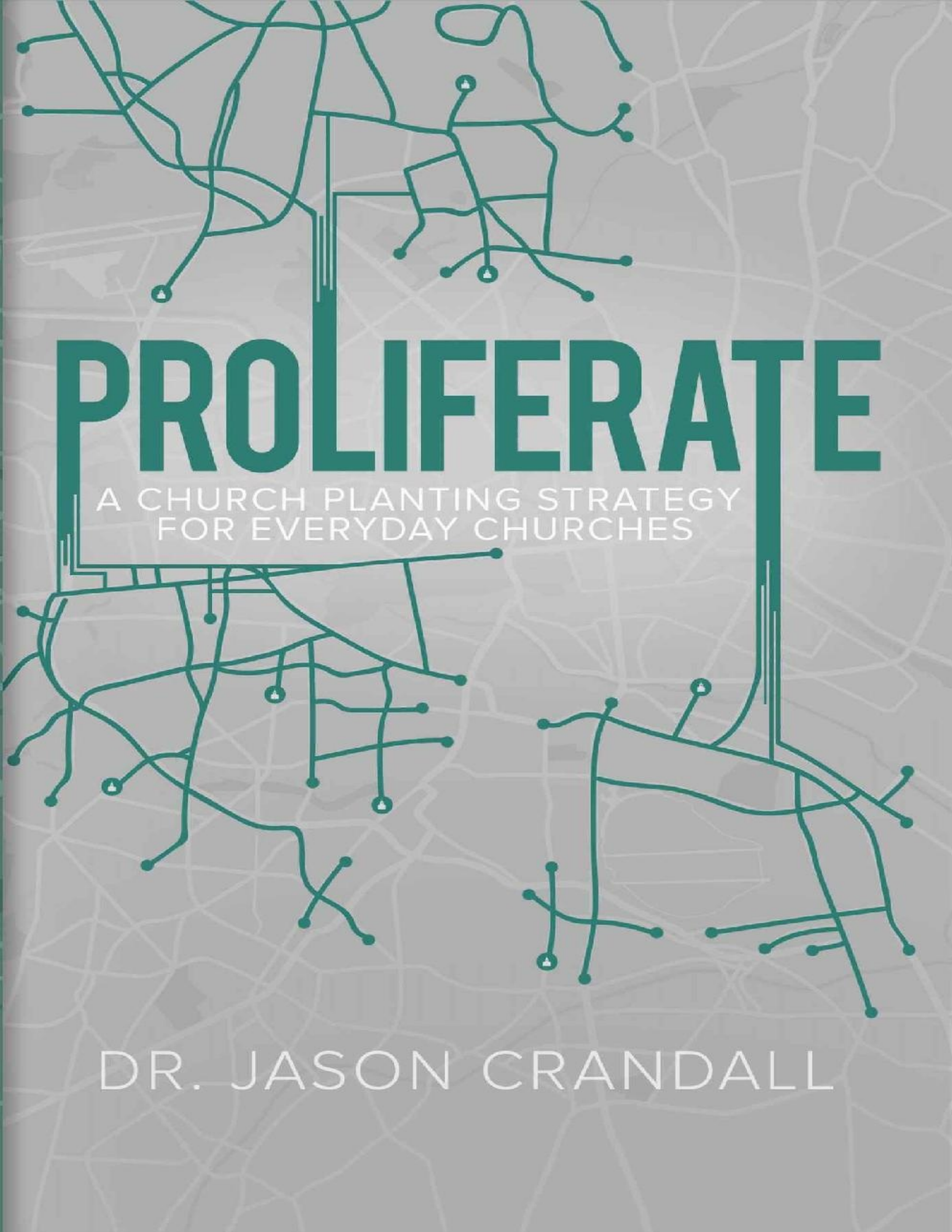




# PROLIFERATE

A CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY  
FOR EVERYDAY CHURCHES

DR. JASON CRANDALL

“In the New Testament, the Kingdom advanced rapidly because churches were reaching people with the gospel, discipling them, and sending them out to start new churches. Guess what? Most likely these local churches were only made up of a few dozen people, not thousands. With over 80% of churches running 200 people or less, Jason Crandall has written a book that will help the normative church see that multiplication is not just a BIG church activity. It’s a command for churches of everyday size. My prayer is that God will use *Proliferate: A Church Planting Strategy for Everyday Churches* to strip away the excuse, ‘We’re too small.’”

— **Shane Pruitt,**  
Director of Missions at Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

“Think your church isn’t big, or significant, enough to be part of planting churches? Think again. In *Proliferate*, Dr. Jason Crandall lays out a challenge, and a strategy, that is helpful to churches of any size who want to get involved in church planting. This isn’t written from theory, but from a practitioner who has planted and led the church to plant while they were still very much a new church themselves. I’m personally grateful that Jason is in Houston and helping lead the charge to see our city saturated with the gospel and new churches planted and multiplying.”

— **Chad Clarkson,**  
Director of Houston Church Planting Network

“Jason is not just a theoretician about church planting. He is an accomplished practitioner. He has written a book that will help any church be a part of reaching people through church planting. It is a must-read!”

— **Dr. Jim Richards,**  
Executive Director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

“Dr. Jason Crandall inspires everyday leaders in *Everyday Churches* to play their unique role in multiplying churches. He’s planted a church. He’s reproducing churches. Now, he’s showing us how. In *Proliferate*, a

practitioner, theologian, and leader will explain how a smaller church can make an enormous impact. It's a good read with a powerful purpose."

— **Bruce Wesley,**  
Founding Pastor of Clear Creek Community Church and  
Founder of the Houston Church Planting Network

"‘Church multiplication’ is often seen as jargon that only applies to large, extraordinary churches because it's thought that only they can devote the time, resources, and attention to such an endeavor. But with the majority of churches being smaller, Everyday Churches, the Body of Christ must find a way to mobilize its largest asset. *Proliferate* is the book we need to help us make church multiplication an everyday concept that can be practiced by Everyday Churches!"

— **Josh Ellis, PhD,**  
Associate Director of Union Baptist Association



# PROLIFERATE

A CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY  
FOR EVERYDAY CHURCHES

**DR. JASON CRANDALL**

LUCIDBOOKS

Proliferate

A Church Planting Strategy for Everyday Churches

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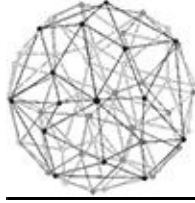
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# INTRODUCTION



When I was a teenager, my brother (who is four years younger than I) got two albino gerbils. If you aren't familiar with this type of gerbil, they look a little like cute demons. They have white fur (the cute part) and red eyes (the scary demon part). We got the rodents from a family friend. We were assured that they were both females. After all, we didn't want any baby gerbils rolling around. We got a cage with a tube, a wheel, and a ball for the gerbils to be put in when my brother wanted to have them outside of the cage. I'm not a big pet person, but they were cute, fun animals, and even I enjoyed petting them, playing with them, and watching them run around our house in their ball.

Then one day we noticed that one of the gerbils was getting fat. That gerbil had eaten a whole lot more than normal, but we didn't think anything of it. After all they were both females. A couple of weeks later there were three more little gerbils in the cage. We separated the biggest—because obviously one of those gerbils WAS NOT a female—which meant we had to buy another cage. The gerbils got a little bigger, and they were still cute and still fun to play with. As the baby gerbils grew, we began to wonder what gender they were. Unfortunately, by the time we were wondering, they were already mating, and a couple of weeks later one of them looked fat. A few days later there were more gerbils. I don't remember exactly why, but my family decided to keep them all—at first. This led to more cages. Eventually these cages were hooked together with plastic tubes until we had an entire gerbil city in our computer room. What began as two cute but mildly freaky-looking animals rapidly grew into a whole colony of gerbils. Eventually, we gave one or two gerbils away (although I thought this should have happened sooner). Gerbils are small, simple creatures but they multiply rapidly. To use a different word, they proliferate, and with a gestation period of around 16 days, they proliferate quickly!

The word *proliferate* means, “to increase rapidly in numbers; to multiply.” Gerbils proliferate. A question you may be asking though, is what does a story

about childhood family pets have to do with church multiplication? I believe that small gospel-centered churches should seek to multiply like gerbils, not every 16 days mind you, but they should be on track to engage in church multiplication frequently. Churches should seek to proliferate. That is the idea behind this book: to give small, what we will call Everyday Churches, a strategy for being involved in church planting and multiplication.

### **THE PROBLEM: A GERBIL MINDSET**

Everyday Churches are kind of like gerbils. They are small in numbers and lack strength. They are mostly cute, but have some freakish elements to them. Perhaps you've been to a Baptist business meeting. A church that is only thinking on these internal issues has a toxic gerbil mindset.

Sadly, these churches don't know how to be involved in multiplication. Even worse, they often feel like they can't be involved in multiplication simply because of their perceived weakness in terms of attendance numbers. This mindset weakens multiplication efforts and hinders local, national, and worldwide gospel saturation.

According to Rick Warren, 85 percent of churches in America run under 200 people in attendance.<sup>1</sup> If these congregations aren't involved in multiplication, then the clear majority of churches aren't getting involved in this effective means of evangelism. Without these churches mobilizing in this effort, many people and areas will be lacking gospel witness.

However, there is a healthy gerbil mindset. These little creatures also possess the aforementioned ability to proliferate quickly. This rapid reproduction happens not in spite of their size, but rather, because of their size.

### **MY ARGUMENT**

In this book I make the argument that all churches should be involved in church multiplication in some manner. This isn't to say that all churches should be involved in multiplication in the same way, but they all need to be involved in the proliferation of gospel-centered churches both nationally and internationally. Whether that means reproducing themselves or helping other congregations to start, all churches should be involved in church multiplication.

Recently, I heard Bob Roberts Jr. speak at a conference. Bob is the pastor of Northwood Church, a notable multiplying church in the Dallas Metroplex. At the conference he said, "Only small churches have the ability to multiply effectively." He went on to explain that large churches struggle to multiply because they spend so much money trying to duplicate exactly what they are doing. Healthy small churches understand what is necessary for a church to function.

## MY SOLUTION

I agree wholeheartedly with Bob. Everyday Churches can multiply effectively, but they have to develop a conviction and then a strategy to do so. Everyday Churches can do a ton of good in the proliferation of gospel-centered churches. Over the next several chapters I'll share how our Everyday Church was able to multiply and then share some keys in how to participate in church planting and multiplication.

## WHAT'S COMING UP

- Chapter 1 – **Crandall, A Happy Nobody**. I want to briefly share a little bit about who I am and mostly that I'm not anybody important. I don't have a big name, but God used me in this effort. If he can use me, then he can definitely use you too.
- Chapter 2 – **CityView's Story**. This is the story of how our small church plant was able to multiply quickly and effectively by the grace of God and for his glory.
- Chapter 3 – **Conviction**. Before we can really get started on this important task, we need to know that it is supported biblically. We've got to develop biblical convictions surrounding church planting.
- Chapter 4 – **Confronting Obstacles**. Obstacles will arise on the road to multiplication. This chapter takes a look at those obstacles and then provides a general solution to confront and overcome those obstacles.
- Chapter 5 – **Collaboration**. Everyday Churches need to learn to collaborate internally and externally. This chapter provides strategies for collaborating within your church for multiplication and building relationships outside of your church as well toward this end.
- Chapter 6 – **Capture a Vision**. Vision gives us a picture of a preferred reality. Before you can lead a church to participate in multiplication, you've got to have an idea about where you will lead them. This chapter provides a process for capturing a vision for how your church can be involved in church multiplication.
- Chapter 7 – **Communication**. It isn't enough to just capture a vision. That vision needs to be communicated effectively. This chapter lays out a strategy for communicating your vision effectively.
- Chapter 8 – **Calling**. We have to follow through on what God has called us to do. This chapter encourages the church leader to not give up as the hard work of church proliferation is done.

- Appendices – These helpful tools are designed to encourage the Everyday Church to find their calling in the proliferation of gospel-centered churches.

## **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

This book was written with a small-church leadership structure in mind. We realize small churches don't have big staffs. The man hours to work through a large book and do the tasks associated with ministry just aren't there. As a result, this book is short and to the point and provides discussion questions after each chapter to engage readers in how to take the parts that are helpful for their situation and leave the rest. My intention for this book is that you study it within the confines of a small group of leaders from your church such as elders, staff members, deacons, or a specified team. I would suggest that the pastor read it by himself first before inviting others into the study.

## **MY PRAYER**

I am thankful that you have taken the time to consider how your church might be involved in church multiplication. I do not take the task of writing this book lightly. Throughout the writing of this book I have prayed that the Lord will awaken a mighty force in this world of churches that feel like they are irrelevant. And that maybe through the Holy Spirit's help this book might encourage many Everyday Church pastors and leaders to equip their churches to proclaim the gospel through church planting and multiplication. May we see the gospel proclaimed, the church advance, and God's kingdom come.

## Chapter 1

# CRANDALL, A HAPPY NOBODY



John 1 records the story of Jesus calling a set of brothers to follow him. These brothers were fishermen, and one of them went on to be the spokesmen of the disciples. One of these brothers was the first to confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. One of these brothers went on to preach on the day of Pentecost and saw 3,000 people saved. One of these brothers went on to lead the church, write inspired Scripture, and have stories told of his martyrdom. Peter was that brother. He's frequently characterized as a bold, powerful, strong, and notable leader although a little rash at times. Andrew was the other brother, and one of the disciples.

My name is Jason Crandall, and I'm a lot like Andrew. In fact, Andrew is my middle name. I'm the lead pastor of a small church in Houston, Texas, called CityView Church. I've been in full-time pastoral ministry since 2003 at three different churches where God has seen fit to have people come to faith in Jesus and grow as believers. But really, the churches I've been a part of are pretty ordinary, or for the purposes of this book, "Everyday Churches." It's not as if these churches have been a part of a trailblazing church-growth movement or on the cutting edge in worship arts, or developing exciting discipleship materials. They're just gatherings of normal people who love Jesus, love others, and seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

I've got some academic degrees. I earned my doctorate from a seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. That's right, you can call me Dr. Jason Crandall. But I'd prefer that you didn't. If you do use the title of doctor when speaking to me, however, I ask that you refer to me as Dr. J (I really like basketball). Otherwise, no need for the formality. Incidentally, all of those degrees are in Bible, pastoral studies, ancient languages or theology. So basically, if I don't pastor or work for an organization with the word "Christian" in it, I'll be driving for Uber,

delivering pizzas, or getting hung up on as a telemarketer. If I'm not working for a Christian organization, I'm not that employable. Admittedly, my level of education really isn't that impressive.

I've had some successes, such as getting the chance to lead a reasonably large student ministry, and I've had some failures. I kind of led a children's ministry, but the senior pastor quickly wanted me to find someone more suited for children's ministry so I could focus on other things. Translation: "you aren't good at children's ministry, son." The point is if I'm not related to you, served with you in church, or gone to school with you, then you most likely don't know who I am. This puts me squarely in the nobody camp. I like that camp. There are a lot of us in that camp. There are a lot of nobodies out there like me.

One thing that's common among we nobody folk is that we are proud owners of many nevers. I've never been on staff at a megachurch. I've never led a college Bible study attended by thousands, or hundreds or even dozens for that matter. I think the largest college group I led was 42 which I guess is technically three and a half dozen.

I've never written a blog with thousands of followers. But there was the time that I had 150 hits on my blog in an hour. I thought I was going viral, but then I realized my views went up because I kept looking at my own site. I've never written a book until this one. But it's a small book. Does that even count?

I've never been asked to speak at giant conferences, although I've been to a few giant conferences, and I've got the lanyards to prove it! I've never been seen on the Trinity Broadcasting Network—not on a segment I'd admit to anyway.

I'm not a Christian celebrity. I'm just a pastor who loves Jesus and his church. Along with a team of 15 other adults, I had the joy of planting CityView Church in February of 2014, and still serve there. I used to think guys like me couldn't be involved in church multiplication. I felt like church multiplication was only for the Peters in this world, and since I'm an Andrew I felt like multiplication was beyond me.

Maybe you can relate to my nobody-ness and my nevers. Maybe you've never served in a big, cool church with its own coffeehouse. Maybe you've never led hundreds or thousands in worship. Our culture is so bent on bigger/better/faster that we often feel like we are less-than because we're serving in "everyday" churches doing "everyday" stuff.

## **I'M NOT A PRINCE OF CHRISTENDOM**

As for me, I used to get hung up on thinking that I had to be like Andy Stanley who planted North Point Community Church in 1995, which now boasts more than 32,000 people in weekly attendance. I mean he's a great leader and speaker,

but he's also the son of DR. CHARLES STANLEY. You know, the senior pastor of First Baptist Atlanta, the founder of In Touch Ministries, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Andy's dad is kind of a big deal! My dad, Robert Crandall, is awesome. He's a faithful man who loved his wife and sons and worked hard his entire life. He loves Jesus. He's one of my heroes, but (and I use the 'but' here only as comparison and not to lessen him in any way) he was a pipefitter for General Motors, not a major player in the Christian world and definitely not the leader of an entire denomination. I don't know about you, but my dad is no Dr. Charles Stanley, and I'm no prince of modern-day Christendom like Andy Stanley.

### **I'M NOT AN EMBLEM OF CHRISTIAN SUCCESS**

I used to think in order to make a meaningful impact I would need to found a major organization or movement, just as men like Lou Giglio have. For those of you in the Christian world who have taken up residence under a rock for the last 15 years, Giglio is the founder of the Passion Movement that hosts conferences all over the world with hundreds of thousands of people attending every year. He is also the founder of sixsteprecords, a Christian record label with a list of artists representing talent like David Crowder, Christy Nockels, Matt Redman, Kristian Stanfill, and Chris Tomlin. He also founded Passion City Church in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2009, and Tomlin is his worship leader. Chris Tomlin! In case you were worried about who would back up Tomlin if he were sick or traveling or something, Matt Redman is the associate worship pastor. Oh, by the way, Louie's dad created the Chick-fil-A logo. You know, the big C that looks like a chicken?

Giglio is an amazingly creative leader and speaker. His messages have touched the hearts of many and brought a lot of glory to God. He's successful on every level on which you would typically measure success and has drawn a huge following. I'm not that successful. I've been the executive producer of two albums (one for my youth ministry and one for CityView), we may have sold 1,000 copies. Most of those sales were because people felt bad for us. My hunch is that since you're reading this book, like me, you're not an emblem of Christian cultural success.

### **I'M NOT AN INTELLECTUAL GIANT**

I used to think that in order to serve God in big ways I would need to be like Rick Warren. Rick is the author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, among other books like *The Purpose Driven Church*, and the pastor of Saddleback church in Lake Forest, California. *The Purpose Driven Life* has sold more than 32 million copies. 32,000,000—that's a lot of zeroes. It is the second most translated book

behind . . . Did you guess?

*The Bible!*

Yes, Warren has written the most translated book in the history of the world behind the Holy Word of God. Based on some of his loyal followers, they may think it is a book from heaven. Based on the opinion of some of his great detractors, they may think it is a book from someplace significantly hotter with fewer angels. He speaks all over the world to all kinds of audiences at a myriad of forums from church growth to AIDS awareness, from worldwide economic issues to foreign relations, from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government to the popular TED organization. He's also an intellectual giant. It's been rumored he has read a book a day for decades.

I've never been accused of being an intellectual giant. For example, I got a *G* in high school geometry. That's right, a *G*. In my high school, everyone was sent to college. If you passed a class by the skin of your teeth and were also tardy a lot, the teacher, rather than giving you an actual letter grade that would impact the GPA of the class and school, would give you a *G* for credit. So, it's safe to say, I'm not an intellectual giant.

### **I'M NOT A WORLD CLASS LEADER**

I used to think that to make an impact in the world for Jesus I would need to be like Bill Hybels. Hybels, the founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church with more than 24,000 attendees, is also the founder of the Willow Creek Association of more than 450 churches and the author of more than 50 books. He's also the mastermind behind the Global Leadership Summit that has attracted hundreds of thousands of leaders throughout the world. Hybels is an innovative leader and is well known for his leadership insights and abilities. Ram Charan, author of *The Leadership Pipeline*, would classify Hybels as a leader of organizations—the highest classification of all leaders. Why? Because Hybels has built and led a successful church, an organization of churches (essentially a denomination unto itself), and a conference that has given him a global platform to talk about leadership.

It's safe to say I'm not that kind of a leader. I'm more of a one percenter kind of leader. My church has about 200 people, (that's a lot less than 24,000, less than 1 percent actually). I've formed an association of three churches called the CityView Collective. Again this is significantly fewer than 450 (we're getting better though; it's almost 1 percent). And I helped put together a conference once for students that had roughly the number of teenagers in attendance as books that Hybels has written.

### **I'M A HAPPY NOBODY**

My point in all this is that I'm frequently tempted to think that bigger is better. Our culture worships the idea of bigger, better, faster, stronger. To most people gigantic is equated with significant and evangelical movements have bought into this myth. In many of these movements, faithfulness is a forgotten concept, and budget and attendance size are the only metrics that matter. We need to fight through the temptation to think this way. We have to stop wishing we were Peter and start being content and truly thankful with being Andrew.

The fact of the matter is the vast majority of churches are Everyday Churches led by Andrews. The median size of a church in the United States is 75 people, that is men, women, and children.<sup>2</sup> Most of those churches are faithfully loving Jesus, loving each other, and sharing the gospel, but they aren't exploding in growth and they don't need to feel bad about that. God has called believers to be faithful shepherds not necessarily gigantic Goliaths.

### **NOBODIES ARE USEFUL**

Nobodies like you and me are the people God uses. He took Abraham, a moon worshiper from Ur of the Chaldees, and made him the father of faith. He used Joseph, the arrogant runt of the litter, to save a huge portion of the world from starvation. He took Moses, a stuttering murderer, and used him to end centuries of captivity in Egypt. He took Rahab, a prostitute, and used her to bring about an unfathomable victory for Israel. He took David, a smelly sheep herder, and made him one of the greatest kings the world has ever known. He took Joseph, a lowly carpenter, and used him to oversee the earthly development of the Messiah. He took Mary, a pregnant teenager and used her to nurture the Savior of the world. He took the disciples, a ragtag collection of fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and the like to launch his plan for reconciliation in the world. He took Paul, a religious terrorist, and made him the greatest missionary the church has ever seen. He took nobodies and used them. They weren't the greatest, the strongest, the wealthiest, the smartest, the most handsome, the most likeable, the best speakers, or the most successful. Each of these people belonged to God, and he used them for his glory. God has always used nobodies.

### **PETERS AND ANDREWS BOTH MATTER**

Please, don't think that I hate or even dislike men with big platforms. I don't fault Andy Stanley, Louie Giglio, Rick Warren, or Bill Hybels for doing what they do or being who God has made them to be. They are Peters and have gifts given to them by the Lord to equip the saints. I don't despise amazing church planters and leaders such as Matt Chandler, Francis Chan, Kyle Idleman, Derwin Gray, or anyone else who started or revitalized churches that grew quickly in terms of numbers. Their ministries have done unbelievable good for the sake of

the gospel. However, Andrews are important too! I want to rage against the idea that it is *only* men with huge platforms that can launch movements that proclaim the kingdom of God. I want to fight against the notion that it is only the gigachurch, megachurch, large church or large parachurch organization that can be involved in powerful and effective gospel proclamation in this world.

The fact is Jesus says the gates of hell won't prevail against the onslaught of his kingdom coming. His church isn't just Willow Creek or Saddleback. It also isn't just CityView Church in Pearland, Texas; Oak Grove Baptist in Richmond, Virginia; or Faith Baptist in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. His church is all believers of all eras throughout time, and that includes CityView Pearland, Passion City Church, The Village Church, North Point Community Church, The Crowded House Church, Prestonwood Baptist Church, the Church at Ephesus, the Church in Jerusalem, and your church in your city, town, village, or farming community.

His church includes your church, and that means that your church has a part in this. Your church is a building block in Jesus building his church in this world. Your church is part of the spreading of the gospel in this world and an important part of Christ's kingdom. Your church of 25, 50, 75, 150, or 200 matters. It matters tremendously.

## **A REDEFINITION OF TERMS**

While speaking at an Everyday Church, I overheard a conversation between a church member and the pastor about the local megachurch. The church member was lamenting to the pastor that the Lord would definitely give the megachurch pastor a bigger mansion in heaven and that their small church was "weak and meaningless." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I couldn't believe this Christian had such a low view of the church where he was a member. I also couldn't believe the restraint of the pastor as he complimented the megachurch and their ministry and still made much of what Jesus was doing at their church—all with a warm smile. This is greater restraint than I would have had.

The typical church attender knows about megachurches and, in my experience, often compares Everyday Churches to them, like the story I just shared. It would seem that in the minds of many Everyday Church attenders, churches under 200 in attendance will never have the impact that big churches will have. Personally, I *hate* that thinking, and maybe that hatred is pride. Essentially, I think most of my negative feelings surrounding this issue are based on an understanding that the *clear* majority of churches are 200 or fewer in attendance. To me, saying that a church is small makes it sound like it's insignificant. But this isn't true. That is a group of people who bear the image of

God, for whom Christ died, and are called to be disciple-makers in this world.

Among those small congregations are churches doing the work of the Lord. These churches aren't meaningless and weak. These churches are sleeping giants that have begun to think less of their mission in this world because they aren't big, their pastors aren't asked to speak at mega conferences, and their facilities don't look like Disneyland. These small churches have the ability to do amazing things for the gospel's advance. They aren't small. They are ordinary. They are normative. They are Everyday Churches, and they are working to fulfill God's plan every day.

### **CHURCH PROLIFERATION IS PROPER**

I believe a few things. I believe I'm a nobody. I believe Jesus is our only hope of heaven. I believe God uses nobodies who believe in Jesus. (I believe God uses somebodies too). I believe God uses Everyday Churches that hold tight to Jesus as well as big churches. I believe he uses house churches and parachurch organizations that lift up the name of Jesus. And I believe God uses all of these people and churches for the advance of the gospel and the glory of Jesus.

It's my conviction that he wants all of these people and churches to be involved in something meaningful. He wants disciples to multiply, and as a result churches will multiply. He wants the church to proliferate. Church proliferation is proper for Everyday Churches.

This book has a simple premise: every church, regardless of size, can be significant in the cause of gospel proclamation through church planting. Every church, regardless of size, should be involved in church proliferation. Let me be clear, not every church should be engaged in church proliferation in the same way, but every church needs to find its role in this effort. We'll talk more about this in Chapter 3 as we discuss the biblical reasons behind multiplication. I believe it is the good pleasure of the Lord to use us in this way. I believe churches need to leverage themselves by planting more churches, keeping the proclamation of the gospel at the center of everything they do.

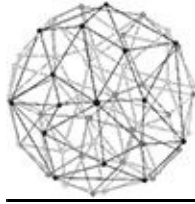
Perhaps you agree. Maybe you're skeptical and need more proof. Perhaps you totally disagree. In the next chapter I'd like to share our story of how the Lord used us to be involved in multiplication. Remember, I am definitely not a Peter. I am an Andrew. I am a nobody, and God used me to multiply gospel-centered churches.

### **Discussion and Study Questions**

1. Have you ever felt like you needed a big name to accomplish big things for the kingdom? What do you think caused you to think like that? Do you still think this way?
2. Who are some other nobodies in Scripture who did big things for God?
3. Who are some modern nobodies you know of who have done big things for the kingdom?
4. Have you ever dreamed about how you might be involved in church planting or multiplication? What are those dreams?
5. What do you think about the premise that every church should be involved in church multiplication? Do you agree? Do you disagree? Why?
6. How do you think your church might be involved in church multiplication? Do you have any early inclinations?

## Chapter 2

# CITYVIEW'S STORY



Here's the story of how a nobody (me) led a church to find its place in multiplication. I share this not to brag, because as you'll see I have very little to do with the church's multiplication. But I will boast about what God has chosen to do through us. We've gotten to see God do some amazing things as we discovered our biblical *convictions* to multiply, the necessity of *collaboration* to multiply, the importance of *capturing a vision* for how we could participate in multiplication, how to *communicate* our vision and strategy, and the beauty of following through on our *calling*. These words that start with C are the Cs of gospel-centered church proliferation: Conviction, Collaboration, Capture A Vision, Communication, and Calling. You will see these Cs throughout our story and the remainder of this book.

### TROUBLING TENSION

I began my tenure at a large church in November 2005. I was blessed to be a part of that church through September 2013, which was when they commissioned us to plant CityView. The church wasn't huge, but around 500 people attended the Sunday morning service. I oversaw a growing student ministry of more than 100 students. I taught a young adult Bible study, which at this suburban Baptist church meant anyone under the age of 45, that was increasing in numbers. I also had a large role in the day-to-day administration of the church and preached when the senior pastor was out of town. I generally had good opportunities to lead.

There were occasional murmurings that after the senior pastor retired I'd be the next in line to lead this congregation. I felt some comfort in that idea and loved the church, but at the same time, my heart was unsettled. I felt a stirring to do more than just be the next logical choice in a succession plan— plan that was unspoken and that didn't seem to be moving forward very quickly.

There was also a tension building in me regarding doing ministry work inside of a conventional church. There is nothing wrong with serving in the typical Baptist, Methodist, non-denominational, or Presbyterian church. Those churches are important, and the calling to serve in them is noble. But for me, I started to feel a pull elsewhere. There wasn't a precipitating factor, just a gnawing in my soul to do something different. I couldn't shake the feeling. I have a mentor who calls this feeling a "holy dissatisfaction." I didn't know where God was leading me, but this holy dissatisfaction prompted me to be open to other opportunities. Previously, I'd turned down requests for résumés and interviews for years. But in February 2012 I found myself interviewing and sending out my résumé. I wasn't sure where I was going to go or what I would do, but I wanted to see if God would open doors elsewhere and see where that might lead.

### **A DIRTY DOZEN INTERVIEWS**

By July 2012 I had interviewed at 12 different churches, but none of them were right. Either I wasn't right for them (the majority), or they weren't right for me (the vast minority). I was feeling some despair and starting to wonder what God's plans were for me. I had worked on a personal vision process, and I had concluded making an exponential impact for the gospel should be my life's pursuit. That was my heart's desire. Inwardly, I didn't see how that was going to happen. I wanted to do something bigger than typical church ministry where pastors go from one church to another usually gaining in size and prestige along the way. I wanted to do something where I had to rely on God, but again I didn't see exactly how that was going to happen. I have a family that needs to be taken care of, and kids are expensive. There was a lot of worry, concern, and prayer as to where to turn and what to do.

### **FATEFUL PHONE CALL**

That August my friend Travis Duke called. Years earlier, Travis and I had served together on a church staff, and we had become close friends. In 2010 he had taken another ministry position and moved to his home state of Georgia. We talked frequently and prayed for one another regularly. One day he called, and I'll never forget his ridiculous words, "I think we should plant a church." He had said similar things before on other phone calls, but there was a conviction in his voice this time that I hadn't heard before. He also wouldn't get off of the subject. No matter how many times I tried to switch the conversation to something else, he kept bringing this ridiculous church planting idea back up. This thing was on repeat for what felt like hours, but was probably only a few minutes. I mean we're guys; we don't talk on the phone for very long. Finally, I relented and said, "I'll pray about it."

You may be familiar with this “I’ll pray about it” tactic. Used correctly, this scheme can get someone off of a subject, get you off the phone, and out of an uncomfortable situation. The only problem is now you actually have to pray about it. The tactic worked. Travis was off the subject, and I was off the phone.

### **PRAYERFUL ON A PRECOR AMT**

All I needed to do now was pray for a minute or two and I’d be done. So I did, but a funny thing happened, I felt compelled to pray longer. So I prayed a little longer and felt compelled to pray even longer. This happened in my devotions over the course of a few days.

I pray while I work out, so I devoted my entire workout routine to praying about whether I should become a church planter. I walked into our local YMCA and started with general prayer. Then I did something I never do. I pulled a Gideon. Just as Gideon laid out a fleece and asked for God to give him a sign about his will, I prayed and asked the Lord for one very specific thing.

As I said, I prayed about church planting through my entire workout routine. The request was something that was a great fear of mine in regards to planting a church: funding. Where would the money come from for chairs to sit in, equipment, a website, or even just to support my family (remember kids are very expensive)? That day I specifically prayed that if I was called to plant a church that the Lord would provide us with \$100,000 or the comfort in knowing that the money would be there. I felt like that was enough to feed my family and do ministry for a year. (Now that I’ve been in church planting for a while I know this isn’t enough money, and if you are thinking of giving toward church planting, be generous.) I prayed for almost two hours while lifting weights and working the machines, including the terrible torture implement known as the Precor AMT. This is a combination stepper and elliptical that burns tons of calories and makes you want to die, and because the Precor AMT was so grueling, I figured God knew I was serious about the prayer.

I finished my workout and as I walked out of the gym, I said a silent “amen.” That very moment I got a phone call—the Lord had heard my prayer. It was someone on the other end who believed in our ministry and out of nowhere wanted to tell me about that belief. The caller wanted to support me if I ever decided to step out and do something big. I knew this person was capable of a lot financially. But when the caller mentioned the amount I’d been praying for, I couldn’t speak. Tears welled up in my eyes, and as I recount this moment, the tears well up again. I’d never had such a direct answer to prayer in my life. So, like anyone who essentially heard directly from the Lord, I decided to . . . take some more interviews with other churches.

## **AN INSPIRING INTERVIEW**

I felt a little like Jonah who heard directly from the Lord about going to Nineveh and then ran in the other direction. I admit to having a fear of a giant fish jumping out of some water and swallowing me and then spitting me back up somewhere else, but I convinced myself that I had good reason to take more interviews. This next one had been scheduled for more than a month. It was with a megachurch. It was a five-day interview. Five days! In Austin, Texas! Without my kids! The position was with a megachurch that had a church-planting ministry. That obviously meant something, right? Maybe this was the way I could be involved in church planting without really having to take the crazy step of planting an actual autonomous church on my own.

My wife and I made all the arrangements and drove to the beautiful Texas Hill Country. An all-expense paid trip to Austin was amazing, and this was a gigantic opportunity to do ministry and learn from some amazing people.

Ten minutes into the first interview on the first day, I knew the position wasn't right for me. Fifteen minutes in, it was apparent that they knew I wasn't right for them. I spoke openly about this with the person guiding the process, and he said, "Let's just see where this goes." I agreed, it was five days in Austin with my beautiful wife without my kids. (I realize I may sound like I don't want my kids around. I love my kids; I love being around them and playing with them; but they're kind of always around, so when the opportunity to be sans kids for a while happens, you seize it.)

The next day I experienced a 10-minute moment that would change my life. I sat down with their church-planting pastor. He shared with me their vision: that every man, woman, and child would hear the gospel from their church or one of its church plants in their defined area of accountability. This church had a vision to do more than just build large buildings and make a big influence. They wanted to make the gospel known in their area and they were going to sacrifice to make that happen through church planting.

I was sold. Not on the church where I was interviewing, but on their gigantic vision. My biggest issue with taking Travis' advice and church planting (other than the question, "how will we survive?"), was the question that kept coming to me: "How could one church really make a difference?" I had recently found a population estimate for the city of Houston's growth. It predicted 50 percent growth by the year 2050. This equated to roughly 3.5 million more people in the greater Houston area by 2050! How would one church reach enough people to keep up with that population growth? The answer was simple: one church couldn't. Certainly, a movement of churches could. A movement of churches that valued church proliferation could make an impact on the lostness of the

fourth largest city in the US. I came home inspired. It was time to pray hard about how this thing could happen and what we might need to do in order to be obedient to God.

## **SIX WEEKS OF PRAYER**

I don't know where the idea of six weeks of prayer came from. Whatever the case, I called Travis and said, "If we're going to do this then you need to commit to pray with me for six weeks." He did. I also called 10 mentors and friends and asked that they'd pray for me. They agreed. Then I asked my wife. The beautiful and talented, Allison Crandall. She was pregnant with our third child and was in the last trimester. The pregnancy had been less than stellar. The baby was fine, but Allie was often sick with different minor illnesses. On top of the illnesses, she was watching our two boys who were both under five years old and had energy to spare.

I came home one day and said in my most sanctified preacher voice, "Allie, I want you to pray for the next six weeks about us planting a church." I felt very proud that I was leading our family so well spiritually. I mean surely she would understand how excellent a husband I was and how much I loved the Lord. She would certainly want to fan me with a palm leaf and feed me grapes after my sanctified proclamation.

This was most assuredly the worst possible time to ask her to pray about something like this. As I look back, I wonder how I was so lacking in situational awareness. If you are reading this and thinking about planting a church, don't ask your wife to pray about it in her third trimester of pregnancy. It won't go well for you.

## **STARTING A GARAGE BAND**

I was keeping a prayer journal and frequently recorded affirmations of others and confirmations I received on this prayer journey. I was feeling a lot of encouragement to plant and felt like the Lord was definitely leading me in that direction. Then I talked to Allie. I remember the evening like it was yesterday. I put the boys to bed for the eighth time that night, walked into our bedroom and said, "It's been three weeks of praying, what has God shown you?" I can't properly communicate my smugness; however, I am sure that it was palpable. I was ready for the palm leaf and grapes and the angels to start singing.

Then Allie spoke, her eyes like flames and her words as sharp as knives.

"I don't want to do this!"

"I think it's stupid!"

"It feels like you're saying you want to leave a steady job and start a garage band." (Incidentally, that last sentence is one of my favorite things she's ever

said.)

I was dumbfounded. I couldn't believe it. The Lord shut my mouth; I know it was the Lord because this is not my normal response. I backed off and put the whole thing on hold. I wasn't going to start a church from scratch without my wife on board. If she wasn't feeling called, I wasn't called to go forward and do it yet. I still felt affirmation and encouragement to do it, but at this point the timing wasn't right—we had a baby on the way!

### **SERIOUSLY SICK**

Our third son, Judson Lewis Crandall, was born on December 19, 2012. He was healthy. He was whole. However, everyone else in our family wasn't. I had strep throat. My oldest boys had the flu. And then we traded—I got the flu and my boys got strep throat. My parents, who had come to town to help with the baby, came down with pneumonia. I'm not sure if you know much about newborn babies, but you can't be around them if you are sick. I kept the oldest boys and myself away from Allie and the baby. So Allie, who had carried this bundle of joy for nine months and endured lots of sickness personally, now had to be quarantined in our bedroom to keep herself and the baby well. We communicated mostly through FaceTime, text and phone in our own house. All she had in that room was the baby, her Bible, and a broken TV.

### **REUNITED AND READY**

Four weeks later everyone was better, and our family was finally reunited. One night while we were getting ready for bed, Allie looked me in the eye and said, "Jason, you need to do this." I didn't know what she was talking about. I thought she was telling me I needed to change another diaper. Before I went to go get more diapers, cream and wipes (the greatest thing ever invented), I asked what she meant. She said, "Jason, we've got to plant. The Lord was disciplining me in that bedroom during those four weeks. He was making it clear that this is what he wants us to do." Through my new parental, lack of sleep stupor, I felt a deep sense of conviction. This thing had to be done.

### **CONVICTION**

The Lord was gracious in our preparation. God blessed us at every turn. I shared this conviction to plant with the church where I was serving. They generously gave us funding and encouraged some wonderful, Christ-centered families to come along with us on our new endeavor. The plans were in motion. One thing nagged at me though: that conversation in Austin. If we were to be a church that multiplied, we needed to instill the DNA early. How could we do it though? Would we even be able to make it? Was this experiment of planting a church

really going to work? How could we send when we were just being sent ourselves? The questions were mountainous and the answers were miniscule.

During this time, I read a lot. I read the gospels and the book of Acts over and over again. I saw how the church started in an upper room in Jerusalem and spread throughout the world. I was developing a deep biblical conviction that churches shouldn't be their own kingdoms, but should be embassies of Christ's kingdom. The more gospel-centered embassies there are in this world, the more places that Christ is much made of. We couldn't be a church that just grew by addition. We had to be a church that multiplied. This wasn't just a passing thought. This multiplication mindset was awakening something deeply rooted in my Christian DNA.

I also read every book I could get my hands on about church planting and multiplication. Many of those books were written by or quoted Ed Stetzer. For those who don't know of Stetzer, he's essentially the pope of modern-day church planting. My partner Travis and I read Stetzer's *Viral Churches* together. In *Viral Churches*, written with Warren Bird, Stetzer mentions the idea of planting pregnant.<sup>3</sup> The idea comes from an episode of *Star Trek* titled "The Trouble with Tribbles." Go ahead and Google the episode. I didn't know what he was talking about either. Apparently, Tribbles were one of the species Captain Kirk (you know, the guy from the Priceline commercials) faced on the original Enterprise. Tribbles were multiplied quickly because when they were born they were already pregnant (like gerbils on steroids).

Planting pregnant became our next prayer focus. This was the way that we could understand our embryonic church plant multiplying. We wanted someone who would help us set the tone for church multiplication from the start. We were praying our church plant would multiply within 18 months of launch, and that meant finding someone who was feeling the call to plant as well, but might see themselves needing a larger amount of preparation time. I want to emphasize that this wasn't just a want, but a clear, blood earnest conviction that we had.

## **COLLABORATION**

Travis and I shared this desire to plant pregnant with every person we talked with from pastors to friends to denominational leaders to potential core team members. We talked about it constantly. We wondered how to plant a pregnant church. We wanted to be a viral church focused on multiplication. I wanted us to make an impact on people far from God in the Houston area. Everyone I talked to heard the same thing; that we were going to be a multiplying church that made an impact on the Houston area. It was like I was an iTunes track on repeat.

Six months earlier I'd been asked by a former intern of mine, Cary Perrin, to

speak at a weekend student event in Missouri. I wasn't pumped about going to the middle of nowhere, but my wife encouraged me that it would be a good time away and this guy was a close friend of mine. So I went. Hanging out with the kids was fun. The event was great. Missouri was better than I had expected.

One providential day, over a nutritious Burger King breakfast, I shared with Cary that God had called me to plant a church and that we were in preparation mode. He told me he was feeling called to plant as well—right there in that tiny Missouri city that already had 100 churches and at least 10 church plants already starting. I told him he was most likely wrong and that planting a church in this town would be a waste of his time. Subtlety has never been a gift of mine, so I went on to discuss my plans in Houston. I explained to him the demographics and growth rate of Houston and told him he had to come and plant with us. He said he'd "pray about it." I knew what that meant: "Leave me alone." My greatest gift is persistence, and so I called him once a week until I was sure he was praying about it. Soon thereafter he agreed to come and be part of what we were doing. Cary took the daring and faith-filled step to move his family to Houston and work with us to build CityView Church, Pearland.

We built relationships that helped us prepare to multiply within 18 months of our launch. We worked closely with our state convention (we're Southern Baptist). We worked very closely with our local association (also a Southern Baptist thing) and its forward-thinking executive director, Donald Hintze. We found another local church that had a similar heart for planting, and they too were feeling called to plant a church in the same area we were looking to send Cary. We worked with the Houston Church Planter's Network for training. Then we connected with a local business owner sympathetic to the cause of church multiplication who promised the use of his movie theater, the only theater in the town, for free. Collaboration with entities outside of our church, other churches, and local business owners who loved the gospel was essential to our ability to multiply quickly.

## **CAPTURE A VISION**

Travis, Cary, and I worked hard to craft a vision statement that encompassed both our heart to make disciples who loved the gospel and loved our town, and kept an eye toward church multiplication. We prayed and fasted. We thought long and hard. We read books on vision-casting and development, read the book of Acts over and over, and looked at demographic research and the influx of population coming to Houston. We were convicted that we couldn't just try to build a monster-sized church. We wanted to build churches full of people who loved the gospel, loved the areas in which they lived, and were inspired toward

church multiplication.

We wanted our vision to be stated carefully and succinctly and worked hard at writing one we finally agreed to in October 2013. We added a few tweaks over the next few months. We felt like the vision God was giving us for CityView Church, Pearland was to “make gospel-centered disciples of Jesus and plant 100 churches in 25 years in the Houston area.” That was it! This was what we were going after for the next 25 years at least. Our vision statement was short, specific, and memorable. And it communicated a vision bigger than the seven couples in my living room. In order to accomplish this vision, God was going to have to do big things. He was going to have to allow our church to grow. He was going to have to bring us people who would become church planters. He was going to have to give us people who were willing to sacrifice for disciple-making over facility building. Our church was going to have to be willing to talk about the vision without fear. We were going to have to communicate the vision that God had given us.

## **COMMUNICATION**

I felt crazy sharing this big vision at first. How would a small church plant in Pearland, Texas, led by a nobody do anything like this? I shared this vision with anyone who would listen. Old ladies in the elevator, baristas at Starbucks, my son’s teacher, our mailman—everyone. If I was invited to speak somewhere, I was beating the drum of church multiplication. We communicated it constantly. Gradually, the people we shared this with started catching the vision of church planting and multiplication too.

CityView Church, Pearland launched on February 9, 2014. On that day we shared the vision of our church: to make gospel-centered disciples of Jesus and to plant 100 churches in 25 years. We also shared our goal to send Cary Perrin, his family, a ministry team, and financial support from CityView Church within 18 months as a first step in this vision.

We shared our vision frequently. Every worship service had some aspect of that vision incorporated, whether that was an announcement, a point in a sermon, a video element, or a handout. Every conversation we had with a visitor was about this vision as well. We talked about it so much our tongues were tired. The vision was on our website, on our social media pages, in our founding documents, and taught in our visitor classes and our new member classes. Every chance we got we talked about it. We wanted to get our people to remember it, understand it, and catch this vision for multiplication.

But we couldn’t just talk about it. We had to put our vision into practice by sacrificing to make it happen. We put aside at minimum 15 percent of our

general giving for missions. Five percent was specifically earmarked for the purpose of church planting in the city of Houston. This number represented a significant portion of our budget, but we knew we had to demonstrate sacrifice to our people.

From the beginning we challenged people who joined CityView Pearland that they might be called to be part of a launch team called elsewhere to plant a new church. We wanted to instill in them that being part of CityView also meant being part of a movement in church multiplication. We didn't see CityView attendees as *our* people but *God's* people, called as his ambassadors to set up new embassies wherever he might send them. Practically, this meant we needed to send people, and that wouldn't be easy. But we didn't just want to send anyone. We wanted to send good people who could lead, disciple others, serve, and give financially.

CityView Pearland's leadership prayed for months, and we challenged the members to pray too. We worked through an application and interview process, trained a team, and sent 20 people to serve as the core team and eventually launch the new church. The group was comprised of a worship leader, band members, sound technicians, small group leaders, and children's teachers who all felt the call to help plant the new church. Everyone in this group were givers and collectively tithed over \$5,000 a month. This represented more than a quarter of our monthly giving at the time. Sending out generous giving leaders at a young church wasn't an easy thing, but they felt a call to be ambassadors of Christ in a different town. This was the vision. This was the hope, and that meant sacrifice. In order for us to be true to our vision and not be hypocrites, we had to follow through on our calling.



## CALLING

This new plant was commissioned on August 16, 2015. Normally, we expected a downturn in people and givers. On August 9, the week before we sent the newly formed team, our church had a total of 110 people in attendance—that is every man, woman, and child. We commissioned 20 people to leave and start a new church whose cumulative monthly giving was \$5,000. We also sent them with 5 percent of our tithes and offerings that we'd saved as a nest egg over our first 18 months. Additionally, we committed \$1,900/month for their first 15 months to make sure they got off to a strong start. August 16 was a great day, though admittedly it was a hard day. These people were friends, co-laborers, and important parts of our church. Naturally, I was nervous about what the coming months would be like. I knew that we were being faithful to the calling of God

for us, but I knew that didn't mean the next months would be easy.

### **CAN'T OUTGIVE GOD**

Simple math says that the week after we sent out our team of 20 we'd be lacking around 20 people in attendance. The next week, August 23, we had 130 people attend Sunday worship. We gave away 20 people and 40 new people took their place! The Lord brought us new leaders, new band members, new children's leaders, and new givers!

The quarter after we sent away \$5,000 a month in giving we had our best financial quarter ever. Our giving increased by 27 percent from the previous quarter. In all of this we learned a very important lesson. It was something we assumed was true and believed was true, but then we got to experience it. The lesson: you can't outgive God. We thought we were giving away 20 leaders and \$5,000 a month in giving. What we learned was that all of the people and all of the money are the Lord's, and he helped us to trust him more deeply. That was the greatest treasure—a deeper reliance on the Lord.

Multiplication would have still been worth it had we not grown afterward. Gospel-centered church multiplication is a blessing in and of itself. The Lord would have been good to allow us to participate in his mission. Miraculously, he did far more than we could ever hope for or imagine and caused our congregation to grow! In all of this we found a few things to be key. We needed convictions based on Scripture. We needed to collaborate to make the whole thing work. We needed to capture a big vision. We had to communicate it clearly and repeatedly. Then, we had to follow our calling. Finally, we had to understand there was no way we could possibly out give God.

### **A CHALLENGE TO YOUR CHURCH**

This is how our church framed what God was calling us to do, and it's my challenge to you. It's what the rest of this book is about: The "Cs of Church Multiplication: Conviction, Collaboration, Capturing a Vision, Communication, and Calling." Over the coming chapters, it is my goal for you to build your conviction about the expansion of God's kingdom through you and your church. Know that regardless of its size, your church can and should play a role in church multiplication. Collaborate with your church and others to figure out how and what you should be doing in multiplication. Capture a vision for your church's involvement in multiplication. Communicate that vision to your people. Let them hear their leadership take bold, confident steps of faith. Let them know that there is a direction and share it with them frequently. Finally, be faithful to God's calling. He will ask for audacious things, and when we give them, he will do more!

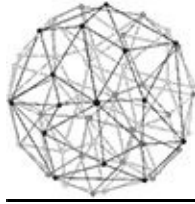
My hope is that this story encourages you and stirs your spirit. I hope it causes you to think about how your church might be involved in church multiplication. We need to see that church proliferation is deeply rooted in Scripture. That's what our next chapter is all about. Let's go to the Bible and see that this isn't just a ridiculous notion. This is the well-thought-out plan of the sovereign creator God who personally knows each hair on our heads and each place in which we serve.

## **Discussion and Study Questions**

1. Did any part of the CityView story inspire you? Which part? Why?
2. Would you be willing to spend six weeks praying about your church's place in church multiplication?
3. If you could write your church's story, how would you write it?
4. Being part of a church plant is hard, but it means that you can do anything you want from the beginning. If you looked at your church as a church plant and could do anything with them right now, what would you do?
5. What keeps you from doing that? What are the obstacles as you see them?
6. Is there a part of the CityView story that you think you could emulate? Which part?

## Chapter 3

# CONVICTION



Winston Churchill is one of the most recognizable names in leadership. He led England through the Second World War and in so doing cemented his legacy as a world-renowned leader. Churchill's leadership is admired for many reasons, but most of all for his unyielding conviction that the Germans under Adolph Hitler had to be stopped—even if that meant that England would stand alone.

Churchill noticed well before World War II that Hitler was seeking to rearm and remilitarize Germany. He rightly understood Hitler to be a tremendous threat to the tenuous European peace that had been won after World War I. While others thought of Churchill as a nuisance for his consistent speeches and the articles he wrote about Germany's growing strength, he stood strong speaking powerful truth. When Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Churchill was proven to be correct, and many of those who opposed Churchill within the British government resigned their posts. Shortly, thereafter Churchill became prime minister and declared war on Nazi Germany.

As prime minister, Churchill led his nation to stand against the Nazi-led Axis Alliance. He did much of this before any other allies joined with England. During this time, England suffered *blitzkrieg* (German for lightning war). This was 57 straight days of bombings by the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force. The bombings occurred primarily on London. This bombing continued with less regularity over the next six months. Remarkably, under Churchill's leadership and with the constant threat of bombings, morale did not falter, and the British people became even more resolute in their support of Churchill and in their need to stop Nazi Germany.

A few months after the *blitzkrieg* ended and the invasion of England was repelled, Churchill visited Harrow School to speak to the student body. It was there that he gave one of his most powerful speeches that included this famous

quote: “Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”<sup>4</sup> This speech and many like it contained passionate words that emanated from a man who was convinced that his nation had no other option than to fight back against the evil Hitler regime.

Pastors can learn a great deal from Churchill. His strength of conviction and never-say-die attitude led England through dire times and ultimately into victory, setting an example for leaders throughout the world. Church leaders must grab hold of this type of convictional leadership, especially since the hazards we face have even greater eternal consequences than Churchill faced should he lose.

The heart of leadership is the conviction to “never give in” to “never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.” Similarly, church leaders need to have a deep-seated conviction about proclaiming the gospel and seeing God’s kingdom take residence in people’s hearts. This obviously isn’t by force, as if that would ever work, but through the power of the gospel to take ground in the hearts of people. The same gospel that takes over the hearts of people turns believers outward to multiply disciples that form new churches. Church leaders need to have a “Churchillian” conviction to help their churches participate in multiplication. I want us to examine some critical passages that help develop this conviction.

## **TRAMPLING HELL’S GATES**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

(Matt. 16:13–18)<sup>5</sup>

The first mention of the church and its unequivocal certain victory is on a mountain in northern Israel. Jesus brings his disciples to Caesarea Philippi, a city known for the worship of a Greek god named Pan. The grotto of Pan is a central location in this district and was a place of idol worship and prostitution. Pan’s grotto became known as the “gates of hell.”

Jesus took his disciples to this most evil of places to teach a strong object

lesson. This is essentially like taking some Baptist missionary kids to Mardi Gras to teach them a lesson. If I were a Jew in the first century, I would be afraid—very afraid. If I were one of the disciples following Jesus to this place, I think I'd begin to question his plans: "Jesus, where are we going? What are we doing here? Can we leave—now!" But then he asks questions and that means he's got a point. If I were there, I'd want to get to the point quickly.

Jesus asks, "Who do people say that I am?" (Can't you imagine the disciples answering like they are in a lightning round on some TV game show, trying to get to the showcase showdown ASAP?)

- Matthew: "John the Baptist!"
- Andrew: "Elijah!"
- John: "Jeremiah!"
- James: *Jeopardy*-style, "Who is, some other prophet?"
- All the disciples silently thinking: "Let's go Jesus!"

### *One More Question*

One more big question from Jesus: "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter, with all of his usual brashness and vigor, says the smartest, most accurate thing he's ever said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." I know that Jesus is never shocked—he's the son of God; he knows everything. But if Jesus ever were to be shocked, ever in all of his eternal and perfect knowledge, this would have been the time. I know he wasn't. You can almost hear it in his response to Peter: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." I imagine Andrew leaning over to John and saying, "We know he couldn't have come up with that on his own!"

I wonder if Peter realized that was the most important thing he'd ever said. In fact it was the most important thing anyone had ever said. Jesus calls this moment with Peter "the rock" Jesus is going to build his church upon. This confession that Peter has made is the same confession that every follower of Jesus is going to make forever. Every Christian, regardless of century, location, or church size, is going to testify this way. Every Christian makes this commitment, and every Christian is part of the promise following it.

"The gates of hell won't prevail against it." Gates are a military, defensive measure. Gates keep people out (like our former neighbor who installed one with a giant lock on it after my kids kept hitting balls over their fence). Gates keep people away. Gates keep people from something. Jesus is saying that his church

is going to trample these gates. Jesus wants his disciples to know that this place where they are standing is nothing to fear; they are going to take down bigger things than Pan's grotto, not by force, but by the beauty of his gospel. Jesus wants his followers to know he wins! And by implication we, who make up the church, prevail. We understand all too well that in this world we'll have trouble, but in the end we who call on the name of Jesus win through Jesus. We will have victory.

Frequently, pastors use this Matthew 16:13–18 to gear their church up for a capital campaign. "Let's charge hell by building a children's wing!" Sometimes denominational leaders use this verse to try and up baptism numbers. "Let's take the gates of hell by getting more people wet!" I don't think these are evil applications, but I don't think it was Jesus' point either. The point is, very simply, Jesus wins and because we are part of his body we get to have a part in the win. Christians win through Jesus! Believers in Jesus are citizens of another kingdom, not of this world, but part of one that will prevail against the gates of hell. That's powerful.

It's not just famous Christians, powerful speakers, or successful pastors in megachurches who win. The church wins! We all win! It includes famous Christians, powerful speakers, and successful pastors, but it also includes me and the Everyday Church I lead. Does this mean that every effort that we make in multiplication will succeed? The simple answer is no. Does this mean that overall the church continues to grow and Christ's kingdom wins, of which I'm a part? That is a glorious and unfathomable yes!

We are promised victory no matter how famous, successful, or big our church is. We will win, and we are part of what Jesus is talking about here. Thus, all pastors and church leaders need to think about how they are involved in proclaiming Christ's kingdom on this earth, in our nations, in our towns, and in towns that are close to us, but we struggle with reaching with the gospel. We need to think this way because we all are part of this ultimate victory.

Large church pastors can't sit on their hands when it comes to multiplication and only think of building bigger buildings with a mini-Disney World for a kid's ministry and multiple restaurants to suit their gigantic congregations' desires. Ordinary church pastors can't leave the job to the big guys thinking that they can't afford to send away valuable resources. It isn't good enough for us to sit on our hands concerned with things such as, "the deacons said this" or "the committee head wants to do that." We've got to teach people to love the idea of multiplication for the sake of kingdom expansion. We've got to get serious about our part in trampling hell's gates.

## GAME PLANNING THE CHURCH'S FUTURE

I played recreation basketball in high school. This was the league for the guys who couldn't quite make the school teams or didn't want to invest the time, but still liked to knock down a jumper or drive the lane with our 12-inch verticals. Playing in this league was fun but not very serious. Playing in this league didn't require a huge time investment. We practiced one night a week and played on Saturdays.

One season I had a coach who took our rec league seriously. At practice he'd come in and actually want us to run, do push-ups, and practice plays. He even brought in game plans for a rec league! Each game plan had ideas for each quarter, scouting reports on the other team's strengths and weaknesses, and where we should be score-wise afterward. Admittedly the coach's seriousness was weird, but his efforts almost always led to a win. Our team went 15–1 that season and won the rec league championship, mostly because our coach made game plans (which still feels like overkill).

Sometimes, I wonder what the disciples thought of the strategies and plans that Jesus laid out. In Acts 1:4–8 Jesus is laying out the game plan for the disciples:

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "You heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Notice the flow of the passage. The disciples are told to wait, in response they worry, but Jesus tells them the way forward.

### *The Disciples Are Told to Wait*

Jesus had died on the cross and had risen. Since that time he had been appearing to his followers. Over the course of 40 days he showed them he was alive and taught them that God's kingdom prevails. During these days Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem. They had apparently been coming and going from Jerusalem frequently. But now they needed to stop coming and going and wait. The church was going to prevail beginning in Jerusalem and the disciples needed to wait patiently for the power that was going to fuel them going forward.

Jesus wanted them to wait for someone specific—the Holy Spirit—who was

coming to give them power to begin the great task that Jesus was calling them to. This power was going to strengthen and encourage them to take on the Great Commission. Jesus spoke of the coming promise in terms of a baptism and compared it to John's baptism. Jesus' baptism was different though. John's baptism flooded over them with water symbolizing repentance and their turning from sin. Holy Spirit baptism would flood over them—and every believer—as a turn toward advancing Christ's kingdom. This is what they needed to wait for. It was going to be worth the wait, but they had to wait.

### *The Disciples Worry*

The disciples got off track and became concerned again about the coming kingdom of Israel and their places in it. They wanted their positions to be given to them in God's kingdom. They thought it was time for that physical kingdom to come to earth. It wasn't. Some believers may read this and think, "What was wrong with these guys? Why didn't they understand Jesus' plan yet?" I don't know exactly why they didn't get it, but I understand them. I understand how they didn't get it.

It's easy to miss the point and think of personal interests and to be caught up in the problems of this life. It's easy to forget that there is a larger goal and a more important mission. It's easy to forget that the church prevails and for its leaders to get stuck in thinking about personal salary or committee issues or maintenance contracts or any other number of issues that come up inside of churches.

Let me be clear; I'm not against fair pastoral compensation. I'm not against churches operating effectively or the daily rigors of church leadership life. But I do think that we frequently find ourselves in a similar spot as the disciples. And Jesus tells them, *Look, there is something so much bigger right in front of you.* I think there might be a similar call to the hearts of pastors and disciples everywhere. Don't worry about those little things. Keep your eyes on God's big plan. Don't worry. Instead, trust. This was a big hurdle for me to get over as we planted CityView and then again as we sent out other churches. How would we be able to make it as a church? How would we be able to survive sending church planters out? How could we handle sending teams of involved, tithing families out? The questions at times were overwhelming. However, the Lord was always gracious in meeting every one of our needs. Get your eyes focused on what matters most and the Lord will meet every need.

### *The Way*

Jesus directed his disciples back to his purpose and unveiled his perfect game plan to see the church prevail. Jesus was going to restore the kingdom with a

worldwide mission. Jesus made two promises to those who would follow his game plan. He promised power and opportunity. Disciples will be empowered, and disciples will have opportunity to be witnesses everywhere.

### *The Power*

Jesus said the disciples would be empowered to speak boldly and without fear, and do big, audacious things because of power they would receive when the Holy Spirit came upon them. These big, audacious things were not to get rich and drive the fanciest cars, but rather to take the gospel into places that needed to hear the good news of Jesus. In Acts 2 we can see the beginning of this promise at Peter's first sermon, and the promise is demonstrated throughout the entire book of Acts thereafter.

Jesus' plan cannot be executed without the Holy Spirit, and the disciples can't be effective without the Spirit's help. Their effectiveness as witnesses would hinge on the Spirit's power in them. They wouldn't be able to proclaim the gospel effectively without God's Spirit in them. We've got a lot in common with these disciples. We aren't going to be utilized to proclaim God's kingdom in power without that same Spirit. It's a good thing all believers in Jesus have this Spirit and are empowered by him. It's a good thing the great God who made everything is living inside of us. Like one of my mentors says, "It is more than a good thing, it is a God thing!"

### *The Opportunity*

The second promise Jesus made to the disciples in verse 8 is that they will be witnesses. They are going to speak about what they have seen and what has happened through Jesus Christ. They are going to do it in a gradual and unfolding manner that serves as the general outline in the book of Acts.

The apostles were first witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem as referenced in Acts 1–7. The witnesses then went to Judea and Samaria in chapters 8–12. Finally, the rest of the world is brought into scope in chapters 13–28 as the gospel traveled to Antioch where believers were first called Christians, to modern-day Turkey and Greece, and to the capital of the world: Rome.

The witnesses are still going. The gospel is being taken to those who have never heard it, and the church continues to prevail against the gates of hell throughout the ends of the earth. The witnessing the apostles began is continuing and is empowered by the same Spirit. Jesus' blueprint is still being followed, and his body continues to grow. The body grows through evangelistic church multiplication and through proliferation of gospel-centered churches. I believe we are at the final stages of this blueprint. We are "the end of the earth" as the disciples understood it on a mountain in Jerusalem.

The church was proliferating under the disciples. The church has to continue to do it. C. Peter Wagner says, “Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.”<sup>6</sup> This is *almost* right. Planting new churches is effective, but churches devoted to the idea and practice of church multiplication is the *most* effective means of evangelism. If only there was some formula for multiplication. If only there was a church that started a multiplying movement. Oh wait . . .

## **FORMULA FOR MULTIPLICATION**

Acts 13 tells the brief story of how the church at Antioch started a multiplying movement. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the church had been persecuted in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and had been dispersed all over. Several disciples found their way to Antioch and began to meet together and preach Jesus as Lord. Soon Barnabas came from Jerusalem and saw what God was doing. He went to get Saul to help disciple these believers. Because of their teaching and their lifestyle, the believers in Antioch were called Christians—first. They grew as a church and then . . .

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1-3

Looking at those three verses is something special. Until this point the church had grown mostly through fear. Acts 1–6 catalogs the beginning of the church as it started in Jerusalem. Acts 7 shares a turning point in the history of the church, the martyrdom of Stephen. Upon Stephen’s death persecution began to penetrate the church in Jerusalem, scattering believers all over Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Persecution continued, and eventually these followers of Jesus went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19). Upon hearing about the gathering believers in Antioch, the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas (Acts 11:22). Shortly thereafter, Barnabas went to get Saul, and they taught this group. It was in Antioch where the assembly of believers were first called Christians due to their devotion to Jesus (Acts 11:25–26). This church’s devotion prepared them for taking an unprecedented step of faith. The church at Antioch was the place where church multiplication stopped happening out of fear and started happening out of faith.

## **FAITHFUL MULTIPLICATION**

Faithful multiplication begins with a *conviction*. The disciples were biblically convicted that Jesus is Lord and that they had to share that story and make other disciples. The leaders *collaborated* regularly about the conviction, working together to lead this congregation. They didn't do it alone. They worked together. They *captured a vision* of what needed to happen, and the direction in which they needed to lead in that came from the Holy Spirit. They *communicated* the vision through their "giftings" as prophets and teachers. Finally, this church took the big step of following through on their *calling*, sending Saul and Barnabas.

## **MY HOPE MOVING FORWARD**

The hope is that after reading this chapter the conviction piece is becoming clear. We are part of a movement that will trample hell's gates. We are assured by Jesus that his body, the church, will conquer through love. Jesus wins! We have nothing to fear. We are his and through him we win!

Additionally, the game plan is clear, and we're in the fourth quarter. The church has been on the way to proliferating since Jesus spoke to his disciples in Acts 1:4–8. We are moving forward, and we are an unstoppable force that will reach every nation, tribe, and tongue and even our own towns.

We all need to think about church multiplication but this doesn't mean we multiply in the exact same ways. Some churches will be sending out plants consistently, year after year. Some churches should release (and fund) a young leader to plant a church in an area that is relatively nearby. Some churches should take serious percentages of their budget and use them toward multiplication rather than random building improvements. Some churches should do all of those things. Some churches should open their buildings up to different ethno-linguistic church plants. Some churches should consider closing their doors to give the keys of God's property to a church moving forward and growing and seeking to plant more churches for the glory of God.

## **WHAT'S COMING**

Over the next several chapters, we are going to take the Cs present here—collaboration, capturing a vision, communicating that vision, and following through on calling—and build a unique strategy for how *all* churches can be involved in church multiplication.

As all good, theologically conservative Bible interpreters will tell you, we shouldn't build doctrine from Acts, much less from three verses. We can learn principles, however, that will help as we look to multiply our churches and efforts. These are key verses in the growth of the church, and they serve as the

foundation for much of modern-day church planting.

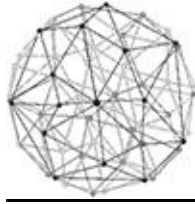
Every church needs conviction and collaboration in order to multiply. Every church needs a vision of how they can multiply. Every church needs to communicate their vision of multiplication. Every church needs to obey their calling to multiplication. Every church needs to be a part of multiplication. Clearly, before we get started on the work of multiplication, there are definite obstacles that will get in our way. Those obstacles need to be confronted, and that is the subject of the next chapter.

## **Discussion and Study Questions**

1. What are some small victories where you have seen the church prevail?
2. What are some big areas where you have seen the church prevail?
3. What are some victories your church has had?
4. What is your church's current game plan? What direction are you going in?
5. How are you feeling about the idea of church multiplication? Are you beginning to develop a conviction toward being involved in church multiplication?
6. Do you know someone currently involved in multiplication? Who?

## Chapter 4

# CONFRONTING OBSTACLES



During the Rio Olympics, I discovered a new event called the Steeplechase. The Steeplechase is a 3,000-meter race that has 28 obstacles and seven water jumps. This might be the Olympic event that is simultaneously least known and requires the most practical skill set if you were to be chased by a wild animal. The other track and field events are interesting, but let's say you are being chased by a bear. (I don't know why you're being chased by a bear, but *bear* with me.) So there you are, a bear in hot pursuit, and you're running on uneven ground. In the Steeplechase, you've got obstacles to negotiate and water to get over or else you become the bear's breakfast. The Steeplechase couples a level of endurance, a 3,000-meter run (almost two miles), obstacle avoidance, and water jumping before you cross the finish line.

When I discovered the Olympic Steeplechase event, it occurred to me that it's the perfect picture of what moving a church to multiply feels like. It is an endurance race. There are a million obstacles. And while no real bear is chasing you, there is a bear of sorts: the congregation. Mess up along the way and you're going to be the congregation's breakfast. Before we get to how every church can be a part of church multiplication, we need to take a look at the obstacles that get in our way. The obstacles sometimes feel insurmountable and overwhelming. It feels like multiplication is a great idea, but we can't be a part of it. Yet, like the Steeplechase, the obstacles can be negotiated and overcome.

## CONFRONTING OBSTACLES

Before considering how your church can be involved in church planting, I think it is important to confront some of the obstacles that I'll bet are occurring to you. We want to get into the Cs of multiplication, but if we don't first recognize that there will be obstacles and roadblocks, then we are just setting ourselves up for frustration and heartache later. Whenever God's people start to mobilize to

proclaim the gospel, problems arise. Don't be surprised. Confront them; deal with them.

The most common problems I hear from those thinking about church multiplication almost always revolve around the resources of money, time, and people. I'm sure others spring to mind, but these are the most prevalent. Multiplication seems like a great idea, but how in the world can churches with limited resources be involved in something so expensive and time consuming? Don't even get me started on sending people from your already small congregation. I believe the issue comes down to one thing: fixing the church's heartbeat. We'll get to that shortly, but first I want to confront the top obstacles that keep Everyday Churches from unleashing their potential in the arena of church multiplication.

### **MONEY MATTERS**

When it comes to finances in the church, we've all heard the cliché bumper sticker slogans: "Trust God!" "You can't out give him!" "Be faithful in giving, and he'll reward you!" You've probably said these platitudes yourself. The refrain is so familiar when you are thinking about your own church. People need to give faithfully for a church to thrive. God uses his people in all kinds of powerful ways, including their financial giving, to accomplish his mission in your church. You say it week after week, compelling your congregation to be faithful. But all too frequently, in a conventional American church model, you are missing budget requirements and you are feeling the financial squeeze. If this happens year after year, you end up having to cut ministries and lower salaries, and in the process, missions become an afterthought.

Did I capture these common occurrences correctly? Was I close? Maybe your church is doing great financially, but they don't share your passion for church multiplication. One pastor of a small church once told me, "When I say there are financial obstacles, I don't necessarily mean that they're financially incapable, but rather that they don't see the relevance in investing in multiplication. They wonder what they're getting out of their investment, instead of focusing on the kingdom of God." They want obvious, tangible things that they can see such as bigger buildings, remodeled children's space, or maybe a jumbotron in the foyer. Everyday Church members have a hard time recognizing the importance of something that won't directly benefit them.

Money is an issue in multiplication. Church plants need the investment of other churches as they set out to do big things for the kingdom. Denominations and networks need the fellowship of churches that give toward their efforts in church multiplication. Obviously, money has to come from somewhere, and

usually it originates from the wallets of people in the pews. But how do we get our pew-sitters to be missionally motivated with their money? The answer is fixing the church's heartbeat to love the gospel deeply.

## **TIME TROUBLES**

There aren't enough hours in the day to get things done, and time is an issue for everyone. The modern church is led by many bi-vocational pastors. Many of them barely have time to prepare sermons, let alone strategize church planting and multiplication. There are constant demands of their time. Not only do they work full-time jobs to provide for their families, but they also plan monthly church ice cream socials and cram in study time where they can to preach a halfway decent sermon on Sundays. These guys are run down to the breaking point with just the normal demands of pastoring. Adding leadership duties toward multiplication efforts seems impossible.

Pastors who get to serve full time in Everyday Churches are also constantly being pulled in different directions when it comes to allocating their time. They may have more time allotted for ministry as opposed to someone who is bi-vocational, but there are more demands on their time for ministry that distract from the most important aspect of ministry. These pastors often wear many hats. They manage the church calendar, they mop the floors and scrub the toilets, they visit the sick, they lead all the ministries, and they preach a more than adequate sermon every week. These kinds of guys often get tired out with the weighty demands of doing church. They hear about other churches where hundreds of congregants regularly attend and dozens come to faith every weekend. They hear from their old seminary buddies who tell them stories of new church-building projects and great properties they're buying up. Then they look at the rhythms of their own ministries and are driven to feelings of despair and worthlessness. Keeping up with all the things that they need to do is hard. It feels like taking on the new task of leading multiplication efforts seems impossible.

There are the lucky few pastors in Everyday Churches that get to have a staff. This staff usually consists of an administrative assistant and a youth pastor who may cause problems you weren't counting on having to deal with. For example, I was this guy for the first few years of my pastoral career like when I requisitioned the church's wheelchairs for a youth event that had "mayhem" in the title. I think the deacons are still repairing drywall, but I know the new wheelchairs that came out of my youth ministry budget that we had to buy were excellent.

These poor pastors are called on to lead their staff, lead their church in discipleship efforts, deal with the silly thing the youth minister did at the

weekend event, visit the sick, and preach a halfway decent sermon on Sundays. Leading in all of these areas makes it difficult to keep your head above water; leading multiplication efforts seems impossible.

Time constraints are there for everyone who serves at a church. So much time is spent in the whirlwind of doing church. In my last ministry position, I oversaw students, young adults, our maintenance crew, and a large portion of our regular administration in addition to regular teaching responsibilities. Many days it was all I could do to keep my head above water, and those were the good days. There were many others where I just flat out felt like I was drowning. I remember feeling stressed out, tired, and teetering on depression. I wasn't accomplishing anything for the kingdom. I was just spinning my wheels. Maybe you feel like that too. Maybe you feel like all of your time is bound up in events that don't produce growth in a numerical or spiritual sense. How do we find time to be involved in church multiplication? The answer is fixing the church's heartbeat to love the gospel deeply.

## **PERCEIVED PEOPLE PROBLEMS**

The funny and all too frequently true one-liner for frustrated pastors goes something like this: "Church would be great if it wasn't for the people." Theologically, we understand that the church is the people and that all people are messy. Those people have problems because all people have problems. They call on leaders to listen to them, give them counsel, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. Marriage issues, kid issues, and sin issues all come into play. People have problems, and the leadership within the church needs to address them, point them toward Christ, and call them to holiness. But we've got to remember that the leaders deal with these issues too. The pastoral leadership, as well as the lay leadership, are always dealing with something that is sitting heavy on their shoulders as well. Then a young, punk church planter comes through and has the audacity to ask for some people to join the core team of his new and exciting church plant. He wants the leaders who have been developed and equipped to help deal with issues well in your church. You understand why he needs healthy leaders on his core team, but you struggle with the temptation to give him the names of the people who have the biggest issues, not the best leaders.

You know that new churches need good leaders, but you've worked so hard on building and developing them. Why on earth would you want to send strong leaders out to church plant? How can you possibly allow leaders to leave to help in church multiplication? You only have a few men and women who actually help in the ministry. This issue is one of the hardest for pastors to think through.

Giving away their leaders means you have to simultaneously invite the congregation to sync up with the heartbeat of the gospel.

## **FIXING THE CHURCH'S HEARTBEAT**

Not long ago I was visiting a church member in the intensive care unit at the hospital. Fortunately, her health was improving, and it looked like she would be home within a week. During my visit, my church member's roommate started experiencing fluctuating heart rhythms, so we called for a nurse. Soon, this poor woman lost consciousness, and her heartbeat nearly stopped. The top-flight hospital staff quickly diagnosed the situation, rolled in the defibrillator, and got to work. They rubbed the paddles, shouted "Clear!", and delivered the shock her heart needed. After two shocks the woman's heart rhythm returned to normal, and within a few minutes she was conscious again. It was a scary experience for her I'm sure, and it was scary as an observer too.

As I've reflected on this scary snapshot of life, it seems a powerful metaphor for the issues that Everyday Churches face in being involved in church multiplication. Their heart is out of rhythm. Their heart used to beat with a strong and powerful rhythm for the gospel, the making of disciples, and the growth of Christ's church and the prevailing kingdom. Then along the way things happen. It isn't that their heart stops beating, but it isn't beating properly. Their heart needs a shock to begin beating regularly again.

At the point of salvation, every believer understands something very basic: I can't save myself. I need a Savior. Typical Tommy receives salvation, and as a new believer he lifts his eyes and starts to realize others need this Savior too. This often gives way to a period of time where there is much spiritual fruit in Tommy's life.

Tommy tells everyone he knows about Jesus and what he's done for him, and he gets turned down left and right as he calls others to salvation. But it doesn't matter because Tommy has Jesus. After a few months or even a couple of years of being turned down often (and typically with very little discipleship), Tommy's heart starts to experience arrhythmia. Not much at first, but the call of the gospel to be a minister of reconciliation dulls a bit.

Five more years go by. Tommy, who told everyone he knew about Christ, now dutifully attends worship, is part of a group at church, and serves in the children's ministry. Sharing the gospel sounds like a great idea. When someone is baptized at church, tears well up in his eyes, and he feels burdened for friends and family far from God. But the service ends and that burden slowly dissipates. Tommy is doing really good things—attending church regularly and connecting with other believers—but he's losing sight of the beauty and power of the

gospel. His heart skips a beat and falls a little more out of a gospel-driven rhythm.

Ten years go by, and Tommy now has a family. He's on a couple of teams (committees for some churches), involved in church leadership, leading a group, caring for his church, and even volunteering in a nursing home with his family. He occasionally discusses the topic of evangelism with others at church, but he rarely evangelizes others in everyday life. Good things are still happening, but the heart has skipped a few more beats, and gospel rhythm is getting weaker and weaker.

Twenty years go by, and now Tommy can't be bothered with being a part of a group. He can't be expected to be there every Sunday. His daughter has gymnastics every week. His son is on a select travel soccer team, and that is a big deal! When he does attend church, he never misses the chance to say how much he likes the big church's children's ministry: "It's almost like Disney World over there." He also makes sure to let the pastor know that the men's and women's ministries at their church are lacking. Living a lifestyle of evangelism is like a distant dream for Tommy. His gospel heart is so far out of rhythm that being at church feels weird. The heartbeat still exists, but his heart hardly, if ever, pounds.

Forty or fifty years go by and Tommy, who was so overwhelmed with joy by coming to faith in Jesus, is now best characterized as a complainer. He complains about the music and critiques the pastor's sermon. It seems like all he ever talks about is how frustrated he is about the constantly changing culture around him. It's been years since he's even talked about Jesus outside the confines of the church building. He has a heart in his chest and a perceivable irregular heart beat that hasn't flatlined yet, but Tommy's heart no longer beats for the cause of the gospel.

Typical Tommy never intended to get to this point. The fact is that staying spiritually engaged and gospel-focused is hard. There is a law of entropy that takes over. While there was so much passion for God early on, it has grown dim because of hurts, failures, and troubles. Tommy is typical because he deals with the typical issues of life. Believers will tend toward this end if their heartbeats aren't constantly challenged with the good news of Jesus.

Every church has some Tommys. If we're honest, maybe as church leaders we sometimes resemble Tommy more than we'd care to admit. Can you see the subtle direction our hearts can take us in? It doesn't begin with fights at business meetings or bitter complaints that cut to the heart of the pastor. It begins with getting involved in good things but neglecting the primary thing. The heart becomes just a little off beat. That leads to a little more. And that leads to a little

more. And before you know it, someone is experiencing a full-scale heart attack. This isn't to vilify Tommys in our churches. We are all prone to this type of drift. The problem is greater than just one person though, because in a family what happens to one member affects all the other members as well.

### **COMMUNICABLE HEART DISEASE?**

This is where the heart analogy breaks down. As far as I know, heart arrhythmia isn't contagious. The thing that happens over years of being slightly off in terms of the evangelistic heartbeat and gospel rhythm is that it does subtly affect others. Local churches are bodies of believers and what happens to one member affects the other members.

The slide to get your heart off of rhythm is subtle. Members don't ask their accountability partners about sharing the gospel and a beat is skipped by those involved. One member complains to a small group member about something that isn't of gospel importance, and another beat is skipped. These Christians are husbands and wives and parents. Their hearts get out of rhythm and it affects the people they encounter both within the church and outside of it.

### **THE CURE FOR HEART DISEASE**

What can be done? What do we need to do to shock the heart back into the healthy rhythms of loving the gospel, making disciples, and seeking the growth of Christ's church? The solution isn't a magic pill that fixes everything. Some work needs to be done. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Repent** – Realize how far you've fallen from the love you had at first. Confess it for what it is—a walking away from your first love. Repent of it, and believe the gospel.
- **Write Your Testimony** – I'm sure you've done this before, but do it again. Write it like a story. Take your time, and remember the joy of your salvation as you remember the sin that you were involved in. Remember the gracious way God rescued you through Jesus by the words of another brother or sister in the faith. Look back on how God's Spirit has powerfully changed you.
- **Create a Top 10 List** – Write a list of 10 people in your life who don't know Jesus. As you write, think about each of them and their lives. Begin praying right then for their salvation and covenant to pray for them weekly. If you can't think of 10 people who don't know Jesus in your life, then isn't that a sure sign that your heart isn't beating correctly? If you can't think of 10, come up with as many as you can and ask the Lord to put other people

on your heart. He will!

- **Start Practicing the P.L.E.A.D. Strategy** – This is a strategy we teach to new and old believers who don't know how to begin talking about Jesus to their Top 10 Lists.

**P**ray for Them – Very simply, name them one by one and ask the Lord of the Harvest that he might allow you to see them saved. Pray frequently for them.

**L**isten to Them – Strike up a conversation over the fence with your neighbor or while getting coffee in the breakroom with a colleague. Call a family member you haven't talked to in a while. Just engage them in conversation.

**E**at with Them – Invite them over for dinner. Take them to lunch. Something loosens in the heart when food is involved.

**A**ctively Serve Them – After you've been praying for them regularly, listening to them, and eating with them, you likely know something that they could use help with or need. Serve that need. Let them see that people who follow Jesus aren't weird, but are caring.

**D**ive into the Gospel – After you've built some credit with these people, talk about why you do it. There is no specific timeline for when this should happen, just that it needs to happen. It could happen the first time you talk or the first time you eat or share coffee together. It could happen months or more down the line, but it is important that it happens.

- **Study Demographics** – Sounds super boring, right? You've got to know the state of our world, your country, your region, your city, and your town. Look into the number of people who are moving into your area. You can get this from the chamber of commerce or the census bureau website. Look at how many people claim "none" when it comes to religious affiliation. Look at how many single-parent homes there are. Realize that each of these numbers has a name and a soul that without Jesus is going to hell.
- **Spend Some Time with a Church Planter** – Church planters, the good ones anyway, are typically infectious when it comes to talking about the gospel. After all, they are leveraging their entire lives for it. Have coffee with one that is in your town (buy for him because he has zero money). Go on a mission trip to help one. They'll make a pitch to get you to help

support them, but after a few minutes you may want to anyway.

- **Invite a Church Planter to Speak at Your Church** – Church planters love talking about the gospel. They love talking about it with anybody. They also love the possibility of building partnerships with other churches that may participate with them. Church planters would gladly come speak for you and share their passion for disciple-making, the gospel, and church planting.

These are just a few ways that may give a heart the shock it needs to start beating correctly again. Listening to Christian music won't be good enough. Listening to sermons might help, but you've got to tap into your heart issue. Stir up your affections. Recall and awaken memories of God's work in your personal history and hold tightly to his promises again. The obstacles of money, not enough time, and losing good people in your church are never what they appear to be. The obstacles are always deeper than the face-value resources of time, people, and money. The greater obstacle is awakening our hearts—and others' hearts—to love the gospel.

### **CONFRONT THE OBSTACLES TO FINISH THE RACE**

The winner of the Steeplechase must deal with all the obstacles in the way. They must negotiate hurdles and water and run 3,000 meters fast enough to win. This race certainly isn't easy for the participant, but it is certainly gratifying to complete and win. The same is true for Everyday Churches that are seeking to proclaim the gospel through church proliferation. The task isn't easy. There are hurdles to negotiate and issues to overcome, but participating is worth it and ripples beyond the walls of your church.

### **Discussion and Study Questions**

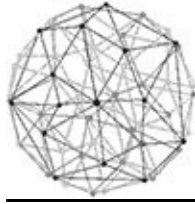
1. When you think of obstacles to church multiplication what comes to your mind?
2. Rank the obstacles mentioned from biggest obstacle to smallest (money, time, people).
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
3. What could you do to address these obstacles?
4. Does the spiritual heart rhythms section ring true in your congregation? In

what way?

5. How is your personal heart rhythm?
6. What steps can you take to help get your members' heart rhythm back on track?

## Chapter 5

# COLLABORATION



*Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Acts 13:1-3

The 2004 NBA Finals were over before they began, or so the ESPN talking heads would have you believe. The series pitted the lowly Detroit Pistons, champions of the Eastern Conference, against the vaunted Los Angeles Lakers, the winners of the Western Conference. The Lakers team was led by Shaquille O’Neal and Kobe Bryant. They also had Gary “The Glove” Payton, Horace Grant, and Karl “The Mailman” Malone. The Laker’s were a super team for the ages. The Pistons had some nice players who had made solid careers in the NBA, but none of them were superstars by anyone’s standard. Ben Wallace, Tayshaun Prince, Rip Hamilton, Rasheed Wallace, and Chauncey Billups started for most of the year for the Pistons. None of them were future hall of famers, but all of them held one goal: win the NBA Championship.

Before the series, every commentator believed the Lakers were guaranteed to win another NBA Championship. This win would solidify the Lakers as a dynasty. Sadly, behind the scenes there was back-biting, squabbling, and animosity between the players. This was especially true of Shaq and Kobe who famously broke up after this NBA Finals.

In contrast, the Pistons were the model of blue-collar teamwork. Nobody’s name mattered more than the goal of winning the championship. Every player individually followed through on what he needed to do. Every player found his

role, understood his role, and fulfilled his role. Unlike the Lakers, the lowly Detroit Pistons learned to work together like a finely oiled machine. The result? The Pistons embarrassed the Lakers super team with an unlikely championship victory.

Collaboration always requires humility. Talented leaders have to learn to submit their talents and efforts to the greater good of the big picture goal. The Lakers didn't collaborate because the egos of the star players were in competition with one another and as a result they lost. They self-destructed after that year. The Pistons had learned to collaborate, and they won. Likewise, the leaders of the church need to learn to collaborate.

Personally, this has been a hard lesson for me to learn. I have a fierce independent streak in me. I always hated group projects in school because I felt like they were a waste of time, and I didn't want to depend on others for my grade. In the beginning of my ministry career I had the same attitude. I wanted to recreate the wheel by making my own tools, creating my own small group curriculum, and very rarely working as a solid team member. Maybe you feel the same way. Ultimately, through our work in church planting and multiplication, I've learned that collaboration is not only a good thing but also a necessary thing. The church at Antioch set a good example of collaboration, and they started something that is still in motion today.

## **ANTIOCH MOMENT**

The church at Antioch was working hard for the sake of the gospel. Citizens of Antioch knew them for their commitment to Christ. So much so that believers in Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch. The church at Antioch also had a set of strong leaders including Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. They were strong leaders in the church as prophets and teachers. There was a great deal of diversity among this group of leaders. Barnabas from Israel, Simeon from Africa, Lucius from modern-day Libya. Manaen was a lifelong friend of a king. Saul was one of the most educated men in the world. They had differing backgrounds and professions, and they all had a hand in leading the church, together.

They worshiped the Lord, fasted, and led together. These men of diverse origins, diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and diverse levels of education came together to lead believers in Antioch. It's a great example of what collaboration looks like and how it naturally boils over into multiplication.

## **COLLABORATE TO MULTIPLY**

The body of Christ is led by all kinds of people. The wealthy investor, the blue collar factory worker, the GED, and the PhD are all involved in church

leadership. When you put these sorts of leaders together there's a diversity of gifting, competencies, and backgrounds. But however diverse the church may be, they have one Lord, one Savior, and one Spirit that indwells them all. And it's their unity that makes the diversity possible. That unity in diversity showcases the beauty of Christ's local body. Rather than dividing over differences, churches can be united because of a Savior and accomplish more because of that diversity.

Once a healthy appreciation of diversity exists within a group of leaders, they need to learn to collaborate on two different levels: internally and externally. Internal collaboration deals with the people within a church such as the staff, elders, and deacons. In short, those who help lead the church. The external level deals with collaboration outside of the church such as other churches, organizations, or sympathetic business owners who may be integrated into the work of multiplication.

## **INTERNAL COLLABORATION**

As I've argued thus far, I believe all churches should be a part of multiplication. Clearly, a senior pastor can't just walk into church on a Sunday and proclaim, "Beginning today, we are going to leverage our church resources for church planting and multiplication!" If he continues pushing his weight around like that, eventually he'll be dodging thrown pencils and hymn books from the pews or nasty social media posts. The senior leader of a church needs to get people on board with their biblically formed convictions. And that means they'll need to learn collaboration.

### *The Who of Internal Collaboration*

You're likely reading this book because you're in some form of Christian leadership role and you're looking for best practices. Maybe you've tried getting people on board with a vision only to be met with the congregation throwing tomatoes at you while you are on the platform. Church congregations are always going to be full of competing goals. Everyone has a picture in their mind of what a "good church" is supposed to be. Lots of parking, an exciting children's ministry, relevant preaching from the pulpit, and decent coffee. All of these things are fine, but if you're going to break out of church business as usual, you have to do some groundwork behind the scenes. That necessitates collaboration.

Who should be involved in collaboration within the church? Obviously, the polity of a church should be a consideration in collaboration. Whether that is the church staff, elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, committee heads, or the like. Whoever has a say in church decisions should be involved or at least have a representative at this discussion. In the churches I've served in previously, this

typically included the pastoral staff, a few deacons, and some ministry leaders who led in various areas. In the church I serve in now, it would involve our elders, staff, and broader leadership team.

The answer to who should participate in internal collaboration goes one step further though. The best leaders in your church may not currently hold an official leadership position. They may have rotated off the elder or deacon teams. They may not be able to serve on committees for a season due to illness, work-related issues, etc. Invariably, these members are frequently your brightest and most powerful leaders who should all be considered for inclusion in this process of collaboration. In order to begin the work of internal collaboration, a senior leader needs to figure out who these de facto leaders are within their church and engage them in the process.

Determining this isn't difficult. Brainstorm a list of people in your church who lead. After taking the time to write out the list, imagine yourself at a church business meeting discussing the new ministry position to be filled. Now look through your list and consider each name in this light: when it is that person's turn to speak do people actively listen to what's being said? If the answer is "yes" then they are your de facto leaders with a voice, and these are the leaders that need to be involved in the collaboration for multiplication process.

There is wisdom in limiting the number of leaders at the table for this kind of collaboration. When too many people get involved, it's more likely that logistical rabbit trails will divert the conversation. For this reason, I recommend a maximum of 12 people on this type of collaboration team. The optimal number is six to eight people. This might be hard at churches with five elders, 10 deacons, and 20 committee heads. In instances like this, narrow down who the real stakeholders are based on your de facto list. It's likely these kinds of leaders want to be at this kind of meeting anyway.

### *The When and Where of Internal Collaboration*

There is no magical time or place where internal collaboration happens. But if you're serious about church multiplication, this time needs to be a priority on your calendar, and the senior leader needs to take the initiative of making it happen. This is difficult when everyone's lives are busy and full of work, youth sports, and social events. The perfect time and place is whenever and wherever you can regularly get a prepared team together who are ready to go.

Here are some tips for collaborating internally:

- Explain. Communicate with those who need to be on this team. Talk to them about the exciting thing you want to invite them into. This is best

done in a one-on-one context. Depending on your relationship with the individuals you could meet for a meal or coffee, make a phone call, send an e-mail or text. The way you communicate needs to be in line with their personalities and your relationship with them. The most important thing to communicate is that you share with them how you appreciate their involvement in the church and how you'd like for them to be involved in something that could be transformative to your church's culture.

- Poll. Ask the team about the best day, time, and place to meet. Send a group e-mail asking about three specific days of the week that will work for the team on a regular basis. Have them rank the days that work best from one (best) to three (worst). Decide on the best date and time to proceed on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Consistent. There will inevitably be times where something will come up and one or two people on the team won't be able to meet. Momentum is important in this process, so resist canceling this meeting when you can. It might feel good to have that night of the week back, but it will feel better if you keep pushing forward toward the goal of collaborating toward a vision. If more than 50 percent of the team will be missing, then reschedule the meeting, but don't out and out cancel it.
- Prepare. Prepare for each scheduled meeting. Challenge each team member to read prescribed chapters in this book in advance. Have them think through the group discussion and study questions at the end of each chapter on their own and come ready to contribute. The senior leader needs to take the lead in this process as well. If the collaboration team is being asked to prepare, then the senior leader needs to be all the more prepared to lead the discussion.

### *The How of Internal Collaboration*

Collaboration within a diverse team has its challenges. With that diversity comes many sincerely held convictions that appear to be at odds. Make no mistake: as you begin collaborating together, people are going to disagree. But don't let the potential for disagreements deter you from getting the right people in the room. Rather, explain to your team that people who love the gospel need to communicate with one another with the gospel in mind. Here are some ground rules I'll frequently lay out for teams that I lead before we get started. I write these ground rules on a whiteboard before people come in to the meeting, and it is the first thing we talk about before we get to the agenda. These rules of gospel-focused communication are very helpful during collaborative conversations and frequently calm tensions before they begin.

1. **Love One Another** (John 13:31–35). Walk into these conversations understanding that you are a family in Christ and that you love each other no matter what and that you will walk out loving each other no matter what. Confront the reality that disagreements may come up, and that's okay, but we need to deal with one another in love.
2. **Think the Best of Each Other** (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). Frequently, in conversation, someone will use verbiage that feels combative or unloving. Remember that as a loving member of the family you are to think the best of each other. Seek clarity before reacting. If and when you engage in conflict, remember that you can't control others, but you can control yourself. Be mindful to communicate respectfully, and avoid a condescending or combative tone.
3. **Seek Unity through Humility** (Ephesians 4:1–3). Differing views are a reality of collaborative conversations. That is exactly what you want. When those opposing views come up, however, humbly seek to maintain unity with one another. Realize that you don't see the full picture on your own and that you need others' perspectives as well.
4. **Encourage Each Other** (1 Thessalonians 5:11). When we disagree we can still encourage each other. The other person's ideas aren't all bad (and even if they are bad you can still compliment them on their shoes or something). Find a way to bring encouragement to the conversation and speak life into the discussion.
5. **Speak Truth in Love** (Ephesians 4:15–16). Tell the truth. Don't be afraid to say something that you understand to be correct. But as my wife tells me all the time, "it isn't what you say it is how you say it." Speak truth to your team members, but do so lovingly.
6. **Point to the Gospel** (Ephesians 5:19–20). We always need to keep in mind that everything points to the gospel, our conversations should consistently point people back to the gospel, and that we are all sinners in need of the grace of God.
7. **Remember the Purpose**: God's Glory (Romans 15:5–7). We exist for God's glory, and the point of collaboration is to work together with the knowledge that the members of the body need one another. As we work together as the body of Christ, we give God more glory through participating in church multiplication. Work hard to make these collaborative conversations revolve around that notion.

### *The What of Internal Collaboration*

You may be thinking, “I know who these collaborative leaders are, but now what? What do I do with them?” Work through this book with your leaders. This book has the intention of helping church leaders work through the important issues of internal collaboration as it relates to church multiplication. Work through this book chapter by chapter over the next few weeks or months and answer the discussion and study questions at the end of each chapter.

This work might take a little bit of time. Getting people to commit to reading a book is tough. Getting them to interact over the content in a book is even more difficult. That’s okay. Frankly, it takes time to facilitate change in church. In big churches it takes time because of the size of the organization. Shifting resources takes time, and new initiatives require careful planning. Resources can shift more quickly in smaller churches, but change can move at a snail’s pace because of mindsets that see their church as too small to do big things. Taking your time to work through a book with your leaders won’t be a bad thing; it will help work through those mindset issues and hopefully give a bigger vision of what your church can be a part of in the arena of church multiplication.

In order to make internal collaboration happen so that your church can be a part of the proliferation of gospel-focused churches, you need to build an internal collaboration team. You need to establish a day and time to meet. You need to make sure that these meetings stay on point and avoid distraction. Following these steps will help begin the important work of collaboration internally, but ordinary churches (like mine and yours) need to work with others to proliferate the church, and so we need to collaborate externally from our church as well.

### **EXTERNAL COLLABORATION**

Have you ever seen a NASCAR race? Dozens of cars turning left over and over again at an incredible rate of speed? The noise. The speed. The blur of speeding cars going by, over and over is almost hypnotic. Something that has always intrigued me about NASCAR is the way the cars are covered with logos. The driver’s jumpsuit is covered as well. From bumper-to-bumper and from head-to-toe, all that is visible are different logos. Those logos are the representation of companies that make preparing that car for the race ahead possible in the first place. Those companies pay money for that advertisement. Without their money and sponsorship, that car doesn’t get on the track. Those companies sponsor the car, crew, driver, and the rest of team.

The NASCAR illustration is a great analogy for how church plants get up and running. They need lots of sponsors who share in their theological conviction

and mission. They need sponsors who will faithfully pray for them and share administrative resources with them.

The NASCAR illustration is also true of churches that want to be involved in church multiplication. They need to take a “one of many” approach and band together to help multiplication efforts. Church bodies that get behind multiplication efforts have got to know that they don’t have to do everything to plant a church, but they need to do something substantial. They don’t need to know everything about church planting to be a sponsor of one. I don’t think Tide Laundry Detergent knows much about winning a NASCAR race, but they sponsor a car. Planting a church is an expensive process, but when many churches are behind the planter it makes the whole process easier.

All churches need to collaborate for the goal of church multiplication to happen. Generally, churches that are under 200 in attendance need to collaborate all the more outside of their local church in order to get multiplication underway. In his book *Collaboration for Multiplication*, my friend and mentor Bruce Wesley writes about the importance of collaboration in multiplication efforts.<sup>2</sup> Bruce is the founder of the Houston Church Planter’s Network, a network of networks that seeks to help every man, woman, and child hear the good news of Jesus in the Houston area. He’s also the Lead Pastor and planter of Clear Creek Community Church, a megachurch in League City, Texas. Bruce is an amazing leader with a gigantic heart for young pastors and multiplication through collaboration.

Bruce has observed five dynamics of church collaboration for multiplication. He says collaborators need to keep showing up, keep it simple, keep on keeping on, keep sharing the mic, and keep including others. Below I’ve adapted these points for the purpose of this discussion.

1. **Keep Showing Up.** Collaboration only happens when there is mutual trust. Trust grows when people know each other. We can only know each other when we consistently get together. Find some churches or an association of churches or a denomination that you affiliate with and keep showing up together.
2. **Keep It Simple.** Collaboration needs to be focused on a singular goal. Collaboration needs to be kept simple. There can’t be too many goals or else progress won’t be made and people will stop showing up.
3. **Keep on Keeping on.** There will be ups and downs in collaboration. There will be disagreements. There will be problems, but it is worth it. Persevere through the tough times. Chad Clarkson, executive director of the Houston

Church Planters Network, says nothing grows fast but a weed. Meaningful collaboration takes time to cultivate and grow. Collaborative effort takes time, but the fruit that is produced is worth it.

4. **Keep Sharing the Mic.** If you happen to be the main organizer of a group of churches that collaborate, you are likely going to be talking the most. That isn't bad, but give up that microphone frequently to let others lead out as well. As Bruce says, "collaboration requires humble leadership."<sup>9</sup>
5. **Keep Including Others.** Always be on the lookout for more people to join the team and jump on board. Share how you are collaborating frequently with others. This will inspire others to do the same. If we are better together, then the more of us who are together will make us all the better.

Church multiplication is a team sport. Each church should form a team to collaborate on finding their place in church multiplication. That team needs to have leaders who pray about what they can do to get behind multiplication efforts. Collaboration efforts then need to reach outside of the individual church to get help in finding planters and multiplication opportunities within cities, towns, counties, states, and countries. A church isn't supposed to carry this heavy load alone. They've got to team-up to help God-called, gospel-centered church planters. As collaboration happens and collaborators share their convictions, ideas will become clearer and big ideas will begin to materialize. These are the building blocks of catching a vision, which happens to be our next chapter.

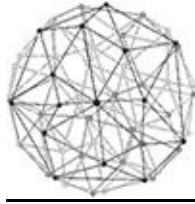
## Discussion and Study Questions

1. Who needs to be on your internal collaboration team?
2. What do you think the obstacles will be for internal collaboration?
3. When and where will your collaboration team meet? How frequently?
4. Have you noticed issues in collaborative meetings? How will the rules of gospel-focused collaboration help mitigate these issues?
5. What denomination is your church a part of? Do they have local, state or national offices? List the leaders of these areas.
6. What networks are you involved with? These networks might be well known, but also might be groups of local pastors who meet together for prayer, a meal, etc.

7. Does your denomination or network have any formalized process to involve yourself in the work of church multiplication?
8. What theological imperatives are vital for you to maintain?

## Chapter 6

# CAPTURE A VISION



Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”* Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1–3

James and Elsa were doing chores in their Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, home one night after dinner. It was a clear night, like many others, with a beautiful full moon. Their son, Jimmy, was playing. Elsa glanced at the clock and noticed it was past Jimmy’s bedtime.

She called to him. “Jimmy, it’s time to go to bed. Go up now, and I’ll come and settle you later.” Jimmy went straight to his room. An hour or so later Elsa went up to check if all was well. She was amazed to find her son staring quietly out of his window at the moon.

“What are you doing, Jimmy?”

“I’m looking at the moon, Mommy.”

“Well, it’s time to go to bed now.”

As Jimmy reluctantly settled down, he said, “Mommy, you know one day I’m going to walk on the moon.”

Several years later Jimmy survived a near fatal motorcycle crash that broke almost every bone in his body. He then went on to see his vision come to fruition as a member of the Apollo 15 moon mission. James Irwin became the eighth man to walk on the moon.

James Irwin had a goal. He didn’t want to stay in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He

wanted to go to the moon. Irwin had clarity as a little boy as to what he wanted to accomplish. The road wasn't yet discovered or the science that would enable it, but the goal was clear: the moon.

This might be how you are feeling right now when it comes to the subject of this book. The big picture goal is clear: be involved in church multiplication, but the "how" toward multiplication may be muddled. How can your church be involved in multiplication? What can you, your team, and your church do to get clarity? What can you do to not just have a goal, but capture a vision for your church's place in multiplication?

### **ANTIOCH MOMENT**

Take a look at the church at Antioch again. Look at what they were doing together. They were worshiping, fasting, and spending their time devoted to God. In short, they were seeking the Lord together. They were not thinking about how they'd be mentioned in the next denominational newsletter or if they'd be asked to speak on some topic at the upcoming Bible conference. They were serious about seeking God and his will for them. The worshiping and fasting were ongoing activities that took time. It's not as if they fasted for a day, worshiped the next, and then the Holy Spirit spoke. They spent time seeking the Lord of the Harvest and then the Holy Spirit spoke. Then the church was clear as to their next steps when it came to the proliferation of the gospel throughout the world.

### **VISION: MARINATED OR MICROWAVED?**

If you came to this chapter expecting a template-ready vision for involvement in church multiplication, then you will be sorely disappointed. Jason Hess, a friend and fellow area pastor, says something interesting when talking about vision. He says, "Vision is marinated, not microwaved." This image is especially poignant when you think about chicken breast (just follow me here). You can put raw chicken in the microwave, and it will cook so that when you eat it, it won't kill you. It will go from pink to white. It won't taste very good, and you probably won't enjoy eating it, but it won't kill you. But if you were serving it to friends around the table, they probably wouldn't want a second helping.

If you prepare that same chicken breast properly, however, it becomes a whole different eating experience. If you were to marinate the chicken with some teriyaki sauce and pineapple overnight and then put that chicken breast on a hot grill for dinner, it would be delicious. And your guests would be more likely to come back for seconds and maybe thirds.

You can certainly take someone else's idea and adjust it a little so you can present a picture that looks like a vision for your church. But it will feel

inauthentic (because it is). Like the microwaved chicken, it won't taste very good. People aren't going to come back and have seconds, and they're not going to champion that vision or participate in it. They certainly aren't going to sacrifice for it. Sure, maybe the chicken won't kill anyone when they eat it, but you want your vision to be well-marinated, pleasing, and authentic.

## **THE PATH FORWARD**

Your collaboration team needs to take the shared conviction of church multiplication and marinate it in prayer so they can capture a vision of their place in church multiplication. The only way this can happen is through the Lord making your vision clear. Prayer is paramount as this process kicks off. Every step needs to be saturated with prayer.

As your team prays over the course of days, weeks, or months, there are things you can work through. My church, CityView, has been blessed to send out three church plants, and a fourth planter is in training now. Our church leadership has worked through a three-step process as we contemplate what we should do with each new plant we send out. We consider our culture, our context, and our dream. (I wanted to find another C word, but there just aren't good ones for dream.)

As a church finds itself seeking to be a part of the proliferation of the gospel through church multiplication, they need to carefully examine who they are. Examine what makes your church extraordinary and what faith step God might be calling you to take. Every church has something about its culture that makes them special. Every church also exists in a particular place. This is called context. Every church has aspirations; we call these dreams. Understanding culture and context helps give birth to dreams. Understanding these three things together helps a church, association, or denomination capture a unique vision for church multiplication.

### *Step 1 - Understand Your Culture to Capture a Vision*

There is something within the individual culture of each church that can cause it to be a unique contributor to church multiplication. Will Mancini has written a fantastic book on church vision creation titled *Church Unique*. I highly recommend this book if you are thinking about creating and communicating a strong vision for your church. In *Church Unique*, Mancini says, "culture is the combined effect of the interacting values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions that define the life of your church."<sup>2</sup> Each church has these four things. Some of those cultural aspects aren't things you want to talk about and can be detrimental to the cause of multiplication. Conversely, many of them are very positive and can be powerfully harnessed for the sake of multiplication.

The key to capturing your church's vision for participating in multiplication is bound up in your particular church culture. I developed the F.L.A.S.H. tool to think through a church's culture.

**FAMILY** – Who are the people that make up your faith community? Do the people in your church have a shared heritage? Are there traditions that your church has that matter to them? What is the denominational background of your church? What kind of groups have you worked with in the past? Have you belonged to any networks or associations?

**LEADERS** – Think of the leaders in your church. What are their individual abilities and strengths? What are your leaders good at? What are the weaknesses of your leaders? What makes them special? What kinds of jobs do they work? What are their backgrounds?

**ACTIVITIES** – What activities does your church regularly participate in? Why do they do them? What are the motivations behind them? Do you go on regular mission trips? Do you have a strong prayer ministry?

**STRENGTHS** – Church members have their own giftings. If each church member has different gifts, then what does that look like within an individual church? What kinds of abilities does your church have? Is there a strong history of stewardship or a big emphasis on evangelism or discipleship?

**HISTORY** – When was your church founded? What were the circumstances? Was it a church plant? Was it part of a split from another church? Is there some historical document that shares the background of the church? Review it.

If your team answers these questions (and others that come up as you process through them), a clearer understanding of your church's culture will materialize. That is step one to capturing a vision.

### *Step 2 - Understand Your Context to Capture a Vision*

Every church has a culture, and every church is situated in a context. Churches need to work hard to understand their individual culture, but they also need to work hard to examine the context in which their church exists. There are three levels of data that are vital to understanding your context. We train church planters to do each of these things as they plan to plant a church in an area. These same levels of data are helpful for every type of church to understand their context.

**Demographic Data.** Demographics need to be obtained and understood in order to minister on the street, in a town, city, state, or nation. These are numbers

typically reported on census forms and then compiled. They include percentages of age, gender, and race. Churches seeking to be effective in planting need to get serious about understanding the demographic breakdowns of their target neighborhoods. Several sources exist to get good solid demographic data.

- <https://www.census.gov/>
- Ministry Area Profile is a service used by the Precept Group that provides a fantastically large report. This is a report that many denominational groups and networks are able to access for free.

Demographic numbers are very important to understand an area. And whatever data is missing in demographic research can be observed simply by driving around the community. Having the actual numbers in hand though helps make good analytical decisions.

**Psychographic Assessment.** Demographics share *who* lives in an area. Psychographics share *how* those people think. This is a large field of study within the marketing and retail world. Reports can be obtained, but they are expensive. This may be a cost you are willing to incur, but we have compiled a list of questions that help to get at the heart of this as well. This assessment is available in Appendix 3.

As you conduct a psychographic assessment of your area, you'll learn a great deal about your community. You may begin to realize how your church made a difference in the community in the past. You may start to realize why your church isn't making a difference in the community any longer. Patterns will likely begin to appear, and those patterns will reveal ways to understand the thought processes of the people in your area.

**Spiritual Climate Examination.** Spiritual climate goes one step further and assesses the spiritual issues that an area might have. Examining the spiritual climate seeks to read what is going on in a particular area in terms of religious leanings. Appendix 4 has a copy of our Spiritual Climate Examination.

As you work through the Spiritual Climate Examination, you can begin to see the spiritual climate of the area. You can see how the gospel needs to be applied to people's hearts and minds. You can see strongholds that grip people and understand how your church can be a part of helping the community.

### *Step 3 – Dream about What You Can Do to Capture a Vision*

Dreaming is fun! Thinking about big potential scenarios is exciting, and so I realize that thinking practically isn't the way most people want to enter into a dreaming conversation. When we dream we want to imagine without limits.

Dreams are supposed to enliven the spirit and set your heart to dancing. The excitement of dreaming is fun and important in many respects, but it doesn't get you from point A to point B very quickly. We liken the context and culture pieces to guardrails on a road. Those guardrails dictate where a car can travel on a highway. They also keep you on the road, and pointed in the right direction. So I encourage you and your collaboration team to dream, but to first do the hard work of understanding your culture and context so that the dreams you have stand a better chance of coming to fruition.

## **A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE**

The reason we do the first two steps in looking at culture and context is so dreaming is a more realistic exercise. For instance, CityView has had the pleasure of sending three different church planters out to plant three different types of churches. We haven't sent them all the same way or with the same amount of backing. Ideally, we would love to send every planter with a strong launch team, lots of cash, and regular monthly support. As a growing church ourselves, however, we need to think about our culture and context and our next steps as we still seek to send planters and teams. This impacts our dreaming process and makes it realistic, though still faith-stretching.

We sent Cary Perrin to lead our second church plant. He had been with us from the beginning, grew in responsibility and reputation at CityView, and we had been clear that we were going to send him with everything we had. We saved money for two years for him and his team. We put the word out that we wanted people to go with him. As we shared earlier, he went with 20-plus people and good financial backing. At the same time we were sending Cary, we had another planter who was just starting to train with us. We also started to realize that we were going to need to start making strides toward a permanent home for our church as we had been renting space in an elementary school for the first couple years of our life cycle. This meant we would need to simultaneously raise money for land, raise money for another planter, train a planter, and send that planter.

We examined CityView's culture and saw that we still wanted to make an impact on those far from God in Houston through church planting. We have a cultural bent toward planting so we had already ingrained in our culture that training and fundraising mechanisms are important for church planting. But we examined our church's context and saw that while church planting was an important priority, we also had an urgent priority: finding land for our future. Our culture dictated that we must go forward in planting. Context showed us that we couldn't do it exactly the same way we did with Cary's team. This

examination helped us dream about what we could do for Joseph (our up and coming planter) and helped us get creative about sending him.

Our leadership team dreamed together with Joseph. We had a burning desire to not just train and raise funds, but help him find a strong team. Based on his chosen location, it would be difficult to raise a substantial group to go with him. Eventually, in the dreaming process we realized we had multiple pastoral contacts who were predisposed to helping church plants. We remembered some CityView members who had to move to that area, but had struggled to find a church to connect with that had the same church-planting DNA. Thus, we could train Joseph well, raise funds for him well, and put together a core team that helped him launch well.

## **VISION IDEA**

After completing Steps 1-3, you and your collaboration team need to mix it all together and let it boil. Taking into account your culture and context and what your dreams and aspirations might be. Write out a *very* loosely worded vision idea. What might your church's vision be for multiplication? It does not need to be well worded, but capture culture and context as you write out your dream for participating in multiplication. This vision idea will be used in the next chapter as you consider how you will communicate the vision.

## **VISIONS DIFFER**

Not all churches are going to have a “going to the moon” vision for church planting, and that's okay. If a church will do the hard work of assessing its culture and context though, then they are well on the way to capturing a vision for how they can be involved in church multiplication. Churches will begin to see what they are great at and where their weaknesses lie. They will begin to see the situation that they are in and what they can do about it. Thus, churches will have a clearer picture of what they can pass on to other churches that they aid in planting.

Collaboration has begun and vision ideas have now been captured. It is now vital that churches need to think long and hard about how they will articulate their vision. Churches need to communicate the vision, which is the purpose of our next chapter.

## **Discussion and Study Questions**

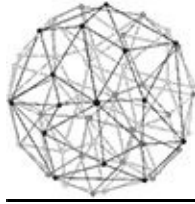
1. Conduct a F.L.A.S.H. assessment of your church using the questions found

in Appendix 2.

2. Conduct a demographic study of your area.
3. Answer the Psychographic Assessment questions in Appendix 3 as a collaboration team.
4. Conduct a Spiritual Climate Examination found in Appendix 4 as a collaboration team.
5. Taking into account your team's prayer time, F.L.A.S.H. assessment, demographic study, psychographic assessment, and the spiritual climate examination, how is your team feeling led to participate in church multiplication?
  - Everyone on the collaboration team should write this out before the team meeting and bring it to the meeting.
  - Everyone should share what they've written.
  - Work together to see the similarities and differences. Focus on what you are similar in to get to the root idea.

## Chapter 7

# COMMUNICATION



*Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Acts 13:1–3

I heard a story once about engineers at a major aerospace company who were instructed to test the effects of bird-strikes (notably geese) on the windshields of airliners and military jets. To simulate the effect of a goose colliding with an aircraft traveling at high speed, the test engineers built a powerful gun, with which they fired dead chickens at the windshields. The dead chicken simulations were extremely effective. The happy results of the testing proved that the windshields on the plane were suitable and several articles about the project appeared in the testing industry press.

It so happened that another test laboratory in a different part of the world was also involved in assessing bird-strikes. But in this case, windshields of drivers' cabs on new very high-speed trains were being tested. The train test engineers had read about the pioneering test developed by the aerospace team, so they gathered data on the specifications of the gun and the testing methods. The aerospace engineers duly gave them details and then trained engineers to set about building their own simulation.

The simulated bird-strike tests on the train windshields and cabs produced shocking results. The supposed state-of-the-art, shatterproof, high-speed train windshields offered little resistance to the high-speed chickens; in fact, every single windshield that was submitted for testing was smashed to pieces, along

with a number of train cabs and much of the test booth itself.

The horrified train engineers were concerned that the new high-speed trains required a safety technology that was beyond their experience, so they contacted the aerospace team for advice and suggestions, sending them an extensive report of the tests and failures.

The brief reply came back from the aerospace engineers: “You need to defrost the chickens.”<sup>10</sup>

## **YOU NEED TO DEFROST THE CHICKENS**

All too frequently, communication inside of churches looks a lot like the foreign engineers who were missing a key piece of information. Communication problems abound in churches. Frequently, correct understanding is assumed, and that doesn’t go well for anybody. For your newly planted vision idea to take root within your church, you need to think about how to communicate it clearly.

## **ANTIOCH MOMENT**

Before we get into the practical, take a look at the church at Antioch again. You need to look closely to find the communication piece, but it’s there. The leaders that were mentioned are leaders with communication gifts. The leaders at Antioch possessed the gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching. They called out sin, taught the Scriptures, and called people to greater love for the gospel. They were seeing disciples made and multiplied. These faithful prophets and teachers tilled the soil so that it was fertile so church multiplication sprouted.

Pastor, be faithful! Be faithful in the Word, and preach and teach the Scripture. Be faithful in calling out sin, and till the soil. Proclaim the gospel to believer and unbeliever alike. Make the regular call to evangelism and disciple-making within your congregation. Don’t back down from the Great Commission that Jesus has given. Put it ever before your people. This will help prepare the soil for your church to plant and water seeds of church multiplication.

Whatever kind of church leader you are—church staff member, church member, deacon, men or women’s ministry leader, elder—I implore you to do the same. Church members expect the pastor to be excited about evangelism and discipleship. Inevitably, when you back him up or give another voice to his cry, it suddenly gets louder. When you sing harmony to the melody of the senior leader, the song of disciple-making is made more beautiful. You need to be just as devoted to the Word, the gospel, and disciple-making in order to see your church take up the cause of church multiplication. Your pastor needs you to stand up with him and use your gifts to till the ground.

## **COMMUNICATE CAREFULLY**

Our team at CityView has used the Communication Filter Tool in Appendix 5 of this book p. 109] for communicating vision to our church body. We use this tool whenever we launch a new ministry, hold an outreach event, send a new church planter, or undertake a new initiative. We want to make sure that the vision communication is simple, sharp, and straightforward. We want to make sure that the plan is sound. We want to make sure that both the vision and the plan is shared repeatedly and celebrated systematically.

## **VISION IDEA**

The vision idea is the big idea of what we feel God is calling us to do. We ask ourselves, “What is the preferred reality we’re aiming for?” This is what you developed in the last chapter. What is your vision for your church participating in multiplication? Is it training planters? Is it portioning out a significant part of your budget? Is it mission trips? Is it sending a staff member? Is it sending people to help launch?

Writing out the vision idea can be a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or a page. The length doesn’t matter at this point as long as everyone understands what you’re aiming to do. In fact, at this point the longer the better (within reason, we don’t need any dissertations here). This vision idea will be passed through the communication filter in Appendix 5. Put the parameters (such as location, amount of money, number of people, etc.) on there and make sure the collaboration team knows what the big vision idea is and where it is leading you to go.

## **SIMPLIFY YOUR BIG VISION IDEA**

Take that big vision idea and start boiling it down. Find the words that are communicating what you really want to do. Church multiplication or planting likely needs to be in there somewhere. But boil that long idea down to a sentence or two. It doesn’t need to describe everything you are trying to accomplish. It needs to, in a few pregnant words, communicate the vision idea. It doesn’t need to be complete. You are working on a concise way to share your unique vision idea for your church. Here are some examples:

- We want to financially assist church plants in the northwestern United States. We want to do this with budget funds.
- Within two years we want to send a staff member and a team of leaders to start a church within 25 miles of our church.
- We want to go on mission with five church planters within five years.
- We want to plant churches in the greater-Houston area.

## **SHARPEN YOUR VISION IDEA**

Take the vision idea and your simple idea sentences and punch them up so they're vibrant. Help them become colorful and clear to the people who will hear the vision. This is the hard work of making the idea completely clear. But completely clear does not mean comprehensive. This is where you take your simplified idea and put it into slogan-type form. Making the vision sharp doesn't mean it needs to be catchy, but catchy doesn't hurt. Making the vision sharp just makes people sit up and listen as you explain it. Here are some examples of sharp statements that communicate the vision clearly and concisely:

- “Pray 100/Plant 100” – This is the slogan of the Advance Team at the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. They want churches to pray for 100 churches to be planted a year and then take action in the planting of 100 churches a year.
- “Equip. Plant. Revitalize.” – This is the call of the Pillar Network. They want to equip churches to plant and revitalize.
- “Rest for the weary. Peace for the city.” – This is the vision of Neartown Church in Houston, Texas. They want to supply rest and peace for their city. They talk about church planting in these terms with their people.

## **COMMUNICATE YOUR VISION IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY**

When we talk about communicating vision in a straightforward way, we want to figure out how best to make the vision concrete in people's minds. We want to figure out how people will understand the need best. Maybe you should present statistics. You may need to use graphs. You may want to put a more personal touch on your approach that pulls on people's emotions. Are there pictures or illustrations that can make the vision clearer to people?

This isn't manipulation. You and your collaboration team have been thinking about this for quite a while. Now you need to help get everyone else in the church on the same page in a much shorter period of time. The hope is that as you share your burden for multiplication, others will feel that burden with you and want to participate. Help them understand why this is a concrete need and how your vision is going to help solve the problem.

- “We equip leaders to plant and multiply gospel-centered churches.” – This is the statement of the Summit Network. Their plan is very straightforward.
- “Make gospel-centered disciples of Jesus and plant 100 churches in 25

years.” This is the vision of CityView Church, where I serve as Lead Pastor. We want to make disciples that make disciples, this is what we explain a gospel-centered disciple to be, and that as those disciples multiply we will have a natural bed of disciples and leaders to pull from to plant churches.

## **SOUND STRATEGY**

This is where you share the plan to accomplish the vision. If the vision is to give \$10,000 annually to church multiplication, then you show where those funds come from in the annual budget. If the vision is to send a staff member to plant a church, then you show how that young man has been prepared to move forward and how you are planning to help. If the vision is to partner with three other local churches to plant a congregation in the neighboring town, then explain which churches you’ll partner with and how your church is going to participate.

Ask questions such as, “What big steps do we need to take in order to make this vision happen?” “Who needs to be involved in these steps?” “Where will the funds come from?” “Are there other churches or entities that need to be involved?”

For your people to buy in to your vision and work toward the plan, they need to know that there is strategic thinking behind the plan. In this step you want to make sure your congregation knows this isn’t a pie-in-the-sky idea, but that serious thought and consideration has been put into what is going to happen. Help them understand that this isn’t a passing fancy, but that you feel passionate for you and your team, and that strategically you can accomplish this goal with the Spirit’s help and their help and support.

## **SHARED REPEATEDLY**

Coming up with a vision and plan is difficult and time consuming, but will mean nothing if it isn’t shared frequently. Sam Douglass, my church-planting coach and an experienced planter in his own right, shared with me early on in our planting journey something vital—that vision isn’t understood until it has been heard at least 21 times. This vision for church multiplication out of your ordinary church needs to be spoken about repeatedly. It needs to be seen on e-mails, social media posts, and prayed over in Sunday School classes, shown on videos in worship, etc. In short, the vision needs to be communicated every day, everywhere, and in every way possible.

Ask these questions: “How will we share this vision?” “When will we share it and where?” “What kinds of media will we utilize?” This might mean ordering signs, updating your website, changing wall art, utilizing multi-media, bulletins, newsletters, and church-wide e-mails. Lead your Sunday School classes to pray

about it. Provide your small groups with some videos or information that communicates how important church planting is. These videos are available from places like the North American Mission Board, Acts 29, and other organizations that focus on church planting. You want to make sure that the importance of church planting is in front of your people frequently and they understand that this isn't just the whim of the pastor and staff, but a focus that is going to continue.

### **CELEBRATED SYSTEMATICALLY**

I've learned a lesson from parenting three strong-willed boys—the things we reward will be repeated. This works with grades, behavior, chores, and the list goes on. If we celebrate what is being accomplished in them, we see those same accomplishments repeated. This is also true of churches and church members. I do not mean to label your church as strong-willed children. Typically, the principle holds that if we celebrate victories, no matter the size of the victories, we will start to see it done more frequently and on larger scales.

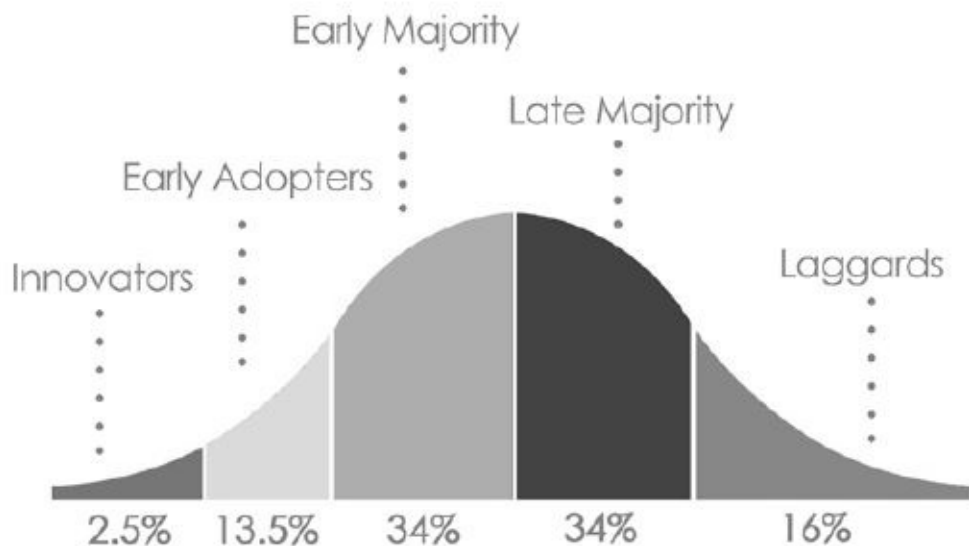
Talk up from the pulpit the small group that went to help a church plant pass out flyers. Celebrate in the announcement scroll that your youth ministry took up an offering for the sake of church planting. Allow the youth pastor who went to a church planting conference to preach on his burden to plant a church. Let the church curmudgeon whose heart has softened share a video testimony of what God has done. Celebrate when other churches you know have accomplished this goal. When the church accomplishes the vision, throw a party and cast the next compelling part of the vision to the people. Let them see what they've accomplished, and challenge them to go further.

### **CAREFULLY CONFRONT MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND LOVINGLY DEAL WITH DETRACTORS**

Even the most well-thought-out and implemented communication plan will be misunderstood by some. Cut out as many of those misunderstandings as possible in the beginning as your team rolls out the plan. You won't be able to prepare for each and every misunderstanding, and that's okay. But prepare to address them. It is important to confront the misunderstandings as they arise. The entire collaboration team needs to listen to church members and hear how they are processing the vision and plan that has been communicated.

Some people will have problems because of misunderstandings and some will frankly hate anything and everything that changes the status quo. In instances like this it is important to remember the bell curve<sup>[11](#)</sup> below. This is likely an innovative idea for your church. You and your collaboration team are innovators or early adopters. There will be some in your church that jump on board quickly

as you share a simple, sharp, straightforward vision and sound plan.



### Rogers Diffusion Of Innovation Bell

There will always be some who will take a wait-and-see approach before they jump on board. Then there will be those who are laggards or detractors. Expect that you'll have different sorts of people in varying degrees of commitment to your plan. But there are some people who won't change no matter how great the idea is or how well thought out the plan is. Here are a few things I've found effective when dealing with detractors.

1. **Sit down with them face-to-face.** Phone calls, text messages and e-mails are no substitute for a face-to-face meeting where emotions and convictions can be explained.
2. **Listen to their issues.** I've found that just listening to concerns and worries from detractors will diffuse most situations. They want to know that they've been heard. It is likely that you've already thought through their worries. Listen to them anyway, and when they are done, thank them for their input and lovingly share how you've planned to handle it. Then ask them if they think that is a good plan or if there are things that you may have missed.
3. **Relate to them.** Find a way to relate the plan to them in a personal way. Maybe they were saved in a new church. Maybe they were integral in starting the one they go to now. Maybe their kids or grandkids are part of a new plant. Find common ground and relate to them.
4. **Pray with them.** Prayer softens hearts. It will soften their heart and yours.

Sometimes, no matter how much you try, they won't listen. That's fine. You still have the same God, the same Savior, and are still brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray with them for the church.

5. **When all else fails.** If none of this works, then you will either need to quit (not an option after all of this work) or move forward without their support. Don't worry about that. This work requires a coalition of those willing to work for the sake of church multiplication. You likely aren't asking for 90 percent of the church budget to go to multiplication. Move forward with the plan, be respectful of those who strongly disagree, but point out the wins when they happen. Perhaps this is the way God will soften their hearts.

## **WE'VE GOT TO THAW OUR CHICKENS**

In the opening story of this chapter, the scientists didn't realize that they needed to thaw the chickens before testing the windshields. That aspect of the testing wasn't made clear and caused the foreign engineers fearful concern that they couldn't design windshields strong enough for their high-speed trains. In order for a congregation to jump on board with this vision for multiplication, or any vision for that matter, the vision needs to be communicated clearly so that the congregation understands that this plan, with appropriate leadership and God's provision, can be accomplished.

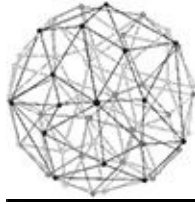
Communicating your vision and plan is vital to leading your church to participate in church multiplication. You will need to choose the right time. You will need to think strategically about how to speak to your people about it. You will need to communicate it with strength and power. You will also need to follow through. That is the purpose of our next chapter.

## **Discussion and Study Questions**

1. As a team, use the Communication Filter Tool in Appendix 5 to work through your vision idea and filter it down to a way to communicate it well.
2. Where do you think misunderstandings will arise? With particular groups in your church? Particular people? Who?
3. What do you think detractors will say about the new plan? What do you think their issues will be?
4. How can you get ahead of potential issues before they become problems?

## Chapter 8

# CALLING



Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” *Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Acts 13:1–3

The 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico featured the marathon as the final event on the program. The Olympic stadium was packed and the air was electric as the first athlete, an Ethiopian runner, entered the stadium. The crowd erupted as he crossed the finish line.

Much further back in the field was another runner, John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. He had been passed by the other runners. After 18.5 miles his head is throbbing, his muscles were aching, and he fell to the ground. He had serious leg injuries and officials wanted him to retire, but he refused. After Akwhari’s knee had been bandaged, he picked himself up and hobbled the remaining 7.7 miles to the finish line. An hour after the winner finished, Akwhari entered the stadium. The giant crowd had dissipated significantly and only a few thousand remained. Akwhari moved around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapsed over the finish line. It is one of the most heroic efforts of Olympic history.

Afterward, a reporter asked him why he had not dropped out. Akwhari said, “My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish.”

### **ANTIOCH MOMENT**

I love how decisively the leaders at Antioch acted. They had tilled the ground,

taught the gospel, and led their church faithfully. They had captured God's vision for their church through the Holy Spirit's direction, and they obeyed. They fasted, prayed, and sent out. They didn't wait for further signs like their church reaching a certain size or their budget exceeding a certain threshold. They just obeyed and followed through with their God-ordained next steps.

The same needs to be true of your work to transform your church into one that multiplies the hearing of the gospel through church planting. You haven't gone through the prayerful painstaking work of identifying obstacles, collaborating together, capturing a vision, and communicating that vision to stop now. You didn't start this journey to quit. You started this journey to make an impact and leave a legacy that goes far beyond you or your church. You did this to help advance Christ's church, bring glory to Jesus, and make disciples. Now is the time to act and implement the vision and plan that God has given you.

*How?*

You may be thinking, "I looked at the length of this chapter and there isn't much here. Thanks for the help, but now tell us how." If you're in the planning stages, you may be asking yourself a few questions: "How do we implement this vision and plan?" "How do we move our church forward through the plan?" "How do we follow through on calling?" First, don't sell yourself short. You're going to do great. Second, I think the implementation answer is easier than you think: keep doing what you've been doing throughout this book. Let's take a quick look back.

## **CONVICTION**

Keep your convictions and build on them. God's Word is the foundation for kingdom advance. His plan for the church and your church is to advance the kingdom. Plow through the book of Acts and you'll see examples of how, despite the most ardent opponents, Christ's kingdom advanced. The more I read the Bible, the more I'm convinced of the power of convicted Christians to advance the gospel and make disciples regardless of the situation or circumstance. Stand strong in your conviction.

## **CONFRONT OBSTACLES**

Continue to identify and confront obstacles. As you attempt to collaborate and communicate, you will uncover new and different obstacles. The enemy is tricky and wants to devour you, especially as you try to make strides for the proliferation of churches. He's going to throw everything he can at you. He's going to do everything he can to hurt you. Prepare your heart, your team, and your church to know these things are coming, identify them when they come, and deal with them in stride. Commit to dealing with these obstacles through the

gospel. As obstacles arise within your church and outside of it, keep your heart focused on the kingdom and gospel matters.

### **COLLABORATE**

Keep collaborating with your team. Keep working with your church to overcome obstacles. Keep connecting with other leaders to participate in and amplify vision and plan. Keep working together to make multiplication the reality of your church, association, and denomination. It can be done, but we've got to work together to make it happen.

### **CAPTURE A VISION**

Stay focused on the vision God has given you. In the event that you fail, and you might, regroup and reformulate it. In the event that you succeed and complete it, don't stop! God has given you success; think through a bigger vision. Make new plans that call your church higher. Help others see how you did it. Share the path forward that helped you.

### **COMMUNICATE**

Keep communicating the vision. Keep saying it. Keep making it more and more clear. Keep putting it in front of people. Keep talking it up. Keep celebrating it. Keep on! Take your people to conferences where they can hear other voices that say the same thing as you.

### **DON'T MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY**

Marco Polo is one of the most famed explorers of history. It seems he inherited the travel bug from his father. In 1260, when Marco Polo was 6, his father and uncle traveled to Mongolia. When they arrived there, the Mongol emperor revealed an interest in Christianity. He asked the brothers to take a letter to the pope requesting as many as 100 wise men to spread the gospel among his subjects.

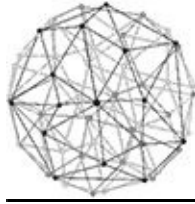
Three years later the brothers arrived home, and two years later they set out again toward Mongolia. They attempted to get 100 Christian priests to come with them. Tragically, feeling the church was too weak to send that many priests, church leadership sent just two low-level churchmen on the quest. Shortly after the journey began, in a moment of fear and feeling the task was too monstrous, the priests waned in courage and returned home.

The opportunity to share the gospel in the Far East was lost because two priest failed to seize an opportunity. The capacity to understand how the kingdom could advance just wasn't there for the pope, church leadership, or the two friars who feared more for their lives than for what could happen if they had walked in faith.

My prayer in writing this book is that ordinary churches and ordinary people in those churches will realize that while their numbers may be few and their finances are limited, their God isn't. He's called you to do big things. He's called you to be a part of seeing the kingdom advance through the proliferation of the church. Please pastor, deacon, elder, staff member, committed church men and women, see the opportunity that is in front of you and seize it. Don't miss your moment to follow through on your calling in church multiplication.

## Epilogue

### A FEW CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



Shizo Kanakuri was a marathon runner from Japan in the early part of the 20th century. During Japan's Olympic Trials in 1911, he is reported to have set a marathon world record at 2 hours, 32 minutes, and 45 seconds. He was thus selected as one of only two athletes that Japan could afford to send to this event at the 1912 Olympics being held in Stockholm, Sweden.

Kanakuri had a difficult trip from his native Japan to Sweden, and upon arrival he needed five days to recuperate before the race. The race was being held in conditions significantly warmer than he and many of the runners were used to training in, causing many of the runners to wilt throughout the race. Kanakuri was no exception. Near mile 16 Kanakuri lost consciousness along the race course and was subsequently taken in by a local farming family and nursed back to health. He later returned to Japan quietly, feeling disgraced for failing to finish the race he had been sent to run.

#### **SOUNDS LIKE A FAMILIAR REFRAIN**

Kanakuri's story is a familiar one. He started out strong with big expectations, only to falter along the way. This story sounds like so many Everyday Churches. The churches are founded with great gusto with the expectation of reaching their community for Christ. Many of them have a plan to send out missionaries to reach foreign lands or to send out church plants to reach towns and cities nearby. But along the way they succumb to unforeseen circumstances that leave them overwhelmed. They stop working toward multiplication, feeling weak or even disgraced. They leave the race that they'd hoped to finish and go on doing church as usual.

#### **A CHANCE AT REDEMPTION**

At first, the Swedish Olympic officials reported Kanakuri as "missing" during the race. But 50 years later Swedish authorities discovered that Kanakuri had

been living back in Japan and had actually run in the 1920 and 1924 Olympic games. In 1967, a television station in Sweden contacted him and gave him the chance to complete his marathon. Kanakuri accepted the invitation and completed the longest marathon ever run. His time: 54 years, 8 months, 6 days, 5 hours, 32 minutes, and 20.3 seconds. Upon completing the race he said, "It was a long trip. Along the way, I got married, had six children and 10 grandchildren."<sup>12</sup>

Kanakuri fell down, walked away, and felt disgraced. He quit, but then inexplicably was given the opportunity to finish the race that he'd gone missing from years earlier. Regardless of the time it took to complete, he finished.

Everyday Church leader, perhaps you've walked away from involvement in multiplication. Perhaps you fell down in this endurance race of proliferating. Maybe you feel disgraced. Please don't. It doesn't matter how fast you start or how you may have faltered along the way. The thing that matters is that you complete the task. Consider this your phone call inviting you to get back in the race. Consider this your invitation to complete what your church started.

## Appendices

# TOOLS FOR THE EVERYDAY CHURCH PASTOR



Throughout the course of our planting journey, we have discovered the need for some helpful tools. When we started in the planning stage of planting CityView, there were lots of books and helps that were out there, but there were a few that weren't readily available or that were intended to be used in a large church or megachurch context. These tools didn't scale well for churches of normal size, and they left me feeling inadequate for the task that Christ was making me adequate for.

This frustration led to the creation of many of the tools in the appendix of this book. These tools are provided for the Everyday Church pastor or leader looking for practical tools to aid them as church multipliers. The tools intend to answer questions such as:

- Who does the church planter need in his life?
- How do I exegete my church and community for how we might be involved in church multiplication?
- How do we communicate our vision for involvement in church multiplication?

## Appendix 1

# THREE PEOPLE EVERY CHURCH PLANTER NEEDS



Ever since we planted CityView Church in 2014, we've gotten multiple questions about what church planters need. Aside from kingdom dollars invested in their plant or team members to join their core team, I always tell them that every planter needs three people who help them plant in a healthy manner. Every planter needs a mentor, a counselor, and a coach.

### *Mentor*

Church planters need mentors. They need someone who has gone before them and done similar work to what they are attempting to do now. Mentors are so important because they let planters know that what they are attempting is possible. The most valuable thing mentors can share is their experiences, both good and bad, and help planters know that at the end of the day there is hope, and that no matter how difficult it gets, you can come out on the other side. Mentors can provide a target for planters to aim for over the course of their ministry. There is definite value in having several mentors in the planter's life that might be able to address different issues at different times in areas related to church life cycle, attendance trends, and family. In many ways, a mentor is a pastor to a church planter.

### *Counselor*

Church planters need counselors. Church planting is hard work and is wrought with frequent discouragement. This should be someone you pay, be it a licensed Christian counselor, a biblical counselor, or the like. Counselors are people you

pay for their time and their expertise, who hear the struggles and pains the planters have and point them toward Scripture. The most valuable thing counselors can do is help planters feel heard in the many struggles and hurts they will experience. Counselors need to help planters identify detrimental thought patterns and behaviors and point them toward healthy, gospel-centered ones as they deal with the ups and downs of planting.

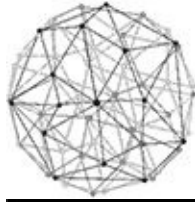
### *Coach*

Church planters need coaches. It is easy for church planters to get bogged down in the minutia of church life and church-planting issues. Coaches cheer planters on and push them when they aren't accomplishing all that they could. Planters should pay coaches for their time. Church planters need coaches to get in their faces a little when they aren't doing what they should. They also need people outside of the situation to point out issues in what is going on within the church. Coaches can do this important work. The most valuable thing coaches can do is drill down deep on a single issue that planters are having, ask questions, and cause planters to process through the issue out loud with someone else. Coaches can ask questions with little knowledge of the situation and bring in a different perspective to help planters correct their actions.

If you are a planter, be sure you have someone who can fill each of these roles. If you are a pastor or church leader looking to contribute to the effort of church multiplication, then seek to help fill one of these roles. You could do this personally if you feel you are equipped to be a good mentor, have counseling training, or feel like you could coach a planter through the ups and downs of church planting. If you don't feel equipped to do these things, then you could help connect a planter with a good mentor or offer to pay for counseling and/or coaching with a counselor or coach of the planter's choosing.

## Appendix 2

# F.L.A.S.H. CHURCH CULTURE APPRAISAL



The F.L.A.S.H. Church Culture Appraisal is a series of questions that help give a clear picture as to the existing culture at a church. This appraisal is best done with a group of church leaders who are seeking to move the church forward toward greater effectiveness. The collaboration team described in Chapter 5 would be a great example of this type of team. I would recommend each member of the team work through these questions individually and then at a regularly scheduled meeting answer the questions together. This will allow members of the team to bring their best thoughts to the table.

### **FAMILY**

- Who are the people that make up your faith community?
- Do the people in your church have a shared heritage?
- Are there traditions that your church has that matter to them?
- What is the denominational background of your church?
- What kind of groups have you worked with in the past?
- Have you belonged to any networks or associations?

### **LEADERS**

- Think of the leaders in your church. What are their individual abilities and strengths?
- What are your leaders good at?
- What are the weaknesses of your leaders?
- What makes them special?
- What kinds of jobs do they work?
- What are their backgrounds?

## **ACTIVITIES**

- What activities does your church regularly participate in?
- Why do they do them?
- What are the motivations behind them?
- Do you go on regular mission trips?
- Do you have a strong prayer ministry?

## **STRENGTHS**

- Church members have their own giftings. If each church member has different gifts, then what does that look like within an individual church?
- What kinds of abilities does your church have?
- Is there a strong history of stewardship or a big emphasis on evangelism or discipleship?

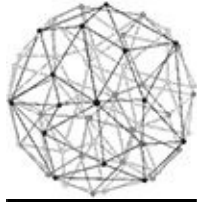
## **HISTORY**

- When was your church founded?
- What were the circumstances?
- Was it a church plant?
- Was it part of a split from another church?
- Is there some historical document that shares the background of the church?

Review it.

## Appendix 3

# PSYCHOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT



The psychographic assessment is used to help understand how people think in a specific locale. The psychographic assessment asks open-ended questions that aren't defined strictly by numbers or percentages (demographics) but by what seems obvious. This assessment is best used by a planter moving to an area or by a team that is seeking to better minister to the area surrounding their church or a place where they are considering planting a new congregation.

### **HEROES AND LEADERS**

- Who are the heroes in the area?
- Who are the leaders in the area?
- What do they do that makes them heroes or leaders in the city?
- What roles do they fill within the area?

### **GENDER ROLES**

- What does masculinity look like in the area?
- What does femininity look like in the area?
- How is sexuality viewed?

### **WEALTH AND AUTHORITY**

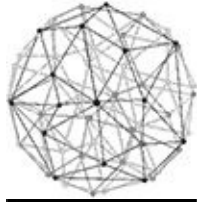
- What are the signs of wealth?
- What are the signs of poverty?
- Who are the authority figures?
- How is authority viewed?
- What are the social conflicts in the area?

## **CULTURE**

- What are the regular rhythms of families in the area?
- What is the political culture of the area?
- What is considered art?
- What are the important musical genres?
- What are the slogans in the area?
- What do people do in their free time?
- What are the landmarks that shape the area?

## Appendix 4

# SPIRITUAL CLIMATE EXAMINATION

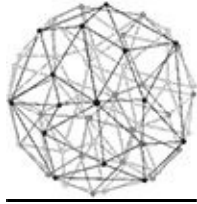


The Spiritual Climate Examination assesses the religious leanings in an area. This exam is best used by a church planter moving to an area to plant or by a church leadership team seeking to assess how they can amplify their ministry in their neighborhood. The spiritual climate examination unveils how people view God and what they worship.

- How many churches are there?
- What kinds of churches?
- Do those churches preach a biblical understanding of Jesus' life and work?
- What other gathering places for worship exist? Is there a mosque? Hindu or Buddhist temple? Synagogues?
- How is the Christian church viewed in general?
- What is the reputation of the religious leaders in the area?
- What activities do people engage in that give them a sense of worth?
- What holidays are celebrated with the most exuberance?
- How do people spend their time?
- How do people spend their money?
- Are people generally working for their own good or for the common good?
- What do people live for in the area?

## Appendix 5

# COMMUNICATION TOOL



The Communication Tool can be used whenever something new is started. It can be used by a ministry that is trying to implement a new idea or a church that is trying to implement a new ministry. The communication tool is designed to take a vision idea and filter it down so that it can be clearly communicated, planned, and celebrated.

Vision Idea:

What is the vision idea? State it in as many words as you like so that you capture the big idea.

### **Vision Filter**

Simple:

How do we make the vision concise? Get it down to a simple, memorable sentence.

Sharp:

How do we make the vision clear?

Straightforward:

How do we make the vision concrete? How can we help people see the need for it? What do we need to present to make the need obvious?

### **The Plan**

Sound:

How do we show that what we are aiming toward is possible? That our plan to get there is attainable?

### **Communication Strategy**

Shared Repeatedly:

How will we share this vision? When will we share it? Where? What kinds of media will we utilize?

Celebrated Systematically:

How do we celebrate this vision? When will we celebrate this vision? What constitutes winning?

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