

Reaching People In and Around a Small Town

By: Ernest E. Brown

Start With Purpose

Acts 13:36 "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed." (NIV)

It appears that ministers always date the growth of the church they are at from their point of arrival. There were men who were here before me, and the work they did, was the foundation that we began from. I came to Arab, Alabama February 1995. We have experienced 11 years of gradual growth. There has not been a down year, but there have been years of minimum increase. But each year has shown an increase in new births, baptisms, membership and attendance as well as missionary outreach giving.

At issue when we arrived was a credibility gap in the community. My family heritage is this county, so that is where we began in our rebuilding the broken down walls...or, bringing God to our town. . . . or Reaching People in and Around Small Towns!

Nehemiah 6:1-19

I. Stay With Passion

A. Passion for God – Nehemiah 6:16b – "They realized this work had been done with the help of our God."

B. Passion for prayer – Nehemiah 6:9b; 14 – But I prayed, "now strengthen my hands." (14.) Remember Tobiah and Sanballet, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me."

C. Passion for God's work – Nehemiah 6:3 – "so I sent messengers to them with this reply: I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"

D. Passion for people

Purpose and Passion produce the ability to stay on Mission – Nehemiah 6:3

Believe that this place is where God wants to begin the next great awakening—God’s plan is always a “Great work.” Know it, believe it, and stick with it. There will always be those who try to knock you off purpose. It’s easy to drift.

E. “Stay until the work is finished”

“Stay here and build a great church—the pattern will be different but it will be built if you stay” Pastor George Waller at the installation service at my ordination service as pastor of the church.

II. Steps To Success

How to reach people in and around small towns – 11 years at the Christian Center, Arab, Alabama has forced me to recognize some characteristics that are essential to small town ministry in America.

1. Don’t be lazy – Nehemiah 6:3 We are to be involved in “the work.” It is easy to appear busy and yet coast in ministry – I try to break stereotypes for preachers—God gives vision to people who are willing to work

2. Do something different with purpose

Why be like everyone else? Tastes like chicken isn’t a compliment! It is okay to do a WOW service, one that makes people think and rather than be amused. Latin—a-(not)—muse-(think)

A. Different times of worship

Multiple services – Saturday evening – Sunday evening

It is always easier to add something new than to completely take away the familiar.

B. Different types of worship

It is not about ancient or future worship it is about variety and focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Different types of ministries

3. Dare to lead

How do you move from a one man ministry model to the corporate ministry model? “The anointing will always be greater on the corporate than on the individual.” Alan McSavage—Greater Emmanuel Ministries

A. It’s a process – be intentional

Changing vocabulary—changing structure

B. It takes patience—to move into the corporate ministry model takes time.

4. Don't let negative people set the agenda – Nehemiah 6:1-8

Follow the 95/5 Rule – 95% positive – 5% negative – give the 95% - 95% of your time and energy and the 5% - 5% of your time and energy. You only have so much.

5. Don't be fear driven – Nehemiah 6:10-13 – well meaning people with bad advice or hirelings

* "We can't do that"

* "We've never done it that way before"

* "We can't afford it" – where God guides He provides

* "What if?" So and so quits giving or we fail etc... take risks

6. Decide who leaves your church – Nehemiah 6:17

"If some are not leaving – you probably not doing much right....If you stay focused on your mission – then you decide who leaves – not them. If you focus on pleasing the disgruntled you will drive off the good folks."

7. Deliberately provide opportunities for outreach

8. Do give God the Glory – Nehemiah 6:16

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