

Five-Step Strategy for Planting Churches

A successful strategy for planting churches needs to be biblical and simple. We have formulated it in five easy to follow steps: **Pray - Meet - Make - Gather - Multiply**

Pray. Pray fervently with God's heart for the people you are reaching out to. Pray to meet people by "divine appointments." Pray until you can weep over people. Pray fervently. Fast and pray. Walk and pray. Ask God to let you see what he sees and feel what he feels. It is in the place of prayer that God will reveal the unfulfilled purposes and God's heart for the people you are reaching. Pray for a student who is open to talking about Jesus to open the door to their other non-Christian friends. Pray for understanding and love of these people. Pray for words from the Lord to guide you and give you specific strategies to make disciples, train leaders and start a movement of simple churches. (Luke 10:2)

Meet. Meet people where they are. Hang out with those who don't know Jesus. Get outside the Christian bubble. Resist the temptation and emotional need to focus on team issues that absorb your time and energy. As you pray, trust God to give you strategies for meeting people. Begin to build a network of relationships; what the Bible calls an *oikos* (literally a household). This network is the beginning of your future church plant. This network of relationships will become the future support system for those who accept Christ if they are disenfranchised by their family and friends. Build this network in faith that it will become a church for God in that place. (Acts 16:11-15)

Make. Make Disciples. Invest in people's lives. Don't wait for them to pray a prayer to accept Jesus or say they want to follow Jesus to invest in them as people. Disciple making is another way of describing evangelism, and of building meaningful relationships. As you build those relationships, seek to discern what God has in his heart for each person. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus commanded us to make disciples. Disciple making is about introducing people to Jesus in such a way that they get to know him personally, and then learn to love and obey him. When it's the right time, teach people the seven basic commands of Jesus:

1. REPENT AND BELIEVE
2. BE BAPTIZED (IN WATER AND RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT)
3. LOVE - GOD AND PEOPLE
4. GIVE
5. PRAY
6. GATHER WITH OTHERS
7. GO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

Do not hesitate to tell new believers the cost of following Jesus. Emphasize the privilege of going to other nations so God's mission is part of their spiritual DNA.

Gather. Gather those you meet who are spiritually open with other seekers for fun, hanging out, enjoying common interests, prayer, and study of God's word. Focus on the words and stories of Jesus. Don't wait for them to say they want to become a follower of Jesus to gather people into a community of friends. Gathering around a meal with others is one of the best ways to build community. Jesus said that where two or three gather in his name, he is with them. Practice "WWF" when you gather - Word, Worship, and Fellowship. This is "church" in its simplest, most essential form. Nothing more is needed to "be church." There is more that can be done to contribute to growing a healthy, vibrant church (see Acts 2:42-47), but gathering people together is the beginning of planting that church. (Acts 10:24)

Multiply. Plan for growth. From the beginning, train new believers to take responsibility for your meetings and outreaches. Stay in the background as much as possible to encourage others to grow and exercise their spiritual gifts. As soon as you reach 15-20 people, multiply. Start a new gathering. Give those you have been investing in assignments that will help you discern their giftings, strengths, and weaknesses. Build the community from the beginning, just like Paul did, by facilitating the development of indigenous leadership. (2 Timothy 2:2) Practice M.A.W.L! (Model, Assist, Watch, Leave)