

The Church Planter's Toolbox

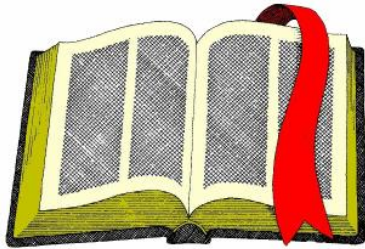
Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • July 2008

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Evangelism

In church-planting ministry, we are too often focused on finding people who are looking for a church when in reality we should be seeking those willing to study God's Word. Remember our basic assignment is to "Make disciples." When we introduce people to Christ and teach them to truly follow of Him, local churches will result.

Our first-century church planting mentor reminds us that "The Holy Scriptures ... are able to make (men) wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It is not the messenger's persuasive preaching or innovative methods that bring men to Christ; it is the Word of God. The Scripture is not just the TEXT of the gospel, it is our TOOL for evangelism. It is not just the MESSAGE of Christ which must be shared, it is itself the METHOD to be used in bringing men to salvation.

Many seem to believe that they must first convince people of the error of their religion and then persuade them of the truth. But why do we need to talk about how sharp the Spirit's sword really is -- we need to use it! Listen to the Apostle Paul's testimony regarding the power of the message and the priority of biblical methods in the work of the gospel:



"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

Some like to study using the proposition and proof-text method. But this is not the best way to help people arrive at a firm conviction regarding spiritual truth. Indeed many use the Bible in this way to teach false doctrine and a different gospel. There is great advantage when one finds the truth for himself in the Book rather than just hearing another talk about it. The unbeliever is most convicted and the doubter best convinced when we simply let the Word of God do it's work, so that faith does not rest "in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The best way to evangelize is to get folks into the Bible for them-

selves - it is "living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12-13). It will work! Those who have ministered in difficult places where one belief system dominates the religious and cultural landscape, have testified to the fact that getting people into the Scripture is what produces genuine disciples.

Continued on the next page

The Power of Vision

Vision is one of the most powerful tools in the church planter's arsenal. Yet, it is often overlooked and/or ignored by many who are seeking to establish new congregations. Consequently, their ministries suffer from a lack of growth, commitment, and funds. Without vision, ministries seldom succeed!

Moses, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul were visionary leaders. Each had a passionate vision that drove their ministries and attracted followers. They used visionary statements such as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Moses), "let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah), "I will build my church" (Jesus), and "to the regions beyond" (Paul) to attract people and to involve them in their ministries.

What is Vision? Vision is a clear and challenging picture of the future as it can and must be. It is a mental image in the heart of the church planter that describes what the church he is planting will look like when it reaches maturity. In his mind's eye he can see the building, the people, the ministries, and the impact the church will have on the community. Just as Moses was able to describe the "land flowing with milk and honey," so the planter is able to articulate the different aspects of the church he is planting.

A man's vision of what God has called him to do must capture his heart. He must be passionate about what he is doing if he expects his people to be enthused about it. Just as Nehemiah had to rekindle the vision of Jerusalem's walls rebuilt, so the planter needs to keep his church-planting vision in front of his people. He needs to remind them of what they are doing, where they are headed, and what it will be like when they get there.

Continued on the next page

Vision continued

What can Vision do for me? Planters often underestimate the impact vision can have on their ministries. When coupled with the power of God, vision can transform a struggling ministry into a vibrant, healthy, growing entity. Moses, using his vision of a "land flowing with milk and honey," was able to liberate the children of Israel from centuries of slavery and form them into a nation of God's people. Nehemiah, using his vision of a rebuilt Jerusalem, was able to rebuild the walls of the city in just fifty-two days when everyone said it couldn't be done. Jesus, using his vision of making disciples, has birthed thousands of churches around the world. Here are a few of the things that a well-thought-out, oft-articulated vision can do for you:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Attract Followers | 6) Encourage Hearts |
| 2) Enthuse Workers | 7) Enlist Commitment |
| 3) Stimulate Giving | 8) Instill Confidence |
| 4) Measure Progress | 9) Motivate Involvement |
| 5) Keep you on Course | 10) Give Direction and Purpose |

How do I Develop Vision? Successful church planters are by nature visionaries. They understand that it is their job to create the vision for the entire church. Vision, however, can not be conjured up. As with Moses, it must come from God as you seek HIS VISION for your ministry. Vision is born as you:

- *Spend time in prayer and Bible study* - It is absolutely essential that you seek God's face in determining what he wants to accomplish through you and the church you are planting. Let him impress upon your heart and mind a picture of the church as it can, and yes, must be, what ministries it should have, how big it should grow, and what it will be like.
- *Let your dream be as big as God* - Like the disciples of Jesus' day, planters need to lift their sights and look at the potential harvest that lies all around them. Church planting is not about what they can do, but what God can do through them. They often have small churches because they have small dreams. Enlarge your dream so it reflects the all-powerful, mighty God we serve.
- *Expand your mission statement* - A purpose statement explains why the church exists. A mission statement explains what the church is supposed to be doing. A vision statement describes where the church is going and what it will be like when it gets there. If your church were highly successful in fulfilling its God-given mission, what would it look like? Your answer to that question describes your vision.
- *Articulate your vision repeatedly* - Your vision must become the people's vision. Talk about it, include it in your teaching and preaching, print it in the bulletin, put it up on the wall, constantly remind people why you are there and where you are going.

Sufficiency of Scripture continued

Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). God the Spirit brings forth new life "by the Word of truth" (James 1:18) and people are "Born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

If we would do effective evangelism that results in churches being established, we must do it "By the Book!" We must use the Word of God. It is sufficient.

Evangelistic Effectiveness

Age of Church	Members per Baptism
0-2	10.3
3-5	14.2
21-30	29.4
51+	46.7
10 and under	15.6
11 and over	41.6

Church planting is the most effective evangelistic method available today. Churches tend to lose their evangelistic fervor as they grow older.

The *Church Planter's Toolbox* is published six times a year. © 2008 Baptist Mid-Missions. All rights reserved. For reprint requests, contact one of the editors.

Editors

Roger McNamara
Church Planting Training Specialist
E-mail: RNMcNamara@juno.com

Dan Whitcher
Church Planting Coordinator
E-mail: dan4bmm@aol.com

Baptist Mid-Missions
P.O. Box 308011
Cleveland, Ohio 44130-8011
www.bmm.org

187 McLaughlin Drive
Moncton, NB E1A 4P4
Canada

Previous editions of *The Church Planters Toolbox* and other valuable resources are available at:
<http://www.churchplantingna.org/>



Will You Come to Church with Me? (Asked of the Unchurched)

	<u>Very Likely</u>	<u>Somewhat Likely</u>	<u>Total</u>
U5	0%	20%	20%
U4	17%	45%	62%
U3	23%	63%	86%
U2	46%	51%	97%
U1	52%	45%	97%

U5 - highly antagonistic to the gospel
U4 - resistant to the gospel
U3 - neutral toward the gospel

U2 - open to the gospel
U1 - highly receptive to the gospel