

# The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • July 2007

## The Main Thing

To be successful in church planting, don't focus on building the church! Instead, focus on building people. Focusing on the church may develop an organization, but focusing on people will build a church.

Of all the places in scripture where our Savior's commission to his servants is recorded, the most thorough description is found in Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

The command in this verse is to "**make disciples.**" That's right! It is not to plant churches, but to help people become followers of Christ. The grammar in the rest of the sentence indicates disciples are made by "going," "baptizing" and "teaching."

**Going** - If we would make disciples for Christ, we must go after them. We cannot just hang out our sign and expect the people to flock to us—we must find them where they are. People don't normally respond to programs and promotion designed to draw them to church—they do respond to people who will invest time to first build a relationship with them, and then share with them God's Word. If we would obey the Master, we too must be going "to seek and to save that which (is) lost."

**Baptizing** - We must bring them to Christ. Not only must we give them the good news that there is a Savior, but we must get them into the Scripture where they can truly know that Savior. A superficial profession will not do—there must be a sincere faith in the Son of God and His substitutionary

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## Why Plant More Churches in North America?

Part 1

The question is often asked, "With over 350,000 churches already in existence, why do we need to plant more churches in North America?" It is a valid question that deserves an honest answer. Here are some of the reasons:

**Church planting enhances our evangelistic effectiveness** - The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches. Virtually every research project shows new churches have a greater emphasis on outreach and soul-winning than most established churches. One cross-denominational study found that established churches average just FOUR baptisms per 100 members whereas newly established churches average SIXTEEN baptisms for every 100 members. As churches move through their life cycle there is a gradual shift from evangelism to edification, and from multiplication to maintenance. New churches tend to have a clearer vision, a greater passion for the lost, and are more focused on reaching out to the unchurched around them.

**Church planting can reverse the current trend of decline** - An estimated seventy-five to eighty percent of churches in America are in decline with about 3,500 professing Christians being lost to nominalism, unbelief, and secularism every day. North America is the only continent on earth where Christianity is not growing. An aggressive program of church planting can reverse this trend by creating thousands of new churches focused on outreach and biblical discipleship. Church planting revives flagging spirits, rekindles passion for the lost, and energizes churches to new, more effective ministry.

**Church planting is needed to reach the multitudes of unsaved people** - There are approximately 240 million unsaved people living in all of North America. Between one-third and one-half of this number are totally unchurched. With the exception of only two or three countries, the unsaved population of the United States is greater than the total population of any other country in the world. Each succeeding generation is becoming more unchurched than the previous ones. New churches are more intentional and more effective in reaching the unsaved multitudes around them. Tens of thousand of new churches are needed to reach these unchurched multitudes.

**Church planting reaches out to our ethnic neighbors** - North America is a land of immigrants, a vast stew pot of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds speaking over 500 languages and dialects. Nearly one of every three Americans identifies with some ethnic group. The vast majority of people comprehend the gospel better in their own language and respond more readily if they don't have to cross racial and cultural barriers. This is especially true of first and second generation peoples. Many can only be reached by establishing new congregations that speak their language and reflect their culture. Right now, we need to start thousands of Spanish-speaking churches along with hundreds of others that speak Chinese, Arabic, and the other languages of our newest residents.

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*The Main Thing continued*

sacrifice so that baptism follows a genuine birth by the Spirit.

**Teaching** - Helping people to follow Christ means teaching them His truth, showing them what it means to live that truth, and then helping them learn how to put it into practice. Church-planting ministries must be characterized by the practical teaching of the Word of God. In a day when many are peddling their own ideas or teaching from a best-selling book, we must be convinced of the power of the Scriptures and committed to exposing and expounding them clearly and passionately.

Discipleship is more than just helping new believers get started in the Christian life, it is the whole task of reaching people wherever they are and taking them to where God wants them to be. To do that, we must:

- Discern their spiritual condition
- Know where they need to go
- Give them what they need to get there

If we truly make disciples, we will be well along the way toward seeing a church established. Want to be a successful church planter? Focus on **THE MAIN THING!**

## Starting on Time

**Begin consistently** - I must begin when I said that I would – to do otherwise is confusing. Those who came on time are not blessed by sitting there watching me squirm over not being able to start promptly. By doing what I said I would, I am silently teaching integrity and responsibility.

**Begin quietly** - I must discipline myself to not harp on the subject. If fussing about this has not helped -- why continue it? The importance of my service and my joy in serving should not be affected by how many are present or by how many arrived on time. Constantly playing the same string makes for poor harmony.

**Begin lovingly** - I must decide that I will love the latecomer just as much as the one who arrives early. As with all areas of growth, we must always deal with people in patience and love (1 Thes 5:14). In the ministry, and especially in the public service, whenever I let my displeasure or frustration show, I lose something.

**Begin creatively** - If what I normally do first is something that I don't want anyone to miss, then I must think creatively about something else I could do in that first block of time. Some have a coffee and fellowship time so the believers can visit with one another. Others have a testimony and prayer time prior to the service.

**Begin meaningfully** - I shouldn't just fill time. Whatever I do during the first few minutes should make the early birds glad that they came. What would happen if during this time we did something so good people would hear about it and begin to feel they really missed out on something.

*Why Plant Churches continued*

**Church planting can evangelize our urban centers** - The United States, like the rest of the world, is rapidly becoming a vast urban community. Sixty percent of Americans now live in the fifty largest metropolitan areas, and one-third of the U.S. population live in either New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit or Dallas. The sad reality is that our cities are among the most spiritually neglected areas in the country. Churches abandoned these metropolises decades ago leaving them to the cults, crime, and decay. The Apostle Paul was an urban church planter who targeted the large population centers of the Roman world. He realized he could impact the whole empire by planting churches in the urban centers of influence. We need to return to a more biblical focus on reaching the vast multitudes in the strategic populations centers of our country. Thousands of new urban church planters are needed to meet this great need.

**Church planting spurs church growth and leadership development** - Planting a new church creates enthusiasm, stirs slumbering hearts, increases giving, heightens awareness of the lost, stimulates involvement, creates new leadership opportunities, and revitalizes dying churches. Every church should have the goal of starting a daughter church, not only to reach new people and new areas, but to strengthen their own ministry. Research consistently demonstrates that mother churches are healthier, stronger, and more alive two years after birthing another church than they were before.

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