

“Launch”
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Notes by Dave Kraft

Above all else, books that are worth printing—ones that are worth reading—are practical. They are books that can be put into action immediately, if not sooner! (8) According to the latest data I’ve read, out of the approximately 100,000 books published each year now, the average book will sell only about 2,500 copies. When it comes to Christian books, make that a bit over 1,000 copies. Currently, 80 percent of all church plants in the United States by the five-year mark will have been declared duds. (9) To lead successfully, whether you are focusing on leading a new church plant, a midsized church or a large “launching pad” church—whatever you have been called to—you must have multiple coaches in your life to attain success. (10)

In church planting there are three deadly sins:

1. Lack of calling;
2. Lack of strategy;
3. Lack of funds. (19)

Launching large is the ability of a new church to reach as many people as possible within the first six to eight months of existence. (28) Don’t get too caught up in the numbers. Instead, focus on the potential of your area as you allow the concept to sink in. So, numbers do serve a purpose—not as a means to secure bragging rights, but as a tool for measuring the expansion of God’s kingdom. We understand the truth that God wants to use many churches to reach our city—and yours. This is not a competition. (29)

Take a moment and use your sanctified imagination to envision what launching large would look like for your new church. We fully believe that a church can begin monthly services within two to three months of a lead pastor’s having arrived in the field—we’ve seen it time and time again. From there, we recommend only three to six months of monthly services until the church launches weekly services. (30) Some churches stay in this prelaunch stage for 12 to 18 months. The sad reality is that many of these churches never get off the launching pad. Take the time needed to ensure that you are on a healthy track, but resist the temptation to wait too long to launch. It is completely possible to launch a church in which the only Christians on the initial team are the staff (pastor, worship leaders and spouses). (31)

Keeping a new church outwardly focused from the beginning is much easier than trying to refocus an inwardly concerned church. (32) Thriving churches have always been—and will always be—built on a base of personal calling, not personal choice. The call to start a new church plant is not the same as the call to serve in an existing church or work in a ministry-related organization. (34) The first year of a new church is not easy. Often, the assurance of your calling is the only thing you have to stand on. So making sure you’ve been called is absolutely crucial. (36)

“When God is stirring in my life, everything familiar gets uncomfortable.”¹ A proper call is always accompanied by the desire to reach the unchurched. If your goal is to change the Christians in your community, you are most assuredly not called to start a new church. (37) The question you must wrestle to the ground is, “Will I allow my fear to bind me to mediocrity?”² (38) The ability to teach and the ability to start a successful church go hand in hand.(45) Strong churches are built by strong teachers. (46) Notice that prayer was Nehemiah’s first step. He then took hold of a God-given vision and created a specific plan to fulfill the Lord’s purpose. (51) A strategy is simply a logical plan that gets you from where you are to where God wants you to be. (53)

- *A strategy is a document of faith.*
- *A successful strategy provides structure.*
- *Developing a strategy forces you to think on paper.*
- *A strategy provides focus.*
- *A strategy forces research.*
- *A strategy is good for your team. (54)*
- *A strategy saves you time.*
- *A strategy makes it easier to ask others for help. (55)*

As you think about developing your strategy, make it easy to understand. Jesus often spoke in simple language, and so should you. Use simple and direct language. (56) As you can see, there is a logical flow within your strategy. Add up your tasks, and you have accomplished your goals. Add up your goals, and you have accomplished your major objectives. Add up your major objectives, and you have achieved your strategic aim. (63) As you begin the process of prioritizing, you may find it helpful to ask yourself, *Since I have limited time and limited money, what is the first major objective that would give me the most return on my investment? Which one would be the most important (65) to accomplish? Which one is second, third, and so on?*

Many people make the mistake of creating a budget and a calendar before they think through their overall strategy. (66) Because your strategy is written in SMART language, every statement should have a date attached to it. (67) Zig Ziglar has said, “Money isn’t everything, but it is right up there with oxygen.” No matter how strong your calling or how good your intentions, a new church cannot succeed without funding. (69) This is called the “big ask.” God is putting you in front of people. All you have to do is ask for their support. (85) If you don’t come out and ask people for their support, they won’t invest. Never fail to make a clear request for support. (86) We love the quote, “Where God guides, God provides.” (93) On a more subtle level, a church may not achieve a healthy launch because of poor staff decisions; (95)

¹ Ron Sylvia, *Starting High Definition Churches* (Ocala, FL: High Definition Resources, 2004).

² Andy Stanley, *The Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc.)

John Maxwell says that the greatest leadership principle he has ever learned was that “those closest to the leader will determine the success level of that leader.”¹ (97) Delegate these traditional tasks to volunteers and watch potential candidates perform. In the beginning, never pay anyone to do what you can get a volunteer to do. (99)

Lesson 1: Hire Part-Time Before Full-Time

Lesson 2: Hire from Within

Lesson 3: The Three Cs: *Character; Chemistry; Competency*

Ask any organization or department leader, and he or she will tell you that most people are hired for competency and fired for lack of chemistry or character. (113) Always strive for clear, concise expectations. Develop a job description, hold regular staff meetings and set up evaluations to help bring clarity to this area. (114)

Top 10 Staffing Lessons from The Journey

1. You’ll never have enough money up front to hire staff.
2. Hiring staff precedes growth, not vice versa.
3. Hire slow, fire fast. One bad apple spoils the bunch.
4. Hire from within whenever possible.
5. Hiring and firing is ultimately the responsibility of the lead pastor.
6. Hire part-time staff before full-time staff.
7. Never hire staff when you can find a volunteer.
8. The role of staff is to find additional volunteers.
9. Hold weekly staff meetings.
10. Clarity and accountability are the keys to an effective staff. (115)

Back-to-School Time: When kids get ready to head back to school, families tend to settle down and stay put for a while. This is a great time to launch a church. (117) Monthly services are real services that you begin holding three to six months prior to your launch date. (120) The biggest mistake you can make at a monthly services is to *fail to collect basic contact information from those who attend your monthly preview services.*(122) *Follow up thoroughly. Follow up quickly. Follow up personally.* (123) Open your calendar, get on your knees, and ask God to confirm your weekly start date. Do this now! The most well-intentioned plans will go awry.

You’ll have a hundred excuses to change that date, but *stick with it!* God has given you a vision, and now a date to launch that vision into being. Stay the course! (125) Don’t sign a long-term lease. (126) Always be on the lookout for the next space into which you plan to grow. (127) Find someone who matches your target group to design your promotion materials. (128) Too many church leaders make the mistake of advertising on Christian radio stations or in Christian publications. (130)

¹ John Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You: How to Help Others Reach Their Full Potential* (Nashville, TX: Thomas Nelson Publishers) p. 203

Direct delivery is the highest-risk, highest-return option in advertising. Direct delivery includes everything from personal invites to servant evangelism, or any other type of face-to-face church promotion. However, it's high return in that a personal invitation, delivered by a live person, is the most effective way of encouraging someone to attend your church. (131) This is a great time to learn and start implementing one of the top skills of church growth: delegate, delegate, delegate. Don't worry about perfection as much as involvement. No matter what happens at the launch, if you have follow-up information, you are off and running. (137) Launch Team Versus Core Group

Your launch team has one singular purpose: to assist you in launching the church. Many churches have sabotaged their launch by treating their launch team like a core group. (142) Obviously you don't want to develop a group that is going to be focused on their own growth rather than on sharing God's love with the community through your new church. If you pastor the people on your launch team, you are making it less likely that you will ever pastor the people in your future church.

Furthermore, never treat your launch team like a core group. It's not. While your team can pray together for the future church and even study the Bible or certain books on spiritual growth, the focus of the study and prayer should never be on the people in the group but on influencing those in the future church. (144) You can lead a team, hold people accountable and ensure that things get done in a way that fosters teamwork and gives glory to God. Don't shy away from leading. Even more important, don't surrender the vision of your church to others. The single greatest tip that we can give you on how to effectively find and lead a team is to show people your heart before you ask for their hand. (145)

Three Top Launch-Team Temptations

Temptation #1: Change the Launch Schedule

Temptation #2: Give Your Launch Team Too Much Control (156)

Listen to their advice and heed their insights, but don't give them control over what God has appointed you to lead. (157)

Temptation #3: Merge with Another Church

We've said it before: A healthy launch is the single greatest indicator of future church health. (157) The launch team is not a democracy. Don't vote. You are the leader. Lead. (158) If you are not passionate about bringing new people into God's kingdom, you may need to reevaluate your decision to be a church planter. A man who lacks enthusiasm never develops it in another. (164) To zero in on this *focus* population, you will need to ask yourself the following three questions.

1. Who Are the Key Population Groups Living in My Area? (166)
2. What Population Group Is Not Being Reached Effectively? You will be more effective if you can incorporate your new church plant with a population trend that is on the rise and represent people that are not otherwise being reached. (167)
3. What Population Group Do I Best Relate To? (168)

Our belief is that your music should speak to the primary group you are trying to reach. (172) It's not about my personal musical preferences; it's about the people we are trying to reach. (173) The healthier the systems are, the healthier the church will be, and the larger it will be able to grow. (180) The future growth of your church will be dependent on the leaders you develop. In the first year, focus your leadership development system on staff and volunteers. (196) We meet a surprising number of pastors who are not convinced that God intends to grow their churches. (202)

Growth Barrier #1: Space (204)

Growth Barrier #2: Self-Development (207)

You may be familiar with Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. In this record-selling book, Covey asks the reader to consider the following scenario: Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see?" comes the impatient reply. "I'm sawing down this tree."

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he returns, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."

"Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?" you inquire.

"I'm sure it would go a lot faster."

"I don't have time to sharpen the saw," the man says emphatically. "I am too busy sawing!"²

(208) To break this growth barrier, you have to ask yourself, *What is my intentional plan for personal growth?* An intentional reading plan is one of the best avenues for self-development. (209)

Growth Barrier #3: Sharing

Healthy, growing churches will have a 5 to 100 ratio of guests to attenders. In other words, an outwardly focused church will generally have five first-time guests for every 100 people in attendance. (211)

² Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 287