

The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • May 2009

How to Build a Core Group

Approximate 4,000 new churches will be started this year. A significant number of these will not survive until their third birthday. One reason for this is planters often don't take the time to develop a solid CORE GROUP of believers prior to launch.

Core group development takes time and effort. Build six to nine months into your pre-launch plan to develop your core group. Here are several things you can do to gather these people:

- **Participate in a Mother/Daughter church**

plant. Mother/daughter church planting involves one or more churches hiving off a group of people for the express purpose of starting a new church. These people are often more spiritually mature, they generally tithe, and may already have some ministry/leadership experience. Take several weeks to establish your own leadership, core values, vision, and philosophy of ministry before launching.

- **Know your Focus Group.** Are you trying to reach Hispanics, Anglos, Asians, Muslims or some particular ethnic, cultural or economic people group? Find out what distinguishes them from other people in the community. Then gear your planning to the people you are trying to reach. Otherwise, you'll end up as a schizophrenic church that will attract few people.

- **Use evangelistic Small Groups to win the unchurched.** Invite unsaved friends and neighbors over for a cookout and discussion time. In the course of the conversation ask, "If you could ask God any question you want, and you knew he would answer it, what would you ask him?" Then offer to

have God answer one question each week (from his Word). Encourage people to bring a Bible as they search for God's answer to their questions. Use questions (rather than lectures) to guide the group into discovering the answers for themselves.

- **Organize periodic contact events.** Build bridges to your community. Make yourself known to area leaders. Tell them what you plan to do. Then host contact events like a sportsman's dinner,

a one-man volleyball rally, a concert in the park, a Super Bowl Bash, a ladies' scrap booking seminar, seminars on how to write a resume, how to buy a home or how to get out of debt, and any number of other things. These events should always be free. The only price of admission would be a completed communication card with the name, address,

phone number, and e-mail address of each person attending.

- **Conduct Servant Evangelism outreaches.** Servant evangelism is defined as "showing the love of Christ through practical acts of service and kindness." It is a powerful way to demonstrate you care about people and often opens the door of opportunity to witness to individuals at a later time.

There is no end to things you can do at little cost including raking leaves, handing out bottles of water and soft drinks at events, washing windshields and cars, shoveling snow, distributing smoke

detector batteries and light bulbs, and doing minor repairs. Never accept money for anything you do.

Simply give people a little card that says, "We just wanted to show you the love of Christ in a practical way with no strings attached. Your friends at Any Town Baptist Church."

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Pursuing People with a Passion

Passion is deemed acceptable in sports, politics, business, and romance, but apparently not in the pursuit of souls - at least that is what one might conclude from observing some church planters, pastors, and churches around the country.

Passionate Pursuit is a Problem - Research indicates only ten to fifteen percent of churches are growing, but much of this growth comes from swapping fish with other aquariums rather than from catching new fish. Studies show only about four percent of American churches are passionately pursuing people with success. Even new churches soon lose their evangelistic fervor. Most Christians will go through life without ever winning another person to Christ. George Barna concludes that what American Christians believe about the Bible isn't significant enough to share with others. As a result, many church plants, as well as established churches, are struggling to survive.

Passionate Pursuit is the Program - The Lord Jesus laid out the church's mission and his vision for it in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The "making of disciples," and all that this includes, lies at the very heart of this five-fold approach to doing church. Jesus himself said he came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He set the example for us by pursuing people passionately all the way to the cross. The passionate pursuit of the unchurched is to be the central program of the church.

Passionate Pursuit must be a Priority - God values people and loves them so much he sent his Son to die for them. Bringing them into a personal relationship with

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Pursuing People with Passion continued

Building a Core Group

himself was a priority for him, and it must be for us as well. Soul-winning, evangelism, and outreach must be a priority in any church plant if it is to succeed. A subtle shift begins to occur in many church plants as the first families are attracted and souls are won to Christ. The emphasis begins to change from multiplication to maintenance and the focus moves from those outside the church to those inside it. Edification starts to replace evangelism, programming takes the place of outreach, and the church turns inward. So subtle is this change that most planters don't even realize it until their passion for the lost is almost gone and the growth of the church has ground to a halt. Pastors and planters must constantly evaluate their hearts and their ministries if they are to make the passionate pursuit of people the priority it should be.

Passionate Pursuit requires Prayer - Jesus was moved with compassion for people (Matthew 9:36). He saw them not as vile sinners, but as lost and wandering sheep without a shepherd. When he looked upon them, he didn't see them as hard and resistant, but as ripened fields of grain ready for the harvest. In his view they were reachable and savable. He wanted his disciples to see what he saw and to feel the passion he felt for people. And so, he told them to pray to the Lord of harvest for laborers, knowing that if they did so their own hearts would be stirred with his passion, and that passion would then motivate them to become harvesters.

Ask God to rekindle your passion for souls. Make praying for the lost a major focus of your own prayer time, and of your mid-week prayer service. Encourage your people to share the names of friends, relatives, business associates, and neighbors for whom they are concerned, and then ask people to pray for those people by name. Prayer fans the embers of passion in our hearts.


Passionate Pursuit requires a Plan - There are four things you can do to become a church that pursues people with a passion.

- *Be intentional.* Most Christians are isolated from the unsaved around them. Encourage your people to purposely build friendships with unsaved co-workers and neighbors so they can win the right to share the gospel with them.
- *Be inquisitive.* Find out what people are really like. American culture has changed. Most people are not pursuing church, although they may be interested in spiritual matters. They have a secular rather than a Judeo-Christian background. They are more concerned with the here and now than the hereafter, and they tend to be process rather than event-oriented.
- *Be innovative.* Planters need to understand that many methodologies are not as effective today as they once were. New, culturally relevant approaches such as servant evangelism projects, evangelistic small groups, and informal forums and discussions groups often have a greater impact on reaching the unchurched with the gospel.
- *Be impressionable.* Some people are more receptive than others. Receptivity ebbs and flows as people move through life. People tend to be more open to the gospel whenever undergoing significant lifestyle changes such as moving, marrying, having a baby or changing careers.

• **Launch an attractive Website.** Today, the web is the Number One resource people turn to when they are searching for a church. Websites are inexpensive and fairly easy to set up. There are lots of Christian people who will help you with this. Make it attractive and easy to find. Tell what the church will be like, when it will start, what ministries it will have, explain its purpose, mission, vision, and values, and how to contact you. Include the plan of salvation on your site as well.

• **Undertake a Listening Survey.** This usually consists of 8-10 non-threatening questions that will help you identify people's interests, needs, and opinions about church. Include the question, "Is there anything we can pray about for you?" It also provides you with the opportunity to leave literature about the new church.

• **Engage in door-to-door Visitation.** This may be old fashioned and is increasingly difficult to do in some areas, but it STILL WORKS! There are hurting people out there who are just waiting for someone to tell them about Christ or to invite them to be a part of a new church starting in the community. Don't put all your eggs in this one basket, but keep it in your toolbox as an important part of your outreach ministry. Time invested in developing your core group is well invested and will pay rich dividends as you move forward in your ministry.



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 or by e-mailing your request to RNMcNamara@juno.com or dialing 540) 604-1838.

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

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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

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