

The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • September 2008

Pastor or Planter?

God gifts people for different ministries. The Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the human body to illustrate this truth in First Corinthians 12. God prepares different people to function as “feet,” “ears,” “eyes,” and “noses” in the Body of Christ. Each has a different shape, skill, and passion that enables him/her to perform particular tasks.

In Ephesians 4:11 we are told God gives gifted men to the church to fulfill certain leadership ministries. Included in the list are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. While there are undoubtedly some overlapping of gifts and skills, each was uniquely gifted to perform the ministry tasks associated with his leadership position.



The “apostles” of the past often functioned as planters taking the gospel to new places

and peoples, building core groups of believers, organizing them into local churches, and ordaining pastors over these new congregations before moving on to do it all over in another place.

In contrast, the “pastors” had shepherd’s hearts and a deep love for their people and the Word of God. Their ministry focused more on caring for the sheep inside the fold, shepherding them, nourishing and nurturing them, and helping them to mature into fully-functioning followers of Christ.

This is not to say that the apostolic planters of yesteryear or the planters of today don’t love people and aren’t interested in seeing believers grow to spiritual maturity. We are saying, however, that the focus, passion, and giftedness of planters and pastors are different because God has equipped them for different ministries.

One of the problems we face today in church planting is that a number of planters seem to be more suited to pastoring than to planting. They are good men who love God, people, and the ministry, but seem to lack the passion, giftedness, and skills needed to be planters. They tend to “homestead” in an area and are sometimes content to shepherd two or three dozen believers for

The Sufficiency of Scripture and the Pulpit

If the Scripture is sufficient to convince the sinner, convert the lost, edify the believer and perfectly equip him for all God wants him to be and do, then above all else in church-planting work we must make the Scripture our focus and the ministry of the Word our priority.

The church had not gone far in its development when the apostles recognized that the ministry of the Word needed to occupy the majority of their efforts and that all they did must be bathed in prayer. “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4).

In the church-planting manuals written, under divine inspiration, by Paul to his teammates (see 1 Timothy 3:15), the Holy Spirit tells us again and again to “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Timothy 4:13). Yet in many churches today biblical preaching seems to have given way to fireside chats, and the teaching of the Word in the classroom has turned into discussions about the latest best-selling book that even remotely relates to the Bible.

Titus was left in charge of the maturing and multiplication phase of the church-planting ministry on Crete as the rest of the team moved on. Paul coaches him that in establishing other churches throughout the island, above all else the pastors must be men who are “holding fast the faithful word” (Titus 1:9). The rest of the epistle makes it plain that this not only refers to standing firmly



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years with little progress toward self-support. Their giftedness enables them to function well as pastors in these small, developing works.

Planters, however, have their own unique giftedness, focus, intensity, and characteristics. Here are some of the ways in which God has gifted them for planting:

Visionary - They possess a clear and challenging view of the future as they believe it can and must be, and are able to articulate it regularly in such a way that others buy into it. They know where they are going and how to get there.

Entrepreneurial - They are good at organizing and starting things from scratch, while creating ownership and a sense of personal responsibility in

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Pastor or Planter continued

others for the growth and success of the ministry.

Evangelistic - They relate well to the unchurched and build a rapport with them that enables them to share the gospel in meaningful terms that frequently results in people committing their lives to Christ as Savior.

Communicator - While their styles differ, they are persuasive in their presentation of whatever they are communicating both publicly and privately.

Growth Oriented - They are committed to increasing both the quantity and quality of disciples through effective outreach and discipleship.

Understand Secular Culture - Just as foreign missionaries study and adapt to the cultures on their fields of service, so productive planters understand and adapt to the ever-changing landscape of post-modernism in North America.

Intrinsically Motivated - Successful planters are self-starters who are committed to excellence through hard work and determination. They demonstrate resilience in spite of hardships and disappointments.

Equippers - Rather than trying to do most things themselves, they implement discipleship processes to help others recognize, develop, and use their skills in their areas of giftedness.

Build Group Cohesiveness - Planters are able to develop a team mentality that enables people to work together toward common goals, while skillfully managing divisiveness and disunifying elements.

Not all planters will have all the above characteristics, but they will possess many of them if God has indeed gifted them to be planters. A man is unlikely to be a successful planter without these qualities. This perhaps explains why so many planting ministries struggle - their leaders are actually more suited to pastoring than to planting. Many of these men might function more effectively and find greater fulfillment in a support role on a team ministry or as the first pastor of the church after the planter moves on to his next target area.

Mission agencies, sponsoring churches, and planters alike should carefully evaluate each man's skills, passions, and giftedness to determine whether he is truly gifted to be a pastor or a planter, and then direct him into the ministry role for which God has prepared him. Assessment tools, personal interviews, and internships can play a vital role in this process.

Scripture and Pulpit continued

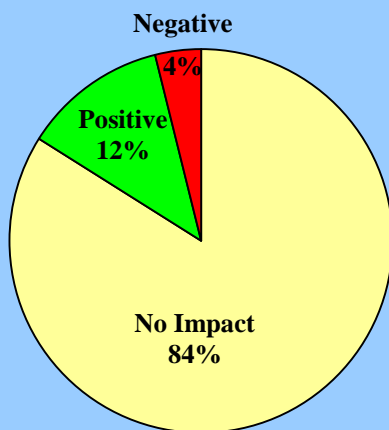
on its authority, but also to passionately ministering it in such a clear and practical way that its truth is applied to everyday life. The watching world will then see a clear witness of Jesus Christ (see Philippians 2:15-16). Modern churches seem to be focused more on helping people feel comfortable and "safe" than on faithfully proclaiming God's truth. One wonders if the pulpit being removed from some church platforms is subtly giving the impression that the preaching of the authoritative Word of God is no longer important. There are many in today's churches who are entertained, but I fear, too few whose hearts are truly impacted by the Word of God.

In 2 Timothy, right in between that great statement on the source, purpose and power of the Scripture (3:14-17) and a description of the spiritual environment in which God's servants would minister (4:3-4), comes this pungent command: "Preach the Word; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (4:2).

It is precisely because the Scripture is of divine origin that we must preach the Word. Because God's Word can save the lost, we must preach the Word. Because its purpose is to convict, convince and change lives, we must preach the Word. Because it will perfectly equip believers for life and service, we must preach the Word. Even when people will not endure sound teaching and desire something else, we must preach the Word. Why is it preachers are talking so much about how to have the best life now and so little about how to glorify God forever? When will churches stop seeking to attract the unsaved with nightclub style worship and game show Christianity, when the fact is that God is pleased to use "the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21)?

We want to be instruments God uses to exalt Christ and to establish churches that effectively fulfill the commission He left us in an ever-changing environment. If this is to happen, we must get back to basics and once again put the ministry of the Word on center stage.

Does the Name of the Church Influence People's Decision to Go to that Church?



Contrary to popular opinion, research among the formerly unchurched indicates that including the denominational identity (such as "Baptist") in the church's name has little or no impact on a person's decision to attend that church.

Of those who said the church's name did influence their choice, three times as many indicated the name had a positive influence on their decision as said it affected their choice negatively.

Thom Rainer - *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*

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