

# The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • March 2009

## They Called Him "Mr. Encouragement" Learning from the First Church Planter

Paul was greatly used by God to reach the lost and establish local churches, but before Paul came on the scene, Barnabas had already been doing the job. He really was the first church planter, and we can learn a lot from him.

Jose was known among the believers as one who spoke from God for the encouragement of others (Acts 4:36). They called him "Bar Nabas" (probably from the Hebrew word for prophet Gen. 20:7; Deut 18:15) and interpreted in Greek as "Son of consolation" (coming along side to encourage) or in our vernacular, "Mr. Encouragement".

Barnabas sold his land to aid the believers in the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:36). While many were doing this, Barnabas alone is recorded as the positive example of sacrifice. Property was not that important to him – his focus was on the work of God. The things of this world were held loosely and all was put at God's disposal for His purposes.

There are three descriptions of Barnabas in Acts 11:24: He was a *good man* – this speaks of his character and reputation; he was *full of the Holy Spirit* – indicating his walk of obedience and devotion to God; and he was a man of *faith* – this was the way he lived in faithful service.

Christ's followers enjoyed wonderful fellowship together in Jerusalem. But the God who commanded us to take the gospel to all the world sovereignly worked so they would not get too comfortable there. As believers moved to new places, they

shared the gospel. The first daughter church (church plant) was started by "laymen" who were living for Christ and testifying of Him wherever they went.

When the church in Jerusalem heard what God was doing, they determined to get involved in helping these new believers, and sent

Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22). Did Barnabas volunteer for this or did the church take the initiative in his assignment? Undoubtedly, the answer is, "Yes."

Sending out servants to multiply churches is not just a matter of seeing who will volunteer for the job. Was Barnabas moved by the need and willing to go? Most assuredly! But the fact is that he was the church's clear choice for this assignment. The believers in Jerusalem witnessed his proven character and knew his testimony. The church observed the way God used him to minister to others. We need to be looking for this more as we send out church-planting pastors into the harvest – the whole church should be saying "He's our man" for the job.

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he strengthened and established the new converts, and stayed to encourage them and teach them how to live out all that Christ commanded. A new church was established (Acts 13:1).

Not only was "Mr. Encouragement" burdened to strengthen new believers, but also to develop other servants for ministry. He had previously met Saul and

### Godly Leadership

We live in a day when our country, business community, homes, and churches are crying out for leadership. They want and need leaders that are not only good and moral, but godly as well. The Apostle Paul, a prolific church planter, wrote to one new congregation in second Corinthians 4:1-5 giving them five aspects of godly leadership. His counsel can be summarized in five words.

The first word is **AUTHORITY** and is found in verse 1 where it says, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry." Paul recognized that it was God who had called him (Galatians 1:15,16) and placed him in ministry (I Timothy 1:12). Godly leaders recognize God's authority in their lives and serve with confidence knowing that God has placed them in the position they occupy. Every believer is divinely commissioned to make disciples and to serve in various capacities depending on their giftedness. They can do so knowing God's Word supports them.

The second word is **TENACITY** and is found in the latter half of verse 1 where it says, "as we have received mercy, we faint not." Godly leaders don't quit. Leadership and ministry are lonely places. You'll have to make some hard calls and tough decisions. People won't always agree with you. Godly leaders are like the Energizer Bunny - they just keep going, and going, and going. They realize God is in control and will give the harvest in his own time. They find encouragement in the words of Galatians 6:9, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."



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*Godly Leadership continued*

The third word is INTEGRITY and is found in verse 2 where we read, "but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully." We live in an age of deception when it seems like everyone is trying to hoodwink us into buying something, doing something or joining something by making it sound different than it really is. Integrity is in short supply, even among some believers and churches. In our effort to attract a crowd we have imported the world's standards, tastes and styles until we look, sound, and act more like the world than like God's people. Churches are increasingly denying their heritage and hiding their identity while pretending not to be who they secretly claim to be.

Paul built his ministry on integrity, openness, honesty, and truthfulness. He renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, refused to be crafty or deceptive, and would not water down his preaching to gain followers. In a world of compromise, camouflage, lower standards, expediency, and pragmatism, godly leaders do the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do.

The fourth word is ACCOUNTABILITY and is found in the latter part of verse 2 in the words - "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Godly leaders recognize that one day they will stand before God and give an account of themselves and their ministries. But they also know they are accountable to those they serve and are to make themselves commendable to them. That doesn't mean they trim their sails, lower their standards, or change their convictions to gain people's approval. Rather, it is through the "manifestation of the truth" - the living out of the very truths they preach that they commend themselves to people. People are watching to see if those in leadership practice what they preach. They want to know if their walk matches their talk. People will hold them accountable, not only for what they say, but what they do.

The fifth word is HUMILITY and is found in verse 5 where Paul said, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Leadership and ministry are not about us - it's about God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be careful because ministry is heady stuff. People look up to you and say nice things about you. Pastors and church planters who do well get written up in religious periodicals. They are invited to put on seminars and to speak at regional and national conferences.

Rewards, perks, and compensation often come from doing well, but we must not forget who we are - we are servants of Jesus Christ. Any success, position or acclaim that may come to us comes from God. It is only by his grace and mercy that we have the gifts, skills, and opportunities that have been afforded to us. All the honor, glory, acclaim, and rewards belong to him, and him alone!

*"Mr. Encouragement" continued*

introduced him to the leaders in Jerusalem. He heard his testimony, witnessed his life, and observed him as he served the Lord and reached out to others. But Paul lacked experience. So he invited him to work with him in the ministry at Antioch, and the ministry continued to grow. They then reproduced themselves by encouraging and training other men for ministry. By the time we get to chapter 13 there were five men involved in the pastoral ministry at Antioch.

Barnabas could have enjoyed a long, successful tenure at Antioch, but was willing to be sent to start churches in other regions that needed the gospel. Later, when he and Paul separated, "Mr. Encouragement" invested in his cousin Mark who had previously wavered, so that he also became useful in the ministry (see 2 Tim. 4:11).

So, from the first church planter we can learn several valuable church-planting principles:

- Public service begins with personal spirituality
- Successful ministry involves sacrificial commitment
- New works are begun when average believers are doing the work
- Churches get involved where they see God is working
- Servants are sent because they have already been successful in ministry
- Teams are built by encouraging the potential in those around us
- God doesn't always want us to get too comfortable in one place
- Successful church planting is not limited to one personality type or leadership style
- Ministries are multiplied by investing ourselves in others

## 2009 School of Church Planting

The 24th annual *School of Church Planting* will be held June 15-18 in Kansas City, Kansas in the lovely facilities of Oak Grove Baptist Church.

Hundreds of church planters, pastors, missionaries, and lay people have taken this three and a half day training seminar taught by three experienced church planters with over a hundred years experience. Registrants receive a 600-page resource manual and discounted prices on other products.

The cost is just \$250 per person or \$275 per couple including meals. A limited amount of complimentary housing in private homes is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Registration forms and more information are available at [www.churchplantingna.com](http://www.churchplantingna.com) or by e-mailing your request to [RNMcNamara@juno.com](mailto:RNMcNamara@juno.com) or dialing 540) 604-1838.

**Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your ministry skills.**



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