

“Planting Missional Churches”

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Book Note by Dave Kraft

As a church planter, it’s critical that you learn about the components of the mission field around you, adapt your approaches while remaining faithful to the gospel, and reach at least some of them as effectively as you can.

The concept of being incarnational as it relates to church planting emphasizes the importance of relationships in effective church planting. It’s not about establishing a location for worship; it’s about establishing a basis for coming together in the first place. Good church planting depends on good relationships.

A newcomer to a church needs to leave a church service being amazed by the awesome God the church planter serves, not by what a cool preacher the church has.

The rapidly changing cultural landscape requires that we use different methods to reach different communities.

Missional church planters focus on the Great Commission by reaching the unchurched, not by seeking to attract area Christians.

Critics of church planting usually don’t voice their objections in such a straightforward manner. They typically raise a predictable series of objections. Here are a few.

1. Large-Church Mentality. For many the idea of one large church is more attractive than multiple churches. The fact is that new churches are often more effective than large churches in evangelism.
2. Parish-Church Mind-Set
3. Professional-Church Syndrome
4. Self-Protection Syndrome
5. Rescue-the-Perishing Syndrome. This is the idealistic assumption that denominations should first rescue dying churches before planting new ones. Saving dead and dying churches is much more difficult and ultimately more costly than starting new ones.
6. Already-Reached Myth. Among the strongest myths that discourage church planting is the flawed understanding that the United States, Canada, and many other areas of this world are already evangelized.
7. Western Christianity in Hopeless Decline. Church planting is not easy, but without it the church will continue to decline in North America. Three compelling reasons to enact the biblical mandate for church planting: the command of Jesus, the need for new churches to reach North Americans, and the ineffectiveness of our present methodologies.

Churches that lose touch with the community lose the heartbeat of God; without the heartbeat of God, churches will eventually flat line. We must move churches beyond a “come and see” mentality to more of a “go and be” as well as a “go and tell” one. Missional means living and acting like a missionary without ever leaving your city.

Congregations that are on mission might be ones that partake in community events in order to establish contact and relationships with those who usually avoid church; participate in community projects in an effort to bless the city; or create a “third place” such as a coffee shop, child-care service, or a community center that provides a service for the community.

Here are some of the more common obstacles that prevent churches (and believers) from having a missional posture.

1. Tunnel Vision—to the Extreme

However, some people hold to a more tunneled vision of mission. They either focus solely on evangelism or mercy (justice). In other words, they either focus on word or deed, not both. The mission of God’s people includes both word and deed. To focus on one and negate the other is to participate in a partial mission.

2. Tradition—to the Extreme. By holding on to personal traditions, rituals, and preferences, churches prevent themselves from sound, biblical, and missional contextualization. If anything, the church should err on the side of becoming futurists (rather than historians)

3. Technique—to the Extreme

Aubrey Malphurs says that an “accurate criticism of (the church growth) movement” is its overemphasis on the practical. Many contemporary church planting and church-growth movements lack theological depth because they emphasize technique, paradigms, and methodologies rather than genuine biblical and missiological principles.

Ultimately our goal is much more than creating a large attendance; it’s making disciples.

1. Understand God’s mission and the gospel.
2. Identify obstacles and idols.
3. Contextualize and communicate.
4. Equip people for everyday mission.
5. Practice unity.

Augustine is most often quoted to have said, “In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

We’d be wrong to send out planters with organizational, strategic, and marketing tools but not the fundamental truths of God’s Word and the principles of Scripture from which to work.

The Great Commission is one of Jesus’ four sending commands.

1. “I Am Sending You”

2. “Make Disciples of All Nations.” For missionaries in the Western world to effectively make disciples of all nations, they must learn and use the skill of contextualization. “Make disciples” means the church is to win people to Christ and grow these new converts in the faith.

3. “Preach Repentance and Forgiveness”

4. “Jerusalem . . . to the Ends of the Earth”

The fact that Paul was entrepreneurial is central to understanding his church planting ministry. Effective church planters always demonstrate entrepreneurial leadership skills. A second trait worthy of imitation was Paul’s desire to remain a team player. Maintaining the balance between being an entrepreneur and being a team player challenges many contemporary planters. Church planting, though profoundly entrepreneurial, is not a solitary effort; church planting must be a partnership.

Individuals Plant Churches Early church history reflects that several of the apostles set out in different directions to plant churches. This must have been a lonely endeavor and reminds us of the importance of bringing a team to plant—or developing one soon upon arrival.

Laypeople Plant Churches; Aquila and Priscilla

Teams Plant Churches

Agencies, Denominations, and Networks Plant Churches

Churches Plant Churches

What Does a Church Planter Look Like? Here are six indicators you may be called to plant a church.

1. Pattern of Ministry Initiation. Is there a consistent flow of “launch” in your ministry life?
2. Pattern of Ministry Multiplication. Are you able to train others in an area of ministry and then let them go to lead that area? If how something is done is always more important to you than who is doing it, church planting will be a difficult ministry path for you.
3. Personal Wiring. Ingrained in you is this constant desire or drive to start new things.
4. Holy Dissatisfaction
5. Family Commitment
6. Church Affirmation

Many people are referring to the “Ridley Assessment” when they speak of a church-planter assessment.

Ridley determined that most successful church planters share thirteen behavioral characteristics.

1. Has a visionizing capacity
2. Is intrinsically motivated
3. Creates ownership of ministry
4. Relates to the unchurched
5. Has spousal cooperation

6. Effectively builds relationships
7. Is committed to church growth
8. Responsiveness to the community
9. Uses the giftedness of others
10. Flexibility and adaptability
11. Builds group cohesiveness
12. Demonstrates resilience
13. Exercises faith

We need to consider three other qualifications uniquely essential to church planters.

1. Certainty of call.
2. Call to a community, culture, or people group.
3. Extraordinary faith. Though every pastor needs faith, the church planter needs extraordinary faith. The planter who does not have faith that God is planting a church through his efforts should not be a planter.

Planting for the wrong Reasons

Here are some inappropriate reasons to consider before we look at the church planting process.

- You have a strong desire to preach, but no one will give you an opportunity.
- You're frustrated where you are because you can't do what you want to do.
- You can't get an invitation to pastor
- You're out to prove something.
- You need to get some experience, and church planting seems like a good opportunity to practice ministerial skills.
- You're dreaming of a large ministry to boost your own reputation or ego.
- Church planting is popular, and someone asked you to do it.

Qualifying the potential church planter

1. Recruitment
2. Initial Screening. I believe every Christian should be in some way a part of church planting, but I do not believe everyone should be a church planter.
3. Initial Formal Assessment. I suggest the Church Planter Candidate Assessment (CPCA) developed specifically for the early stages of church planter assessment by LifeWay Research.

The CPCA is intended to be an initial indicator for a potential church planter's likelihood for success in church planting.

4. In-depth Screening. We received input from more than thirty expert church planting assessors ranging from Peter Sung, to Neil Cole, to Tim Keller. One of the most consistent things they mentioned was how important clarity of calling was for successful church planters.

5. Next your character will be the focus of exploration. Some of the most impressive candidates outwardly have some of the biggest character problems; they have just learned how to mask the issues with charisma and leadership. Never skip examining areas of character. Church planters should be known first and foremost as people of integrity.

6. Your competencies will be evaluated.

7. Finally, is there a match between you and your church planting organization, as well as you and your potential church planting context?

Assessing for context helps church planters answer these questions:

- Am I the right fit for this church planting opportunity?
- Do I fit the doctrine and distinctives of the church planting organization?
- Do my personality and leadership style lend themselves to church planting?
- Do I fit the community in which the church is being planted?
- Do I fit the model of the church that is being planted?

You can find a link to all of these assessments at www.NewChurches.com/PMC.

The missional church planter is performing an “exegesis” of the target culture. Planters need to abandon a model-specific vision and bring the gospel into a context asking the question, “What cultural containers—church, worship style, small group ministry—will be most effective in this context?”

The pastor may be a “Planted Pastor” or an “Entrepreneurial Planter”

The planting pastor has a pastor’s heart, so he doesn’t become restless to move on like the Entrepreneurial Planter typically does. He’s a pastor with a missionary’s heart rather than a missionary with a pastor’s heart.

Statistics show that longer tenured pastors tend to grow stronger churches.

A successful team could include a full-time senior pastor and a team of bi-vocational staff or even gifted, committed laypeople.

I concluded that the roles that make the most effective two-person planting teams are a full-time lead pastor plus a part-time second pastor with worship and evangelism skills.

Many are embracing church planting as a way of life rather than a strategy.

As Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch write: “The missional church is incarnational, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. Missional/incarnational models are gaining in prominence

Signs indicate that house churches could be a significant part in the wave of the kingdom future in the West.

J. D. Payne, a pastor and missiologist, has produced a cogent and coherent book titled “Missional House Churches.” Payne’s work is invaluable on this subject.

In it he offers some helpful contrasts in describing simple churches.

- More organic, less institutional
- More simple, less structure
- More participatory worship, less passivity
- More community, less acquaintances
- More ministers, less professional

The simple church is different in that it doesn’t see itself as part of a larger body because it is a church, in and of itself. Simple churches do not need a building. As it grows in size, it multiplies into other houses but not to a church building. It makes sense that emerging generations, with strong interest in authentic relationships, would be attracted to churches that are built on relationships and not highly organized systems.

At some point people began to “go to” church instead of being the church.

Church began to be recognized as a place instead of a way of life.

The fact is, if you look at the places where there are movements around the world, you’ll always find a simple and reproducible methodology.

Multiethnic or monoethnic Churches?

Why do monoethnic churches remain the majority in a world that is progressively becoming multiethnic? Monoethnic churches can still be faithful to the biblical vision by ministering to those specific individuals? As long as monoethnic churches do not act as exclusivist clubs,

“At the end of the day, the goal is not assimilation but accommodation rooted in sound ecclesiology.”

Multisite Planting

Multisite is defined as one church that has two or more locations with a shared leadership, budget, vision, and board. We need to be watchful and careful of:

- A confusion of pastoral responsibility.
- The franchising of church.
- The cheapening of discipleship.
- The glorification of the senior pastor.

Here are three benefits of multisite.

- Greater impact of ministry.
- Stewardship.
- Economy of scale.

Systems for Church Planting

The importance of systems in church planting.

This is a natural next step for those of you who are highly detailed and systematic. However, we've found that many church planters are weak in this area.

For the church plant to ride the initial wave of momentum and to lay a solid foundation for long-term impact, church planters must decide on structure before hanging out the welcome sign. The church planter must have not only a God-given mission and vision but also a biblical structure that will accommodate them. When choosing a biblical structure, you want one that protects the church, forms disciples, and advances the mission.

When a church overly focuses on structure, the planter spends more time servicing the structure and less time serving God. When choosing a biblical structure, Daniel and I strongly believe you want one that protects the church, forms disciples, and advances the mission without restricting gospel movement. It's important to find the basis for your style in Scripture and not just personal preference.

When a pastor can't build systems and structures that support ministry, the only people who are cared for or empowered to lead are those who are "near" the pastor or those very close to the pastor. This limits the size of the church to the size of the pastor.

Thus, one of the greatest marks of effective structural leadership is training the saints for the work of ministry. Therefore, a church is led by pastor-elders—some of whom function as teaching pastors. Some planters build their ministry around their own personalities rather than creating a God-centered community.

The congregation should allow its pastor-elders to direct the affairs of the church. When congregations entrust most decisions to pastor-elders, those churches generally eliminate the need for constant church business meetings. Even though a church may have a healthy biblical church structure, the church will be only as healthy as their leadership team.

Planter-Pastor Leadership Issues

Four areas of focus for church planting leadership:

1. The priority of a prayer life,
2. The pattern of a daily routine,
3. The importance of coaching/mentoring.

1. Putting Prayer First.

Planting pastors are driven, high-energy individuals. The great temptation to be busy rather than pray is compounded when this personality meets the multiple and varied demands of church planting. Many church planters neglect fundamental spiritual disciplines. They love God and trust him for the future of the church plant, but for most it has become a long-distance relationship. Often performance pressure overwhelms the theological mooring of their identity in Christ, planters who fail to keep their time with God a priority will invariably suffer in their personal walk, and the church plant will feel the profound effects as well.

2. Daily Responsibilities and Schedule. If pastors are to model leadership, a fifty-hour pastoral workweek is not unreasonable.

- Evangelistic outreach: Fifteen hours per week
- Sermon and study preparation: Ten hours per week
- Administration: Ten hours per week
- Ministry care: Fifteen hours per week

I don't think you can actually build a church on people who need counseling.

The church planter who loves studying Scripture and finds lengthy sermon preparation comforting can avoid the tumultuous experience of constantly meeting new people and sharing the faith and the vision of the new church—critical

Be self-aware or “awake” to how you're really using your time, and be a faithful steward of that precious resource. Excel in your areas of strength, and do what you can in your areas of weakness while looking for others who can joyfully help you in the work.

Developing leaders

We found that leadership development is the most frequently cited challenge for planters. Training and reproducing committed leaders in your church plant is an essential and must be an intentional priority in your daily routine as a church planter. As you look for others to join you, focus on people who seem likely to become reproducing leaders.

Planters too often spend time with a small group of available people without considering or realistically assessing whether these people will become reproducing leaders. A church plant marked by leader reproduction starts with a church planter taking time to reproduce leaders.

3. The importance of coaching and mentoring

Develop a network of other planters and intercessors, a mentor, and a supervisor who can provide support during the high and low tides of weariness and hopelessness.

Church planters tend to be self-starters and often think of themselves as self-sufficient.

Accountability leads to productivity.

Of those who were coached, 77 percent reported that coaching had “some” to “very significant” impact on their personal effectiveness and productivity, with 54 percent reporting coaching had “significant” or “very significant” influence.

The regular support and accountability of a mentor serve as another safeguard against the loss of the church planter's family at the expense of the plant.

Leadership is essential. You may have plenty of funding, a full-time team, and a great location; but if your leadership skills are not developed and you are reluctant to invest in developing them, you will not succeed.

Developing a Launch Team.

Difficulties quickly arise when “borrowed” or volunteer launch-team members’ ideas conflict with the planter’s vision for the new church. When a planter and family move into a community without team members, the risk factors increase. Unavoidable administrative details limit a planter’s time available for relationship and team building. Thus, a strong launch team is essential. Making sure your launch team is on the same page as you is essential to maximizing the team’s multiplying potential in the long run.

Finding and Handling Finances.

Before you request help, learn about a potential donor’s or congregation’s passion. Some respond to need, but most respond to vision. If a church planter can’t raise funds, the planter probably can’t plant a church.

Finding a Meeting Place

Bottom line: keep your overhead low so you can spend money on supporting the ministry staff and on outreach and community events instead of on buildings.

With the birth of the twenty-first century and the changes it has ushered in, we must redefine good stewardship in the context of land purchase and buildings. We need new paradigms for new times. The church should never let the shoe determine how big the foot will become.

The Launch—the Birth Day of a New Church

The key is to do it in a way that gets people’s attention without offending them. Social media is the twenty-first-century town square. As such, any new church launch must engage in social media. Social media is no longer a fad. It is established in our culture. And new church plants should do everything they can to engage the public in this forum.

Growth in the New Church.

At times church planters invest so heavily in launch-day preparation that they flounder in the days following the birth of the new church. In other words, they are so excited about having the baby that they forget to prepare for the growth and nurturing of the baby.

Preparing the new plant to grow disciples spiritually and the church numerically will require the following:

- Creating continuous connections
- Developing a follow-up process
- Designing a discipleship plan
- Having a small group multiplication strategy
- Maintaining an unwavering commitment to the vision.

If people do not connect, they typically do not stay. Connection cards and connection points are tools by which the new church can build bridges of connection with people. The ultimate goal of follow-up is connection; if you don’t point them to a possible next step, you are not pointing them to connect with your church. When thinking through growth in the new church, one must think of discipleship. It’s the key to unlocking God-honoring, God-glorifying growth.

After an exhaustive research process, the research of the TDA revealed eight factors or attributes at work in the lives of believers who are growing in their faith:

1. Bible Engagement
2. Obeying God and Denying Self
3. Serving God and Others
4. Sharing Christ
5. Exercising Faith
6. Seeking God
7. Building Relationships
8. Unashamed Transparency

In general, a church that fails at multiplying small groups will ultimately fail at effective discipleship and numerical growth.

Keep in mind the following principles:

1. The simpler the makeup of the groups, the more reproducible they will be.
2. Focus on transformation, not necessarily more information.
3. Broaden the leadership credentials by moving from a “called to teach” to a “called to disciple” model.

The impossibility of the planter’s presence everywhere with everyone means the church will quit growing.

The planter must continually remind the entire congregation of the vision.

Vision is more than just a set of propositions, value statements, or truths; vision requires a mental image. It should touch people’s hearts and motivate members to get involved in the purpose of the congregation. Vision should cry out, “This is something you long to be a part of, a purpose to which you want to make a major contribution.”

The power of the vision requires a credible vision caster. If the church planter’s attitudes, behaviors, and values suggest he’s not credible, the congregational vision suffers. Vision hijacking is an attempt to redirect the church away from the original vision especially when the original vision no longer seems workable. The leader must repeatedly and consistently recast the church’s vision and values in order to cement members to the vision.

People who row the boat cannot easily rock the boat.

Sure, God ultimately grows the church, but he does so through our planting and watering (1 Corinthians 3:6). Thus, for new churches to grow and continue to grow, the planter and launch team must work hard to create continuous connections, develop a follow-up process, design a discipleship plan including a multiplying small group ministry, and commit passionately to the vision.

Congregational Formation

Having the following documents is prudent:

1. Statement of Faith
2. Constitution. The constitution should be simple. Several examples of constitutions are available at www.NewChurches.com/PMC.
3. Bylaws. Bylaws and operations manuals should be simple to change because they explain methodologies the church is using to incarnate and live out its core values.
4. Legal Formation Documents
 - Incorporation
 - Employer Identification Number
 - Federal Tax Exemption
 - State Sales Tax Exemption
 - Insurance
 - Nonprofit Bulk Mail Permit

Ministry areas to pay attention to for effective church planting

1. Believe it or not, the quality of your children's ministry is going to determine the type of church you will have and the kinds of people who will attend
2. Your time is better spent developing your leaders and focusing on what only you can uniquely do.
3. Building a Team. Don't underestimate the importance and potential of a unified, equipped, and called church planting team.
4. When pastors do for people what God has called them to do, everyone gets hurt and the mission of God is hindered. The church had a culture of nonparticipation. People came to be objects of ministry rather than co-laborers on mission.

When new people came into our church, most of them connected to the one hundred passive people instead of the twenty-five active. A bad situation became worse. People naturally want to be objects of the ministry, not partners in it. When God's people think less like customers of the ministry and, instead, see themselves as the owners of the ministry, it's a whole different kind of church.

My exhortation is to take the time to communicate vision, expectations, and the implementation of a plan to change the culture.

Growth demands empowered leaders and unafraid pastors. Too many pastors are afraid of the people. Those of us who write on growing churches would say that growth barriers are leadership barriers. These are real barriers, and the answer is more, better, and empowered leaders. A lack of empowered leaders consistently hinders the health of a church. Churches grow as leadership expands. No matter the roles, a church crosses a barrier because leadership and roles expand.

Seven Key Leadership Roles

When forming your team, here are the seven key leadership roles you need to have in place before you launch your first public worship service:

- Guest Services Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Evangelism Coordinator
- Assimilation and Groups Coordinator
- Children's Coordinator
- Worship Coordinator
- Finance Coordinator

Poor quality may mean that first-time guests will not return.

Take whatever time is necessary to develop leaders. Pick leaders wisely or suffer the consequences later.

Mike Breen laments that in the United States “96% of church growth is due to transfer growth and not churches striking into the heart of our enemy's territory.

J. D. Payne argues that biblical church planting is “Evangelism that results in new churches.” His definition precludes transfer growth.

If you desire to start a church that is in line with the biblical example, you will eschew “sheep stealing” and focus your team's efforts 100 percent on those who do not know Christ in your community. This takes significant investment in seed-sowing strategies. You can have outreach all day and never announce the good news of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is when people are challenged directly with the gospel and invited to respond. It always involves Jesus' death on the cross for our sin and in our place. Those facts are a constant. Without that message there is no evangelism since there is no good news.

First, the church planter must be intentional about developing an evangelism strategy, figuring out how to reach the lost instead of just rearranging church members in a given community. Members of the church planting team should hold one another accountable for building relationships with the unchurched and sharing the gospel with them. Strategies are useless unless they can be translated into “boots on the ground.” Authentic evangelism is progressive, not just a one-time event.

Many people, and specifically people in leadership, are asking, “How do we balance gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration?” Instead of seeing the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel as competing, perhaps we should see them as a blend contained in the Christian life—one flowing from another. There's no need to choose between proclaiming and demonstrating. If the church planter is not intentional in evangelism, the planter—and soon, the new church—will lose its evangelistic zeal. Reaching other believers is much easier than doing evangelism. Planters can't afford to spend all their time with church people and must become acquainted with unchurched people who live nearby.

D. L. Moody put it aptly, “I like the way I do evangelism better than the way you don't do evangelism.”¹⁵

Small Groups

Each healthy church with more than fifty in attendance needs to develop a multiplying network of small groups which may take different forms but accomplish the objective of binding a church together. The overarching purpose for any small group is discipleship—to connect individuals to the church of God that is being transformed into the image of God and participating in the mission of God.

Here are seven reasons small groups are so important.

1. Reflect the Nature of God
2. Model Small Groups. The early church modeled smaller groups.
3. Do Ministry by creating small groups. Planters help build an effective ministry with oversight through delegation, as demonstrated through Moses and Jethro (Exodus 18:13–23).
4. Small groups are a way for pastors and leaders to train and equip the saints to effectively minister and oversee those God entrusts to his church. The larger a church, or any organization, becomes, the more it must break down into smaller units to maintain an actable level of care for its members.
4. Create Stability. Small groups help close the back door, making it harder for people to leave the church.
5. Counteract individualism. Small groups combat the idol of individualism because they provide a place of circles rather than rows and a place where people think about we, not me.
6. Engage in personal evangelism
7. Facilitate transformation

Transformation does not happen in isolation but in community.

The following are five types of small groups.

1. Learning based.
2. Community based.
3. Mentoring (accountability) based.
4. Mission-based.
5. Niche-based.

The sad reality is that over half of pastors, according to our research for transformational groups, had no visible strategy for their small group ministry. We encourage you to do the following:

1. Purpose. If you want to make sure your small group ministry harmonizes and is in sync with the church, Choose based on where groups fit in the overall mission of the church as well as what your church currently does well.

THE KEY TO DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP STRATEGY IS TO AUGMENT THEM WITH THE WEEKEND SERVICES RATHER THAN DUPLICATING THEM.

2. Guardrails. Create guardrails (core values) for the small groups. Once you have determined your primary purpose, you are ready to create the guardrails, or core values, that will drive and protect your small group ministry.

3. Leaders

4. Vision If you want to draw people to small groups, you need to make a big deal about small groups. You need to make sure your church is blowing the trumpet of small groups.

5. Connection. Teach people to take advantage of the three-minute rule. Create a groups concierge in a prime location. Use a basic newcomers' class or informal gathering.

6. Start and end dates

A successful small group ministry is one that can connect anywhere from 50–80 percent of their weekend attenders to a small group.

Healthy groups have four main elements:

1. Fellowship

2. Prayer

3. Study. The study time should be group focused and Bible centered, not teacher/leader dominated.

4. Mission. To some degree every small group should be involved in mission. A small group that doesn't engage outward in mission is a small group that will eventually turn inward to self. A church without small groups will often be a church with a large backdoor.

Worship. Believers who assert that the church is intended only for Christians assume continued preaching to believers will mature them to the point where they will evangelize the unchurched. I have yet to see this happen. Churches that are not intentionally evangelistic do not become evangelistic through quality Bible teaching alone. My main concern is that the actions of the church are understandable to the unchurched, sensitive to their needs, but not changing the message to be sensitive. Accepting people without approving of their lifestyles can be challenging. That does not mean we need to condone everything, but we do need to welcome everyone.

Preaching. Good preaching usually does not focus on theological truths without application; The challenge is a balance of theological content and life application. The church planter must allow the text to set the agenda and to address the issues. At its simplest, proclamation explains God's Word to people. Expository preaching does not make statements and look to the Bible for support; it begins by examining and then explaining the Scriptures. The pastor-planter must preach the Word. We need innovative preaching, but we also must take people to the Word, not just give them the sort of commonsense wisdom that they can get from watching any talk show.

The four most common ways to preach that can be expository are:

1. Verse by verse,

2. Thematic,

3. Narrative

4. Topical.

Application

The pastor needs to answer the questions people are asking, show them how the Scriptures (and the gospel) are the answer, and teach those truths in a way that influences people's lives. Good messages have memorable illustrations. How does this work? Here is how many Bible-focused pastors do it:

1. The Bible says this.
2. It is important.
3. You should do/believe/respond to it. Why is this important, and how does it relate to me? What does the Bible say about it? Why is it important? What am I going to do with what the Bible says about it?

The most effective form of preaching in churches is not trendy and culturally driven. Instead, it is holding up the Word of God as the source of truth and allowing the listener to be challenged and shaped by it.

Calvin Miller explained that the purpose of the sermon is not education; it's encounter with God.

Spiritual Formation

Sunday worship, no matter how effective and spiritual, cannot provide sufficient spiritual nourishment for a new believer.

The church planter is the person who must select and mentor the church's first generation of leaders.

The church planter must also choose the initial framework and system for disciple making.

Spiritual Formation / Discipleship. Discipleship does not happen by accident. Church planters are called to create disciples, not just believers. A disciple is also a believer who practices biblical habits that enable him or her to live the Christian life effectively. Habits leading to Christian maturity must be practiced in order for a disciple to become developed. Part of the church planter's task is to create an atmosphere, a congregational culture, in which discipleship and disciple-making surface as core values.

New members hear about the spiritual-formation process but observe that the vast majority of church attendees don't participate. A better course is to get the entire church valuing and participating in a spiritual-formation process. Without an intentional developmental approach, the church is likely to become "a mile wide and an inch deep." The pastor and other leaders must cultivate a congregational culture of intentional discipleship

The following are thoughts that will help create a culture of discipleship or spiritual formation in your new church.

1. Elementary is a "danger" and not a goal. If you end up pastoring a great (big) church but end up a personal spiritual midget, the plant will fail, and more importantly, your spiritual life will fail.
2. To plan for discipleship means you will have a clear path or progression that you will want people to follow. Our research has found that the number one statistical correlation to spiritual maturity was the practice of reading the Bible.
3. You don't need to get your people thinking you are clever; you need to get them thinking that the Word of God is sufficient. God involves us in our personal and our church's spiritual growth. Unlike conversion we "work toward" spiritual growth.

Notice the balance: God gives the growth and is ultimately in charge of our spiritual formation, but God places responsibility for our spiritual growth on us.

For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to will and to work out His good purpose” (Phil 2:12–13). We must teach our people to spend time and energy working on our salvation. Remember, that’s not working for our salvation but working out, working through our salvation. We work in light of our salvation, not for it. In other words, working in light of our salvation isn’t something you do once.

4. Many church planters are spiritually bankrupt and strategy rich. They know more about the ins and outs of church planting than the ins and outs of gospel living. You need a workable plan for how you will lead your people to be personally responsible for their spiritual formation.
5. Decentralize discipleship away from the clergy. As a church planter your responsibility isn’t to become a religious shopkeeper and a provider of religious goods but to equip believers to do the work of the ministry as outlined in Ephesians 4. As a church planter you must realize that God didn’t design the church to have one person lead everyone else in spiritual formation.
6. The most effective churches are the ones who are incredibly intentional with their discipleship processes.
7. These churches understand that transformation is not a direct result of knowledge transfer, and it doesn’t just happen in a classroom setting; rarely do the high standards of a few lift the standards of the masses without intentionality. Churches that expect more from their members are larger than those that do not.
8. Sunday morning worship is not a plan for spiritual formation—it can be a part of the plan, but it cannot be the plan.
9. One of the biggest mistakes leaders make is asking too little.
10. Choose not to become a cul-de-sac on the Great Commission Highway.

Churches Planting Churches

Daniel and I are disappointed when gifted church planters have not after three years mothered a second church.

Let’s look at some reasons established churches plant new churches.

1. To Reach Lost People
2. To Follow a Biblical Pattern
3. To Ensure Church Survival
4. To Benefit the Planting Church
5. To Reach the Western World
6. To Develop New Leaders
7. To See the Kingdom Grow

8. To Transmit a Lasting Legacy

9. To Glorify God

Here are a few tips on casting vision:

- Start with Prayer
- Cast the Problem and Create Tension
- Share a Story about the Future
- Corporately Personalize the Vision

Residencies and the Future of Theological Education

Denominations and Networks

One of the most significant shifts in evangelicalism is the rise of networks. I believe networks have reinvented how evangelical Protestants operate.

Breaking the Mold: Church-Multiplication Movements

Here are four things network/denominational leaders can do.

1. Find a Multiplication Leader
2. Get Other Leaders to Build Momentum
3. Get Respected Leaders to Invite Others
4. Persuade Others to Join the Movement

Spiritual Leadership. Engage in the particular spiritual disciplines that will help you move from your narrative to Jesus' narrative on this issue.

If planting a church is wrapped up in your identity, ambition, and ego, then you should not expect God to bless your church because you're doing it out of the wrong motives.