifetime.

See the Tips section at the end of this chapter for links to church-planting training resources. Before you commit to a training program, ensure that disciple making is central and foundational to what is being offered. Disciple making and church planting must go hand in hand.

One last thought about training. Some church planters ask if the training we offer will give them all the answers to their church-planting questions. We wish. Here’s the truth: there are no turn-key solutions for starting a healthy new church. Jesus builds the church. God gives the growth. Jesus is the head of the church. The Holy Spirit empowers His work. The ultimate purpose of training is not to give all the answers. The ultimate purpose of training is to prepare the person God is calling. How do you hear God’s voice? How do you develop your mind so you can hear Jesus’ wisdom, obey, and help others follow His voice with you? In a sense, church-planter training means learning how to ask the right questions and listen to Jesus for the right answers.

For more information about assessment and training resources, see below.

“Taking the time to assess and provide intense training will help you identify, inform, and inspire a generation of planters.”

—Ed Stetzer, Author, Speaker, Church Planter



Passion for Planting (P4P) Assessment Center

<https://church-planting.net/church-planter-assessment/>

Stadia Church Planter Assessment Center (CPAC)

<https://stadiachurchplanting.org/services/assessment/>

ACTS 29 Assessment

<https://www.acts29.com/assessment/>

FREE e-Book: *Together with Family: Flourishing in a Level Five Marriage* by Deb & Larry Walkemeyer

<https://exponential.org/resource-ebooks/together-family/>

P4P Church Planter Bootcamp

<https://church-planting.net/bootcamp/>

EFCA Startup Bootcamp

<https://www.efca.org/resources/document/start-boot-camp>

P4P Distance Church Planter Residency

<https://church-planting.net/residencies/>

FREE Online Church Planter Training Courses

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<https://exponential.org>

Prayer Foundation

When I (Sean) was planting a church in Buffalo, NY, our city was the second poorest city in the nation. Boarded up houses, deserted church buildings, and vacant lots permeated the landscape and demoralized the community's psyche. One day as I meandered through our neighborhood on my bike, I caught a vision of starting a community garden in one of those vacant lots.

For perspective, this was very early on in our planting process. At this point, we had ten people on our launch team. To say we were limited in resources is like saying the *National Enquirer* may not be the most trusted name in news. I also had no idea how we would start a community garden, but I began to dream and pray anyway. I reasoned that a garden might be one way our church could serve our community and help them see that we were invested in it.

A few weeks after I started praying about this vision, a friend of mine invited me out for coffee. That day at Spot Coffee, my friend, who wasn't into Jesus but was into real estate, asked me if our church would start a community garden in the vacant lot behind one of his properties. He then told me about Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, an organization he was connected to that would network us with other gardeners in the city and supply us with knowledge, tools, soil, and seeds for the garden. My jaw just about hit the floor. He had no idea I had been praying about start-

ing a community garden, yet here he was asking me to start one and willing to provide most of the resources we'd need to start it.

That day God reminded me of a lesson I had learned about

Sometimes it's hard for me to know what's an answer to prayer and what's a coincidence. All I know is, the more I pray, the more coincidences happen."

prayer years earlier. The lesson came from my professor, Doug Aldridge, who told his Christian Life class, "Sometimes it's hard for me to know what's an answer to prayer and what's a coincidence. All I know is, the more I pray, the more coincidences happen."

As a church planter, your to-do list feels endless: recruit and train your launch team, fundraise, find a gathering space, build ministry teams, network with community leaders, and a few hundred other things after that. Our new church planning checklist at Passion for Planting consists of over 15,000 tasks to complete by the Opening Day of worship gatherings. Not really. Actually, there are *only* 400 tasks. So the to-do list is not endless, but it may feel that way when you first get started. By the way, the list of 400 tasks is not arbitrary. This is the work every church planter must do to start a healthy church plant. So there are other options: you can use the to-do list we've created through the years, you try to generate your own list, or you can sip coffee at Dunkin Donuts and hope everything works out by sheer luck!

If you haven't figured it out yet, we believe God is into details. Some call us the detailed nerds of church planting. As our friend Ricky Brown once said of us, "You guys live in the how." He's right. We live in the *how*, so you can live in the *why* and be confident you're doing all that needs to be done to reach as many people as possible with the gospel.

One resource we created to help planters is a project management app called PlanterPlan. PlanterPlan sequentially maps out all the tasks you'll need to complete in order to turn your church planting vision into reality. And none of these is more essential to the health of the church than the task of establishing a prayer team.

Develop Prayer Warriors

No team you develop will be more important than your prayer team. No partner is more important, no project more significant than recruiting an army of prayer warriors to intercede for your church plant. Getting your prayer team up and running early in the process is a major priority. No matter how gifted and talented you are as a leader, you're setting yourself up for disappointment if you neglect to root and cover yourself in prayer.

Jesus reminded His disciples in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (NIV). Jesus didn't say that to be cute or to impress His disciples with His horticulture knowledge. It's simply a powerful truth. A charismatic leader can draw a crowd, but only a surrendered leader, backed by an army of prayer warriors and refreshed by consistent communion with their Heavenly Father, will be able to start a church that makes disciples among people living in a dry and weary land.

Never forget: Starting a church parachutes you into a spiritual war zone. You're a fighter on the front lines. While Satan isn't as powerful as the Holy Spirit who lives in you, he is sly, and his power must not be underestimated. He's not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient, but he also isn't stupid. He can see your weak spots. He can see where your team is vulnerable. He and his demons will do whatever they can to thwart your mission. Fight back! Call in prayer support by recruiting a team of intercessors to lift you and your team up in prayer.

Pray Big Prayers

Several years ago, a friend of ours started a church in Africa while stationed there for work. His mentor Ying Kai, challenged him, “You must pray bigger prayers.” So he did. He prayed to reach thousands. Within two years, they had started a disciple-making movement that reached over 10,000 people.

How big are your prayers? Begin by praying small prayers and look for God’s leading to obey. Then, pray bigger prayers. One prayer our friend in Africa prayed was, “God, reveal Yourself to the Muslims we meet.” Another was, “Help us reach the mosque across the street.” Once, when showing his disciples how to make disciples, he stopped a man on the street and asked, “How can I pray for God to do something in your life?”

The man answered, “I’m Muslim.”

“Okay, how can I pray for Allah to do something in your life?” our friend replied.

“I don’t believe as you believe,” the man shot back.

“Okay, do you believe in Isa (Jesus)?” our friend asked.

“Yes,” the man admitted.

“The Koran says that Isa did miracles. If I would ask Isa to show Himself to you, how would you like me to pray?”

So the conversation went on until our friend promised, “I’m going to pray that Isa shows Himself to you this week.”

And, then, our friend went away praying, but only half-believing Jesus would actually answer the prayer.

The next week, our friend was driving down the street, when the Muslim man jumped on the hood of his car and yelled, “Stop! You must get me a Bible! You must stop praying! I can’t sleep at night because Isa keeps showing Himself to me . . . and I can’t rest until I learn more about Him.”

While that prayer may sound fantastic (okay, it is!), it is not unusual among people who pray! Materialistic people think money fuels ministry. Organizational people think strategies and plans fuel ministry. Powerful church planters know prayer fuels ministry. Only one question remains: How well-fueled will your church be?

Organizational people think strategies and plans fuel ministry. Powerful church planters know prayer fuels ministry.

In Ephesians 6:11–17, Paul reminds us of the conflict we face as church planters by commanding believers to gird themselves for battle. He implores us to put on the armor of God as protection from Satan’s attacks. Then after describing what this protective armor entails, he shares the first step to take when going on the offensive against Satan: *Pray!*

Ephesians 6:18–20 says this:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (NIV)

Paul is crystal clear. An essential ingredient to effective ministry is prayer. It energizes us and supplies fuel for disciple making. If there was ever a follower of Jesus who you’d think could make disciples without prayer, it would have been Paul. He was God’s chosen vessel to take the gospel to the Gentiles. He was a spiritual giant willing to spend a fourth of his life in jail for the sake of the

gospel, and yet even Paul solicited prayer support. Why? Because Paul knew prayer changes things.

The Greek word Paul uses in these verses that's translated as "pray" is the word *proseuchomai*. The interesting thing about this word is that it rarely appears in ancient Greek literature. Instead, the word used in classical Greek writings was *euchomai*. It meant to "wish" or to "ask" or "vow." It was used to describe the way pagans tossed prayers to the gods in hopes that the gods would hear them, if they were lucky. However, that's not the way Jesus taught His disciples to pray. No, He taught them to pray with confidence, assured that their Heavenly Father heard them and was powerful enough to answer their prayers.

That's why the authors of the New Testament added the prefix *pros*, meaning "to" or "toward," to *euchomai*, which gives the word a clear sense of direction. No longer do we aimlessly throw up prayers hoping someone's up there listening. No, now we speak to the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth through Jesus, who opened a direct line of communication to us through His death on the cross.

Before we leave Ephesians 6, notice Paul's request for prayer. He doesn't request prayer for his physical health or comfort. He doesn't request prayer for his finances. He requests prayers for other believers and for his ability to communicate the gospel. Let that sink in. Even the apostle Paul asked people to pray for his ability to share the gospel with other people. If he needed friends praying for him so that he could engage in spiritual conversations with people, don't you think we do as well?

Pray for increased opportunities to share the gospel, and ask others to pray for this as well.

Have you ever found yourself frustrated with a lack of gospel opportunities arising in your life? Do you feel that you rarely get chances to share your faith with neighbors, coworkers, family

members, or friends? How often are you talking to God about these people? How often do you have other believers pray for you, asking God to open doors for you to communicate the gospel to specific people?

Pray for Boldness

How will you respond to opposition? In Acts 4, after Peter and John were arrested and tried, the church did not pray for compliant government officials. They didn't pray, as we might, *God, by Your power strike down the evil ones*. They prayed for increased boldness: "And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29–30).

An expert on missionary work was once asked by a group of future missionaries, "What is the most effective means of evangelism known today?" With dry wit he responded, "Martyrdom." Silence hovered over the room until one who understood the dark humor asked, "So what's the *second* most effective means of evangelism?"

Reaching lost people demands boldness, sacrifice, and the power of the Spirit; perhaps this is another reason Jesus said that some things only come out by prayer and fasting.

Stated negatively, don't make the error of thinking that being a disciple maker is all about your effort. You're not a salesman trying to get in front of as many people as possible to make your pitch as often as possible. You're

Reaching lost people demands boldness, sacrifice, and the power of the Spirit; perhaps this is another reason Jesus said that some things only come out by prayer and fasting.

not an engineer building a better mousetrap. You are a pastor, one called by God. As a child of God, you talk to your Heavenly Father regularly. You pray, *Father, give me opportunities to share Your Good News with others.* Then you go about your day watching for doors God will open. He will provide opportunities for us to share the gospel. The question is, will we be attentive to the Spirit's leading when those opportunities come?

*"I would rather teach one man to pray
than ten men to preach."
—Charles Spurgeon, Pastor, Author*

One More Word on Spiritual Warfare

As stated earlier, church planting is a spiritual battle. We should never lose sight of that fact. Before my career with Boeing, I (Dale) served twenty-two years in the US Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer. The military does a great job of transforming civilians into warriors who are focused on a mission. And sometimes that mission takes you into hostile territory. Planting a new church is a spiritual invasion into enemy territory. Surrounding yourself with a team of prayer warriors is the single best thing you can do to prepare the way for lost people to come to Christ.

While not everyone will be able to join you on the front lines of ministry in your city, don't discount the support other believers can offer you from a distance. Your prayer team can act like a US Navy destroyer that sends a cruise missile from over the horizon onto the enemy to demolish their strongholds, which are keeping people shackled in bondage to their sin.

One missionary put it this way: "Not everyone will be able to go with you to the field, but everyone can go with you on their

knees.” Don’t go into battle without people you can radio for prayer support—and don’t forget to utilize them either.

Recruiting and Engaging Your Prayer Team

As silly as this may sound, some church planters recruit a prayer team but forget to keep them updated on how they can be praying for them and the church. That’s not because the planter doesn’t value prayer. Usually, they haven’t figured out a good tool or system to keep their prayer team in the loop. Don’t be that church planter. Read the rest of the chapter to discover what steps you should take to develop a prayer team and keep them informed.

First, recruiting a prayer team begins with your commitment to pray for a prayer team! Next, compile a list of every person you know who would pray for you and the new church plant. Think big! The goal is to get as many committed prayer warriors as possible who will be actively praying for the new church. Think through the following groups of people:

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Coworkers and previous coworkers
- Church members who will be a part of the plant
- Church members who will be staying behind
- Other church planters

As you recruit people for the prayer team, think about how you want your team to function. How often are they expected to pray for the church? Will there be times when the team will

“Not everyone will be able to go with you to the field, but everyone can go with you on their knees.”

gather to pray together, perhaps in person or through a virtual meeting? How will the team stay in the loop about the church and how they can be praying for it? These are some of the questions we encourage you to answer as you develop a prayer team for your church plant. As you wrestle with these questions, learn from what other church planters have done, but don't be afraid to try something new.

Developing a prayer team email group is one common way church planters disseminate prayer requests to their prayer supporters. Email marketing companies like Mailchimp, Emma, and Constant Contact provide easy-to-use pre-built templates. Just remember to make your prayer requests obvious to your team. Don't bury them in any narratives about yourself, your family, or the church. If your prayer emails do include stories, consider having specific prayer requests below the narrative section in a bullet point format. That way your prayer team will know specifically what to pray for.

Social networks also provide simple and quick ways to communicate with the prayer team. If you're active on social media, consider creating a closed group for just your prayer team where you can post updates and prayer requests when they arise. Writing physical letters or sending pictures from time to time can also be effective. This "old school" method can give people something to place on the refrigerator as a daily reminder to pray.

At the end of the day, you need to pick a consistent method of communication, and simple and easy makes the best kind. If it's complicated or difficult, you'll stop using it. It's human nature. When the effort feels like it exceeds the pay off, we tend to quit. The greatest killer for prayer teams (besides spiritual warfare) is the church planter being so overwhelmed in immediate tasks that communication with the prayer team gets neglected. A short post to your prayer team group every week beats a monthly newslet-

ter that rarely gets written or read! The simple weekly update is a great way to celebrate wins and keep your team informed of prayer needs.

One church planter we've worked with uses a text messaging app to keep his prayer team informed about how they can be praying for him. The app allows him to write and schedule prayer requests to be sent out as text messages to his prayer team. All the members of the team have committed to praying for him and the church one day a week. On the day they're signed up to pray, they receive a text in the morning telling them how they can be praying for the church that day. It takes some discipline to write and schedule the texts, but he's found it to be an effective way to keep his prayer team updated and consistently praying for the church.

Once you've got a team and decided how you'll communicate with them, you'll need to list all your potential prayer needs. So you don't have to start by looking at a blank sheet, here's a good starter list for prayer requests:

- For your need for God's wisdom, patience, and strength
- For people with evangelistic gifts
- For "people of peace"
- For "pillar people"
- For the stresses of church planting on your marriage and family
- For God's protection against Satan's attacks on you, your family, and anyone who wants to join your launch team
- For God to guide you to a clear vision for his new church
- For God's provision of financial partners

Here's a list of ongoing, regular prayer updates:

- Upcoming big launch plan decisions and actions
- Your biggest celebrations and your biggest concerns

- Community connections and events
- Answers to prayer
- Financial status (needs and blessings)
- Staffing status (worship leader, children’s director, etc.)
- Spiritual warfare issues

The bottom line: *be consistent*. Your prayer team needs updates regularly, so keep the process streamlined. If you are not a detail-oriented person, get your coach to hold you accountable to your prayer team strategy, or recruit a prayer team champion who will own the prayer team communication process.

*“I have so much to do I shall spend the
first three hours in prayer.”*

—Martin Luther, Reformation Leader, Theologian

Don’t be content, however, with just keeping your prayer team up-to-date with news and prayer requests. Create opportunities to pray together. With today’s video conferencing technology, getting your prayer team together to pray has never been easier. It’s as simple as scheduling a time and sending out a link. Consider scheduling a monthly or weekly virtual prayer meeting to lift up your church plant in prayer.

Finally, think about how you can look at your prayer team strategy through a disciple-making lens. It would certainly be easier to fill your prayer team only with mature disciples, right? Of course, but building a prayer team is a disciple-making opportunity that we don’t want to miss out on.

What if, in addition to a core group of mature disciples, you recruited and developed new disciples for your prayer team? Or perhaps even some who have been Christians for many years but haven’t ever fully matured in their faith? Being part of a new

church's prayer team is an amazing opportunity for people to learn to pray and to see God move in response to their prayers.

*“Heaven is full of answers to prayers for
which no one ever bothered to ask.”*
—Billy Graham, Evangelist, Author

As discussed in previous chapters, the best way to achieve clarity and clear expectations is to get your ideas onto paper. Having a written prayer team strategy is no different. Your prayer team strategy should include:

- Prayer Team recruiting goals (number of people on the team)
- How you will recruit the Prayer Team
- What methods you will use to communicate with the team
- How often your communication will occur
- Principles and policies for confidentiality
- Special prayer events (virtual team meetings, team fasting, prayer walks, etc.)
- Plans to transition the pre-launch prayer team to an ongoing internal prayer team

*“We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy
to have power. We have a great deal of activity,
but we accomplish little; many services but few
conversations, much machinery but few results.”*
—R. A. Torrey, Evangelist, Educator, Author

Get a jump start on your prayer team strategy by downloading the free template linked in the Tips section below.



Prayer Team Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/prayer-team-template

PlanterPlan Church Plant Project Management App

<https://planterplan.com>

Disciple-Making Focus

*“Christianity without discipleship is always
Christianity without Christ.”⁵*

—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Theologian, Author*

Where’s Your Focus?

In 2004, Matt Emmons represented the US in the 50-meter three position rifle event at the Athens Olympic games. Going into the last round of the competition Emmons had a commanding lead. To win gold all he needed was a score of 7.2. Out of his first 9 shots, his lowest score was 9.3, so gold was well within sight.

When it was his turn to fire, he steadied himself, took a deep breath, aimed his gun and fired. Undoubtedly, he hit his target, but when he looked above the target to see his score, a score didn’t appear.

Confused, he motioned toward the judges to see what had happened. They huddled together for a moment and then announced that the reason a score didn’t appear was because Matt had cross-fired. He had committed a very rare mistake in such an elite competition. He shot at the target in lane three while lined up in lane two. The score awarded to Matt for a good shot, fired at the wrong target, was a zero, which dropped him out of medal contention completely.

Every church planter would do well to learn Matt Emmons's lesson: hitting the bullseye is meaningless if you're focused on the wrong target.

Every church planter would do well to learn Matt Emmons's lesson: hitting the bullseye is meaningless if you're focused on the wrong target.

Far too often, church planters' stories mirror Matt's story. Many church planters set their sights on starting a new church, but what's in their crosshairs is a sterile church service that doesn't reproduce disciple-making disciples. They gather a team, rent a space, advertise the church launch, gather hundreds of spectators the first few weeks, and feel good about hitting the mark. However, in the following months, few disciples are actually making disciples. If Jesus said, "Go and make disciples," yet we start churches that are not making disciples who make disciples, are we fully obeying Jesus' command?

Now, can we see how many church planters reading this book are *not* actually committed to *disciple making*? If they were, wouldn't the US be surging with disciple-making movements that feed church-planting movements? The problem usually isn't intention: we have our eyes focused on a target. The problem may have something to do with which target we have in our sights.

Which Comes First, Discipleship or Church Planting?

For the last few centuries, the church's discipleship strategy went something like this: the Smith, Jones, and White families move into a town without a church of their liking (or they decide they don't like the carpet color at their current church), so they say to each other, "Let's start a church."

Step one: find a place to worship on Sunday morning. Step two: meet on Sunday morning. Step three: raise enough money to hire a pastor to yell at them on Sunday morning. Step four: hope

other people show up. Step five: along the way, we're disciples, who sometimes see someone baptized. (Cynical? Me?)

The updated version of the Smith, Jones, and White strategy? Attack steps one through four with more money, more people, better staff, and a better strategy before opening day. Launch big. Gather a crowd. Work the crowd through your discipleship strategy, generally following this path: promise people a better life, produce for them the best show (to make them feel good) in town, prove to them that the Bible is primarily common sense, then ask them to make a deeper commitment. Once they're sold, invite them to take next steps, to give, to serve. *Eventually*, call them to sacrifice (remember: "take up your cross and follow me," doesn't sell well if slipped in too soon).

What is the discipleship path in this strategy? Better Sunday music. Better preaching. Then, guilt the tar out of them until they commit to attending a small group.

God has used traditional methods for discipleship (Sunday worship plus some type of group Bible study) to make many disciples. However, these methods have not produced disciple-making movements like we see in the book of Acts or around the world today. Now, as we move more deeply into postmodernity, we suspect that 19th and 20th century methods for discipleship produce increasing frustration for church planters hungry to make reproducing disciples who start multiplying churches.

We don't claim to be futurists, but one prophesy we *can* promise: effective church planters of the future will have Olympic champion focus on disciple making. The most effective church planters in the future will see their

The most effective church planters in the future will see their calling to make disciple-making disciples of all people, not just the superstars.

calling to make disciple-making disciples of all people, not just the superstars.

“All who are called to salvation are called to discipleship, no exceptions, no excuses!”⁶

—Bill Hull, Pastor, Author

What Is a Disciple?

First, let’s clarify. What *is* a disciple? How do you know you are aiming at the right target in disciple making? As the Cheshire Cat in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* so clearly points out, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.” If you don’t know what a disciple maker is, one strategy is as good as another.

In determining your own definition of discipleship, keep it simple, clear, and biblical. Many Winnie the Pooh intellectuals poke their heads and “think, think, think, think,” about discipleship and hand out definitions that are profound, deep, and unhelpful. Keep it simple. Keep it biblical. Then it will be usable.

According to discipleship.org, a disciple is “a person who is following Christ, being changed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ (Matt. 4:19).” As a church planter, you’ve been called not only to be a disciple, but to be a disciple maker. You’ve been called to make disciples, who will in turn make other disciples. That’s why the leaders at discipleship.org define disciple making as “entering into relationships to help people to trust and follow Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20), which includes the whole process from conversion through maturation and multiplication.”

Scripture is clear. Following Jesus means more than agreeing with ethereal theological ideas. Good theology is far more than good thinking. Following Jesus means holy behavior. It means turning from sin and self to Jesus. It means, “If you love Me, you

will keep My commandments.” Godly church planters lead out of their own discipleship. They’re not content merely to be good preachers or administrators, expecting others to make disciples while they attend to more *important* matters.

At New Life Christian Church, we take our definition of disciple from two moments in Jesus’ life. The first comes from John 10:27. Jesus spends John 10 describing Himself as the Good Shepherd (which echoes of Psalm 23). He then says, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

Am I a disciple of Christ according to John 10:27? First, is Jesus my Good Shepherd? Do I listen to His voice every day? Is my identity in Him? Do I obey Him?

The answer is simple: Disciples listen to the Good Shepherd’s voice and follow.

Now, in light of Matthew 28:1–20, we must take it one step deeper. What will it look like if we hear His voice and follow? In Matthew 4:19, Jesus said, “Follow me . . . and I will make you fish for people.”

Discipleship is lived out in two dimensions:

1. *Disciples follow Jesus.* Period. If you’re not following Jesus, Jesus is not your Good Shepherd.
2. *Disciples fish for the lost.* If you’re not fishing, you’re not following.

In this definition, we also have clarity of expectations. Every day, every disciple is measured by two questions: “How is your following?” and “How is your fishing?” That accountability is not legalistic; it is personal: “Are you listening to your Good Shepherd and obeying?”

Now, you must search Scripture and pray for how God will clarify your definition of disciple making for your church. But

remember, if you don't know what you're shooting for, any strategy is as good as another.

So what do you believe it means to be a disciple of Jesus? Take a few minutes. Write down some characteristics of a disciple. After you do that, encapsulate those descriptions into a one sentence definition of what a disciple is. Define it in a way that a new believer will be able to understand and remember—so be clear, be simple, and be biblical.

If God has called you to plant a church, your first calling is to follow. Your second calling is to fish. If you're not fishing, you're not following, but if you're not following, you won't catch many fish. Since disciple making is every follower's call according to Matthew 28:18–20, assess your disciple making now. Whom are you discipling? Whom is your disciple discipling? God's call is in you now, not just in your

The healthiest churches will plant not only for disciple making, they will plant from disciple making.

future. The healthiest churches will plant not only *for* disciple making, they will plant *from* disciple making. And that begins with your clear understanding of biblical discipleship, your daily listening to God's voice and following it, and your experience making disciple makers before your church ever opens its doors.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

—Luke 6:40

Get in the Game

I (Brett) once coached an all-star baseball team with a coach I had not worked with before. He was a nice guy, but a yeller. More

than any other player, his son was the target of most of his frustration. The young boy may have been the most talented pitcher on our team, but once he lost the strike zone his dad's tongue took control. He would offer helpful advice like, "Throw strikes! Hit the strike zone!" and "Come on!" The rest of us would watch as a talented young man withered under the barrage. At our first all-star practice, it became clear why coach dad was no help to his boy: he didn't know how to pitch! Trying to toss at batting practice, coach dad threw with all the beauty of a heron with two broken legs.

By contrast, I've coached with men who have played college and professional baseball. One thing they have in common: they don't yell in frustration. I've watched a friend with two World Series rings help my sons pitch. His years of personal experience as a player and a coach gives him perspective. He's seen it all before. He understands the frustrations. He knows many ways to overcome a weakness. In no universe would he ever yell at a pitcher in a game, "Throw strikes!" His personal "discipleship" as a baseball player equips him to "disciple" young players in his role as a coach.

Which coach would you rather play for? Church planter, which leader do you think your team would rather follow?

Your church-planting journey begins now. Start your church merely with a Bible study and your church will be proficient at studying God's word. Start a worship service and you'll attract worshipers. But start a church out of your history of obedience hearing God's voice, following it, and helping others to hear God's voice and follow it, and you will reproduce what God is doing in you—and in time, you will see movement.

Godly church planters eat, drink, and sleep the mission given to us by Jesus to "Go and make disciples." Heaven rejoices when the lost come home. Jesus weeps for lost people. If our hearts are close to Jesus, we will celebrate what He celebrates and cry over

what makes Him cry. Every day, we pray, *God, help me to love lost people as you love them.*

Your number one priority during pre-launch must be, “Go, make disciples.” How can you determine your priorities? Check your calendar. Check your contacts. How are you spending your time? With whom are you spending your time? How intentional are you with your time and your relationships? (In other words, spending ten hours a day sipping coffee at Dunkin’ Donuts “surrounded” by lost people doesn’t count as much as spending an hour in conversation with someone talking about their lostness.)

Then train your launch team to “follow me as I follow Christ.” Everything you do to help people take next steps in their relationship with God, train your team to do it with others. Don’t be content to just lead by example. Exemplify the habits and practices of a disciple and then help others follow that example.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to challenge you to lead by example in disciple making:

- How much time are you spending “prayer walking” neighborhoods?
- How many spiritual conversations do you have on a weekly basis (with people outside the church)?
- How many people have you asked, “How can I pray for you?”
- How many people have you personally led to Christ in the last six months?
- How many people are you personally discipling?
- How many non-Christian friends do you have?

Your answers to these questions will give you insight into how ready you are to plant and what you need to do to get yourself ready. To be clear, if disciple making is the heart of church plant-

ing (and the command of Jesus in Matthew 28), then these questions are an invitation to “Real-ville.” If you’re starting to question your readiness, read on! If you need a disciple-making tune-up, or perhaps a brand-new disciple-making engine, we have hope for you!

“Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ.”⁷

—Thom S. Rainer, Author, Speaker

Obedience-Focused Discipleship

Bill Smith, Ying Kai’s mentor as mentioned in Chapter 3, has led disciple-making movements (DMMs) and church-planting movements (CPMs) around the world for decades. If we were to ask Bill, “Why aren’t there DMMs and CPMs in the US like we see around the world?” One reason he would give is, “Too often, discipleship in the US is *knowledge-focused*, while discipleship movements are *obedience-focused*.”

Knowledge-focused discipleship assumes that more people will make more disciples if they have more knowledge. While all would agree that the measure of a disciple is growing in love for God and love for people, Enlightenment thinking influences Christians to say, “The answer to our problems is more education. If you want more disciples, you need to give more education.”

Obedience-based discipleship assumes that most Christians are educated beyond their obedience—that our knowledge

Obedience-based discipleship assumes that most Christians are educated beyond their obedience—that our knowledge already exceeds our surrender.

already exceeds our surrender. Obedience-based discipleship also assumes that “doing” increases conviction and teachability in a new disciple. In other words, if you want to teach a baseball player how to hit, get him into a batting cage with a bat, not a classroom with a pen. Jesus said to go make disciples and teach—not to go teach and make disciples. Teaching is best done in the process of being a disciple (obedience) who is making disciples (obedience). As a church planter, you’re going to have to decide which assumptions will drive your discipleship strategies.

Pause for a moment. Evaluate your disciple-making assumptions. Do you assume that if you transfer knowledge then obedience will naturally follow, or do you believe that obedience reproduces obedience? How do your assumptions mold your Sunday morning services? Your staff meetings? Your personal discipling conversations?

Ying Kai brings *obedience-based discipleship* to life in what he describes as a “three-thirds” strategy that can, and should, be used as the pattern for every gathering in a disciple-reproducing church. (Discover Ying Kai’s stories and strategies in the book, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-revolution* by Steve Smith and Ying Kai). The three-thirds strategy has three major sections: Past, Present, and Future. Starting with the end in mind, the “Future” section ends with commitments to action. After a period of training on the lesson of the day, the disciples commit to action. First, “What actions will you take this week as a disciple?” Second, “What actions will you take as a disciple maker?” To use Jesus’ language: “How will you follow Jesus this week?” and “How will you fish this week?” is the focus of the last third of any meeting or conversation.

Now, guess how you begin your next meeting or conversation. “How did you follow in the past week?” “How was your fishing?” Other elements may be included in the first section (the “Past”) of

the meeting, but loving accountability for previous commitments to obedience is key.

The second section of the meeting is “Present,” which is essentially the lesson. This is where individuals listen to what God is saying through Scripture that week. The purpose of the discussion, of course, is obedience: *What is God saying to grow me in how I follow Him?* and *How does God want me to share this Good News with someone else this week? With whom could I share it?* (i.e. “fishing”). A prejudice for action changes how we approach Bible study discussion.

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Review what we just shared. What do you think is the strategic key to reproducing disciple makers? (If you said, “Jesus,” yes!) The strategic key to reproduction is action commitments (in the last third) and accountability (in the first third). But which third is the primary focus for discipleship in most churches today? The second third: the lesson. Now, is it clear why knowledge-focus does not produce disciple-making disciples? Do you think this is what Jesus meant when He said, “Go, make disciples, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded . . .”? We don’t think so, because knowledge alone rarely produces obedience. Knowledge must be paired with application and accountability for it to result in obedience.

Spiritual Conversations

Next, if we’re going to see disciple makers making disciple makers, we must train them how to have God-appointed, spiritual conversations. Have you had enough disciple-making conversations with lost people to discover that they aren’t difficult, just terrifying?

Training begins with heart development. Spiritual conversations engage frontline spiritual warfare. The heart never beats fast-

er than when bullets are flying all around, and it will likely scare the willies out of most of us (and who has excess willies to spare anyway?). So first we train disciple makers to pray, *God, whom are You scheduling an appointment with today? Help me love You more today so I can see others through Your eyes! And when the conversation starts, Lord, You must give me ears to hear and the words to say!* Without prayer preparation, spiritual soldiers enter battle unarmed.

Next, we train disciple makers to ask questions. Every good leader is a good question-asker. So much of disciple making is simply listening to God's voice to discern, *What question do I need to ask next?*

Jesus was the master of asking questions (and everything else, of course). Read through the Gospels and note the questions Jesus asks. Questions like:

- Why are you afraid? (Matthew 8:26)
- Why did you doubt? (Matthew 14:31)
- Why are you thinking such things in your heart? (Mark 2:8)
- What are you looking for? (John 1:38)
- Do you believe this? (John 11:26)

One of the best ways start a spiritual conversation is by asking this simple question: "Would you mind sharing your story with me?" Most people love to talk about themselves, right? Then just listen. Ask genuine questions along the way, like: "What was that like? You must have been scared." Then explore. Now that you've earned the right to be heard, see if you can steer the conversation toward Christ. Try, "Can you share with me how God has intersected with your story?" Or, "Can I tell you how I see God in your story?" If the person engages, ask another question or two to guide the conversation towards the gospel. Like, "Can I tell you why I

have hope no matter what I'm going through?" or "Can I share with you some news that changed my life?" If the person disengages, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Then, pray like mad for the Holy Spirit's power and guidance every step of the way!

Generally, spiritual conversations that lead to sharing the gospel take these five steps:

1. *Casual*: Shooting the breeze
2. *Personal*: Talking about someone's cares (e.g. family, children, career)
3. *Meaningful*: Opening up about significant matters like worries, fears, ambitions, or struggles
4. *Spiritual*: Dialoging about faith issues
5. *Gospel*: Sharing the Good News of Jesus

Circumstances and openness dictate the timing of this sequence. For example, on a two-hour flight, you have ample time to let the conversation naturally unfold through these five steps. But a fifteen-minute Uber ride demands a bit more urgency. Perhaps you'll plant a seed that another disciple will water later. With a neighbor or coworker, you have the opportunity over multiple conversations to get to the spiritual and gospel discussions.

"Wherever there is dirt, throw seeds."
—Bill Smith, *Disciple Maker*

In the 1960s, the Church lost home-field advantage in the United States, but what we lost in social acceptability we gained in opportunity. Prior to the 60s, Americans knew the church answers to spiritual ques-

Today, talking about Jesus may generate increased discomfort in some; however, the chances of engaging a genuine spiritual seeker, left thirsty by a world with no living water, is greater than ever!

tions. Today, talking about Jesus may generate increased discomfort in some; however, the chances of engaging a genuine spiritual seeker, left thirsty by a world with no living water, is greater than ever! It also means that disciples of Jesus must be sharp, prepared by the Holy Spirit, and strategically ready to reap the harvest God has prepared.

“At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ . . .”

—Colossians 4:3

Disciple-Making Tools

Here are some simple tools to fuel your personal disciple making that can also be used to equip and challenge your launch team. These tools are more deeply explored at movements.net (see the Tips section at the end of this chapter).

1. *Oikos Map*: Simple tool to help you visualize on paper your sphere of influence.
2. *Three Chairs (Your Story)*: Clear, concise fifteen-second and two-minute versions of your personal testimony.
3. *The Three Circles*: Simple and reproducible gospel sharing tool that anyone can easily learn and easily train others to use.
4. *The Wheel*: Effective illustration from The Navigators to visually explain what the life of a disciple of Jesus looks like to someone you're discipling.

Simple tools like these are very helpful, but they are not the be-all, end-all. Effective evangelism is fueled by effective disciple making. This is birthed by developing and deepening relationships, which results from spiritual conversations.

“The relational approach is our most effective tool in our post-Christian culture. We must learn to listen to and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to find receptive, disciple-able people.”

—Dan Grider, Pastor, Author

As your disciple-making toolbelt expands and your confidence using these tools increases, it’s time to equip others to follow your lead. Pray, *God, whom are You calling to be on my team? Who are the disciple makers You are calling out?* Then, look for disciples through Jesus’ eyes. Whom did Jesus invest in?

In Chapter 1, we established that God entrusts us with finite resources. Two of those limited resources are time and energy, resources we’ll exhaust when pouring ourselves into the people we’re discipling. That’s why we must be wise about whom we choose to invest in.

One common disciple-making mistake is recruiting the wrong people to disciple. Too often, we choose to disciple people we *like* instead of people who are *ready* to be disciplined. Another common mistake is choosing too many people, and consequently failing to make a significant impact on any one of them. One of the biggest mistakes we can make is trying to make disciples in our own strength. Rather than praying, *God, show me*, we assume we can identify the next LeBron James of disciple making without God’s leading.

Think about how Jesus did it: He chose twelve men to disciple, and even within that group He chose three to invest in further. Is it any surprise that the three disciples we hear leading the disciple making in the first part of Acts are Peter, James, and John? Excluding the list of disciples in Acts 1:13, none of Jesus’ twelve disciples are mentioned by name in the book of Acts except those three. Could that be because of their leadership and influence in the

church that they possessed as a result of Jesus' intentional investment in them?

The point is this: Since a disciple is always discipling, we see Jesus using every group size to make disciples. He disciplined multitudes. He disciplined twelve, three, and one. But the greatest long-term fruitfulness grew out of the deepest discipling investments.

Now, consider whom Jesus picked. What did He see in this band of scallywags from Galilee that other rabbis missed?

He didn't pick the seminary graduates. He didn't pick the most upright, well-loved, well-respected members of the community. He picked uneducated fishermen, a despised tax collector, a Jewish Zealot (think far right extremist), a thief (Judas), and others whose professions were so impressive that they aren't even mentioned in Scripture. Jesus didn't pick the popular, the powerful, or the well-educated. He chose common, ordinary people to disciple.

While we aren't given much information on the disciples' backgrounds, the little we do know, coupled with what we observe about them as they followed Jesus, clues us in to what we should look for in the people we choose to disciple. But beware! Even today, what impresses Jesus is not what impresses most.

What We Know About Jesus' Disciples

First, we know that even though they were all Jews, they represented various segments of first-century Israel. They had different spheres of influence into which they'd be able to share the Good News.

Second, Jesus' disciples were uneducated, which meant Jesus didn't have to teach old dogs new tricks. Perhaps He had His disciples in mind when He talked about putting new wine in new wineskins. It's hard to teach people something when they think they already know everything. In other words, it's difficult to

teach someone something they think they already know. (Note: As sociologist Rodney Stark points out, being “uneducated” by Jewish tradition does not mean they were illiterate. They were educated enough to be able to read and write.⁸)

Third, they were available and committed. They walked away from their occupations to follow Jesus. Jesus’ disciples didn’t use family as an excuse not to follow (Luke 9:59–61). They were all in. They left everything (homes, wives, siblings, parents, children) to follow Jesus (Luke 18:28).

Fourth, they were obedient. When Jesus told them to go and preach, they did (Mark 6:12).

Jesus taught the masses, but he was intentional about investing in a few. As church planters, you need to be sharing the gospel, planting seeds far and wide, but you also need to be intentional about developing a few laborers to send out into God’s ripe harvest fields.

Jesus taught the masses, but he was intentional about investing in a few.

To identify key characteristics of people to look for to disciple, many find the “FATSO” acronym helpful.

Faithful: This is someone who is committed to Jesus. They display a desire to grow in their faith and obedience to Christ. They aren’t living in rebellion against God but are pursuing Christ in their personal life and relationships with others.

Available: They make time for you and for training. They make discipleship a priority in their schedule. They focus their life so disciple making is their priority. Someone who is more committed to climbing the success ladder and escaping to go camping or to the lake house on the weekends probably won’t be the most available to disciple others.

Teachable: They are open to learning new ideas, tactics, and methods. This requires humility. Many seasoned Christians think

they know how to disciple and are unwilling to try new things to make disciples. Look for flexible, “new wineskin” people.

Sendable: When you give a challenge, who accepts it? When you agree to new goals for the week, who aims for them? Who exceeds expectations? Who shows God at work within them? The best way to discover “the sendable” is to give assignments and see who responds.

Ying Kai points out that we do not choose our disciples, God does. One way God shows us His disciples is by revealing who is sendable. At this point, be ready to be surprised. Often, the people you most expect to be the most sendable and fruitful will disappoint. But people you would not have guessed will go out and return bringing great stories of God yielding fruit out of their obedience.

Be ready. If thirty people say, “Train me! I want to make disciples!” Don’t be surprised if fewer than ten actually demonstrate that they are sendable. Of course, God is able to do more, but “many are called; few are chosen.”

Obedient: Who prays, reads their Bible, shares their faith, and walks more like Christ every week? Once again, let reality be the revealer. If you’re wondering whether or not someone is obedient, give them a simple assignment and watch how they respond. Are they ready to hear God’s voice and obey?

Jesus invested in a few to influence the many. He chose twelve FATSOs and walked with them, prayed with them, taught them, challenged them, and lived with them. He infused in them His vision for God’s kingdom, modeled how to proclaim that Good News to the many, and then sent them out to do it themselves—long before they understood everything! Even before the cross and the empty tomb, Jesus said, “Go.” Then, they returned—more teachable—and Jesus trained them further. Effective disciple makers, like Jesus, invest in a few to reach the many.

Keep It Simple

Choosing the right people to invest in is vital if we're going to see movement through them. However, following proven strategies and tools for making disciple makers is equally important.

First, keep it simple. Jesus told every disciple to “go make disciples.” Many long-time Christians hear that and think, *I want to, but I can't. It's not my gift! I'm not trained enough! I have never baptized someone. I've never led someone to baptize a friend. I probably never will.* Christians want to obey Jesus' Great Commission. Why don't they? One obstacle is unnecessary complexity. Humans take God's work and make it too complicated!

If the church is ever going to reach the redemptive capacity God has given her, then the key will be equipping ordinary people. There are not enough superstar Christians in any generation to reach the whole world. However, if everyone can “go and make disciples,” then God has provided everyone we need!

For everyone to win as a disciple maker, disciple making must be simple. Does disciple making only work post-Gutenberg press? Can we only make disciple makers in literate societies? Can we only make disciples in a post-Industrial Revolution world that understands the nature of systems? Obviously not. So if your discipleship approaches can only be effective if people have books, the ability to read, and the wisdom of the next coolest strategic approach, it could be that your disciples won't reproduce because your approach is not simple enough.

Think about the telephone game we played as kids: the teacher lined us up shoulder-to-shoulder, whispered a message into the line leader's ear, and then had that kid pass the message down the line person-by-person, everyone whispering the message they heard from their neighbor. By the time the message gets to the last kid, it's a jumbled mess.

However, I (Sean) have done this with kids at church who have succeeded at keeping the message intact all the way down the line. The secret is keeping the message short and clear. If the message is, “Sean slipped on a banana peel, broke his clavicle, and had to get emergency surgery on Saturday,” there’s no way that message is getting safely relayed through a game of telephone. However, if the message is, “Sean eats bananas,” there’s a good chance that is going to make it through. Why? because it’s simple and memorable, and therefore easily reproducible.

As my dad used to tell me when I first started preaching, “Sean, KISS . . . Keep It Simple, Stupid.” Don’t try to impress them with all your Bible knowledge. Give them basic information to know and simple commands to obey.

Train your disciples this way. Don’t just teach them. This is another unforced error we see church planters make on a regular basis. They confuse teaching and training. Preaching is powerful. God has used preaching to lead the church for centuries, but training is an undervalued treasure in the church.

What do we mean by training? Let’s explore that.

Training versus Teaching

Before you can create a strategy that will guide your church’s disciple-making efforts, you need to explore the differences between training and teaching. For most churches, discipleship hinges on teaching people information from the Bible. Whether that’s through sermons, Sunday school classes, or small groups, the main focus rests on information. While that’s not a bad thing, we believe it’s missing something valuable and important: training.

Other discipleship methods incorporate mentorship into their discipleship strategy. They connect younger believers with more mature believers who model for them how to trust and follow Jesus

in everyday life. That's also good, but we believe it's missing something valuable and important: training.

Absolutely teach people the Bible and model for believers what it looks like to follow Jesus, but also *train* them in the ways of Jesus. Teaching and modeling both focus on exchanging information, but training is putting that valuable and important information into practice.

Let's illustrate it this way: every summer NFL teams head to training camp with the same goal of preparing to win a Super Bowl. Focused on that goal, they get to work. What exactly that work looks like is up to the coaching staff. Typically, it includes strength and conditioning workouts, playbook study sessions, scrimmages, and a plethora of position-specific drills.

Now imagine how successful a football team would be if the head coach decided the best way to prepare for the upcoming season was to study their playbook, but never practice it on the field. The team would know their playbook inside and out, but how successful do you think they'd be at executing it when the pressure was on? They'd probably lose every game. Why? Because while the team would have a lot of head knowledge, they'd have no practical experience.

Athletes not only need to have an idea of what's expected of them in their head, they also need to train their bodies and minds to work together. They accomplish this by actually going through the motions of the plays in order for them to be successful on the field—when it really counts. That's why athletes don't just study their playbook, they train their bodies and minds to be able to execute plays when it matters.

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While it seems naive for a football team to prepare for a season just by studying their playbook, that is how many churches have been preparing believers to accomplish the mission God has given them. Many churches do a great job studying the playbook (the Bible) but are mediocre at helping their people practice basic evangelism and disciple-making skills so they can be confident to implement them in their everyday lives. If we're going to be successful at making disciples, we need to train our people to think and act like Jesus. That training involves purposeful practice.

Teaching is primarily one directional. You share; others listen. Training is active. Training looks like this: You say, "How has Jesus Christ changed your life? Let me share the stories of the woman at the well and the apostle Paul. If they were telling their stories, they might begin, 'Before Jesus, my life was like this. Then, I encountered Jesus and discovered how lost I was. I surrendered to Jesus. Since then, Jesus has changed my life like this'"

After teaching, you then say, "What is your story? What is your story before Jesus . . . and then when you met Jesus . . . and since surrendering to Jesus Take time. Write it down. Then, share it with the person beside you in five minutes. Do it again. Get feedback from your friend. Do it again. Can you share it in sixty seconds?" Then, you assign: "This week, find five people you can share your story with. Next week, we will talk about how things went."

Teaching conveys information. Training prepares people to obey, encourages them to take action, and urges them to follow up with their team. Will everyone succeed with flying colors? Not in this world! So the next time you meet, you train more. When taught by reality, people will be more teachable!

If you want your launch team to be recruiting people to join the team, how are you going to train them to do that inviting? One thing you might want to train them on is being able to share a

thirty-second “elevator speech” through which they articulate the vision of the church. To train people on your team, don’t just share the speech with them; break them into groups at a launch team meeting and have them practice sharing the speech with another team member. If they can’t share it in that setting, why would they be confident enough to share it in another setting like in the workplace, with a neighbor, or at the grocery store? Don’t be the team that just talks about what you want to see; practice what you want to see done.

“Practice builds competency and confidence.”

—Bill Smith, Disciple Maker

Let’s clarify: Disciples need to be taught and trained to obey. Jesus made that clear in the Great Commission. One reason we struggle to find disciple-making movements in the United States is because we become content with teaching alone. Our work is not simply to tell our disciples what to do. Like professional athletes performing at the highest levels, they need practice. Let them practice with you, in front of you, and with others so you can offer them constructive feedback, encouragement, and hope!

If you’re teaching people to pray, don’t just give them a tool that helps them understand how to pray; have them pray by practicing it right then and there. If you’re teaching a group how to share the gospel, don’t just show them how to do it; model it for them and give them the opportunity to share it back to you. The first few times they do it, they’ll probably feel insecure and awkward. By giving them time to do it in your training, you give them a safe setting to learn, try, fail, and reinforce learning.

In the process, you also help them build confidence through repetition. Every preacher wonders why people don’t put sermons into action. *I told them to invite their friends to church, why don’t*

they? or, *I've told them to share their faith, but they don't!* Is the problem simply the stains of original sin? Could it be that people want to obey, but they lack the confidence that comes through training? Can you imagine sending a child to hit or pitch for the first time in the middle of a game? Can you imagine expecting a child to make a foul shot without hours of practice first? We understand well the need for training in sports, yet the need for training to develop competency and confidence in disciple making is even greater before sending people into the spiritual front lines! So rather than being frustrated from lack of obedience, perhaps we can look at ourselves and see the need for increased training.

Jesus was a home builder by trade. Historians tell us that He worked with wood and stone. It is safe to assume that Jesus didn't learn how to build in a classroom. He mastered His craft by picking up a hammer, watching His father, and following His father's lead as they built houses side-by-side.

When I (Sean) needed money to pay for college, I worked on a house-framing crew. Doing my job meant learning a new set of skills, like sinking a nail with one strike. When I first started framing, it took me three to four swings to sink a nail through a two-by-four. Then one day, a skilled carpenter on the crew saw me swing the hammer. He shook his head with a "poor neophyte" look. "You're doing it all wrong," he insisted. Then, he walked away. (No, he didn't, but isn't that what it feels like Christians do sometimes?) First, he explained, "You generate power by flicking your wrist, not by swinging your whole arm through the shoulder." Then, he modeled the technique for me. Next, he watched me attempt it myself. He offered more helpful feedback, and I tried again. Within minutes I was confidently sinking nails and framing walls with a speed and beauty that would make grown men cry.

Modern church planters have an acronym for that process too. (We seem to have acronyms for everything.) Remember MAWL.?

Model, they watch; *Assist*, you do things together; *Watch*, you watch them practice; *Launch*, they begin making disciples. And once they launch, you remain available for coaching.

Jesus spent three years with His disciples using the MAWL steps. He instructed and modeled. He had them practice up close. He had them baptize people (John 4:2). He had them preach the gospel and heal the sick (Luke 9:2). After watching them, He gathered with His disciples to hear about their experience and give them feedback and encouragement (Mark 6:30; Luke 10:17–20).

For three years, Jesus knew the launch day was coming. He knew a day was coming when He would return to His Father and leave His mission in the hands of His disciples, so He trained them to continue the work He had started by sending them out to practice what He taught.

He modeled, “Come and see.” He demonstrated, “I have come to seek and to save the lost.” He sent the Seventy-Two with instruction and assistance. When they did well, He praised, “Flesh and blood has not revealed that to you, but the Spirit.” When they needed correction, He said, “These things only come out with prayer and fasting.”

He launched in small ways, “Take up your cross and follow Me,” before He launched them to go, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”⁹ Modern disciple-making movement leaders show us that Jesus’ model for disciple making still works today!

At first, disciple-making training feels strange—change usually does. Give it time. Explain to your leaders why these skills are important to develop. Cast vision for what God can do through competent and confident disciples. Then—and most importantly—help them experience Jesus in the harvest. Take them with

*Modern
disciple-making
movement leaders
show us that Jesus’
model for disciple
making still works
today!*

you. Help them experience Jesus at work, answering prayers, changing lives, and using them to make disciples! Everyone wants to experience Jesus in a more real way. Model for them in the harvest. See what fruit God produces!

If you're leading an existing church, changing the discipleship culture may be difficult. It may take more time than you expect. However, if you're planting a church, you have the opportunity to establish a Christ-like disciple-making culture from day one. Disciples obeying and making disciple makers can be in the DNA of the church if that's what you focus on and practice as your church begins to take shape. So don't delay. Incorporate disciple-making training into what you do now as a church. Jesus said, "Follow Me. I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19, ESV). That begins today with your new team. "How is your following this week?" "How is your fishing?"

Disciple-Making Strategy

As discussed in previous chapters, the next step is to get your disciple-making dreams, ideas, and plans out of your head and onto paper. This will not only give you clarity but will also provide something concrete for your team to embrace. Remember, you don't have to start with a blank piece of paper. Take advantage of the Disciple-Making Strategy template and sample in the Tips section at the end of this chapter.

Your written Disciple-Making Strategy will help you think through your passion for reaching the lost and how you will instill this same passion in the launch team, as well as how you'll ultimately form a disciple-making culture in the new church. The Disciple-Making Strategy should also address:

- How you see the disciple-making process in Scripture
- What disciple making will look like in your church

- What disciple making will look like outside the church walls in your local community
- What simple tools you will use to make disciples who make disciple makers
- What training resources you will use to equip disciple makers

“Only a disciple can make a disciple.”

—A. W. Tozer, *Pastor, Author*



Disciple-Making Tools

www.movements.net/411

Free Disciple-Making Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/dm-template

Free Disciple-Making Strategy Sample

www.church-planting.net/dm-sample

T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution by Steve Smith with Ying Kai

www.t4tonline.org/resources/

Becoming a Disciple Maker by Bobby Harrington and Greg Wiens

www.discipleship.org/ebooks/becoming-a-disciple-maker/

Rise and Fall of Movements by Steve Addison

www.movements.net/riseandfall

Crucial Conversations by Dan Grider

www.ignitediscipleship.com/shop/

Disciple Maker Assessment

www.church-multiplication.com/disciplemaker/

Funding the Dream

The pastor had a problem. The elders had to meet. One by one they entered. Perfunctory greetings and “how-’bout-that-weather” conversations served less to connect than to read each leader’s anxiousness. A nervous laughter here. A tapping of fingers on a table there. Crossed arms. Eyes avoiding direct contact. Clearly, the decision facing these men was rare—not once in a hundred years does a group face such a consequential moment.

The lead pastor walks in as a hush waves through the room. “It has been reported to me,” he begins, “on good authority that,” he coughs nervously then continues, “everyone remembers how long we worked on cost-projections for our program. It turns out that our estimations were wrong. Embarrassingly wrong.”

“To be clear, our cost projections were accurate. Our income projections were grossly erroneous. Our project managers today informed me that the people are bringing more than is needed for the construction of the work the Lord commanded to be done.”

“Therefore, today I released this edict: ‘Let no man or woman make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.’”

Wouldn’t you love to have that problem? That, of course, is a very loose version of Moses’s experience recorded in Exodus 36.

Show of hands for all who want Moses’s problem? *People, you’re too generous! No! Really! I mean it! Quit giving so generously! Stop!*

No single issue vexes church leaders more over the life of a church than financial matters. On one extreme, we worry about paying staff and keeping the doors open. On the other, we stress because our dreams exceed our finances to fund the dreams.

No single issue vexes church leaders more over the life of a church than financial matters.

Thank the Lord for Moses's example. Meditate on this question: Why did people give so much that Moses had to tell them to stop giving? As always, don't

look for a silver bullet. First, God's blessing was on Moses. (God funds *His* visions, not ours.) Second, Moses was a trusted leader. (First year pastors don't have the credibility they will have after forty years of ministry in one place.) Now, you meditate. What is God teaching you?

Provision for the Vision

One of the greatest challenges in starting a new church is funding. According to Bloomberg, eight out of ten businesses fail within eighteen months. Only twenty percent make it! Why? For over thirty years the top reasons have not changed. What reason for failure consistently tops the list? Undercapitalization. Or, in church-planting words: they didn't have enough money to fund the plan.

While new churches seem to have a better success rate, they have the same struggles as new businesses. Yes, God provides, but He doesn't provide for foolishness. He doesn't promise to provide if we don't take responsibility for ourselves. He doesn't bless our lack of character. He doesn't bless when the vision is our vision and not His vision. He doesn't promise to bless if we hide the vision under a basket and fail to let it shine.

“But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.”

—Luke 12:31–32

The Bible could not be more clear: God provides. When His people obey first things first, He delights to provide! God’s provision follows God’s vision. Instant application: whenever finances are stressed, remember, “God’s provision follows God’s vision.” Don’t blame people. Take responsibility. *Am I following God’s vision? Am I communicating God’s vision clearly and compellingly? Am I looking to people for the solution, or will I trust that God delights to provide the kingdom if I will seek His kingdom first?* Churches never have provision problems. Often, they have vision problems.

Remember this when raising money for your launch. Money follows vision. People don’t give to needs; they give to a compelling vision. Needs don’t stir the spirit. Paying the maintenance bills doesn’t raise vision. Kingdom-first stuff does! The gospel does! Lives changed by Jesus does! Being the light of the world in the community does. While some donors may desire to give to a particular need (e.g., toys for the nursery), most are willing to give if they are confident that your church will make a difference. A clear, compelling, prayer-given vision is the first step to successfully funding the mission of your church.

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.”

—Helen Keller, Author, Lecturer

Fundraising Strategy

After you’re able to clearly and confidently cast the vision God’s given you for this new church, it’s time to develop a written fund-

raising strategy that will help you raise the resources necessary to pursue that vision. Budgeting and fundraising can be two of the most daunting tasks church planters face. This doesn't have to be the case. Fundraising will always present challenges. It's intimidating. It's awkward. There never seems to be enough money to go around. But you can overcome many of those obstacles with the help of an effective strategy.

If you cringe at the idea of raising funds, understand that fundraising doesn't end after a church launches. The lead pastor of the church will always be charged with casting vision and raising the funds needed to help the church accomplish its mission. Don't look at fundraising as just a season. Look at it as an opportunity to grow in a leadership skill that you'll exercise for as long as you're in ministry.

As with the other strategies we've discussed so far in this book, we don't want you to start with a blank piece of paper when you sit down to hammer out how you'll fundraise for the new church. Take advantage of the free Fundraising Strategy template linked in the Tips section at the end of this chapter.

*“Without execution, vision is just another
word for hallucination.”*
—Mark V. Hurd, CEO

Fundraising Partners

When presented with the task of fundraising, church planters make a huge mistake when all they focus on is money. As Bill Dillon points out in *People Raising*, fundraising isn't just about raising capital, it's about helping people grow.¹⁰ Fundraising is discipleship, or at least a component of it.

Imagine how different your attitude would be toward fundraising if you weren't focused on raising a specific amount of money, but instead were focused on helping people take next steps in their relationship with Jesus and His kingdom? What if rather than pursuing a potential donor just to get them to write a check, you instead saw every meeting as a discipleship opportunity? Recall the Discipleship.org definition of a disciple in Chapter 5 as "a person who is following Christ, being changed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ."¹¹ Asking people to support your new church is inviting them to take part in Christ's mission.

Imagine how different your attitude would be toward fundraising if you weren't focused on raising a specific amount of money, but instead were focused on helping people take next steps in their relationship with Jesus and His kingdom?

Think about it. The real asset here isn't the money; it's the person. It's about their personal walk with Christ. It's about inspiring them be a faithful steward of the resources God has entrusted to them. It's about helping them grasp a long-term kingdom perspective.

Think about all the people you know who love you but aren't connected with a local church. How many of them are putting God first in their finances? Probably not many. Research groups show that, on average, Americans give between two and four percent of their income to charity every year.¹² We tell you this to highlight the opportunity that exists to help people grow in their imitation of Jesus. It's wonderful that people are giving to charity, but how many people are missing out on the blessing that comes by putting God first in their finances? Too many! As a church plant-

er who's been entrusted with a vision for a new church, approach this as an opportunity to help people experience the joy of giving.

If we really believed Jesus when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), we'd never apologize during offering time or when making a fundraising pitch. We'd jump at the opportunity to invite people to contribute financially to ministries like new church plants that yield eternal dividends.

When I (Sean) was planting a church, I cultivated a relationship with the guy who lived in the apartment above mine. As I got to know him, I found out he was Jewish and wasn't particularly interested in our church, but he was interested in giving to our church. That was actually the first question he had for me when I told him I was starting a church. He asked, "Can I make a donation to the church?"

When he said that, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. This was a guy who wasn't a Christian and yet wanted to contribute to our church—without me even asking him. I suspect it was for tax purposes, but still, I figured a guy who needs to give more in order to get a bigger tax break would know plenty of charities to support. I share this story because it reminds me of the opportunity we have to help people take next steps in their relationship with God.

I wish I could say this young man ended up giving millions of dollars to our church and, more importantly, giving his life to Christ, but I can't say that happened. What I can say is there are many people we know who are looking for an opportunity to give to a good cause. Sometimes they are the people we would least expect to give to a church. They may not even be believers yet, but imagine what might happen in them if they give to your church and hear about the lives changed, the marriages restored, and the communities transformed as a result of your ministry?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." By inviting people to contribute to

your ministry, you're inviting them to be a part of your church. While the majority of your support will come from believers, don't be afraid to ask nonbelieving friends and relatives to support your ministry. You may be surprised by who accepts your invitation to contribute, and you may be surprised at how God uses that act of giving to transform their heart.

One church planter who recently graduated from our residency program is in fundraising mode as of this writing. The other day he shared his progress with us and shared how his first two financial supporters are both non-Christians. One was a guy he mixed drinks for while serving as a bartender, and the other is his former landlord. For this church planter it was probably tempting to neglect these individuals and focus on raising support from committed Christians, but those two were who God placed in his life, so he built a relationship with them and shared his vision with them. You never know what God is up to in peoples' lives. Sharing your vision with friends and family members and asking them to be a part of it might be one way God opens their hearts up to Him. You never know, so at least ask and give them the opportunity to listen and respond.

Starting Point

So where do we start in the fundraising process? Step one is to sit down with your spouse. What will you give? Yes, start with yourself. Remind yourself how when collecting resources to build the temple, joy filled the people of God. First Chronicles 29:9 gives one reason why: "Then the people rejoiced because of their leaders' willingness to give, for they had given to the Lord wholeheartedly. King David also rejoiced greatly." Financing the dream begins with trust. Trust begins with the integrity of the leader. That does not mean the leader's *amount given* must exceed everyone else's. It

does mean, however, that the leader's *sacrifice* must be exceeded by no one.

Next, write down the names of everyone you've known since kindergarten. Okay, maybe that's exaggerating a bit. But not much! Fundraising begins with trust. Trust begins with the people who trust the leader most. Brainstorm your list of every potential partner. Think about every person you've had a positive relationship with (both past and present): friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, marketplace jobs, ministry connections and organizations. Don't forget to include your spouse's connections. Include *everybody*. Don't say "no" for someone by excluding them from your list. Then build your fundraising contact list and use it to track progress (see the Fundraising Worksheet Template in the Tips section at the end of this chapter).

Remember: Inviting people to participate in what God is doing in you is not asking for a hand-out. You are not asking for a donation to you. While it may feel personal, your goal is not to wrestle money out of people's pockets to help you accomplish your dreams (if it is, be honest with yourself and repent!). Jesus has invited you to build His church in this place with this vision. If people listen to Jesus' voice and believe Jesus is leading them to participate financially, that is wonderful. They need to respond to Jesus' voice—not yours. You aren't worthy of their support; only Jesus is. If they decide not to contribute, that's okay. Entrust that to God, as well! When we trust God to provide for His vision, that takes a lot of pressure off of you feeling the need to force things to happen.

*You aren't
worthy of their
support; only
Jesus is.*

Partner Expectations

In years past, donors were generally satisfied with the act of giving alone. But today's donors (especially high-capacity donors) are more apt to take a "stakeholder" view. They don't just see themselves as supporters, but as partners, which is a great thing. You'll just need to set clear expectations with these donors for how your partnership will work.

Clear expectations encourage open communication, which ultimately leads to financial supporter buy-in and sustainability. Agreeing on expectations instills accountability and forms a strong foundation of trust. Keep in mind that the greater the commitment, the more specific those expectations should be. For example, a church providing a \$25,000 financial commitment may be expecting a seat on your Management Team (AKA Partnership Team, Leadership Council, Oversight Board, etc.) as a committed stakeholder.

Having clear expectations for when (and how) you will receive donations is crucial for budgeting purposes. There is a huge difference between \$1,000 per month for twenty-five months and a single \$25,000 check written today. Knowing when money will be flowing in will help you manage cash flow. This is particularly important in the pre-launch phase when you're depending on outside support and beginning to purchase startup equipment.

Spend some time writing down what you expect from your donors (the who, what, when, where, and how). More importantly, write down what you envision your financial supporters will want from you. Then have these written expectations available to showcase during your fundraising conversations.

"Donor loyalty is not about the donor being loyal to you, it is you being loyal to the donor."
—Harvey McKinnon, Author, *Fundraising Expert*

Preliminary Budget

Ah yes, creating the detailed budget in a spreadsheet—perhaps *the* most exhilarating moment in the life of the church planter.

Budgeting and fundraising can be two of the most unnerving things planters face. But that doesn't have to be the case. In simple terms, your overall goal with finances is to determine what God is calling you to do (budgeting) and to discover how God will provide for that calling (fundraising).

We encourage church planters to create a preliminary budget for two main purposes. First, it gives you an understanding of how much money you'll need to raise in order to support the vision of the church. Second, it allows you to show potential partners how their money will be spent if they contribute financially to the church plant. The typical church plant budget should include the following major expense categories:

1. Staffing
2. Evangelism (Marketing and Outreach efforts)
3. Equipment
4. Facilities and Operations

Staffing: How much you will spend on staffing depends on if you'll have paid staff, how many staff members will be hired, how much they will be paid, when they will be hired, and whether they are expected to raise outside support. If you're a bi-vocational planter, staffing expenses may be \$0. In a multi-staff church plant, staffing expenses could be well over \$100,000 per year.

Plan for one staff member per one hundred people in average weekend attendance. You can minimize staffing expenses by staggering the hiring of staff members. For example, the lead planter may come on nine months before opening day, a second staff member four months before, and a third at opening day.

Marketing and Outreach: “Marketing” is a dirty word in some circles because of what it connotes from the business world. For our purposes, marketing is another name for communicating vision. If you have a name, you market. If you have a building, you market. If you have a website, you market. Everyone markets. Some churches just market proactively.

We teach church planters that the most practical purpose of church marketing is to help start spiritual conversations. While percentages have decreased in recent years, most unchurched people still say they would be open to attending a church service if invited by a friend. The value of any marketing for the church (whether the church’s name, logo, slogan, or sign) is not to get people to simply walk into a service. The better strategy is to use marketing to create opportunities for your disciple makers to start conversations about your church. As one preacher said, “Introduce them to the Bride of Christ so they will come to know the Groom.”

Too many planters think a “big splash” marketing campaign, just prior to launch, will give them all the punch they need, but that’s just not the case. A new church is ready for a direct mail campaign only *after* establishing broad name recognition in the community. Like those expensive equipment expenditures, total marketing and outreach costs can reach \$80,000 or more. Many churches will spend at least \$10,000 to \$15,000 on initial marketing and outreach. How much you spend will be determined by your strategy (i.e. the more you depend on disciple makers making disciple makers, the less will need to be spent, and the more leg work you are willing to do, the less you will have to pay others).

Make sure whatever marketing and outreach you do as a church leverages your team and helps them to engage people in spiritual conversations. If you invest money in a direct mail campaign, make sure your launch team members are aware of when the postcards will be hitting local mailboxes. Have your

team pray over the postcards before they're mailed. Train your team to ask their neighbors about the postcards once they've arrived in their neighborhood. Train them to share the elevator pitch of the vision for your church and their thirty-second testimony in the moment they're having that conversation. Don't rely on marketing and outreach events to invite people to your church. Use them as an opportunity to help your launch team spread the news about the church and share what God has done in their lives.

Equipment: Most new churches have a number of one-time expenses for equipment purchases. These include, but are not limited to: a sound system, lighting, projectors, storage cabinets, children's supplies, and a trailer. Depending on the quality and size, total equipment costs can also reach \$80,000 or more. Unlike staffing expenses, which are ongoing, most equipment purchases are one-time expenditures.

When buying equipment for the church, get help. Whether you work with a vendor that specializes in portable church equipment or you recruit teammates to help, buying church equipment should not be something a church planter invests large amounts of time and energy into.

If you don't go with an equipment package vendor, give your ministry team leaders a budget and allow them to create a list of needs. Review their lists. Make sure the lists stay within the budget and they aren't forgetting critical items. Then, as long as the lists meet your approval, allow those ministry team leaders to hunt down and acquire the equipment themselves. Encourage them to get as much donated as possible, whether from individuals, churches, or companies looking for a tax write-off.

(As of this writing, however, individual churches usually have a difficult time beating the quality of packaged equipment. As a church-planting church, we have tried each option. Our conclu-

sion as of 2020 is that portable church vendors offer quality at a fair cost.)

Facilities and Operations: Most new churches cannot afford, nor should they purchase, a permanent gathering space. There are two reasons for this. First, too many churches make the mistake of building a facility that limits growth and vision. The old axiom still stands: churches build

Most church buildings make unchurched people feel like outsiders.

the shoe that tells the foot how large it can grow. Second, most church buildings work at cross purposes with the church's vision. The primary reason to start a new church is evangelism: there is no more effective means known to man to reach lost people than starting new churches. Most church buildings make unchurched people feel like outsiders. On the other hand, churches gathering in public spaces come together on neutral territory. If a church meets in a school, for instance, everyone is an insider. Even though newcomers may be walking into your services for the first time, as a taxpayer they own that public school building. Not only that, but their kids or their neighbors' kids use that building, so there is a familiarity that they would never have in your church building. Similar parallels can be drawn to other public buildings.

To start, for churches that rent schools, movie theatres, community centers, night clubs, hotel conference rooms, etc. to host their corporate worship gatherings, Sunday rental costs typically range from \$200 to \$1,200 per week. Often, you'll pay per Sunday, not per month, so budget for the 5th Sunday that comes up every quarter. If you're already paying \$1,000 a week in rent, an extra \$1,000 surprise isn't fun. However, what we are sharing is not a hard and fast rule. Pray and ask for your needs. "You have not because you ask not" (James 4:2-3). You would be surprised at

the number of churches God has blessed with rental arrangements that only God could have provided!

Additional facility costs may include rented office space. Prior to launching regular in-person worship gatherings, facility costs will be much lower. However, as the season of COVID-19 taught many companies and organizations, expensive office space may not be as needed as experts once assumed. Everyone seems to be working out of their homes today. You can always move forward later to get office space. You might consider asking staff to work out of their homes, and then you can be creative about finding space for other staff and church meetings.

Ongoing administration and operations costs include ministry expenses, printing, copying, office supplies, liability insurance, phones, etc. Expect operations to be approximately ten percent of the total budget.

*“A budget is telling your money where to go
instead of wondering where it went.”*

—Dave Ramsey, Radio Show Host, Author, Speaker

Your Church Budget

Some good advice from Dale: get help developing the budget! One of the best decisions Brett made leading New Life was that he would be very careful with church finances. Brett never counted the offering and has always had others determine his salary.

Most church planters are not financial geniuses! *Praise God!* That means you get to focus on other things and allow God to provide others, who are more competent in that area, to play an important role on the team!

Chances are someone on your launch team has expertise in creating business budgets. Don't delegate this task and then forget

about it though. Form a team. Invite them to develop a budget with you. The church planter's role is to make sure that *the vision* drives the budget—not just money.

The church planter's role is to make sure that the vision drives the budget—not just money.

One of my (Brett's) favorite stories from the early years of New Life brings us back to creating our first official budget. For the first year, New Life's budget was set by our founding organization. That budget was \$75,000. (Yes, you read that right. \$75,000). Kevin O'Conner, the smartest financial guy in the church, joined our budget team. (We called it a "spending plan," because it was about vision for how to spend, not a budget for control. Weird things matter sometimes when we're young.) Since he worked with money all day every day, we expected Kevin to give us a voice of financial responsibility. The spending plan we created that year increased our budget from \$75,000 to \$125,000! Inside, I gulped. I thought, *That's a 200 percent increase over last year's budget!* (I know it's less than 200 percent, but I'm not good at math, which is why I need math people on my team too!) Before I could express my fears though, Kevin O'Conner spoke. *Here it comes! The voice of moderation*, I thought.

Kevin's words, though, were: "I'm just wondering . . . where is the vision?" (And that is a direct quote. I cannot remember my fourth child's name most of the time, but I will remember that until I can't remember my own name.) "Where is the vision?"

Who are your financially wise people? Those who are in love with God enough to challenge your vision? That team—and teams like that—made New Life God's church.

Now, you have to know your budget numbers and be comfortable answering financial questions from prospective donors and board overseers, so don't just hand over the reins and wash your

hands of it. The bottom line is: don't create a budget all by yourself. For that matter, if you want the church to be healthy, don't do anything on your own! Get help. And accept your responsibility to be informed and knowledgeable.

Donor Communications

In a dream, an invisible hand reaches down to you from the sky. "I give you two choices," the freaky phalanges offer. "You can either recruit a new, large group of financial supporters every year, or you can retain forty percent of your first-time donors and only need to recruit the remaining sixty percent." Who wouldn't take offer number two?

Donor retention is all the rage these days in fundraising circles. Experts report that typically organizations lose between sixty and seventy-five percent of their first-time donors every year. The primary way to beat those odds: communication and gratitude.

What is your financial supporter building and communication strategy? How can you build donors into partners? The right answers are easy to talk about, but a challenge to do well.

First, be personal. People give to people. Be friendly. Cast vision, but don't be a salesperson. Most people can spot a phony from far away. People don't want colorful descriptions of what might be. They want to see the soil turned, the seeds planted, and the vegetation beginning to fight through the dirt.

Give them your best stories, sure, but be real. Don't toot your own horn. Tell stories of God at work. Let people tell their stories of how they have seen God at work. Give God the credit. Jesus promised that if we lift Him up, He will draw people to Him. After all, Godly people want to see God at work—not you

Being personal applies not only to your message but to your method as well. The more personal the contact, the effective it will be. As our friend and fundraising coach Phil Ling famously says,

“The largest gifts come from the conversations in the smallest rooms.” That thought is fundraising gold.

When you raise funds, repeat to yourself fifty times before going to bed every night: The more personal you can make your fundraising pitch, the greater the likelihood you’ll have of gaining a financial partner. How would you respond to an impersonal appeal from someone you don’t

“The largest gifts come from the conversations in the smallest rooms.”

know? How would you respond to a general announcement from the pulpit on Sunday morning saying, “We need more teachers. If you are interested in teaching first grade Bible school, please contact the church office this week”? On the other hand, how might you respond to an appeal in a small group of six, being personally invited by a friend? How might you respond if you sat across the table, one-on-one? Smaller rooms communicate seriousness and provide better opportunities for serious questions to be answered. Large gifts. Small rooms.

Many church planters drunk on their vision make the mistake of thinking people will be compelled to give to their church plant if they receive a support letter in the mail or in response to a fundraising appeal made in a sermon to a large group of people. Support letters and stage announcements are first points of contact for supporters. Fundraising is trust-raising, and impersonal contacts serve merely to initiate a courtship. They set you up for a second “ask.”

The second “ask” is to join you for a personal, face-to-face conversation. That’s when you share your calling and vision and lay out how the potential donor can partner with you. In that moment bring that vision to life!

Perhaps the worst thing you can do in the fundraising process is to send out that initial support request and then go silent. Some

potential donors will wait to see if you are serious before making a commitment. Don't assume a potential donor received your initial communication. Follow up with them and tell them you'd appreciate the opportunity to share your vision with them. Then schedule a time to make that happen.

Once you've compiled a list of every possible partner, rack and stack your list: put the ones you believe are the most likely to give at the top of the list and the ones least likely to give toward the bottom. Then, starting at the top, contact everyone on this list asking them to meet with you to hear what God has been doing in your life recently. Make the invitation clear, with something like: "We believe God has called us to start a church to reach people in Bedrock. I have appreciated your friendship and support through

Your primary goal is to cast the vision and to build a team of supporters.

the years. I want a chance to share with you the vision of the church, to answer your questions, and to ask for your prayerful support." Do not deceive, and listen to your conscience. Jesus builds the church. You don't know how He is going to build it or whom He is going to use to build it. However, to find out whom He is calling to partner with you, your responsibility is to spread the seed. When you meet with people, your primary goal is not financial. Your primary goal is to cast the vision and to build a team of supporters. Some will say, "I want to be on your prayer team!" Others will say, "We've already decided to give your work \$50 a month." Some, maybe those you least expect, may say, "I want to join your launch team!"

Few people have had greater influence in forming the identity of New Life Christian Church (NLCC) than Pat and Kim Ferguson. Pat is a church planting rock star. He is currently NLCC's executive pastor. Since NLCC began, Pat has worn almost every hat on staff. However, six months before New Life started, Pat

asked me (Brett) if we could talk about the new church. Since Pat's parents had practically adopted me like a little stray puppy, I figured Pat was just being a good adopted brother. By the end of the conversation, Pat said, "I'd like to be part of the church plant." I objected. My commitment was to start a church without the benefits of pirating members from other churches. Pat insisted. Today, no one can imagine Pat not being central to New Life's ministry.

Fundraising is trust-raising. Share God's vision. Appeal for people to join you in pursuing God's vision with you in some way. If it's financial, great. If not, great. Trust God for the finances. Your responsibility is to broadcast the vision so those whom God has already prepared to call will hear!

As you reach out to potential financial partners to share about your vision, remember the goal is a face-to-face conversation with them. That's why we suggest having someone else schedule these appointments for you. If you reach out to people by phone, asking them for an opportunity to share what God is doing in your life, how do you think many will respond? They'll ask, "Why can't you share with me right now?" While sharing over the phone is better than nothing, it's not ideal. Avoid the awkward conversation in which you insist on meeting in person by having someone else, like a spouse, set these appointments up for you.

Another solution is to text people an invitation to such a conversation. Let them know you want to personally share with them the next steps God is leading you to take, and you would like to do that in person. Then ask them when they'd be free for a meeting, and make it happen.

If you can't meet a potential partner in person, use Zoom or some other video conferencing software to share your vision with them. It's not as good as meeting face-to-face, but it's more effective than a phone call. A video call helps people sense your passion

for your vision as they see it in your facial expression and body language. Phone calls and letters don't communicate the same level of enthusiasm that a face-to-face conversation can deliver. They won't infect people with your passion and vision like an in-person conversation can.

For the church planters who have potential supporters spread across the country, meeting in person with everyone is almost impossible. If that's your situation, we encourage you to set up opportunities where you can meet with small groups of potential partners in targeted geographical locations. For instance, if you served at a church in Chicago and have a large contingent of potential supporters there, host a dessert night in that area. Ask a potential supporter to host the event in their home and then invite all your friends from that area to the event. Ask your friends to invite anyone they think might be interested in hearing about this new church.

At this meeting, share your vision. Explain to those gathered how they can support you, and let people know you'd enjoy answering their questions about the project. Then mix and mingle and catch up with people you haven't seen in a while. Introduce yourself to people you've never met before. Make yourself available to answer questions they may have about the church plant. Thank everyone for coming, and make sure you express how excited you are that they are considering being on your team.

At an event like this, you'll want to make sure everyone who has heard your vision has a clear next step to take. Invite them to take your Launch Vision (see the template in the Tips section) home and to pray for a week about how they might support the new church. After a week, reach out to them and ask, "How do you believe God is prompting you?" Whatever next steps you give them, make sure they are clear. What are you expecting them to do, and what should they expect from you? Surprises because of

incompetency or lack of attention to detail erode trust. Surprises of that sort tend to be fatal to fundraising.

Also understand that just because someone says “no” to supporting you doesn’t mean they’ll always say “no.” Their “no” may be because of their personal financial problems, or because they don’t yet trust you. It could turn into a “yes” down the road if you ask again later. Be persistent. You do not know who has the financial resources to support you. Big houses and fancy cars are not wealth-indicators. I played golf with an elderly man who drove an old car, who slowed down every group by spending too much time looking for lost golf balls, and lived in a house with no cable and no air conditioning. However, over breakfast he and his banker discussed \$200,000 of new income that he needed to invest!

*You do not know
who has the
financial resources
to support you.*

Do not presume to know what financial resources people and churches may have to support you. So pray, and share the vision clearly. Help people see what God is doing and what God is calling you to do. Then, give a clear invitation to partner with you in the mission, with options that include praying daily for the church and financially supporting the church. You are not entitled to the money God has entrusted to others; however, you are responsible to cast vision and to see if He wants them to partner with the work He is doing through you!

When people do commit to supporting you, make sure they understand how to send the money in. Don’t assume they know this. Make sure the giving process is simple and trustworthy. Don’t ask supporters to send checks to your home. Encourage them to give online. If they’d rather give through checks, have them send those to a P.O. Box for your church. (This P.O. Box will come in handy for legal paperwork as well.)

If you're not at the stage where you're ready to open a bank account for the church yet, find a supporting church or church-planting organization to collect donations for you. They will collect gifts people send in that are earmarked to you. Then, once you establish a bank account, they can transfer those funds to you.

As you raise funds, make sure you get in the habit of keeping in touch with your supporters. Reach out to them to see how they're doing and pray over any prayer requests they have. Consider adding them to your prayer team, or at least sending them the updates you are sending to your prayer team. That way they can see the difference their investment is making in the kingdom.

Treat your financial supporters as teammates. Don't just take their money and forget about them. Make sure to thank them for their contributions on a regular basis. Allow them to celebrate with you when people come to faith and when you hit major milestones as a church.

Your relationships with financial supporters are no less important than your community networking relationships. Plan on spending about one full workday each month managing your fundraising efforts. Put that day on your calendar and protect it. If you don't, the tyranny of the urgent will eat up that time.

In our digital age, a handwritten note can go a long way to express your appreciation to your financial supporters. You may not have time to write to everyone, but set a goal for yourself of how many notes you want to write each month and then work down your supporter list. Work at a pace that keeps you on track for handwriting a personal note to every supporter by the end of the year. Your notes will express your appreciation for their partnership.

Paul did this in his letter to the Philippians. In addition to expressing his gratitude for the support he received from the church

in Philippi, he also encouraged them to grow in their imitation of God. Paul used his letter to the Philippians not just as an opportunity to thank his supporters and update them on his ministry, he also used it as a discipleship opportunity. View your communication with donors in a similar light. Don't just thank them for their support; inspire them through the testimonies you share of God's faithfulness, and encourage them to take next steps in their own walk with Jesus as well.

Donor Management System

You'll also want to keep donors updated as to how much they've contributed year-to-date. We recommend you send giving statements to your supporters, along with your updates, at least once a quarter. That way donors can track how much they've given and make sure they're on pace to contribute the amount they've committed to. This may also encourage some supporters to give a year-end gift if they're looking for a tax deduction.

This is why early in the fundraising process you need to set up a secure and reliable donation receipt process. The quick and easy solution for this is to raise funds through another organization as was mentioned before. This isn't uncommon. Often church planting groups or sending churches will handle the donor management process until the church plant is close to launching. However, if that's not an option, you'll have to process and track everything in-house.

With the assistance of church management software systems, processing and tracking donations is fairly simple. There are now literally dozens of church management software programs that provide a church database solution but also include online giving and donor management tools. Our free Fundraising Worksheet (see below) will get you started with tracking donations, but the automated software tools offered by these software systems will

give you a sustainable method for tracking giving at your church for the long haul.

We know fundraising can be intimidating. Asking people for money can be awkward and uncomfortable, so don't do it. Instead, share what God is doing through your church plant and invite them to join Him. People are not your Provider. God is. Look to God for vision and provision. Pray. Share His work in you. Then, trust God to work in people. Trust those you are recruiting to wrestle with God. It may surprise you how God really does build the church.

Remember, fundraising for a church plant is a discipleship opportunity. You are inviting people to take a next step of obedience in their faith. Who knows where they are in their relationship with God and their money? Perhaps they've never given to kingdom work before. You could open the door for them. Perhaps their money is their god, and you could be the catalyst to break their chains. Perhaps you will be the reason they begin to start storing for themselves treasure in heaven instead of investing in that which is temporary and fleeting.

Remember, fundraising for a church plant is a discipleship opportunity.

View fundraising as a discipleship opportunity. When you do, the process will be much more spiritual and a little less intimidating.

“Stewardship at its best engages donors with the impact and outcomes of their investments of time, wisdom, expertise, connections, and money.”
—Karen Osborne, Author, Motivational Speaker



Free Fundraising Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/fundraising-strategy

Free Fundraising Worksheet Template

www.church-planting.net/fundraising-worksheet

Free Launch Vision Template (AKA Vision Booklet, Church Plant Prospectus)

www.church-planting.net/launch-vision

Free Church Plant Budget Template

www.church-planting.net/budget-template

People Raising: A Practical Guide to Raising Funds by Bill Dillon

www.peopleraising.com

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CHAPTER 7

Finding Leaders in the Harvest

“Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.”
—Warren Bennis, *Organizational Consultant*

Walk with us one more time through the door that opens to John 4. Jesus and His disciples walk the dirty paths through the hill country of Samaria, making their way home to the north shores of the sea of Galilee. Historically, most Jewish hikers avoided this region filled with spiritual scallywags, but not Jesus. Watch the scene unfold as our hikers cautiously enter town. “Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water” (John 4:6–7).

How many disciple makers do you know who would make engaging with this woman core to their disciple-multiplication strategy? Yet Jesus listens. Jesus teaches. Jesus shares His Good News. And the unlikeliest of disciple makers responds to His vision, immediately bringing others to Jesus!

Next, step into the minds of Jesus’ disciples. At that well where that ostracized woman sat, in that spiritually confused town of Sychar, in that historically condemned region of Samaria, Jesus motions at those hills and says, “Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest’? Listen to what I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they

are ready for harvest” (John 4:35). As He told the Seventy-Two, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

As you stand in the brains of these disciples, what thoughts do you see whizzing by? *What? Samaritans, workers for Jesus? Pray for women to work God’s fields? This region is filled with spiritual losers! They’ve been rejected by God for centuries! The harvest is ripe? Pray for workers . . . from here . . . to work the harvest? Jesus, did you eat some bad weeds this morning?*

Yet this was Jesus’ strategy. Please, don’t race past this thought too quickly. Pause. Mentally chew on it. Jesus did not go to Samaria simply because He wanted to create a great story with a rejected woman. He was casting vision. He created a living metaphor. He throws down the challenge for every generation: What do you see in Samaria? Do you see losers to be overlooked, or do you see the best reproducing disciples yet to be reached?

Emblazon Jesus’ Samaritan metaphor on your mind. The Samaritan vision is the church leader’s essential vision. Who are your leaders? Where will you find your best leaders? In the harvest. And the harvest is plentiful. They are broken, and they are called by God. Most are unimpressive—just like the rest of us—yet God has prepared work ahead of time that they must do. Your best disciple makers are in the harvest. Your mission is to work the Samaritan fields to find them.

Your best disciple makers are in the harvest.

As we mentioned in Chapter 5, Jesus didn’t pick typical, qualified leaders to entrust His church to. Instead, He chose ordinary people and developed them to be world-changers. The same method Jesus used to make disciple makers, raise up leaders, and plant reproducing churches is still His blueprint for us today.

“Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to high sights, the raising of a person’s performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”
—Peter Drucker, *Management Consultant*

Church-Planting Leadership 101

Can you imagine beginning your ministry, looking around you, and seeing no followers, no disciples, no leaders? You think, *Yes, in fact, I can. I’m a church planter!* Aren’t you thankful Jesus was not sent by a synagogue with fifty rock star spiritual leaders? As always, He shows us the way! The next time you are discouraged and find yourself thinking, *Where are we going to find enough workers to conquer this challenge*, remember Jesus! He started His ministry from scratch too. Just like you, He had to pray, teach, preach, and reach out to the “least of these.” He healed and performed various miracles, demonstrating His authority and capturing people’s attention. Crowds of people flocked to hear Him. The common people followed gladly.

Through teaching and serving, Jesus drew multitudes. Yet, after His resurrection, only 120 disciples committed to His cause—10,000 listened on the hills of Galilee, but only a few dozen followed in the shadow of the cross.

Don’t buy the sucker’s conclusion that this means preaching and teaching to large crowds is largely a waste of time, while developing disciples in small groups is all that matters. That’s popular and sloppy logic. More than anyone, Jesus understood the preciousness of every moment. Consider all the time He spent sowing seeds of the Good News to large crowds!

Take a step back into Samaria. At one point, James and John told Jesus, “These people are wicked! Why not give them a Sodom

and Gomorrah light show?!” Instead, Jesus continued to reach out to Samaritans. Then, in Acts 8, we read:

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds were all paying attention to what Philip said, as they listened and saw the signs he was performing. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5–8)

If Jesus had incinerated the Samaritans, how receptive do you think they would have been when Philip preached Jesus? How many times did Samaritan villages reject Jesus in His time, and yet Jesus continued to pursue them? By extension, how many multitudes heard Jesus preach, but never responded until Acts 2? Rather than depreciating the value of preaching, teaching, and serving, perhaps Jesus was smart enough to know that often the ground has to be prepared long before the soil produces spiritual fruit.

As a church planter, never forget Jesus’ example. When you announce that you’re planting a church, many will express interest.

*So celebrate
the crowd, but
count the
committed.*

Crowds may even initially flock to you. However, there is a difference between an interested crowd and a committed congregation. If twenty percent commit to becoming pillar people, consider yourself normal. If another thirty percent are seriously curious but need more time to build trust and more information to clarify commitment to vision, consider yourself textbook. Perhaps this is one reason Jesus left us His example to follow. Large crowds may look impressive, but turning crowds into the committed is hard work. So celebrate the crowd, but count the

committed. Sow the seed broadly; you don't know who the fourth-soil disciples are in the crowd. But don't take it personally when crowds walk away.

As you build the team of disciple makers that will plant with you, filter your ministry through Jesus' example. He drew crowds of thousands, and yet he chose to live with a small community that included the Twelve and a smattering of older women who paid the bills! After the resurrection, 120 individuals were still devoted. As a church planter, what would it look like to know your team as Jesus knew His? Who are the initial adopters, like Peter? Who are your thinkers and challengers, like Thomas? Who are your passionate leaders, like James and John? Who is willing to serve while others get more attention, like Thaddaeus (write a book, Thad!)? Who is vulnerable to betray you? You need to have your eyes wide open to recognize the differences among the fringe, the crowd, and the committed, and you also need to know each team member well so you can love and develop each one according to their bents.

Developing your core means taking them to the "upper room" with you. What is the upper room exactly? Just as Jesus had 120 loyal disciples praying in the upper room waiting for His next cue in Acts 1:15, so you will need to cultivate a group of people who are sold out for the vision and mission God has laid on you. These people aren't just interested in the idea of the new church. They have the heart of God. They see the world through His eyes. Like Jesus, they weep for lost people. Thus they are ready to sacrifice to complete the work to which God has called you in Christ Jesus. This is not just a nice idea for them. This is not just a way to pursue a churchy-narcissistic experience. This is a calling worth dying for.

Lead with Your Vision

Like in Jesus' ministry, there will be people who hear about your new church and run to it like this year's version of Disco, Crocs, and skinny jeans. They may even express interest in being involved. Great. And one of your responsibilities as the leader is to challenge people to move from being spectators to living on mission.

When New Life first started, for instance, we wanted to develop a fresh, strong core of disciples. Since God created living things to reproduce after like-kind, we wanted to reach lost people who would come to Christ and then return to the harvest to share the Good News they had discovered. So on one hand, you want to reach lost people. On the other, you are thankful for anyone who will grab an oar and row! That's why we say accept people where they are and move them to where they should go.

When Christians would show interest in joining the church, we had one standard challenge: "We are a new church just getting started. We believe God has called us to reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible. If you want to be part of a church that is serious about reaching lost people, and you want a place where you can serve and build and have an impact that will bless people in fifty years whom you have never met, this is the church for you. However, if you are looking for a church that has most of its ministries already developed, if you are looking for a place that already has a fully developed youth ministry, singles ministry, and women's ministry, for instance, this is probably not the church for you. Want to serve and have impact—great! Looking for a place to be served—you'll probably fit better at another church."

Did we lose people by being so clear about expectations? Probably. Yet we doubt we lost anyone who was listening to God's call to build His vision with us.

Confused? You may think, *Wait! the title of this chapter is "Finding Leaders in the Harvest," but so far it sounds more like, "Good luck finding leaders anywhere!"* Here is the point: We don't find leaders. God calls leaders. We don't choose leaders. Leaders reveal themselves. Embracing that understanding is the beginning of leadership development wisdom.

We don't
choose leaders.
Leaders reveal
themselves.

In the parable of the sower, the seeds are cast liberally on different types of soil. How do you find fourth-soil, reproducing seeds? Watch the seed take root, grow, and produce fruit. How do you find leaders in the harvest? Cast God's vision broadly, communicating clear expectations, giving clear assignments, and watching where the seed takes root and produces fruit.

In some circles, this is called looking for FATS_O people, as mentioned in Chapter 5. *Faithful, Available, Trainable* (which is a step higher than simply being teachable), *Sendable, Obedient* people. How do you find laborers for the harvest in the harvest? Who is faithful, consistent, and dependable? Who says "Yes, I'm here for whatever. I'll do whatever."? Who is willing to be trained to prepare to make disciple makers? Then, who is willing to go and make disciples? Finally, when goals are set and expectations are clear, who actually follows God's call in meeting those goals and expectations?

To be clear, often the difference between qualified disciple makers and nice church attenders is in the "SO" of FATS_O. Most of us are educated beyond our obedience. The greatest void for most church attenders is not the lack of knowing the right things to do; our greatest challenge is to actually "go" and "obey."

Have you considered Jesus' words in Matthew 5:19 lately? "Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the king-

dom of heaven. But whoever *does* and *teaches* these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” That last phrase ought to grab your attention! Raise your hand if you want to be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Me, too! Jesus says, “Here’s the formula for greatness: *do* and *teach others to do*.”

It is not a stretch to hear Jesus saying, “Who are the great leaders you should identify in the kingdom? Who is obeying? Who is teaching others to obey My commands?” That describes the FATSO individuals. The great ones in the kingdom are not content with quietly living out their faith and never teaching anyone else to know and obey Jesus. Neither is greatness defined as someone who teaches the whole city to obey, while he, himself, wallows in hypocritical stagnation. Finding leaders in the harvest begins by realizing that many are called, but few respond. So we look for people who are sendable and obedient. By their actions, they self-select. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, “You’ll recognize them by their fruit.”

Sadly, church planters fall prey to the “rose-colored glasses” syndrome. “How many people have committed to your launch team?” a church planting coach asks. “Fifty!” responds the planter. “Wow! That’s great!”

Launch month arrives. Forty people show up—including kids, two kittens, and a Teddy Bear. Lesson learned: be brutally honest with the facts. It is fine to have curious bystanders. Jesus had Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who apparently hovered in the background for a time. But to grow them and to build the church, you must know the spiritual commitment level of each member of the team.

Anyone reading this who has coached a sport understands this principle. Coach a baseball team of nine-year-olds and a varsity team in the same season. Coach a twelve-year-old who has taken batting practice since he was six and a twelve-year-old who is pick-

ing up a bat for the first time. All need to learn the same fundamentals, but you coach them in completely different ways with completely different expectations. The senior in high school needs to learn plate discipline, how to change his hitting approach based on the count, the inning, the score, the pitcher's tendencies, who is on base and what bag they are on. The six-year-old needs to learn how to grip the bat properly and which way to run after he hits the ball off the tee. Winning coaches know how to assess each player so he can "coach him up."

Winning church planters lead like winning coaches. In Jesus' words, by their fruit you will know them. Observe reality. Coach a fruitful, trainable, sendable, and obedient individual according to their readiness for greater challenges and responsibility. Teach, train, and send a curious bystander according to the fruit of their obedience. To coach every disciple with the same expectations will frustrate both the tee-ball level player and the varsity player with college-level abilities. The lesson here is this: be clear about who is on your team, who is a fan, and how to disciple everyone according to their FATSOS fruitfulness.

Levels of Commitment

As we mentioned in Chapter 3, church planters guzzle vision like runners on Gatorade. They are so infatuated with the vision of "church planting," they get drunk on vision. One side effect of this inebriation is a blurred ability to see clearly, distinguishing between the crowd and the committed, the trustworthy and the dangerous. Filled with so much passion, they can't see that not everyone is as ready to walk on hot coals for the church as they are.

That's why it's helpful for church planters to define what's expected of each disciple—whether leader, launch team member, or fan. Now, let's drill down on this more.



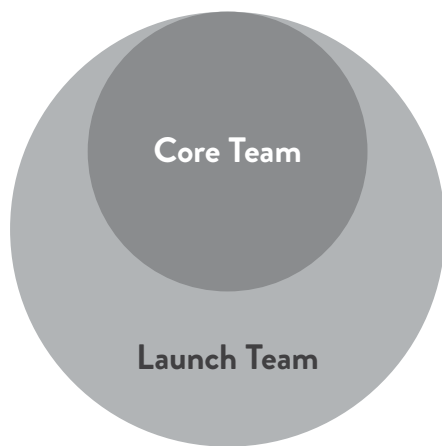
Core Team

Most church plants start by gathering a core. On day one of pre-launch, you and your immediate family may be the core. So you fast and pray, *Jesus, you've told us to pray for workers in the harvest; please answer that prayer.* As rudimentary as that instruction may sound, most ministers are long on fear and short on prayer. Jesus builds His church. Ask Him, *Lord, build Your church! We don't want to do this in our own strength!*

Before New Life got started, our vision out-punted our coverage by a hundred yards. We had a vision for a great worship team. We had two guys who could strum a guitar and one whose voice would melt the heart of every elderly woman (which would have been great if we were called to build a church of elderly women). So we prayed. I specifically remember getting on my knees in my office, putting my face into the new, off-white carpet fibers, and praying, *God, we need a great worship leader. I've looked. I've asked. I'm lost and afraid.* Within a week, God gave me a name: "Call Bernie." I called Bernie. (Bernie was a minister I knew from Baltimore, MD.) On our call, Bernie reminded me of a guy who led worship for a week of church camp when I had been the dean. He became our worship leader. God answers prayers to build a core.

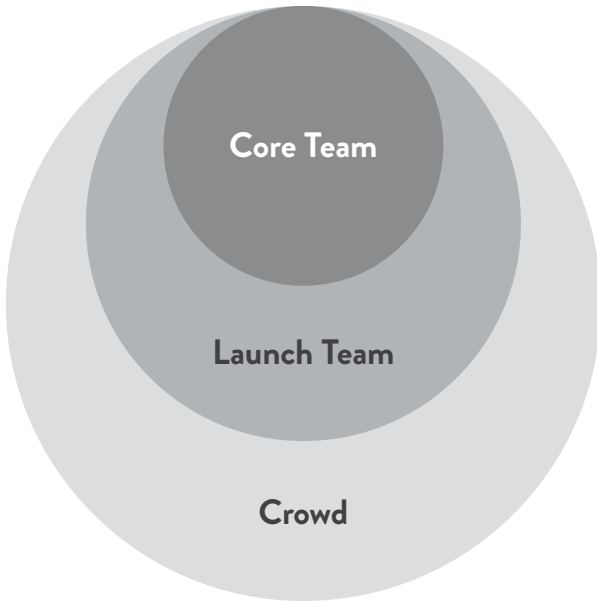
In your core, look for people who will be faithful to you, to the vision, and to God's heart for lost people. Tell them that you are looking for pillar people: people who are looking to build something for others, not people who are looking to enjoy something

for themselves. You are looking for people who will say these two things: 1) I am here whatever the cost, and 2) I will do whatever needs to be done. Biblically, you are like David, looking for his Mighty Men. You are like Jesus looking for His disciples, people so clearly called by God that they will walk this journey with you for decades.



The next circle of leaders to develop is often referred to as the launch team. Of course, this team also must embrace your leadership and God's vision and mission. They must also have an owner's mindset. You will also challenge them to commit to be present whenever necessary and do whatever is asked of them. These are your coworkers in Christ who will start making things happen. They will serve at events, faithfully participate in disciple making, consistently gather for weekend worship gatherings, and share Christ with their friends. They are in many ways the hands and feet of the church. They are potential core leaders, but initially, they are more like the 120 huddled in the upper room in Acts 1 rather than The Twelve entrusted with leading in Acts 2. Like many nameless ones in the upper room, these will be your unsung heroes. People may never know their names. This side of heaven,

they may never get the recognition they deserve, but without them the church would run as fast as a man without lungs or toes.



Finally, the Good News of Christ has the power to draw a crowd. These are Jesus' multitudes who sometimes turned away. These are those out of whom 3,000 were baptized on the first day of the church. These are those who heard Paul's message, and while some scoffed, they said, "We want to hear more." But still, only a few *believed*.

In any crowd, you will find perpetual church shoppers who listen to one radio station, WIIFM (*What's in it for me?*). Others will be disaffected seekers who are nominally open to Jesus but carry deep wounds from past church experiences. Still others will be unhealthy Christians with agendas. For instance, in the early weeks after New Life Christian Church began, a new young professional couple showed up. They were well educated, intelligent, biblically literate, and dangerous. On the surface, they

seemed like the perfect answer to prayer for an infant church in need of gifted (and financially generous) leaders. Our first clue that something may have been off was when the young man said, “I want to be part of this church because I want to be at the middle of making something great happen.” His words were either a blessing from heaven or a warning from heaven! In this case, what we discovered he meant was, “I am important. I am special. I have more to offer than most people. I want to be in the inner circle of your church.” In the childhood years of the church, no single person caused more trouble than that unhealthy Christian with an agenda.

Don’t let this discourage you! Be circumspect. In the crowd you will discover that God has sent you the strongest disciple makers you’ve ever served with, and even, perhaps, the best friends you have ever known.

Crowd people carry baggage they will need to unload before they will be ready to commit to Christ. Often, it is baggage of hurt. New churches are magnets for hurting people. They will need time to heal before they will have ears to hear.

Usually, crowd people carry hidden expectations:

- *Church is what people do on Sunday morning.*
- *Church exists to help me scratch my spiritual itch.*
- *I don’t need church, but I want my kids to learn morals.*
- *Our marriage is in trouble. Nothing else is working. Church is our last shot.*
- *I’m lonely. The bars don’t work for me. I’m trying church.*
- *I like church, but nothing radical. “Everything in moderation” is my motto.*

If your outreach is effective, your crowd will probably be your largest group—as it was for Jesus and the disciples. So be discern-

ing. There is no “one size fits all” in discipling people. Each person, no matter how spiritually mature, must be challenged to do one thing: take the next step from wherever they are, and hear and obey Jesus.

Invest in each person according to their maturity and commitment to Christ. Babies often require more attention than young adults. But young adults grow by serving the children in the family. Know your people. Know the path they need to walk. Help them each take next steps according to their own readiness.

Leadership Development

“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.”

—Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States

This is a good place to pause again. What is your vision for your church? If God builds His church through you, what will it look like a year from now? Ten years from now? Think deeply because the size and clarity of your vision will determine the size and demands of your follow-up questions.

For instance, when New Life started, our vision was to be a church-planting church. Beneath that, our vision was to reach over 200 people in worship every weekend. Candidly, we had a little vision for discipleship and children’s ministry; most of our vision focused on Sunday morning attendance. Do you see how our vision for church planting didn’t fit our vision for the church? The key to church

The key to church multiplication is disciple multiplication.

multiplication is disciple multiplication. However, we weren’t smart enough to realize that a vision for larger Sunday attendance

was too small to achieve the vision for church reproduction. To reproduce on a church level, our vision had to embody an all-out devotion to reproduce on a disciple-making level.

So what is God's vision for your church? Is your vision sufficient to match His vision? For much of the 20th century, most pastors would have said that their vision was to plant a big tree. If their tree could be the biggest in the field, serving the most families with fruit and the most birds with shelter, they would call it "a win!" At Passion for Planting, we challenge pastors to greater vision. Rather than planting big trees, what if your vision is to plant an orchard filled with trees?

"My fruit grows on other people's trees."

—Bob Buford, Author, Founder of Leadership Network

What if God is not calling you to plant a church? What if God is calling you to plant a church whose fruit grows on other people's trees? What if God is not calling you to build a big Sunday morning worship, but to reproduce disciple makers who have greater impact than all you could ever ask for or imagine?

If more fruit matters more to you than simply more butts in seats on Sunday morning, then you have just thrown away most of your books on church leadership development. Your attitude and strategy for leaderships has just made a capital "C" Change.

First, it means you must pray more and look to God for daily wisdom and leadership. You must trust in the Lord with all your heart, leaning not on your own understanding. In all your leadership ways, seek Him, not the latest books and conferences on leadership, and trust that He is doing a new thing through you. He will lead you His way, with His people, for His glory.

Next, keep your eyes open for leaders to invest in. Who is demonstrating FATSO qualities? Who is producing fruit?

In the early years of New Life, I entrusted a young man with leadership of the first small group outside not led by me. We moved forward with fear and trepidation. One night, I got a call from a trusted leader. “You can’t let Pat lead a group. He’s terrible.” I said, “We have no choice. He’s the only other person right now even remotely qualified.” Fast forward twenty years. That “loser” of a small group leader has become one of our best disciple makers. So don’t just look at personalities and giftedness. Look to see whom God is blessing. Whom is God using to produce fruit? Feed the fruit producers!

The lesson learned here is this: sometimes the leaders you’re longing for are right under your nose! Too often, church leaders look for leaders who are already .300 hitters. Most often, God sends us .245 hitting rookie league players, and expects us to disciple them to be .300 hitters. Quit looking for Mike Trout. Pray for God to lead you to someone who can become a Mike Trout, then go to work!

Let’s face it, many churches are good at leadership placement, but are not good at leadership development.

Let’s face it, many churches are good at leadership *placement*, but are not good at leadership *development*. They’re better at work-dumping and slot-filling than discipleship. If a planter has worked in an established congregation, he may be a bit spoiled by the leaders and leadership culture that others have already developed. Church planters do not benefit from standing on the foundation others have built. Often, the church planter celebrates this reality (*Yeah! I don’t have to destroy an unhealthy culture before I can build a healthy one!*). The downside of that reality is that more work is needed to grow leaders from the ground up. (*Yeah! Unless God provides workers for the harvest, we’re toast! I get to trust more in God than ever before! Yippie!*).

Managing Expectations

At this point, a couple of warnings are in order. First, don't be crushed when everyone who starts with you does not finish with you. Stunning as it may sound, many who say they are on board when the first souls are being baptized will not be with you when the 101st is baptized. The churn rate for most churches is about twenty percent every year. Yes, that means a church with one hundred people will be a church of eighty people in a year if no one new is reached. Some of that churn will be people you would never expect to leave.

Many will roll off for healthy reasons. Working in the Washington, D.C. suburbs, we were warned that few people who live there are from there, and most can't wait to move away. Since God never seemed very impressed by our whines of ontological victimhood, we thought it better to see ourselves as a missionary church. We may only have had some with us for a few years, but while they were with our family we did our best to fill them with God's love for lost people and God's vision for what the church can be. Even though saying "goodbye" was never fun, we got to celebrate the fact that we were sending them out to serve God in a new harvest field.

Some people will leave, giving you a fresh appreciation for Paul's disdain for Hymenaeus and Alexander. People have left New Life because . . .

- The church didn't have elders, *yet* (this was a couple in the pre-launch team).
- The church was too focused on reaching lost people.
- The preacher was an idiot.
- The visuals on the screen gave them a headache.
- The associate minister used zombies to illustrate the living dead.

- The preacher was an imbecile.
- The church didn't hire their son-in-law.
- The church moved from the middle school to a high school three miles away.
- The church built a gym for the community, not a sanctuary for ourselves.
- The preacher wasn't a good leader.
- The church teaches sex outside marriage is a sin, so they didn't feel safe.
- The music was too loud.
- The music was too soft.
- The preacher was too loud and too soft.

Whatever the reasons behind your plant's churn rate, it creates an inherent urgency for disciple making and leadership reproduction from day one!

Next, beware of vision hijackers. Vision hijackers are strong personalities with great vision, just not God's vision for the church you are leading! Usually, they are gifted leaders—even more gifted in leadership than the positional leaders. Sometimes, they lead with their resumes: “When I was an elder at XYZ church . . .” or “I've been through a lot of leadership training for my job” or “My mom says you'd be lucky to have me on your team,” or something mature like that. These are your 100–100 leaders. Submissive to God and aligned to you and the vision, they can produce the results of 100 people. Selfishly motivated and subversive, they will do the damage of 100 people.

Prepare for your irregular people three ways. First, pray. God protects His church. God specializes in turning into good what Satan intends for evil. Second, give thanks in all circumstances, as Paul instructs. David had his Shimei. You should expect your rock-throwers too. Finally, don't be stupid. In other words,

trust slowly. Give small assignments and small levels of responsibility. God entrusts us to be faithful with little before He entrusts us with much. Call it a hunch, but His example is usually pretty trustworthy to follow!

Never forget that Jesus builds His church. Jesus builds His church as we go and make disciples. Jesus begins by teaching, “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2). Then, open your eyes. See the fields ripe and the servants God is providing. Affirm them. Entrust them with a little. Give them a chance to self-select according to their obedience and fruitfulness.

Jesus builds His church as we go and make disciples.

Leadership Pipeline

*“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself.
When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”*
—Jack Welch, CEO, Author

Developing a culture of reproduction isn’t easy. It’s counterintuitive for many church planters. Most ministers are primarily gifted preachers, teachers, and pastors. Most attend seminary looking to be trained to minister the gospel, not to lead leaders. By design, colleges and seminaries are designed to produce students, teachers and “doers,” not leaders, disciple makers, and culture creators.

Listen again to Paul’s vision for Timothy’s ministry. First Timothy 2:2 says, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” That is the language of continual reproduction. *What you have witnessed in me, pass on to others who will be able to pass it on to others who will be able to pass it on to others.*

This is Jesus' challenge to His disciples, as well. "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). *As you have witnessed in Me, model for others who will model for others who will model for others.* As Jesus said in Matthew 5:19, "Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Greatness in the kingdom looks like this: do and teach these commands to those who will do and teach these commands to those who will do and teach these commands to others.

One of the reasons many churches struggle from a chronic leadership shortage is because too many leaders spend so much time "doing" ministry and so little time training others to do and teach. Consequently, they work while others just watch. They work. Others watch. They work. Others watch. And what do they reproduce? Watchers, not reproducing disciple makers. If we truly believe that God has gifted each and every follower of Christ to be an active member of His functioning body, then it is our responsibility to equip disciples who will pass on what they have seen to others, who will pass on what they have seen, so others can pass it on until the body of Christ is built up, lacking nothing (Eph. 4:11–13).

Disciple making is not one program of the church; it must be seen as the core of all that the church is doing.

Chronic leadership shortages in churches can also be the result of treating disciple making as merely one task of the church's many tasks, when we are called to make disciple reproduction *the* culture of the church. Disciple making is not one program of the church; it must be seen as the core of all that the church is doing. When disciple reproduction is the core, it

is naturally taught in every sermon, discussed in all small groups, prayed about daily, and celebrated regularly.

Nothing is more important in the pre-launch days than developing and living out a clear plan for making disciples who make disciples. The example the leaders live out and the principles and tools leaders follow create a congregation that will reproduce in the same way. Ask yourself, *For each ministry role, team, and group in the church, how will reproduction take place? How will we teach and train disciples to be disciple makers wherever they are serving?*

In healthy churches, reproduction happens at every level, from elders to nursery workers. Reproduction, in its most basic form, is discipleship. Reproduction does not happen by accident, nor does reproduction happen in isolation. Effective reproduction requires action that is driven from a well thought-out strategy.

Leadership Training

So where do we start? We can give you examples to help prime the pump for your spiritual thinking. But let us be clear: if God is going to do a new thing in you, you must do the joyful work of seeking His face to hear His voice.

In coaching church planters, I (Brett) have discovered that very often the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The planter loves God, loves lost people, and deeply desires to lead a disciple-making church. The struggle to make disciple makers is not a lack of hearts. Usually it is a lack of action. It reminds me of that Peanuts cartoon where Linus yells, “I love mankind. It’s people I can’t stand.” Christians want to save mankind for Christ; it’s the people next door they struggle to reach.

Leadership development always begins with the leader. The leader must love God more every day and see the world through His eyes. The leader must pray continually. The leader must be ruthless about daily actions and personal results. The speed of the

leader dictates the speed of the team. When you as a leader do not see the fruit of disciple-making disciples, good news! The answer is easy: change yourself.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”
—John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States

Next, hold onto these assumptions:

- Jesus builds the church.
- Jesus sends laborers to work the harvest when we pray.
- Jesus has provided for your church—right now—all the seeds you need for the next harvest!

Want to develop disciple makers who will one day lead a disciple-making church? Model it. Do what you want them to do. Emblazon the 2 Timothy 2:2 principle on your heart. Find three or four others who will make disciples with you. How do you find these people? Ask God to help you create a list of people you know who are lost or not connected to a church. Write down their names. Pray for them. Get on the phone. Invite them to join you for coffee. Ask them how they are doing.

Do not invite them to church. Your agenda is not to build a church for yourself. Your agenda is to “go,” as Jesus said, into their world. Listen for the reasons they need the Good News of Christ. Ask them, “How can I pray for you this week?” Or, “If Jesus could do one thing for you this week, what would you want Him to do?” Then, pray with them in that moment, and pray for them every day.

As your friends share, listen for their need for the Good News. Be prepared at all times, as 1 Peter 3:15 says, to give a reason for the hope that you have. If they are stressed, share with them how

Christ gives you peace. If they feel hopeless, tell them how Christ gives you hope. If bitterness robs their joy, share how the grace of Christ has set you free.

Before your disciples make their first calls, your job is to prepare them for those calls. They don't need to be Billy Graham-level evangelists, but you do need to train them enough to feel ready to make the first call, to ask the first questions, and to pray the first time with their friends.

Everyone should take notes after their conversations. What did you hear? What went well? What did you learn? What did you see God doing? What do you think God would have you do next? What help do you need to be prepared for your next conversation?

Then, roleplay with your disciples. How will you share your Good News story? One method we've used, for instance, is the "Three Chair Testimony." The Three Chair approach simply gives a path for people to follow so our gospel sharing is direct and clear. First chair: "There was a time in my life" Second chair: "But since surrendering to Christ He has given me. . . ." Third chair: "Now, I have"

For instance, the apostle Peter might say, "Before Jesus, I was impetuous and unreliable. I spoke and acted without thinking. And my greatest ambition was to make money in the family fishing business. But Jesus has changed me! Jesus has forgiven me of my unfaithful, impetuous past. He has given me a new identity and a great purpose for living. Now, I live in the peace of being forgiven, the confidence of a new identity, and the joy of knowing what I do matters for eternity."

Go through the New Testament. It is filled with three chair testimonies. Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the man born blind, sons of thunder to apostles of love, and Saul becoming Paul. Now, what are your stories? What are the reasons for the hope you have because Jesus has genuinely saved you and walks with you?

Church planter, this is not simply a good strategy to follow. This is the core of leading people to live with Jesus. And this is joy: you are not just doing good stuff to build a church; you are discipling people in Christ because that is what you are made for and that is what they long for!

Now that you have debriefed with your small team of disciples and trained them so they are prepared for their next conversations, “go” again. Go back to the list. Add to the list. Make the calls. Set up the coffee meetings. Come back together to debrief.

Again, you need to ask, “What should we share with the people we are calling next time?” As you listen, you will need to be ready to share with your team tools from your discipling toolbox. Do they need to have a “Bridge” conversation? Or a simple and concise way to share the gospel like the Three Circles conversation? Or something else? Okay, now train them on the tool. Model using the tool. Roleplay with the tool until everyone feels a level of confidence to use the tool.

Remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:19, “But whoever *does* and *teaches* these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” What are the commands your disciples need to be ready to teach?

Each week, repeat the process. Each week, increase the number of calls being made. Each week, pray. Find a way to share why Jesus is the Good News for you in a way that applies to your friends. Pray for their salvation, then call them. Listen. Ask to pray with them for what they need. Share good news. Take notes. Huddle to review and learn. Repeat.

What can you expect? Some will say, “Stop! Thanks, but no thanks.” Others will say, “I’ve been so frustrated, I really appreciate that someone cares. I want to know more.” But if your disciples can share the love of Christ, the Good News of Christ, and an invitation to follow Christ, eventually they will find one person

who is ready to believe, repent, and be baptized. This is how you find laborers in the harvest.

Who are the most effective evangelists? People who have just been saved. As Bill Smith says, “The most obedient people are wet people. I’ve never known anyone still wet from baptism who isn’t ready to say ‘yes’ to God.” One purpose of baptism is to be a testimony. That newly surrendered disciple has an exciting story to share with their lost friends. Have them invite their friends to the baptism. Tell them to talk to their friends about why they are being baptized. As Jesus said, “Do not wait four more months and then hope for a harvest. The harvest is ready right now!” Immediately, start teaching, training, and entrusting that new disciple to disciple others.

So the first approach to leadership development in the church is for the church planter to model it in their own life within their own personal sphere of influence. The challenge for church planters is to cultivate a culture where staff and non-staff become leaders of leaders. Instead of doing all the tasks of the church, the leaders become disciples of other leaders. Here are some practical approaches for training and coaching leaders:

- One-on-one or group coaching
- Leadership Community gatherings (time of vision casting, sharing wins or challenges and training)
- Group emails and other forms of written vision-casting communication
- Investing in leadership conferences or seminars
- Retreats with church team leaders
- Reading leadership development books together as a team
- Reviewing podcasts and blogs on church leadership

Leadership Planning and Development

Each ministry team needs a leader. Developing a culture of reproduction and multiplication begins by answering one question: Will you be a fear-based organization or a faith-based organization? Another way to ask it is this: Will you be structured for control or for freedom? As insultingly obvious as those questions may sound, most churches are organized by fear and control, not by freedom and faith.

For instance, the classic American church organizational system is fear-based. To keep anyone from making mistakes, a system of checks and balances is set up so no one gets too much power. On the other hand, ministerial pride causes some pastors to look down on other leaders and church members. *This church would grow if I could just do things my way*, he thinks. Rather than entrusting people with ministry, the pastoral staff is fearful of empowering non-staff to take serious responsibility.

The reality is for a church to thrive, everyone has to give up something. The congregation has to give up leadership to its leaders. Those leaders have to give up the work of ministry to the church members. This is the principle of the priesthood of all believers. However, fear of making mistakes makes everyone tight-fisted with control.

We were faced with this decision: Do we organize for control, or do we organize for growth and ministry?

For instance, when New Life was young, small groups needed to expand. However, we knew that entrusting more people to lead small groups meant a greater likelihood that things would be discussed that we would not agree with. We were faced with this decision: *Do we organize for control, or do we organize for*

growth and ministry? The decision was obvious, but it meant more training and more trusting.

“I think one of the keys to leadership is recognizing that everybody has gifts and talents. A good leader will learn how to harness those gifts toward the same goal.”

—Ben Carson, Doctor, Author, Politician

The Leadership Matrix (see the free template download below in the Tips section) is a helpful visual aid for organizing and keeping up with leaders and their teams. The matrix is used to prioritize leadership needs, pray for leaders, and recruit team members.

Start leadership meetings as soon as you recruit leaders so you can both equip and support those leaders. Plan your leadership meetings in a way that enables busy people to participate. Not only will these meetings provide a context for training, prayer, and support but problems can be dealt with before they develop as well.

Decide in advance the basic framework of these ongoing leadership development meetings. The Three-Thirds Process developed by Training for Trainers (T4T), which we mentioned in Chapter 5, is an excellent framework to hold leadership training meetings while keeping disciple making at the core. This method divides meeting into three basic “thirds”:

1. Looking Back
2. Looking Up
3. Looking Ahead

The first third consists of the following:

- *Worship*: A time to praise God through song, prayer, reading Scripture, etc.

- *Pastoral Care*: A time for trainers to ask “How are you doing?” and minister to the needs of the people in the group.
- *Accountability*: A time to ask questions about how our trainees have followed what Jesus taught them and how they did in fishing for men. Ask questions like: How did you do in implementing the lesson from last week? Whom did you have a spiritual conversation with this week, and how did it go? How are you discipling new believers?
- *Vision-Casting*: A time to share words of encouragement to not give up on the journey. Use stories from the Bible that call people to obedience in living out the Great Commission. Celebrate wins as a group and inspire people to action by depicting what a win might look like for them in the near future.

The middle third has a single focus:

- *New Lesson*: This is the time to present a new lesson. The goal here is to give enough biblical content for the trainees to obey and then pass on to others. If you’re focused on developing leaders, make sure the lessons you’re teaching aren’t just about growing a participant’s character, but also leadership competencies and confidence.

The last third includes:

- *Practice*: This is the time to prepare trainees to go back into their world and live out what they have learned. Allow enough practice time for them to feel competent and confident to share the new lesson.
- *Set Goals and Pray*: This is a time for each person to set measurable goals for the upcoming week. Remember to have them set goals for both following and fishing and to write

them down. Then close the group meeting with prayer for each person.

Ministry Teams

Ministry teams are formed to let the church grow. Ephesians 4:12–13 could not be clearer. Jesus gives gifts “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.” That’s the goal—growing the body to the fullness of Christ.

Which ministries are needed? Pray. Don’t just evaluate needs—there will always be greater needs than any church has capacity to meet. Evaluate leadership. Who is called to lead an area of need? Only one person? Or a team of people? Since the book of Acts is filled with examples of God sending teams to start ministries, that is the principle we would apply.

And remember: faithful in little, faithful in much. When New Life started, we were small. We had fewer than fifty people every Sunday. So we focused small—just three ministries: children’s ministry, discipleship ministry (small groups), and Sunday morning worship ministry. As we demonstrated faithfulness in those small ways, God expanded our sphere of opportunity, and we grew.

“Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve.”

—John Stott, Author, Theologian

On Opening Day, a handful of ministries need to be fully functioning. Some common teams include the following: children’s ministry, administration, outreach, facilities, hospitality, worship, and tech. Which teams you need to develop will depend on your vision for the worship gatherings. Pray about which teams you’ll

need and identify these ministries months before they're needed in order to get them up and running by Opening Day. In some cases, an entire ministry may simply consist of a small group (like Student Ministry). These relational ministries will play a vital role in getting newcomers involved in the new church after Opening Day. It is much easier to launch a new church with team-based ministry rather than backfilling it later. Plan for (and commit to) a team-based ministry from the outset!

It is much easier to launch a new church with team-based ministry rather than backfilling it later.

Staffing

Even if your first hire isn't imminent, you need to plan for hiring. Before hiring anyone, develop your hiring process. This will help you set expectations for the candidates, keep you from skipping important steps, and help you avoid embarrassing lawsuits.

It's crucial to make the right staffing decisions. A staff member who consistently underperforms will create a financial and relational drag. But a staff member with the right heart and team chemistry will strengthen your church's capacity to make disciples who make disciple makers.

The old adage of "hire slow and fire fast" rings true. Take that to heart! Use these Four C's of Hiring to evaluate potential staff members:

- *Calling:* Does this person have a clear calling to work for this church? Would they take a pay cut in order to work here? Is it clear they're not interested in the job because of a paycheck, but in order to fulfill the purpose God has for them?

- *Character*: Is this a person of Christ-like integrity? Do they have a maturing faith? Are they hungry to grow spiritually? Are they humble and teachable?
- *Competency*: Does this person have the gifts, knowledge, and experience to perform the duties assigned to them?
- *Compatibility*: Do they fit on our team? Do their values align with the values of the church? Do they pass the parking lot test: When you see their car in the parking lot, do you feel good or are you discouraged?

A written Staffing Strategy (see the template in the Tips section below) will help you think through and identify your initial plans for hiring. The Staffing Strategy identifies staff positions to pursue, determines a hiring timeline, identifies which benefits to offer, and defines the hiring process. Additionally, the Staffing Strategy contains the following key information:

- Specific positions that will be filled with paid staff
- Specific positions that will be filled with volunteers
- Expectations (if any) for paid staffing raising all or part of their salary
- Desired timing for hiring of new staff

Finally, when building the staff team, don't overlook potential "marketplace-to-ministry" folks in the church. Some of the most impactful staffing hires may be leaders in the harvest. Look for people within your church who are already acting like staff members. Look for individuals who embody the vision and mission of the church. They have the church's DNA running through their veins and are infecting others with it as well. Sixteen of the twenty (eighty percent) team members that I (Brett) have on staff are marketplace-to-ministry folks. They didn't follow the traditional Bible school or seminary education path, but they were trained

to lead by serving within the church. They are all living out their calling, making a significant kingdom impact, all because we kept our eyes on the harvest.

Todd Wilson is a perfect example of this. Todd is the co-founder and executive director of Exponential. He is a nuclear engineer by education and training. He served in the nuclear navy for a decade, but shortly after he became a Christian, I (Brett) challenged him to think about the impact he could have for the kingdom if he used his engineering mind to help us plant new churches instead of building nuclear submarines. While it didn't make much sense from a worldly perspective for Todd to walk away from his prominent career, God got ahold of Todd's heart and made his call to ministry clear.

*Your next
leaders are in
the harvest.*

Every year thousands of leaders are impacted by Todd's decision to leave the marketplace and enter ministry. Exponential would not be what it is today if New Life hadn't looked for leaders in the harvest. Your next leaders are in the harvest. Find them, equip them, empower them, and watch them multiply, whether within your church or by being sent out to plant themselves.

*“Don't just delegate tasks to the next generation.
If you delegate tasks, you create followers. Instead,
delegate authority to create leaders.”*
—Craig Groeschel, Pastor, Author



Leadership Development Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/leadership-development-strategy

Leadership Matrix Template

www.church-planting.net/leadership-matrix

Ministry Teams Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/ministry-teams-strategy

Launch Team Development Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/launch-team-development

Staffing Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/staffing-strategy

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CHAPTER 8

Connecting with the Community

Do you prefer waffles or pancakes? People can argue about which tastes better, but there is no debate about which allows for easier syrup distribution. Drop a tablespoon of syrup on a mound of pancakes and watch gravity do its work. However, drop a tablespoon onto a waffle and watch it pool in a half-dozen cubicles while the rest of the waffle protests the inequity!

Although Jesus calls us to spread the gospel like syrup throughout every crook, crack, cranny, and crevice of the age, the world receives the gospel more like a waffle than a pancake.

The world is not flat. It's divided up into pockets—varied, uneven, and complex. Barriers like language, culture, lifestyle, socio-economic challenges, geography, and age all create walls that contain the gospel, hindering it from further spreading.

People tend to spend time with people they have something in common with. Don't believe me? Just think about the people you've shared a meal with this past month. Chances are you have a common interest with them. Whether you live next to them, attend church together, are relat-

As a church planter, you need to understand the people and pockets that make up your community.

ed, or are connected by a hobby, people tend to spend time with people like them. As the saying goes, “Birds of a feather flock together.” As a church planter, you need to understand the people and pockets that make up your community. Understanding them will help you contextualize your ministry and the communication of the gospel in language that make sense to your community.

Contextualization

Before we go any further, let us emphasize that contextualization is not about changing the gospel. It’s about translating the gospel into language your audience can grasp. As Tim Keller puts it:

Contextualization is not, as it is oftentimes argued, giving people what they want to hear; rather it is giving people the Bible’s answers, which not may be at all what they want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, in language and forms that they can comprehend and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel even if they reject them. Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself.¹³

The apostle Paul exemplifies contextualization in Acts 17 when he visits Athens. In Acts 17:18, Paul preaches the gospel in the marketplace of Athens. He doesn’t share the gospel in just any way, but in a way the Athenians can relate to. While we don’t know Paul’s exact words when he first taught the philosophers on the Aeropaus, Luke reports what Paul preaches when brought before the leading thinkers of Athens and is asked to explain his “strange teaching” (Acts 17:18–21). Acts 17:24–31 chronicles Paul’s

sermon. Read Paul’s message. Count how many times he quotes Scripture and names Jesus. He mentions God a few times, but he doesn’t quote Scripture or say the name of Jesus. He alludes to Jesus and His resurrection. Paul’s message stands in stark contrast with Peter’s message in Acts 2 given to a Jewish audience. Try preaching that sermon in a seminary homiletics class. You might not get many kudos for quoting Greek poets more than Scripture.

Now, please, don’t go too far. Since the 1980s, some have used Paul’s message in Athens as an excuse to try to preach the gospel through the back door. While the Paul who preaches in Athens is the same Paul who preached, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ! It is the power of God bringing salvation to all people!” some interpret the subtext of Paul’s message as being, “Okay, sometimes I have my doubts about the power of the gospel, so I’m going to lend it a hand by being clever!” Never! This is the same Paul who said that he was sent “to preach the gospel—not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect” (1 Cor. 1:17).

When Paul teaches, he is always sharing the gospel. Sometimes, he may refer to other Scripture more; other times, less. But contextualization never means helping the gospel. Contextualization simply means that in small town America, you may talk about hunting; in Pittsburgh, you may ask, “yinz Stillers fans goin’ dun tun?”; in D.C. you may talk a lot about traffic; in Nashville you talk about music. In India, you don’t talk baseball, you talk cricket, and you need to understand the modern influence of the ancient caste system. In Kathmandu, you must understand the effects of being the country trapped between the two great powers of China and India.

*Contextualization
never means
helping the
gospel.*

Earlier in Acts 17 Luke notes, “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead” (Acts 17:2–3). Paul’s preferred method of preaching the gospel was revealing how Jesus came to fulfill all Scripture. However, in his attempt to make disciples among the Areopagus, he neglected pointing to Scripture at all. Why? Because he was contextualizing the gospel. He was translating it into language, appeals, and arguments that his listeners could relate to.

How did Paul know what language to use and what arguments to make when explaining the gospel to the Athenians? Acts 17:23 tells us that he walked around and looked carefully at their objects of worship. Before preaching the gospel, Paul became a student of their culture. He observed their worldview and lifestyles and then shaped his presentation of the gospel to make sense to them.

As a church planter, your first responsibility is to love God more every day and to see the world through His eyes. That means seeing people through His eyes, loving them through His eyes, and becoming a student of the context to which are you called. All of Paul’s world sat under the influence of Greek culture, thanks to Alexander the Great’s conquests three centuries earlier. Yet Paul still took time to drink in the details. To see the distinctives. Like Paul, we do not love people in the abstract. We love people closely and personally. Watch. Observe. What do you notice in people’s lifestyles, worldviews, or identities? What idols have they embraced? How are they building on sand, rather than rock? Only after seeing people personally, in living detail, will you find yourself effectively hearing their specific needs for God, their unfulfilled longings, their need for repentance, and their next steps to salvation in Jesus Christ!

The gospel never changes. It calls everyone in every context to repent and put their trust in Jesus. However, how you connect with their lostness and call them to repentance and redemption is personal.

There's a wonderful scene from an old Inspector Clouseau movie. The bumbling Inspector, played by Peter Sellers, asks for a room in a country inn. A dog stands beside him as he addresses the owner. "Does your dog bite?" the Inspector asks. "No," the innkeeper answers quite confidently. Clouseau leans down to pet the dog. The dog snaps at his hand.

Recoiling in pain, Clouseau is incredulous, "I thought you said that your dog doesn't bite."

To which the Innkeeper responds—without looking up—"That's not my dog."

That is what happens when we fail to contextualize. Wrong questions get asked. Wrong answers are given. And everyone wonders why there is a failure to connect.

This is why after deciding where to plant the first step is to study the community to which you are called. In church planting, this process is often called *exegeting your community*. Exegesis is the process by which we critically analyze and draw information out of a subject matter. In preaching and teaching, we do this with a particular Bible passage. In the same way, exegeting a community means intentionally studying your community and drawing out truths about the people who live there.

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

—Margaret J. Wheatle, Author and Management Consultant

Contextualization begins with a curious mind. Here are some good questions to ask as you study the community you're focused on reaching as a church:

- Who lives there? (demographics: age, race, gender, etc.)
- What hobbies, personal preferences, and values do they have?
- What are the felt needs and real needs of the community?
- What is important locally that has shaped the community (history, heritage, etc.)?
- What are the topics that either divide or unify people there?
- What is their basis for truth?
- Where and how is the city planning to grow?
- What are the commuting and major traffic patterns?
- What are the common idols of the people (money, career, kids, sports, health, education, etc.)?
- What are some major neighborhood concerns?
- What other churches are in the area? Any other new churches starting?
- What is the spiritual temperature (how receptive people are to Jesus)?
- What is the media writing about the area?
- Which businesses are influencers in the region?
- Who are the major influencers in the community (politicians, business leaders, community activists, etc.)?

As you learn about your community, pray, *God, help me to see these people through Your eyes. Draw me to what specifically breaks Your heart. Help me to see the opportunities You see.* The prayers you pray and the questions you ask will form the ministry God builds through you.

A Cultural Fit

My (Brett) college internship was in Louisville, Kentucky, with one of the five fastest growing churches in the United States. My first preaching ministry was in a little church in English, Kentucky that hadn't grown in fifty years. The internship exposed me to a church that expected excellence, baptized people weekly, and changed constantly. The pews of the church in English, KY were mostly filled with extended family and friends of three tobacco farming families with deep roots in bluegrass. While only a fifty-minute drive separated English from Louisville, only a fool would try to build a Louisville church in English.

If by studying your community you realize that dogs outnumber kids, you may not want to force-fit a megachurch children's ministry into your new church. If you learn that a large percentage of your community is made up of young parents, that may be a cue to start a MOPS group (Mothers of Preschoolers).

Parenthetically, we've seen church plants build their launch teams by starting a MOPS group in the community. Done right, it'll attract young mothers to your church and equip them to reach other moms with the gospel. However, if you're planting in the community with more dogs than children, MOPS would not make sense for you. Perhaps "PADS" (Passionate About Dogs) would. That's a joke, but it might not be a bad idea if you love dogs.

The purpose of your community exegesis is to enable you to plant the church God wants in your community, and *not just the church that's in your head*. Once you get a clear sense of what makes your community unique, prayerfully consider how the community's

The purpose of your community exegesis is to enable you to plant the church God wants in your community, and not just the church that's in your head.

real needs and opportunities overlap with the gifts, passions, and God-given vision of your launch team. The intersection of all those facts may be the sweet spot for you to engage your community.

One of the best ways to learn about what makes your community unique is by meeting its leaders and interviewing them about the community. Through these meetings, seek to learn about the community's history, its strengths and weaknesses, and its assets and needs. One of the first meetings you should nail down is with your mayor, or if you're planting in a major city, meet with the city council member(s) who represents your neighborhood. There are a lot of different things you can glean from your mayor, but you'll learn a lot about the community by asking these two simple questions: "What do you see as the greatest needs of our community?" and "What are the dreams for our community?"

New Life Christian church reaches Fairfax, County, one of the suburbs surrounding Washington, D.C. With over a million people living in the county, it would be a mistake to simply seek a mayor's insights. In fact, the county board members represent more people than the state representatives from the area. At the same time, when we conducted a community survey while assessing our next steps with our building plans, we met with both Congressmen as well. Even though the Congressmen carried national name recognition, they shared a unique perspective of county needs that we could not have gleaned from a more locally-focused leader.

A great question to lead off with is, "What do you love about this community?" This gives civic leaders the opportunity to brag about their community and sets a positive tone for the rest of the interview. Also, make sure to take notes during the interview. Not only will you want to mull over them later, taking notes expresses to the leader how much you appreciate their willingness to answer your questions. It'll make a great first impression.

Connecting with community leaders may be a daunting task for the introverted church planter. After several of these interviews, you may be ready for serious rest and recuperation. In those moments of fatigue, remind yourself that your Mom didn't want to get up in the middle of the night to change your diaper as a baby, and your grandfather didn't feel like going to war, but that's what it means to be an adult. Still, if you struggle with extroverted activities, recharge your batteries by spending time gathering and studying your community demographic data. Such research will give you an accurate idea of who lives in your area. Just as Paul walked the streets of Athens observing and listening, you can virtually walk the streets of your community vicariously through the information others have collected.

Begin with the basic demographic data such as population, income, age, race, education, and marital status to get an overall snapshot of your community. Keep in mind, though, that demographic data taken from a census will not be 100 percent accurate for lots of reasons, including that not everyone participates in the census. If the demographic data of your community seem less diverse than what you see in the population all around you, interview school principals and counselors and ask them about the diversity represented in the school system. That'll offer you a more accurate depiction of the diversity in your area.

Typical demographic reports gather what many people call "hard" data like age, race, education, etc. You'll also want to press into psychographic reports that gather "soft," subjective data which explains how the people in your community live and think. To get a complete understanding of your community, you'll want to discover those soft demographics that you won't find in your typical static demographic data report. You can conduct your own soft demographic survey (questionnaire) with random people in the community to gain insight into their worldviews, aspirations,

values, lifestyles, and personalities. You can also search online for soft demographic reports.

Another excellent community networking connection is to join the local Chamber of Commerce to leverage their wealth of information about the community. It's fascinating to find that many Chambers do not have a local minister as a member. What an incredible disciple-making opportunity joining your local chamber can be!

Sometimes the best and simplest (and most effective) neighborhood networking method is a prayer walk. It takes four easy steps: prepare in prayer, walk, pray, and meet people. Start by finding a quiet place to pray and focus on God. Align your spirit with His and attune your ears to His voice. Then walk through your community asking the Holy Spirit to lead you to people who will be open to engaging in conversation.

Sometimes the best and simplest (and most effective) neighborhood networking method is a prayer walk.

Ask them what the best and worst parts of their neighborhood are. Ask them if they could recommend a good church to you in the neighborhood. Listen for cues to start a spiritual conversation with them. If they're open to listening, share your story and why you're starting a church. Offer to pray for people when they mention burdens they're carrying. Interceding for people in your community will help you gain God's heart for your community. Start pastoring and discipling your community before you even think about a Sunday morning service.

Networking Strategy

Now that you've become a "student" of your community, you are ready to develop a robust networking strategy. Seek to identify who the key organizations and leaders in the community are.

There will be more leaders to network with than you will have time to meet with prior to launch Sunday. You'll have to prioritize and be strategic.

The purpose of a community networking strategy is two-fold: 1) to foster relationships with community and civic leaders in your target area and 2) to gain a better understanding of your community. When it comes to community networking, the old adage, "It's not what you know, it's who you know," will prove itself true. The relationships you build with community leaders will open up outreach and marketing opportunities for the church and consequently help you establish broad name recognition in your community.

Collective Church in Frederick, Maryland, fostered relationships with various organizations in their community while they were building a launch team. They wanted to learn more about their city and how as a church they could serve it. They went to organizations like the United Way, the Downtown Frederick Partnership, and the Frederick Rescue Mission. They sat down with the leaders of those organizations and asked them about the assets and needs of the community. After establishing a relationship with those leaders, the planters of Collective Church asked them how their church (still a small launch team at this point) could serve the community. The answers the church received led Collective to conduct a canned food drive for the local food bank, help the Rescue Mission pull off a 5k fundraiser race, and provide family-friendly entertainment at the First Friday events organized by the Downtown Frederick Partnership in the months leading up to the church's launch. Through these events, Collective was able to serve their community and have spiritual conversations with hundreds of people.

Collective gained the reputation in their community as being the church that's *for* Frederick. They didn't wait until after they

launched to start serving their community. They started by learning about their city and building relationships with its leaders and then served where they could. This not only helped them establish name recognition in the community but also infused community engagement into the DNA of the church. Serving is part of the church's culture because it's what they've always done.

Two other benefits of community networking are 1) developing a list of resources that already exist within your community and 2) gaining an understanding of where God is already at work there. As you connect with community leaders and explore your city, create a list of organizations and agencies that are helping people in your community. Chances are there are already food banks, homeless shelters, afterschool programs, and free health-care and counseling clinics in your area. Get acquainted with these organizations. Consider serving alongside them, but most importantly build a relationship with them. That way when people from your church or neighborhood come to you in need of these agency's services, you'll be able to connect them.

The key caution here is to be ruthless about God's mission.

You are not starting a church to be another good community needs-meeting organization.

You are not starting a church to be another good community needs-meeting organization. You do not exist so people can feel better about themselves because they've scratched the "I feel guilty for not helping the less fortunate" itch. You exist to reach lost people. You are called to "go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded . . ."

Partnering with community care ministries will help you pastor people in your community. They provide places for disciples to serve and to start spiritual conversations. But you still must be ruthless about results. Train for evangelism, don't just create "feel-

good, do-good” activities. If our call is to make disciple-making disciples, be ruthless that serving events be seen as discipleship events.

God has been at work in your neighborhood long before He called you to plant a church there. Acquaint yourself with how He’s been at work there and look for opportunities to support the good work He’s already doing. While it will be tempting to focus on meeting the physical needs of your community, remember that your focus is on meeting spiritual needs. Most likely there are many organizations in your community that are meeting physical needs. Get to know them. Serve with them. Celebrate the impact they’re making, but keep your focus on making disciples. Your job isn’t to serve a cup of cold water, but to serve a cup of cold water *in Jesus’ name*.

Remember, allocate finite resources toward your goal: making disciples who make disciples. As you make disciples, you will build capacity to do more for your community. One day it may make sense for your church to start a separate non-profit entity to serve your community, but that won’t be before you start making disciples and get to know the organizations that are already at work in your community.

Leverage the free Community Networking Strategy template linked in the Tips section at the end of this chapter to think through your approach to networking in your community. Don’t make the mistake that many overconfident church planters make by thinking they’ll know everything they need to know about a community by reading a book about it and talking to neighbors. That’s a good start, but it’ll leave you with a limited perspective. It’s true that you may not directly add a single person to the launch team by talking with community leaders. However, if all you gain through such meetings is an ally who knows you’re there for the good of their community, you will have accomplished a big win.

So whom are you going to meet with? We recommend meeting with government leaders, school principals and counselors, non-profit leaders, business owners, real estate developers, law enforcement officers, city planners, and other key influencers in your community. They have their finger on the pulse of the community like few others do.

When you meet with them, network. Ask them who else you should be meeting with to learn more about the community. They will know other leaders in the community, sometimes including the unsung heroes of the community: people who fall under the radar but will be helpful to know. If the leader you're meeting with suggests someone else to meet with, ask them to connect you with them. That way you don't have to cold-call them.

Many leaders you'll want to meet with have obtained their current position because of their charisma and ability to network.

God has placed people in the community whom you need to find and disciple.

Many of them have the ability to influence others on your behalf. Get them on your side. These influencers have a good grasp on your community and can help you discover the best ways to reach it. God has placed people in the community whom you need to find and disciple. They may be the “person of peace” Jesus has called you to look for when entering a new community. They can open up doors for you to reach segments of your city with the gospel that you might not otherwise have access to. Your networking strategy is one simple way to find these influencers. The relationships you build will often lead to event partnerships, like an annual 4th of July celebration or Neighborhood Arts Festival, as well as community outreach opportunities.

As mentioned earlier, don't lose sight of your ultimate mission to “go and make disciples.” No matter what your step-by-step

discipleship process looks like, it probably starts with building relationships with people far from God. Seek to start conversations that lead to friendships. Cultivate friendships that lead to trust. Let that trust lead to spiritual and gospel conversations.

As a church planter you'll feel pulled in many different directions. Your to-do list will seem endless most days. Overwhelmed by urgent matters, it'll be tempting to overlook this step of networking with community leaders. If you're not a socialite, it'll take you out of your comfort zone. Setting up appointments with high profile community leaders can be intimidating, but it's worth it. Done right, God will use your networking to help you learn about your community and to open doors for future opportunities for service, impact, and partnerships with people of influence.

Setting up appointments with high profile community leaders can be intimidating, but it's worth it.

One last word of advice about networking: make sure to develop a community networking notebook, spreadsheet, or database for keeping track of community leaders and organizations. After you've developed your tool for keeping track of community leaders, prioritize which leaders you'll want to meet with, then gather and record their contact info, schedule meetings, and log notes from your meetings with them into that notebook, spreadsheet, or database. That way you can mull over those notes as you pray and dream about your ministry to the community.

Outreach Strategy

Your church plant outreach strategy should inspire your team to action. Action follows vision, passion, and clarity of expectations. *What is the potential for what we are doing? Why does it matter? How*

will my part make a difference? Serving in the community won't be sustainable without a Jesus-centered, disciple-making purpose.

Below is a list of questions to chew on as you develop your outreach strategy. Leverage the free Outreach Strategy Template linked in the Tips section at the end of this chapter to help guide your thought process.

1. Why should the church do outreach?
2. Why should the launch team participate in outreach?
3. What should outreach accomplish?
4. How does outreach help make disciples?
5. Given your limited resources, what outreach will you focus on?

Too many planters get to the opening day of worship gatherings and wish they had done more outreach events. They've heard exciting stories of other church launches, not appreciating the long hours and stressful nights invested to bring those stories to life. Don't fall into that "could have, should have" ditch. Set a challenging but reasonable expectation for the number and types of events you produce prior to your public launch. Here are three different categories of outreach events:

1. *With Your Community*: These events focus on partnering with the good that's already being done in your community.
2. *In Your Community*: These events focus on providing fun activities to build trust, create community, and provide inviting opportunities for your launch team.
3. *For Your Community*: These events are focused on community service and meeting real needs around you.

A solid outreach strategy has a mix of these different types of events. One approach is to partner with other organizations for

big, regional events and to focus most of your time and money on smaller, relational events. The other approach, obviously, is to do the events yourself, but to recruit people from nearby supporting churches to help you pull them off with excellence.

“Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends.”

—Walt Disney, Co-Founder of The Walt Disney Company

The reality is, things that get measured get done (and usually grow)! It is also true that work tends to fill the time allotted. Give yourself forty hours to accomplish thirty hours of work; your entire forty hours will be required. On the other hand, if you try to accomplish sixty hours of work in forty hours, you may actually get fifty hours of work accomplished.

In the same way, if you schedule two events in the next nine months, amazingly those two events will suck up all your time and energy. On the other hand, if you schedule ten events in the next nine months, you might actually only produce seven events. However, the big goal will force planning and effort to accomplish the greater ambition. As James Cameron says, “Hope is not a strategy. Luck is not a factor.” In other words, don’t hope for a great opening. Sweat and pray for it. Don’t expect to be lucky. Luck favors the prepared.

“Hope is not a strategy. Luck is not a factor.”

Also, new churches find it fruitful to ask every family on the launch team to host at least one smaller event (block party, cook-out, open house, etc.). Remember that at this point, you’re just setting expectations, not selecting the exact events and dates. Establish the number and type of events, but be flexible to allow the specific events to change with time.

The point of these events is not just to be good neighbors; it's to encourage your launch team members to get to know their neighbors more, start spiritual conversations with them, look for opportunities to pray for them, and let them know about the new church getting started. That means before these events take place you'll need to train your launch team members on how to share their two-minute testimony and the concise vision of the church.

For these small events, encourage the hosts to invite a few other people from the launch team. That way guests can meet multiple people from the church and realize this church is bigger than just one family. Also, inviting people from your launch team can provide the critical mass needed at such an event before strangers will be willing to join the party.

Let's be honest: Who wants to go to the backyard barbeque of a neighbor they don't know when no one else is there? Nobody does, except maybe a vacuum salesman. A common reason people show up at parties late is because they want to avoid being the first and only person at a party. So find people with hospitality gifts. Invite launch team people gifted in making others feel at home. Create a welcoming environment from the moment newcomers arrive. (Another way to do this, by the way, is to follow Jesus' example with the woman at the well: ask a new person to help you with something. Ask them to come early to help you grill, for instance. Making them owners makes them feel like insiders, not uncomfortable guests.)

Chances are there are many people in your neighborhood looking for an excuse to meet neighbors or get to know them better. Most are waiting for someone else to take the initiative to organize an event. Step up. Be the leader. Invite launch team members to watch what you do, then encourage them to follow suit. Help them organize and host the event and then release them to host a similar event all on their own. Whatever type of event

you offer, keep the focus on building relationships with neighbors, engaging in spiritual conversations, and telling people about the new church.

If you don't feel the need to dig into specifics on event planning, grab some coffee, walk the dog, change the baby's diaper, and skip to the next section. For those looking for nuts and bolts, treat these events like a big deal. They will demand more time and energy to pull off than one might expect. Put specific outreach events and service projects on the calendar and in the budget. You won't do what you don't plan to invest in! The list of potential outreach events is much larger than you'll be able to accomplish. Therefore, create a filter to decide which events to run with and which events to run from. Here are a few considerations in developing your filter:

1. *Understand your target demographic and their felt needs:* For example, if your target is young families with children, Bingo nights are probably not the best events to host, but a neighborhood campfire and s'mores night might be.
2. *Understand what other churches and organizations are already doing:* You aren't the best church, but you are starting a church to reach people that others won't reach as effectively. Establish your own niche. Don't try to duplicate what is already being done well. If it's already being done, figure out if it makes sense to support what they're doing or try something else.
3. *Understand the reputation you are trying to establish:* You will become known to your community as the "_____ church." Service, outreach events, and marketing will shape how people think of you. Are you the fun church? Are you the creative church? Are you the excellence church? Are you the "ready-to-serve" church? Use everything you do to build that reputation.

4. *Determine the intended size and reach of events:* Some events are quick and easy to pull off. They don't take a lot of time and effort. Other events do.

Next, plan a balanced mix of different types and sized events. For example, you may plan one large regional event the weekend before launch Sunday. In the three months prior to launch, offer one community-wide event each month. In addition to these community and regional events, challenge your launch team to take ownership for local neighborhood events. We call this the "don't put all your eggs in one basket" principle. Many eggs. Many baskets.

Again, think "differentiation." Each church earns a reputation. Some are good; others not so good. Some are by design; most are by default. Every event you do will create culture inside your launch team and an identity in your community. Marketing experts call this "creating brand recognition." When people connect with your brand, they want to honor Christ. You want to conduct yourselves so that in every way you make the teachings about God our Savior attractive (Titus 2:10).

Faith is seeing what God wants that those without faith cannot see.

Brainstorm your event ideas like a wish list. If you could do any events for the glory of God and know they would succeed, what would you do? Remember, faith is the substance of things hoped for. Faith is seeing what God wants that those without faith cannot see. Weed out events that are already common in the area. For example, in the early 1990s, no one was offering high-quality fall festivals for free. Others were offering events, but none for free. We offered free, high quality events, including free games, free moon bounces, free face-painting, free bands, and free hot dogs, popcorn, and

cotton candy. For years, no one offered anything close for the quality and the price. Today, every church on every corner offers some fall event for free. One year, we took out event money, bought an ice cream truck, a moon bounce, and a blow-up movie screen and told church members that if they would host a neighborhood event, we would provide the “stuff.” So don’t zig with the ziggers. When ziggers zig, you zag!

Next, tentatively schedule events as soon as possible (even before you are confident you can do them). You can always change your schedule. But the more lead time given for each event, the more time you have to pray, plan, and make adjustments. It’s not hard to look at a calendar and recognize the opportunities of the season.

For instance, people in transition are the most open to change. People tend to move the most in the summer. While it is tempting to slow down outreach activities in the summer, the most fruitful falls will follow the more evangelistic summers. Back to school, the fall time change weekend, and holidays all create special opportunities to make connections with spiritual seekers. Planning these events months in advance also helps you market the event, so more people hear about them and participate.

Marketing Strategy

“The greatest message deserves the greatest marketing.”

—Mark Batterson, Pastor, Author

Do the words “church marketing” sound like dirty words to you? If your image of marketing is the used car salesman trying to get you to overspend on something you don’t really need, your suspicion is understandable. Churches don’t sell anything, though. We preach Christ crucified, trusting the power of the gospel to draw all people to Him.

In the minds of some Christians marketing is a dirty word, but it's really not. It's a neutral word. According to the American Marketing Association, "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."¹⁴

By that definition, what does a church do that isn't marketing? Do you have a name? Marketing. Do you have a place to meet? Marketing. Do you use a logo? Strategic clothing styles and music on Sunday morning? A website? Follow-up letters to newcomers? Send emails? Invite neighbors to worship? Marketing. Marketing. Marketing.

Done right, the purpose of your marketing is to help Christians in your church start spiritual conversations with their friends.

Decades of research demonstrates that the most effective means to reach people for Christ has always been, and continues to be, the personal invitation. However, an effective overall marketing *strategy* encourages and enhances those personal invitations and seeks to multiply them. The goal of a marketing strategy is not cold invitations that lead to impersonal responses.

Done right, the purpose of your marketing is to help Christians in your church start spiritual conversations with their friends. Done ineffectively, your church may become the best kept secret in town.

Your marketing strategy crafts a well-thought-through approach to telling your church's story in a way that appeals to the people God has called you to reach. This, again, shows the power of contextualization. Craft a message that quickly and simply conveys your vision. Then, get that message in front of as many people as possible. Take a "six to stick" (or "twelve to stick") approach. This means get at least six positive touches to every household in your

area before you launch an expensive media campaigns like direct mail or door hangers. It takes at least six positive touches to build name recognition. A touch is any interaction a person has with your church, including:

- Personal conversations
- Webpage views
- Community service events
- Social media engagement
- Signs and flyers

It doesn't take a large budget to get six positive touches. In fact, as a general principle, hard work can make up for lack of cash. While it may be easier to try to solve problems by throwing money at them, getting more people involved usually produces greater long-term results. Coordination and planning are demanded to ensure the networking, marketing, and outreach strategies are integrated and complimentary. This is so important that some churches postpone their launches if they need more time to increase church exposure in the community.

Once you've begun to get traction on brand recognition, it's time to get the word out via a mass marketing medium that blankets the community (e.g., direct mail campaign). Physical media that gets to every door is still a powerful way to invite people to the launch of the new church. Mass marketing is generally more expensive, but it requires minimal time investment from your launch team.

Before spending thousands of dollars on a mass marketing campaign, establish name recognition in the community. If the first time the community hears of the new church is from a door hanger, chances are it will be in the trashcan in less than five seconds. But if they receive this direct mail card and say to them-

selves, “Oh yeah, this is that church I ran into at the _____,” it can be a very effective way to help start spiritual conversations that lead to spiritual next steps.

Some planters shy away from direct mail campaigns due to the cost and the return on investment. For many, it’s one of the most expensive things they do during pre-launch. Mass mailing is a high cost, high risk approach. Many churches are disappointed because they think a mass mailing is a silver bullet. On the other hand, many planters will tell you that it’s one of the most effective things they did to invite people to the grand opening. The difference between the two responses is wisdom in strategy, quality, and distinctiveness in the mailings, and the readiness of the people in the church to seize the opportunity. That’s why we encourage a new church to hire a company that specializes in church direct mail campaigns. They will walk with you through the entire process to ensure everything is done on time and in a cost-effective manner.

If you do use direct mail marketing, make sure your cards stick out and stick in the mind of the people you’re trying to reach. Become the advocate for the people God is calling you to reach. For instance, don’t tell your vision, show it. Most church mailings are drowning in words. Who do you think cares if you have “powerful worship,” “relevant teaching,” and “a casual atmosphere”? Church people.

Instead of saying, “We are not your grandparents’ church!” use a picture that makes people turn over the card to see who sent it. Use images people don’t expect a church to use. Don’t say, “We’re different.” Show “different” by picturing “different.” For instance, we once sent a card with the image of a distraught young man on it. Accompanying that image were the words: “Church? I already feel bad enough. Why would I go to church?”

We also want to communicate fun through our marketing efforts. Fun and risk are two of our core values. For us, that means risking offending church people to reach lost people. One Christmas, we used a picture of an angry Santa eating a meal with the head of Rudolph and his red nose mounted on the wall. Over the line? Some thought so, but most people we talked to thought it was funny and caught their attention. Plus, do you think many expected a card like that from a church?

The point is not to “be edgy” or “carelessly offend.” The point is to know the kind of church God is calling you to build and commit to build it with everything you do.

The point is to know the kind of church God is calling you to build and commit to build it with everything you do.

When you begin to develop a marketing strategy, go back to your community needs research. What burdens are people carrying? Advertise how your church can help alleviate that burden. Are people depressed? Share hope. Are people lonely? Advertise community. Are people divided? Promote unity. Are people struggling with significance? Proclaim purpose. Whatever you decide to focus on, make sure to get opinions from people in your community. Show them your designs and ask them which ones grab their attention. Survey multiple people and make sure they’re in your target demographic. Ask people in coffee shops, subway cars, grocery stores, and other public places for their impressions. From these interactions you’ll get a good sense of what message resonates with your community. And it may just lead to a spiritual conversation.

Depending on your context, door hangers (or hand delivered flyers) put on every door may get you a higher return on investment than direct mail. Work with your graphic designer to create the door hangers and have them printed by a print shop. There are

even businesses that can be hired to deliver them door-to-door. The message on the door hanger should help tell your church's story. Also include a call to action like visiting your website, attending an info night, or joining you for a community service project.

Collective Church, whom we mentioned earlier, used door hangers to advertise their church. The door hanger invited neighbors to support the food drive the church was organizing for the local food bank. Through this campaign the church collected hundreds of pounds of food and invited thousands of people to the church's website where they found out more about this new church that was serving their community and offering people hope.

Like door hangers, hand-delivered flyers are another inexpensive way to spread the word about your church. Then recruit outside volunteers to deliver one to every house in your community. Don't deliver these by yourself or expect your launch team to be able to deliver them all. This is a great opportunity to ask a supporting church for help. Round up teams of volunteers to go door-to-door sticking these flyers under doormats or in doorframes. Meet at a centralized location. Provide them with donuts, coffee, water, flyers, and maps. Give them a motivational speech and some basic things to say if they find themselves answering questions. Tell them that when they're done delivering all their flyers, you'll have pizza waiting for them. Then let them loose (and do provide pizza for them afterwards—they'll have earned it). Thank them for coming, pray, and celebrate what God is going to do through their efforts.

As you think about ways to invite your community to your church, pray and think through your marketing options. Then start writing out your ideas and leverage the Marketing Strategy template linked in the Tips section below to help you organize those ideas into a cohesive strategy.



FREE Demographic Report

www.church-planting.net/free-demographic-report/

Community Networking Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/community-networking-strategy

Outreach Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/outreach-strategy

Marketing Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/marketing-strategy

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CHAPTER 9

Momentum Through Multiplication

Progress is good. Momentum matters more. If you are a sailor (and isn't everybody?), momentum working for you looks like this:



Picture by Sabrina Solch from Unsplash.com

Momentum is like sailing with a strong tailwind. The wind is working toward you. All you have to do is catch it and fly!

Momentum working against you feels like this:



Picture by Michael Henry from Unsplash.com

Can you make progress when you are fighting the wind? Sure. But it takes a lot more effort!

Businesses understand the power of momentum. “Nothing succeeds like success,” the old axiom goes. It is less expensive to find new customers than to win back lost ones. It is easier to continue to build a business after you have established name recognition, a positive reputation, and a growing list of satisfied customers than it is to build a company from scratch.

Sports leaders understand the power of momentum. Some Washington Nationals baseball fans look at the 2019 World Series champions and credit momentum as important as coaching, talent, pitching, or hitting. We have all watched games where one team dominated until something caused the momentum to shift. Once lost, momentum is hard to regain.

Catching the Wind

Now, look at the church you lead. Be brutally honest. Is momentum working for you or against you? Are you sailing with the wind at your back, or are you fighting against the wind?

Here's the good news: we are not victims of momentum. Yes, sometimes events outside our control create momentum shifts, that is true. For instance, a church in Texas once discovered oil in its backyard and had a source of income to support its ministry for years to come. Or perhaps you live somewhere in California or in a small town in Pennsylvania where everyone is moving away and few are moving in. Even in those situations, however, we are not ontological victims with no responsibility to seize the opportunities presented to us.

Momentum is not a mystical force. It is a product of God's creation. How many church leaders frustrate their socks off because their own ministries are doing the same things as other churches, but they aren't seeing the same results at home that they see in others? How often do churches try to do things today that produced fruit yesterday, but are befuddled that they see no fruitfulness today? Often, the difference is not in quality of people or quality of effort. The difference is natural: momentum.

If you ever struggle because it feels like you are sailing against the wind, be encouraged! God is the giver of every good and perfect gift—even momentum! Isn't that what Isaac Newton taught us? One of the most influential scientists of all time, Newton wrote more on theology than on science or mathematics. Newton's laws of motion were educated by his theology, which believed the world was created by a rational, self-revealing Creator. Consequently, know creation. Know the Creator.

Creation taught Newton that the Creator is a God of momentum. This is one reason there is no single more important principle

for church planting than Jesus' promise, "I will build My church." Jesus is the Creator. The church belongs to Jesus, is defined by Jesus, is led by Jesus, is empowered by Jesus, and exists to glorify Jesus. Other principles may matter equally, but none is superior to Jesus' promise to be the Builder and Finisher of His church. Cooperating with Jesus to build His church means cooperating with Him as He uses His laws of momentum.

Skeptical? It may be helpful to remember that Newton, the single most influential scientist of all time, developed his laws of motion theologically. While Newton's theology did not always align with orthodoxy, no one can question that his scientific conclusions grew out of a basic theological assumption. Specifically, that the Creator communicates reasonably through His creation (Rom. 1:18–20); therefore, the Creator can be discovered by logically exploring His creation.

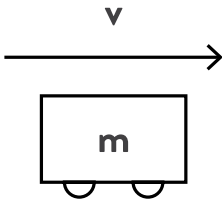
Have you ever wondered how non-Christian religions can grow without God's blessing? In the Washington, D.C. suburbs where we live, it's easier to find a Mormon church than a 7-Eleven. Drive the Washington Beltway. The most impressive edifice is the Mormon temple in Kensington, Maryland. How do you explain the growth of the Mormon church despite their denial of the divinity of Jesus? Natural sciences. God has created His world to work. One need not be spiritual to use God's natural laws to make grass grow or trees produce fruit. In the same way, churches can use God's natural laws to produce the fruit of unrighteousness.

The challenge for us, then, is to cooperate with Jesus in every way. Yes, Jesus can grow His church despite our weaknesses, stupidity, and failures (in fact, He always does). However, our prayer is always, "Lord, don't just use us despite our fallenness. Please, use us because we cooperate with You in every way."

One way to cooperate with Jesus is by applying the laws of momentum.

I (Brett) am not a physicist (although I once talked to a physicist, which, in Washington, D.C., makes one an expert!). Simply stated, the physics equation for momentum is as follows:

$$P = MV$$



P = momentum.

M = mass

V = velocity

One way to cooperate with Jesus is by applying the laws of momentum.

The momentum of an object is discovered by multiplying the mass of an object by its velocity. Newton's first law of motion says that any object at rest wants to stay at rest. Objects, and churches, want to keep doing what they have been doing. This is the power of momentum! A church with no momentum wants to stay at rest. In the same way, a church with momentum wants to keep moving. In other words, objects (and churches and people) resist change.

This tells us why we ignore the laws of momentum to our own peril! Working for you, the Big Mo feels like you're running on high octane, super-turbo! Working against you, it feels like running in quicksand!

Next problem: Velocity. What is velocity?

Obviously, velocity is more than speed. Velocity is considered a vector equation. (Raise your hand if you understand “vector equation.”) If I might oversimplify, velocity is speed and direction.

Growing up in northwestern Pennsylvania, our county fair boasted of being the largest agricultural fair east of the Mississippi. One of my favorite competitions at the fair was the horse pulls. Gear-heads may drool over tractor pulls, but what’s more impressive than watching two 6’3”, 2,000-pound horses pulling thousands of dead-weight pounds together?

The draft horse teamwork story is almost as renowned as Mrs. O’Leary’s horse starting the great Chicago fire. If a draft horse can pull 8,000 pounds, how much can two draft horses pull? *16,000?*

“No,” the preacher says. “24,000 pounds.”

It’s true, if the horses pull together. If they are out of sync, if one pulls before the other moves, or if they pull in opposing directions, the weights will move, but their energy will be largely wasted.

Is that not the momentum issue in many churches? Much activity, full calendars, busy schedules, much energy expended, but no progress. Much done, but not many disciples made. Much work, but not much reward.

Here’s the good news: Jesus builds the church. Jesus wants to build His church through you and the team He has called. You simply need to cooperate. The first step is aligning with Him and with each other. The Hippocratic Oath is a doctor’s vow to “first, do no harm.” If you want Jesus to build His church through you, first vow to do no harm. Vow to work with Him to create momentum, not against Him.

Creating Momentum

Alignment in the church begins with you as the leader being aligned to Jesus. Jesus defines alignment in John 10:27: “My sheep

hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.” The first step of alignment is church leadership hearing Jesus’ voice and following. In John 17:17, Jesus gives a foundation for church alignment: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Then in verses 21 and 23, He adds, “May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me . . . I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.” In other words, Jesus’ bullseye is for lost people to be saved, and the foundation for alignment to that end is unity on the truth of His Word. Period. Period. Period.

Alignment in the church begins with you as the leader being aligned to Jesus.

How does Jesus build His church? Through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does a church position herself for the greatest experience of the power of the Holy Spirit? By aligning to God’s clearly revealed will in His Word. Momentum begins as we pull together, united in speed and direction with the Holy Spirit.

Next, momentum builds as the people of each church align to God’s vision for the church He is calling us to build. Think about this in terms of starting a restaurant. If you’re starting a restaurant you need to be clear about what type of restaurant you’re starting. If you have a vision for starting an upscale Mexican restaurant, but your partners and employees think they’re helping you start a “Taco Bell,” good luck creating momentum towards your vision. For your church to be faithful to God’s calling, your people must be clear on God’s vision for your church, for your community, in your sub-cultural setting, and in your historical moment.

Alignment to Jesus’ voice and alignment to a clear vision, one that articulates Jesus’ voice, must be followed by alignment to

clear strategies that are aligned to Jesus' leadership. So far, we have described, at a 30,000-foot level, three levels of alignment. Alignment to God's clear will in His Word, alignment to Jesus' vision for your specific work, and alignment to the vision and to one another through strategic plans and daily actions.

Bottom line: Do you see the challenge of alignment? Do you see how easy it is for good people to do good work—even Biblical work—yet see little forward progress? How many times do church leaders get frustrated with a lack of fruitfulness and then point the finger at people? Perhaps the problem isn't the quality of your people or their effort. Often, the problem is that good people are not properly aligned.

Do the Math

Remember the first law of motion teaches us that objects want to do what they are already doing. An object at rest wants to stay at rest. An object in motion wants to stay in motion. Momentum is a God-given law of nature that He designed to work for us. Our purpose in this chapter is not to explore all the nuances and applications of momentum in the work of the church. However, we hope to stimulate you to become more aware of momentum so it can work for you!

A simple reading of the book of Acts shows the power of momentum. Jesus' vision for spreading the gospel was for each disciple to be a disciple maker. With that simple vision and clear strategy, the church moved from addition in Acts 2 to multiplication by Acts 6: "And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly" (Acts 6:7, ESV).

Jesus' vision for spreading the gospel was for each disciple to be a disciple maker.

By Acts 13, Luke showcases the multiplying church in Antioch. At this point, the gospel begins to spread throughout the Mediterranean region and beyond. How does that movement start? The Antioch disciples release their best leaders, Saul and Barnabas, to make disciples and plant new churches.

Which church do you believe best aligns with what honors God? The church that seeks to be a big, impressive tree, or the church that seeks to produce fruit in many orchards? Antioch is an orchard tree. Antioch practiced open-handedness with resources, intentionally equipping and sending their best leaders out to start new churches and other kingdom initiatives.

If the story of how the church momentum and multiplication in the book of Acts hasn't challenged your big-tree vision, just do the math. Are you ready for a math refresher? Crunch the numbers with us.

Church Plant #1 had a healthy launch team of forty people heading into opening day of worship gatherings. This church plant sets a vigorous goal of *adding* forty more people per month for the first year. That's a goal most people would rally around! Now, Church Plant #2 sets a different goal. They begin with three couples (six adults) with a goal of *multiplying* their groups each month.

What will the two new churches look like on their first birthdays?

Month	Church Plant #1 Attendance (Addition)	Church Plant # 2 Attendance (Multiplication)
1	40	6
2	80	12
3	120	24
4	160	48
5	200	96
6	240	192
7	280	384
8	320	768
9	360	1,536
10	400	3,072
11	440	6,144
12	480	12,288

Church Plant #1 grew from 40 to 480 people in that first year. Church Plant #2 started with only 6 adults and grew to 12,288 people in that same first year. How can that be? Isn't that impossible? But that's the power of multiplication versus addition. This is exponential growth. This is why every church should have a church multiplication strategy.

*"I will not vote against the truths of the multiplication table."
—James A. Garfield, 20th President of the United States*

If multiplying a church to 12,000 in a year is so easy, why doesn't everyone do it? Obviously, church planting is not math, and it's 1,000 times easier to paste a chart in a book than to actually reach lost people! But you can still catch the vision. Jesus calls

us to think *multiplication*, not addition. The four-minute mile was once considered the humanly-impossible, unbreakable record. Until Roger Bannister did it. Since then, over 500 American men have broken the unbreakable mark.

Is it possible that discipleship multiplication is the modern church's four-minute mile? That sentence sounds like so much Christian-guru claptrap even as I (Brett) write it. I wouldn't believe it either, except that it is the pattern of Jesus' church in the book of Acts. If the book of Acts is normative at all, then multiplication is God's normal. Our addition is the aberrant.

Is it possible that discipleship multiplication is the modern church's four-minute mile?

Todd Wilson has been on New Life's staff for over fifteen years. In his role leading Exponential, Todd advocates that if you commit to the following principles, you will establish a multiplication momentum culture at your church:

- Plant your first church before building or buying your first building.
- Send out your first church planter before accumulating your first two to three staff members.
- Commit the first fruits of your financial resources, tithing ten percent or more to church planting, even before paying other essentials (like salaries).
- Plant your first church before starting your first campus.
- Come alongside and coach other church planters in your area who can benefit from your encouragement and experience.
- Start or join a church-planting network, locally or nationally, to collaborate in multiplying churches.

Multiplication Thinking

Over recent years, certain behaviors of multiplication have surfaced in the church-planting community. Behaviors that have shifted the thinking of church leaders from growth through addition to growth through multiplication. Let these behaviors encourage you as you embrace multiplication on your journey to “go and make disciples.” You could call these “proverbs on multiplication.”

- *Give Away Your Best*: Be willing to release your best leaders or staff for the kingdom multiplication win.
- *Propensity Toward “Yes”*: Church planting can sometimes be experimental and messy. Instead of shutting ideas down, think, *How can I get to a yes?*
- *Don’t Fund Brick and Mortar*: Buildings slow you down. Make funding of church plants a higher priority than your building fund.
- *Join and Form Networks*: Develop friendships with local pastors to form a network to plant new churches regionally.
- *Send vs. Accumulate*: Embrace multiplication by sending planting teams rather than accumulating (adding) people at your church.
- *No Fame or Fortune*: Be joyful through daughter and granddaughter church plants instead of the potential fame and fortune of the megachurch.
- *Internal Church Planter Pipeline*: Look for leaders “in the harvest” and develop a pipeline of prospective planters.
- *Plant Rabbits Not Elephants*: Large (elephant) churches are too slow and expensive. Small (rabbit) churches are simple, inexpensive, and lead to mass reproduction.
- *Run with Scissors (Take Risks)*: Is church planting risky? Yes. Taking a risk to achieve a kingdom purpose requires courage to face the fear of uncertainty.

- *Tithe to Church Planting*: One of the simplest ways to get involved in church planting is to take a portion of your missions giving and earmark it for planting.
- *Change the Scorecard*: Measure what matters. Rather than butts, buildings, and bucks, we should measure how we are doing regarding what Jesus told us to do: “Go and make disciples.” Measure baptisms and the number of people who are sharing their faith on a regular basis. Measure how many leaders are being discipled and discipling others.
- *Bigger Isn’t Better; More Is Better*: Bigger churches aren’t the answer to exponential growth. Reproducing and multiplying churches have a broader kingdom impact in the long run.
- *OJT Now, Seminary Later*: Don’t let seminary be a prerequisite (roadblock) to church planting. Get practical nuts-and-bolts, on-the-job training now, and go to seminary in the future (or along the way).
- *Make Heroes of Multipliers*: Are you a hero or a hero-maker? As a hero-maker, you develop leaders who become disciple makers and then do the same for other leaders. Let’s celebrate our hero multipliers.
- *Erode All Unnecessary Controls*: When we begin planning to multiply our church, immediately we think of all the controls and oversight needed to ensure success. Some control may be necessary, but learn to let go and keep only the controls that are essential.
- *New Plant Before New Campus*: Churches may desire the benefits of multisite, but we must recognize the multisite model’s inherent limitation to multiplication. A church-planting church may start a hundred churches over its lifespan. However, it’s unlikely a multisite church will see more than ten to fifteen campuses due to the amount of energy it takes to manage campuses and keep them aligned.

- *Bi-Vo and Co-Vo Planters*: Do you know folks who are thriving in their secular work environment while at the same time making disciples? Encourage them to pray about planting a church while remaining bi-vocational or co-vocational. We need more tent-making disciples!
- *Obsessive Dedication to Disciple Making*: Establish the disciple-making DNA and culture in the church plant during the pre-launch phase. It's both difficult and challenging to turn on the disciple-making switch five years into the life of a new church.

*“We don’t want to start a megachurch—
we want to start a mother church.”
—Jeff Christopherson, Author, Missiologist*

So what are you waiting for? Get a jump start on multiplication by crafting your Church Multiplication Strategy using the free template linked at the end of this chapter (in the Tips section). Don't put off developing this strategy. Churches that don't start a new church by their third birthday will likely not become a multiplying church. If you wait until your church is *ready* to plant, you'll probably never begin the work of planting.



Church Multiplication Strategy Template

www.church-planting.net/church-multiplication-strategy

Notes

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About the Authors

BRETT ANDREWS is the founding pastor of New Life Christian Church in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. Since launching in 1993, New Life has grown to be multi-site and has directly planted 294 churches with over 31,000 people reached. They've also built a national church-planting ministry, Passion for Planting, that has impacted countless other church plants by providing free resources and project management and by shaping Exponential into what it is today. New Life also runs the nZone, an indoor recreational facility, which allows over 400,000 Washingtonians experience the love of God every year—before they know it's God's love they are experiencing. Brett's greatest blessing on earth is his wife of twenty-nine years, Laura, and their four children. He enjoys sailing, coaching baseball, and his beagle, who will eagerly greet you by wetting the floor.

DALE SPAULDING is recently retired after serving as the Director of Passion for Planting for seven years. Located in Chantilly, VA, Passion for Planting was founded by church planters to help church planters stay focused on people. Prior to his work at P4P, Dale was a software quality engineer and technical fellow with The Boeing Company. Prior to Boeing, Dale served in the US Navy for twenty-two years, retiring as a Lieutenant Commander. Dale holds a BS in Business Administration from Auburn University and an MS in Information Systems from the US Naval Postgraduate School. Dale lives in Fairfax, VA with his wife Nancy. He has two sons and three grandchildren.

SEAN CRONIN works on staff with Passion for Planting—training, supporting, and equipping church planters. He also serves in various roles at New Life Christian Church in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. He’s a graduate of Ozark Christian College and Cincinnati Bible Seminary, where he studied church planting and leadership. He then put his education to work by helping start churches in his hometown of Buffalo, NY.