

A Church Planting Strategy for the 21st Century

By: Mike Bailey

Why do you start new churches when we have so many already? This is a question often posed to church planters by other Christians. Somehow the thought of a new church in their community seems to be a threat to those Christians whose churches are struggling to survive. It's also a relevant question for the Pastor who has a burden to expand the Kingdom of God. The simple answer is that the planting of new churches stands head and shoulders above every other strategy for reaching new people for Christ.

In spite of the numerous churches in our communities 70% of all Americans have no meaningful church relationship. Recent statistics show that there are 195 million un-churched people in America. This is ample evidence that there is plenty of fruit left in the harvest for all to have a bountiful crop. In light of the scope of the task we face to fulfill the Great Commission in our Jerusalems and Judeas we should strongly consider the most effective means to get the job done.

One reason that more churches don't consider this an option is the irrational fear that their church will suffer in the process either through competition for members or diluted resources. These fears reveal a root of unbelief in the one who would be stalemated by them. Not only will the Gospel be advanced in the lives of new believers, the local church prospers as well. Church planting energizes the mother church by releasing new opportunities for ministry to develop. In addition it demonstrates positive forward movement to the congregation. Success in any area of ministry breeds success. It's contagious, and I hope you catch it!

There are a number of strategies for church planting. The two most common are the pioneering and mother/daughter model. The pioneering method describes an individual with a burden for a particular geographic area who will launch out on their own to start a new work. This was the pattern of missionary movements for most of the church's history. The mother/daughter model describes a sponsoring relationship between a planting church and the church that is birthed. From my observation this can be the most effective means of advancing the Kingdom.

The first question that comes up is where will the new pastors come from?

They are among us. God's first law of creation is that everything reproduces after its own kind. Monkeys reproduce monkeys, sheep reproduce sheep, and pastors reproduce pastors.

Paul told Timothy, "the things you have heard me say...entrust to reliable men, who will be qualified to teach others." That simple statement describes 4 generations of leaders who are advancing the Kingdom in the lives of others. The key is to develop the reliable leaders in our midst by entrusting ministry to them. Once a responsibility is entrusted you soon find out who is reliable and who is not. Those that are faithful entrust more and more into their care until they are ready to launch.

In some churches it may be more of a concern as to where the finances will come from. What we have done at Grace Covenant Church is to set aside 5% of all undesignated funds for church planting. When a new church is planted they also begin to contribute to this fund and it is amazing how quickly the resources grow. When the mother church was started we only had a few thousand dollars to launch. We did it by the pioneering method and it was mostly funded by my own business for several years. Progress was painfully slow.

The second church we started with just over \$14,000. Even 10 years ago that wasn't much money, but the church had a much larger beginning. We sent 50+ folks from the mother church and did a county wide advertising campaign. On the church's first day it was the second largest church in the county with 145 folks in attendance and it was self-supporting. Today that church has around 400 attending and has planted other churches that have planted other churches.

Two years ago we birthed another church. We encouraged around 40 folks to go w/ the new church who were from that geographic area. The start up funds we used was around \$60,000. Today that church has its own beautiful facility that will seat 185 and a congregation that averages over 110 in attendance. In addition it has been self-supporting from day one.

If we truly believe what we have preaching since the beginning of the Charismatic renewal that we shall reap even as we have sown, then we must believe that sponsoring new churches is great for the Kingdom and great for us. Jesus said He was building His Church. I believe He is still hard at work and I love working along side of Him in the project that is closest to his heart.

There is much more to share than can be done in this short article if you interested in discussing this more feel free to contact me.

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