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There must be more churches, more churches that are effective and more churches that are flourishing because the hand of God is on them.



SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

Essential Principles for Church Planting

Why should new churches be started?
Who should do it?
How should it be done?

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There must be more churches,
more churches that are effective
and more churches that are
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Church planters are people of vision. They see people that are lost, confused and without spiritual direction. They long to see them know God, they long to see them living purposeful, righteous and fruitful lives and they long to see them gathered into fellowships that are expressions of the family of God. Is God impressing on you a desire to reach out to lost people? Is He giving you a picture of how He might use you to plant or help plant a church? If so, then talk to a few people you trust. Ask them to pray for you. Begin to reach out, devote time to teaching those that show promise, gather a few partners with you and consider carefully the kind of church you wish to plant. **Don't be afraid. Do it.**

A. Why should new churches continue to be planted?

1. Look around you

- a. There are people everywhere, like sheep without a shepherd, lacking harmony with each other and lacking direction for their lives. Matthew 9:36 – When he saw the crowds, “he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”. NLT
- b. See the beauty in them, people... made after the image of God, created for a reason, for a purpose. Psalm 8:4
- c. From the beginning of time, God planned for them to be born, to be awakened to Himself, to learn to walk with Him, to serve the purposes of His kingdom in life and after death to be with Him forever in His eternal kingdom. John 17:1-5; I Corinthians 2:6-8; II Timothy 1:9-10
- d. Jesus said in John 10:11-16 and in John 20:21
 - i. “I am the Good Shepherd.”
 - The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.
 - I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.
 - I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.
 - Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”
 - ii. God did not only send his Son into the world to be the Good Shepherd, He also sends those who are followers of Jesus into the world to reach out to those who are lost, like sheep without a shepherd.
- e. Jesus commissioned His followers to go everywhere, inviting others to know and follow their true Shepherd, gathering them in congregations, where they would be comforted, taught and strengthened and sent out to continue to make more disciples and churches everywhere.

2. Are more churches needed?

- a. Are there still people, like sheep without a shepherd?
 - i. If so, then there still need to be more “good shepherd imitators” who will give their lives to reach, teach, gather and send. Like Jesus, they long that others also “may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10
 - ii. Every person should be within reach of a church that expresses the life and love of Jesus Christ. They should be able to see and experience the love God has for them through the church, the people of God who are living it out from day to day. They too should have the opportunity to hear the plan and purpose of God for their world, their family and their own lives.
- b. But shouldn't people be gathered into the congregations we already have?
 - i. It is in the plan of God that healthy living things reproduce and multiply. In the case of churches; they are to reproduce disciples, they are to reproduce shepherds, leaders and churches.
 - ii. Sometimes new churches must be formed because of the disobedience of existing churches or because existing churches have lost their vision for faithful service to the society in which they live.

B. Who should start churches?

1. One or more people that have a persistent desire to do so

- a. Nobody starts a new church without a strong compelling sense of its necessity
- b. Their desire must be fuelled by the Word and the Spirit
- c. Not by desires for status, material gain or a rebellious spirit

2. Those with reasonable maturity

- a. Individuals with a good understanding of the Word of God
- b. Individuals who have and continue to learn to know the ways of the Holy Spirit
- c. People whose wills are “bowed to the will of God”
- d. Individuals that have walked with God for some time; not new converts

- ii. But he was also a man of prayer. God directed him. Sometimes we struggle to know when should we pray and when should we plan and make up our minds and make decisions?
- iii. How can we make good decisions together?
Pay special attention to:
 - The guiding teachings and principles of Scripture
 - The voices of mature and experienced people
 - Evidence of a clear majority
 - The witness of the Holy Spirit
 - Timing. Sometimes we fail to be united in our decision making because the timing is not right.
- vi. Good decisions include both “harmony and direction”.

6. Adjust to growth

Adjustments must be made as congregations grow

- a. 5-12 youth and adults, one person leads the group
- b. 12-25 people, mostly adults & youth, a leader and a few informal helpers
- c. 25-40 people, things have to get a bit more organized, informal helpers become more formal helpers. Don't forget Section D. 4. e.
- d. 40-80 people are ready to become more organized as a church
- e. 80-150 increasing need for repetition and continual communication about how our church works
- f. 150-250 increasing need for delegation and empowering of gifted people to work more independently from the primary leaders

7. Plan to plant again

- a. At what size or stage should we consider our next church plant?
- b. When should it happen? Give people time to get used to the idea.
- c. Choose individuals to provide leadership for the new church.
- d. Give them everything they need to succeed.

e. Church leadership develops in stages

- i. Informal influence. When new fellowships begin to form they don't have people with formal leadership roles. But that doesn't mean there isn't leadership, it is simply an informal style of leadership. It is embodied in those who "make things happen".
- ii. Formalized leadership. When the apostle Paul travelled to various cities to evangelize, there was response. But he did not formally appoint elders or leaders for several years. When he did, he appointed people that were the most mature of the group, those who well respected and those who imitated the apostles in words and deeds. Acts 14:23; I Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9
- iii. Leadership "Change Points". When churches grow, decline, key people move away, age – congregational dynamics change and leadership must change. These "change points" often go unrecognized and create problems in churches. Be alert to them.

f. Leadership, delegation and administration

- i. In new church formation leadership must gradually become more formalized if the church is to flourish.
- ii. Those leaders should not do everything themselves, they must delegate ministries to other that are suited to such roles.
- iii. Management or administration is required.
 - Clarity must be established about how leaders are appointed, what their ministry roles are, how lines of accountability work and for how long and under what circumstances they remain in their ministry positions. Although the Bible is our guide in all such matters it does not provide detailed information in all these areas. Wisdom is required to know how to apply Biblical principles.
 - There must be good order in how our finances are handled. Sometimes those who are good at forming churches are not good at handling money. It is of great importance that trustworthy people be found to administer finances in a way that enhances the credibility of the church.

g. Planning, praying and decision making

- i. The apostle Paul was a planner. He deliberately planted churches in major and strategic cities. He planned his schedule, he recruited team members, he collected financial gifts for the poor and wrote letters of instruction to churches he was associated with.

3. Those who have positive reputations

- a. Individuals that have learned to get along with other people
- b. Individuals that are open and honest in dealing with money
- c. Individuals that have the positive support from those who know them best

4. Those that have some capacity to do it

- a. They have demonstrated a capacity to win non believers to a life of following Christ
- b. They know how to teach others the word of God and the ways of discipleship
- c. They know how to gather people so that together they have harmony and direction of purpose

5. Those with great faith in God

- a. They believe that He has moved them and convinced them to initiate or be part of initiating a new ministry or church plant
- b. They trust him completely for everything that will be required at every stage
- c. They trust, not in their own strength, but in His power

6. Those who will trust and partner with others

- a. Such individuals must learn to trust others and to share influence with them
- b. They must learn how to trust and cooperate with leaders of other churches
- c. They must learn how to submit to others in the interest of unity
- d. They must learn wisdom about when to wait, when to submit, when to adjust and when to press forward

7. Those who acknowledge and continually discipline their negative desires

- a. Their own capacity for folly is great, I Timothy 6:11,12
- b. Their sexuality must be continually disciplined
- c. Their marriages and family lives must be protected and nurtured, Titus 1:6
- d. Their handling of money and material things must be without reproach

8. Five common characteristics of church planters

- a. They have an ability to see possibilities that don't yet exist
- b. Are motivated to work hard from deep within, not because others think they should
- c. Are able to help others feel that this is "their church" and that they share in the responsibility for it
- d. Communicate effectively with those that are not yet followers of Jesus
- e. If married, have a strongly supportive spouse

C. How should it be done?

1. Essential Principles

- a. Start by reaching out to potentially responsive people; let the words and deeds of believers filter out to the less responsive people
 - i. The apostles went first to the Jews with whom they had much in common
 - ii. Then to Gentiles who were drawn to the Jewish synagogues
- b. Start in the larger centres; the word will spread out to the more remote areas
 - i. Paul went to the major cities first
 - ii. The Gospel radiated out to the regions around the cities
- c. Cooperate with others that are doing similar work
 - i. The apostles met to address common challenges
 - ii. Together they resolved conflicts
- d. Respect the New Testament principle that there will be leadership within and among a network of churches
 - i. Leadership within churches. Churches of the New Testament era gradually grew and were led by elders, pastors, prophets, evangelists and teachers whose focus was primarily on one congregation.
 - ii. Leadership among churches. The apostles started many churches, opened new territories and maintained positive and supportive relationships with the churches they had begun or had developed positive relationships with. These leaders focused on providing leadership among many churches. Similarly there should be

5. Leadership

- a. Criteria for church leadership
 - i. Becoming more spiritually mature – inquire about EQUIP training from VMK.
 - ii. Becoming more aware and able to acknowledge your own strengths and weaknesses – use online assessments which can help you gain insights into your own personality and tendencies. See the VMK website for information on Meyers Briggs or DISC or look for other resources that will help you evaluate yourself well.
- b. Becoming knowledgeable about church leadership
 - i. Inquire about the Jethro Manual from VMK for training in how to lead and organize a church.
 - ii. Make friends with church leaders that are succeeding in what they are doing.
- c. Progressive stages of leadership in new churches
 - i. The planter is the spiritual leader of the congregation.
 - ii. The planter as the spiritual leader, begins to appoint others to leadership roles and communicates the new arrangements to the congregation.
 - iii. The planter establishes and works with a leadership team. Together they provide leadership for the congregation.
 - iv. The team provides leadership for the congregation through its leading members and also engages the congregation in some decision making.
 - v. Communicate your intentions to the people you work with clearly so they know what to expect from you.
- d. Freedom and Order in Balance
 - i. In order for people to thrive they must be loved, well nourished spiritually and they must have the freedom to try things, express themselves and expand their spheres of service. The Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the wind or breath of God. That's freedom!
 - ii. It is also true that for people to thrive they must have direction, reasonable predictability and accountability. That's what the Holy Spirit breathed out, the word of God, the Bible. It provides instruction and the basis for both freedom and order.

4. Organizing

- a. Schedules for meetings
 - i. Primary gathering
 - ii. Secondary gatherings
 - iii. What will happen at each of these?
- b. Who should be responsible for various activities?
 - i. Who speaks/teaches? How often?
 - ii. Who leads prayer? The prayer ministry? The worship ministry?
 - iii. Who looks after Bibles? Worship materials? Keys? Arranges seating? Invites people? Provides refreshments?
- c. Who should be responsible for the funds of the group?
 - i. The planter should not be in charge of the finances. He must learn to trust others. There is no better place to start than with money.
 - ii. Open a bank account.
 - iii. Report regularly and openly on the state of the financial affairs to the whole group.
 - iv. Register with the government as required.
 - v. At least once every two years have an outside expert in financial matters review the finances and make a report to the congregation.
- d. Arrange times for communication; things that the whole group should know about, consider and discuss.
 - i. When a church is small and new, it is like an extended family.
 - ii. From time to time the family needs to talk.
 - iii. They must review progress, consider options, resolve differences and make decisions. A regular routine for this kind of communication should be established. Once every month or two months, three months or six months. At such meetings, write down the conclusions reached and confirm with everyone what those conclusions were, in order to avoid future confusion.
- e. When you ask people to do particular tasks, ask them to do them for a limited period of time. For example, would you do this for the next 3 months? 6 months? Till the end of this year? Then we will talk and decide what to do next.

an expectation of leaders among the churches we begin who help with their development and provide elements of supervision. This service is provided by Vision Ministries Kenya.

- e. The main things churches do
 - i. Engage people and communicate the good news by good deeds and true words to those that are outside of the Kingdom of God
 - ii. Nourish the faith of the members by teaching them all things
 - iii. Depend on God for everything through passionate prayer and worship
 - iv. Behave like the family of God
 - v. Practice freedom and order so that these things are done consistently and appropriately

2. Church planting methods

- a. The pioneer
 - i. Individuals are sometimes able to win people to Christ, gather them, teach them and form a new church together with them. But sooner or later, they will need partners.
- b. A team or small group with a "united heart"
 - i. It is quite common in church planting to see small groups of people who develop a common passion and heart to see a new church formed in a community God has given them a concern for.
- c. A household
 - i. Sometimes a household or family become believers and reach out to friends and neighbours who become followers of Jesus also. Together they form a new congregation.
- d. Follow-up from evangelistic activity
 - i. Some evangelists work in a community and over a period of time people begin to respond, believe and to follow the Lord. The evangelist then gathers them together and establishes a church.
- e. An extension from an existing church
 - i. As a church grows and extends its reach, some of its members will have a desire to start additional congregations in communities that are too far away for people to walk or come by public transportation. They will begin outreaches in those communities that lead to church plants.

- f. A colony
 - i. A group of people who know each other well, move to a different community to live, serve and plant a church together. They already know each others strengths and have agreed in advance what role each will play in the new church plant.
- g. A fresh expression
 - i. Sometimes churches lose their way or drift into such traditionalism that they are no longer effective. Some members of those churches may wish to start a new church as a “fresh expression” of the mission of Christ.

3. The need for partners

- a. Nobody can do it alone
 - i. Even the most capable and gifted planter needs partners, sooner or later. Those partners will be more gifted and capable than the planter or pastor in some areas of ministry. If the planter can't work with people more capable than himself in some important areas of ministry, then his own ministry will face limitations.
 - ii. It is not good for the planter to be alone!
- b. Primary church planting roles
 - i. Evangelizing and gathering people
 - ii. Teaching and discipling people
 - iii. Pastoring and shepherding people
 - iv. Leading a successful children's ministry
 - v. Leading a successful youth ministry
 - vi. Worship and worship leading
 - vii. Money management
 - viii. Administration of people and ministries
- c. Which of the above roles are you most gifted with?
- d. Where will you most need partners?

D. Stages in Planting (The book of Acts is our primary Church Planting Manual)

1. Preparing

- a. Who are the people you want to reach and where are they?
- b. Learn all you can about them
- c. Praying – is God in this? Why do you think so?
- d. What will your planting method be? (See Section C. 2.)
- e. What kind of partners will you need? (See Section C. 3.)
- f. Becoming fully persuaded that planting is for me
- g. How will you fit into the network (denomination) of churches with which you are familiar?
 - i. Who do you need to talk to?
 - ii. What do you need to do to gain their support?

2. Reaching

- a. Make this the first priority
- b. How will we reach the people?
- c. What will our evangelistic methods be?
- d. Do it in faith and with prayer
- e. Keep doing it
- f. When you have from ten to thirty believing and maturing adults meeting for discipleship and teaching, you may have the core needed to start a church

3. Gathering

- a. An increasing number of committed believers are gathering on a regular basis for Bible teaching/study, prayer and fellowship
- b. Quite a few among them have been baptized
- c. Some are showing signs of maturity and are respected as leaders among the group
- d. Some of them are showing promise of being able to carry some of the roles mentioned in Section C. 3.
- e. Relationships among the group are positive
- f. The members of the group have a heart for reaching out to those around them with good deeds and also evangelistically