

# The Church Planter's Toolbox

Ideas and Helps for Great Commission Workers • March 2008

## Creating a Leadership Culture

Leadership and discipleship are inseparable. You cannot have the one without the other. You will never have the lay leaders you need to complete your church-planting project unless you develop an effective discipleship process for moving people from the point of salvation to spiritual maturity to ministry involvement. Yet it is at this very critical juncture that many church planters come up short. Churches without a process for making disciples will almost always flounder.

Leaders are not born. They are made. If you want your people to become leaders capable of fulfilling various ministry roles in the church, then you, the church planter, must create both a culture and a process for moving them from where they are to where they need to be. A leadership culture is both a mindset and an atmosphere that is conducive to developing people into leaders. Here are eight things you can do to develop a leadership culture in your church plant:

- **Develop a philosophy of ministry in which the people do the work of the ministry** - A clearly defined philosophy of ministry articulates how ministry is done in your church. It describes who is responsible for doing the work of the ministry. For many years, church leaders and lay people alike viewed the pastor as the one responsible for carrying out this awesome task. It was his job to do the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:11,12, however, teaches that it is the people (the saints) who are to do the work of the ministry. The pastor/teacher/planter is to equip (outfit, prepare) the laymen with the training and leadership skills they need to fulfill this biblical function.

- **Raise your standards and expectations** - People are perfectly willing to sacrifice and work hard to achieve that which they consider worthwhile. If you want people to become leaders in the church, require them to complete a pre-membership class, enroll them in an on-going discipleship process, and let them know before they join that they will be expected to accept a ministry assignment when they become members. Won't some people refuse to come to church? Perhaps, but you'll attract a lot more teachable people who will rise to meet your expectations.

- **Develop your purpose, mission, and vision statements** - These explain why your church exists, what it is supposed to be doing, and what it will look like at maturity. A discipleship structure for developing lay leaders should play a central part in these documents. Publicize your objectives frequently. Keep the vision fresh in the minds of your people. Let them know how they fit into the overall picture.

- **Develop a ministry statement** - This document outlines the church's view of ministry, especially as it relates to the involvement of lay people. Make it part of your pre-membership class. Go over it with the class and explain that all members are expected to go through the discipleship process, and to accept a ministry assignment consistent with their gifts, skills, talents, personality and experiences.



## Crossing Cultural Barriers

Part 2

Most fundamental Christians have a love for lost souls and rejoice when missionaries are sent to all parts of the world. We enthusiastically support and pray for them as they reach out to people of all cultures and ethnic groups. What is new in recent years, is that God is sovereignly bringing many of these same people to our neighborhoods. We no longer have to travel around the world to visit one of our missionaries in order to get personally involved in fulfilling our commission to take the gospel to all people groups (Matthew 28:19).

But this presents a new challenge – that of learning how to do first hand what we have up until now done only by proxy.

What would it take for us to reach out to the people of different cultures that God is bringing across our path? Could God really use us to reach someone for Christ? Here are five things we can do to prepare ourselves to be a witness to people from another culture:

### 1) Develop a spiritual perspective of people.

Walking down the sidewalks of Mexico City one will see men and boys who make their living polishing shoes. As the people walk by, they are never looking up at their faces, they are looking down at their shoes. It is only when they see shoes that need to be shined that they look up to ask if you would like their services. As we look around us and see all the people that God is bringing to our communities, our natural tendency may be to look at them from a racial, social, or political point of view. But as believers, we should ask God to help us see everyone from a spiritual perspective. Their race, their economic level, their social status, their political situation, must all take a back seat to the need of their eternal soul.

### 2) Devote ourselves to a genuine love for others.

Someone asked Jesus "Who is my neighbor that I should love?" He responded with a story which taught that being a neighbor was not based on who a person is or where he comes from, but rather on the need he has and on our opportunity to help him. There are neighbors all around us every day who are lost and in spiritual darkness – in obedience to Christ and in response to His Love we must reach out to them and share with them the light of the gospel. The Scriptures teach that those around us who cannot see God will be able to know something of His love

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Leadership Culture continued

• **Plug people into ministry early** - Start using individuals as soon as they get saved. Don't let them sit and soak for several months before asking them to serve. Let them know that ministry is a normal part of being a Christian.

• **Develop a list of entry-level ministries** - These are areas of service that do not require spiritual maturity or knowledge, and where there is minimal risk of damage if the person stumbles and falls. This can include setting up chairs and equipment, putting out songbooks, folding bulletins, mowing the lawn or helping in the kitchen.

• **Require every person to attend a progressive discipleship course that leads to increasing levels of leadership** - This is one of the keys to developing lay leaders. You must have a discipleship process in place for moving people through the various stages of spiritual growth and leadership development. Make this a priority in your ministry.

• **Do not start any ministry until you have someone to lead it** - Many church planters attempt to do too much too soon. Rather than trying to be a full-fledged church, start with just a worship service and a mid-week discipling class. Train your people to have servant hearts and provide them with the ministry training they need. Resist the temptation to add any other ministries until you have a trained lay leader to direct them.

Developing a leadership culture takes time and hard work, but it pays rich dividends in the form of a greater number of workers and an more effective church plant.

Crossing Cultural Barriers continued

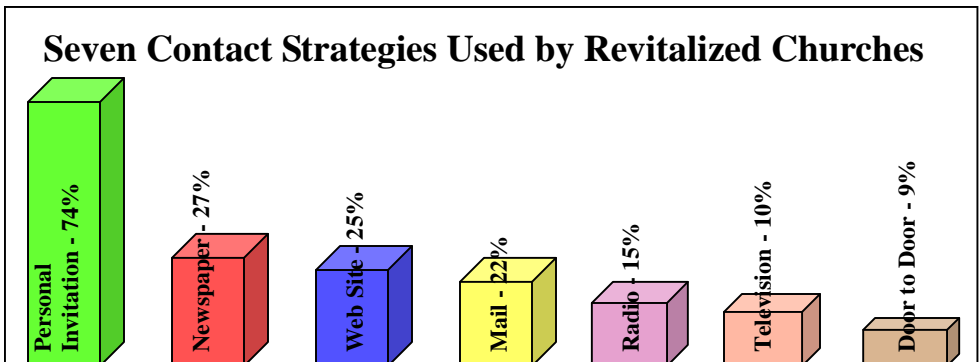

when it is "perfected" or carried out to completion through our lives (1 John 4:12). People who come from a background of manipulation and insincerity will not be influenced by superficial salesmanship. They will come to trust our motives and be willing to listen to our message only as they see the love of God demonstrated through us.

3) **Design a lifestyle of reaching out to those around us.** We will probably never be able to reach out to people who are different from us until we have first developed a lifestyle of reaching out to people who are just like us. Crossing cultural barriers adds a whole new dimension to seeking lost souls. If reaching people in our own culture and language is difficult for most of us, reaching those of another culture will be even harder. As individuals and as churches, we need to first develop the habit of caring about, loving and sharing the gospel with people that are like us. Once this becomes a natural part of our lives, we can build on this experience, taking it to the next level of reaching those who are from a different background.

4) **Deal with the subtle, sinful attitudes of superiority.** Besides the personal pride that is an inherent part of our fallen nature, most of us have grown up with some degree of nationalistic arrogance. The idea that our language and culture are superior to others will always conflict with efforts to evangelize other people groups. Our attitudes, if left untreated, will be a hindrance to people from other backgrounds coming to Christ. But as the Holy Spirit helps us to develop a sincere appreciation for and acceptance of the culture of others, God can use us to win them to the Savior.

5) **Decide that the souls of men are more important than our comfort.** Most all people, but especially Hispanics, respond to people more than to programs and to friendship more than to plans and projects. If we would love people and reach them for Christ, we must invest in building relationships with them. I'm convinced that is the best way to reach people in our own culture, but in crossing cultural barriers, it is essential. To establish friendships we must give of ourselves to build relationships of mutual understanding and trust.

These things will not happen by accident – we will have to work at them. But think of the joy and the eternal results of allowing God to change our thinking, mold our hearts, and then use us to reach across cultural barriers to bring others to the Savior.

## A Great Opportunity

First Baptist Church of Medina, Ohio will be hosting the 23rd annual *School of Church Planting* June 16-19, 2008. This 4-day seminar includes 17 sessions with a total of 25 hours of class instruction. Participants receive a 600 page notebook crammed with ideas, forms, and helpful suggestions for a better church plant.

The *School of Church Planting* is sponsored by Baptist Mid-Missions and is taught by three veteran church planters with nearly a hundreds years combined experience.

The cost is just \$250 per person or \$275 per couple. This includes a resource manual, noon and evening meals, and lodging in private homes on a first-come, first-served basis. Academic credit is available when you complete a prescribed post-course assignment.

You can obtain additional information and a seminar brochure by going to [www.churchplantingna.org](http://www.churchplantingna.org), e-mailing [RNMcNamara@juno.com](mailto:RNMcNamara@juno.com) or calling (540) 604-1838.

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