

“Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers “

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Kindle Notes ~ Dave Kraft

In successful church plants, evangelism simply overpowers the need for self-preserving ministries that tend to use up the energies of the core once a church becomes established. I think discipling the staff is as important as preparing a message and certainly more important than any day-to-day planning,” – Church Planter Ralph Moore

Ralph...

1. Started one youth group.
2. Planted two churches.
3. Had a direct hand in multiplying over seventy church plants from the congregations that he pastored.
4. By 2010 the impact through replication had spanned seven hundred churches on six continents, representing more than 100,000 people.

One of the principles Ralph has embraced for church multiplication is that leadership development is always worth your time. In fact, it is one of the best ways to spend your time.

MiniChurches meet weekly to review the Bible teaching from the weekend services. The format is simple and reproducible as participants ask:

What did you learn (head)?

What did God say to you (heart)?

What will you do (hands)?

We affirm to those we train that God may well be raising them up to do “even greater things” than they have seen in the ministry of those who train them. If a church multiplication movement is to emerge, our disciple-making strategy must be characterized in two ways:

1. Intentional

and

2. Full of faith.

As our friend Ralph Moore often says, “It’s time to stop counting converts and begin counting congregations.”

As The Message words it, *“And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you. May you be infused with strength and purity, filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when our Master Jesus arrives with all his followers”* (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13;

Multiplying movements are born from the impulse of the missionary, not the monastic. We must remember that the denominations exist to aid the church. When the attitude is reversed, then uncompromising preservation becomes the goal rather than exponential expansion. Do churches care more about their own institutional turf or about the overall health and prosperity of the kingdom of God in their area?

Any church that is more upset by its own small losses rather than the kingdom’s large gains is betraying its narrow interests. Thus for the overall Protestant landscape of America, most congregations today are small, according to Duke Divinity School researcher Mark Chaves, who directs the National Congregations Study, a major survey of houses of worship across religious lines. He reports that the median congregation has only 75 regularly participating people and an annual budget of approximately \$90,000. Ninety percent of all congregations have 350 or fewer people.

Megachurches, defined as congregations with average attendances of two thousand or more adults and children, represent 0.4 percent of the total Protestant church population (although they draw almost 10 percent of all worshipers). Among churches of all sizes, growing churches are rare. In fact, they only make up about 20 percent of our churches today. The other 80 percent have reached a plateau or are declining.

To multiply yourself means giving others real opportunity, influence, & authority in ministry, as well as your time and attention in mentoring & training. What can we do together that we can’t do apart if we don’t care who gets the credit—other than God? The increased success rate of church plants in the last decade is directly correlated to the advent of assessment, training, and coaching incorporated into national and regional strategies.

For Bob Logan, this was a dream of multiplication. “2 Timothy 2:2 has had a profound impact on me,” he says, “showing me that leadership development is the limiting factor in most churches.” We prepare leaders to apply their reflections in the boot camp when coaches will be present to help. The entire process is organized around five personal operating questions:

- Who am I?
- What am I called to do?
- Who will do it with me?
- How will we do it?
- How will we evaluate our progress? ”

Participants learn not by teachers presenting to them so much as by discovery. Bob Logan says, “The great teachers of the past—Jesus as the best example—have always used discovery learning principles.”

Ridley’s assessment is a behavioral assessment tool that helps the interviewer know how this individual is wired. For instance, if you’re going to be the starter of a new church then you definitely need to demonstrate a history of starting things (religious, secular, business, and so on). As assessors look at these characteristics, they can discover who could be most effective in church planting. Though everyone can help plant a church, not everyone is wired to be a church planter. We believe that honest assessments done in the spirit of Christian friendship can help some well-meaning people to avoid planting and find their proper role the church.

Stagnation of growth often follows closely on the heels of bloated church programming. Explosive growth often follows easily reproducible ministries.

The likelihood of church survivability increases by over 250 percent when the church offers leadership development training to new church members.

Leaders must be developed early and often in a plant. One of the great lessons for planters is to learn how to delegate work without abandoning the new leader. Instead, bring new leaders along to build faith and skill before launching them into their assignment. “We must lower the bar of how we do church and raise the bar on what it means to be a disciple.” —NEIL COLE

For Cole, that simplicity boils down to the right DNA:

D— Divine Truth

N—Nurturing Relationships

A— Apostolic Mission

For house churches to find their formula for multiplication, their equation needs one more element. They need what all movements need: leadership multipliers with the intent of loss. When leaders are raised up who are willing to sacrifice size, resources, and other leaders for the sake of starting new gatherings, we will then witness a multiplication movement.

Churches need to be, well, biblical churches. That absolutely does not require buildings, budgets, and programs, but it does require things like biblical leadership, covenant community, practicing the ordinances, and several others. But if a church has those marks, it is a church regardless of whether it meets in a condo, a coffee shop, or a cathedral.

Some critics have theological concerns about separating the traditional pastor-teacher role into two people. The typical way this happens in multi-sites is for one person or team—embodied by the lead pastor—to take responsibility for the church’s teaching ministry. Meanwhile another person or team—embodied by the campus pastor—focuses on the local shepherding and ministry deployment needed at each local campus. This division of roles is an important issue for a congregation and its leadership to process.

Likewise, Larry Osborne, who has pioneered a video-venue approach to multisite at North Coast Church in Vista, California, says, “It’s a both-and world. We need church plants and multisite. . . . If I have a gifted communicator, I tell them to plant. If I have someone who is a good shepherd, I suggest multisite.”

We must understand the danger inherent in attributing value to big without discernment. “Big” produces more consumers in church, but small produces more contributors. The most likely place for life transformation to take place is not in a big sanctuary, but in face-to-face small settings of accountability or service. Based on our personal observations and the research, we think people best join Jesus in his kingdom mission when they get involved in the small. Small is often the place of the kingdom’s agenda, the place to plant the mustard seed and to permeate the yeast.

The average attendance of a church plant is seventy-three people after three years.

Not only were planters trained and coached personally but they did ministry in teams. An impressive 88 percent had church planting teams. In sharp contrast, only 12 percent of struggling church plants were planted by teams.

If you want to gain enough money to start a church that starts a movement, then understand why people give. They give to great vision and trusted people. Resources always follow vision. Church planters must become very skilled at communicating vision. Also, people give to people; more than anything else, fund-raising is about relationships. Whether the source is the denomination, a network or organization, a mother church or a partner church, the key to soliciting support is through authentic relationships.

According to Ed’s dissertation, factors related to higher attendance in church plants are assessment, mentoring, and training. It is interesting to note that the amount of funding had no correlation with successfully increasing attendance.

The idea of transformation is such an important issue that Bob Roberts and NorthWood have developed a new scorecard for measuring their progress as a church. They do continue to count in traditional ways—they still tally financial offerings, worship attendance, and small-group involvement. But they place far more emphasis on certain measures of transformation. “A transformed life’s supreme focus is to glorify God,” says Roberts. Leaders at NorthWood believe transformation takes place in believers’ lives by living out God’s kingdom in the following three ways:

1. *Interactive relationship with God.* This involves worship, hearing God, and responding to God in obedience. Disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, private and corporate worship, and journaling are all part of a transformational walk with God.

2. *Transparent connections*. This involves interaction with other followers of Christ as they authentically encourage, instruct, and support one another. Typically this happens best in the small-group life of the church.

3. *Glocal impact* (a word that represents “global” and “local” combined). This involves using one’s vocation not only to touch the community locally but also the world.

1. Church multiplication.

2. Community development.

3. Global engagement.

Consolidating power and merely delegating responsibilities are sufficient ways to maintain a single community, but they are terrible ways to exponentially reproduce Christian community. Movements occur only when the disempowered are given the freedom and responsibility to lead, along with the accountability to make it happen. They had a new view of what it meant to be a pastor. Basically, if you were gifted, called, and anointed, you were ready to plant. Leaders were unleashed based on call and anointing, not education and credentialing.

True reproduction occurs when people are given permission to function as God has gifted and directed. Church planting movements are usually found among people with robust beliefs, not generic belief systems.

For example Acts 2 has launched a degree-granting graduate program named Resurgence Training Center as part of a strategy for preparing leaders to plant a thousand churches in the United States. Church leaders are shifting focus from seating capacity to sending capacity.

Multiplying churches are going to do a better job of disciple making. This is due to their determination to emphasize the transformation occurring in small communities and to simpler church structures that give more time to personal formation.

Modernity produced a discipleship model that is knowledge-based. If you could find Galatia on the map in the back of your Bible, then you must be a star student. But as we’ve known all along, and what is now blatantly obvious, basic spiritual information is important but not enough. Leadership multiplication is crucial. The need for a multiplication movement demands that we transform believers who are now in the sheep pen into leaders of new flocks. Public power will make you famous for a while, but steady gospel transformation will make you useful for a lifetime.

To maintain something is far easier than to train someone else to do it, and also to instill in that person the heart and skill to train yet others. Cordeiro has a favorite saying that we wholeheartedly support: “We teach what we know, but we reproduce what we are.” Too much of church planting today is more of an entrepreneurial quest than a spiritual experience. It’s driven by leadership, which can be good, but not if the leader’s prayer and spiritual devotion is running on empty.