

The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • May 2008

Developing Lay Leaders

Having godly lay leaders is one the secrets to developing healthy, growing churches. Blessed is the planter who has a core of committed lay people willing and qualified to fill key ministry roles in the church. It is not unusual to hear planters and pastors alike pleading for God to send them spiritually mature individuals to help in their ministries. The responsibility for developing godly lay leaders, however, does not belong to God, but the planters themselves. God is not going to do for us that which he has already commanded us to do - namely, to make disciples. Here are five things you can do to produce godly leaders for your church:

- **Prioritize** - Leadership development is intentional. It happens because someone makes it a priority and takes steps to ensure that it happens. The development of believers into leaders should be one of the top three priorities (along with preaching and winning souls) of every planter. He should see every person as a potential leader and should be constantly thinking, planning, praying, and talking about developing people into mature, godly leaders in the church. While there are many things a planter can do, there are only a few that he must do, and leadership development is one of them.

- **Identify** - Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific. The term "lay leaders" is generic and nebulous. It can mean different things to different people. Be specific. What kind of leaders are you looking for? What qualities do you want them to have? What skills and gifts do you want them to possess? What do you

want them to be able to do? Are you looking for a deacon? A Sunday School teacher? An outreach networker? A welcome coordinator? An assimilation director? Are you looking for people with godly character? A person of integrity? Someone who is growing spiritually? Do they need a servant heart or perhaps a teachable spirit? Planters must be clear and specific in



identifying who and what they are looking for in lay leaders. Otherwise, they will not be able to produce those leaders, and won't recognize them when they show up.

- **Structure** - Leadership development is a process that requires structure. There must be a predetermined plan that guides believers from conversion, to spiritual growth, to ministry involvement, and into leadership. Leadership development is nothing more than biblical discipleship. It is the process every believer should go through, but one which few do, because the structure for doing so is often missing.

Before launching public services, every church planter should have a multi-level structure in place for shepherding people through a discipleship process that will turn many of them into leaders. Sadly, most planters (and churches) have no plan for doing so. Successful planters guide new believers into a pre-planned, step-by-step process that leads them through the various stages of spiritual growth and leadership development.

A graphic is often used to help believers visualize the next step in the process. It may be a baseball diamond, a set of concentric circles, a series of stair steps, a flow chart or a visible reminder that shows where they are headed.

- **Clarify** - There are two key questions you need to ask as you contemplate developing lay

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The Sufficiency of Scripture and Church Planting

In Hebrews 1:1-2, God tells us that in the past He used a variety of means to reveal His truth in bits and pieces at different times. But Christ, the God-man, the very creator and sovereign heir of all, when He came to earth was Himself the complete and ultimate revelation of God. Then He goes on to explain that the apostles (His eye witnesses) transmitted His truths during their lifetime (Hebrews 2:3) and put them in written form so they could be passed on to others in a reliable manner (1 John 1:3-4; 2 Peter 1:18-21).

In 2 Timothy 3:15-17, God speaks to us of the origin and trustworthiness of the Scripture - it was God-breathed. Next He tells of its practical purpose and shows how it works. Finally, He explains to us that the inspired Scriptures are completely sufficient to enable us, as God's children, to be all He wants us to be, and, as His servants, to do all He wants us to do (II Peter 1:3).

As God's ambassadors, we are here to carry out His work. How can we, being mere men, accomplish this? First, He sent His Spirit, telling His disciples not to begin until He had come (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:8), and then, through the apostles, He completed the

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The Sufficiency of Scripture continued

Scriptures. Thus, He is able to say to us, "There. Now you have all that you need. Now you are completely equipped for every good work I want you to do."

The concept of starting local churches is not a human plan, it is an inherent part of Christ's commission to make disciples and to teach them to put all of His truth into practice. It is not a plan of action that we design and then ask God to bless. It is not up to us to decide what we think should be done – we are to be doing God's work. In the same way, as we go out in obedience to His command, it is not up to us to decide how we think His work should be accomplished – we must do God's work in God's way. All that we do to carry out His will must be founded on and bounded by His Word.

If we get hold of this truth, it will impact significantly the way we carry out the Great Commission. The Bible provides instruction about what we are to do, the principles that must guide the way we work, and real-life examples showing it actually being done. If we are to do church planting ministry, we must do it "By the Book!"

In the entire panorama of our ministry, from our grasp of the assignment to our understanding of how it is to be accomplished, we must submit to God's evaluation of the place His Word is to have. We must accept at face value His statement that the Scriptures will thoroughly equip us to carry out His work.

A firm belief in and understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture is tremendously important. It will affect our church-planting model, our methods of evangelism, our teaching styles, our children's ministry, the way we counsel people in their needs, our schedule of activities, our Christian education plan, our advertising and public image, our youth program, our worship service activities, and even the furnishing of our building.

In the coming issues of the "Toolbox", we will discuss some of the implications of this fundamental principle as it applies to ministry in general and church planting in particular.

Developing Lay Leaders continued

leaders in your church: *What do I want them to know?* and *What do I want them to be able to do?* Once you know the answer to those questions you will be in a position to clarify what you are going to teach at each level of the discipleship/leadership process. The goal is to provide people with the biblical information they need to grow spiritually and to develop into mature Christian leaders.

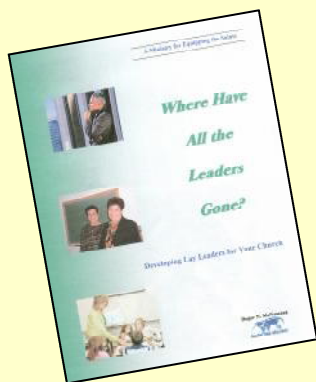
For example, if we start with a new believer, the first level of leadership development might involve a simple course covering sin, salvation, assurance, baptism, church membership, and service. This should be followed immediately by a second course on the church and its view of ministry, pastoral leadership, spiritual gifts, outreach and discipleship, Bible doctrine and distinctives, deacon ministry, and membership. Couple your initial instruction with entry-level ministry assignments so people start to develop a servant mentality from the very beginning.

Include a second, third, and fourth level in your leadership development process to teach people the habits and skills they need to grow spiritually and to become the godly leaders you want them to be.

- **Implement** - You can't get to where you want to be unless you know where you are going, and start down the road. Good intentions and well-thought out plans are of little value unless you put them into practice. Know what kinds of leaders you want, have a plan in place for developing them, prepare lesson material in advance that will produce the type of people you are looking for, and start teaching it as soon as the first person gets saved or begins attending your core group or church meetings.

America has fewer churches per capita than at any time in her history. Although the number of churches has increased by 50 percent in the past century, the population has increased 300 percent. There are now nearly 60 percent fewer churches per 10,000 persons than in 1920.

A Great New Resource



"Where Have All the Leaders Gone?" is a 92-page manual on training lay leaders in your church. The book is divided into three sections detailing the problems, principles, and process for moving people from the point of conversion to spiritual growth, maturity, ministry, and on to leadership.

Leaders seldom come pre-packaged. They must be developed from among those who accept Christ as Savior. Many churches, however, do not have a plan or process in place for guiding new believers through the various stages of spiritual development. This very practical book provides the structure your church needs to shepherd people through the growth process and on into leadership positions throughout the church. Ministry involvement combined with on-going instruction at all levels of development is seen as the key to producing healthy, growing lay leaders. Electronic copies of the manual are free of charge while spiral bound printed editions cost \$9.00 plus shipping. Contact our editor at RNMcNamara@juno.com for your copy of this valuable resource.

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