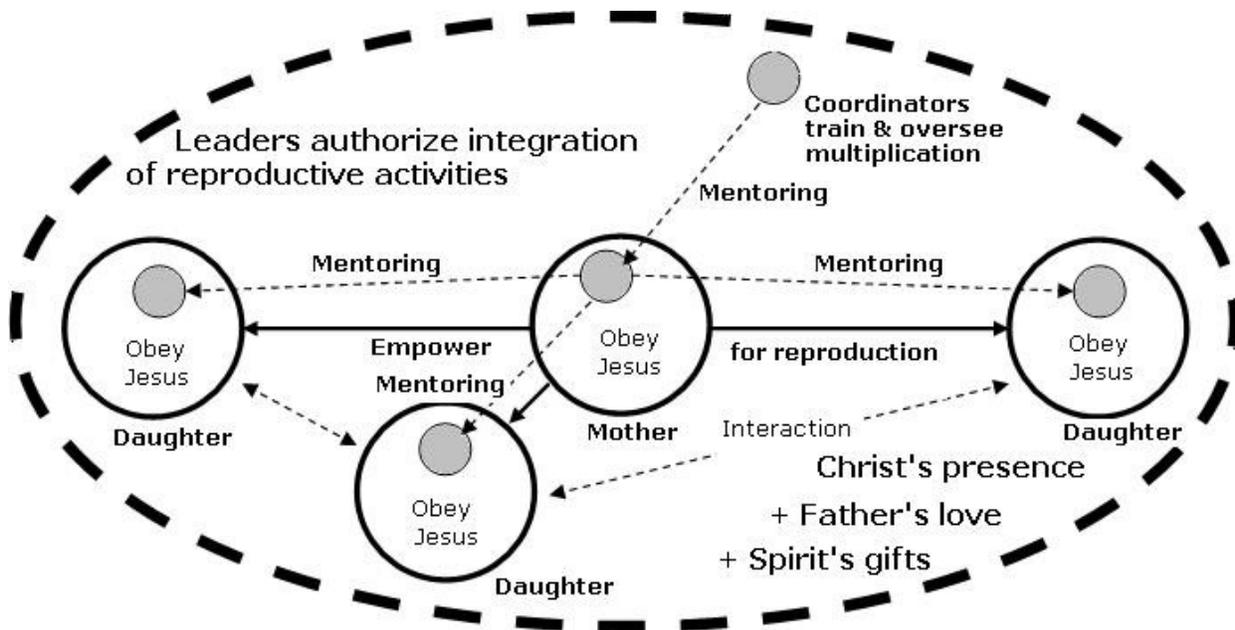


MentorNet #64
**SEVEN ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES THAT FOSTER
 CHURCH MULTIPLICATION**

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Since the late twentieth century, several researchers have written in English on various “universal” factors, functions or traits that cause or abet church-planting movements. We owe a great debt to such specialists as Donald McGavran, David Garrison, and Mikel Neumann, for the risk they ran in publishing their findings. This paper, seeking to remain within the glow of their light, signals seven general activity areas that normally improve church reproduction where implemented in a coordinated fashion over time. We offer these, not as promises or as magic tricks, but as widely-proven activities that you can implement, control, adjust, test and improve.

1. Spread the Good News about Jesus within existing social networks. The out-dated “homogeneous unit principle” was neither an authoritative rule nor always a reliable guideline; rather it grew out of observations made across many movements, mostly in what was then called the developing world. The principle stated that the gospel tends to flow within ethnic and linguistic communities, and that forced integration of communities tended to thwart the gospel. Today, there is better reason to identify the natural gospel bridges as existing communication links between individuals and between social groups. Economic classes may prove more influential than ethnicity or nationality. The gospel tends to flow through existing relationships. So let it do so by your use of methods and materials that enhance inter-personal communication and interaction within groups.



2. Teach obedience to Jesus’ commands above all else. After devoting most of our lives to teaching classical theology, strengthening organizations, following fads, publishing materials, and avoiding extremes, we are left bewildered by our colossal blunders and sterile churches. Where the gospel has progressed, where willing workers have volunteered, where churches have reproduced and where believers were filled with the Spirit and joy, we had practiced a few, basic commands of Jesus and empowered others to do the same. Filter all church and mission rules and activities through the New Testament. Retain all that Jesus and his apostles commanded, and eliminate every rule and practice that hinders believers’ and workers’ loving obedience to him. Consider: “If you love me, you will obey my commands.” “If you obey me, I will send you the Helper.” “He gives the Spirit to those who obey him.” “We seek your complete obedience.” “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”

3. Maintain interactive worship that includes the Lord's Table. Inspiring, decently-ordered worship depends less on authoritative, theologically-astute leaders, than it does on their consciously allowing every worshipper to participate actively in church gatherings. The New Testament instructs churches to practice more than twenty mutual, "one-another" church activities that cannot happen amongst passive listeners. Big congregations will have to provide some kind of opportunity for believers to gather in small groups, part of the time. Small congregations or cell groups should develop interactive cooperation between flocks as well as within them, providing time during worship to plan specific activities that all can participate in during the week. All believers, especially new ones, benefit spiritually from frequent participation in the Lord's Table by acknowledging their sins, by experiencing mystical "communion" with Christ, and by announcing the Lord's death until he come. Teach family heads and small-group shepherds how to serve the Table and authorize them to do so. Participatory churches keep believers thrilled with Jesus and see many guests become believers.

4. Train leaders in ways that meet needs of new churches and cells. Without eliminating formal education for mature church leaders, you must ensure some kind of training for new leaders that allows more experienced church workers to guide the less experienced. Whether you call the process training, mentoring or guidance, it must focus more on the trainees' churches and cells than on the trainees themselves. Ensure that you or your appointed trainers spend significant time with small numbers of new leaders, listening to them report on their flocks' current opportunities, needs and weaknesses. Next, help them to plan what they and their sheep will do during the coming few days to meet those needs and challenges. Every new and old church has many problems, some of which remain irresolvable. Keep on edifying every flock and never spend more than half of your training time on trying to deal with exasperating problems. Pray with faith for the Lord to keep the flocks growing and multiplying.

5. Empower workers to start new churches and cells. No church ever has enough highly-skilled, educated, willing workers. Most new churches, cells and home groups are started and led by unqualified individuals who will prove willing only if you provide them with guidelines, authorization and timely advice, like Jesus and the apostles did. Round the globe, those denominations, churches and agencies that plant the most new, thriving churches are precisely those who authorize their membership to start new churches and cells as soon as the Lord will allow them to do so. Your fears about false doctrine, disunity, low quality, inadequate finances and persecution in new, little flocks can best be dealt with by your mentoring of a few new leaders who will do the same with others, it turn. Most of those whom you authorize and mentor will remain faithful to you. Most church splits occur where pastors distrust potential leaders and refuse to authorize the starting of new churches.

6. Provide coordination that sustains multiplication of flocks. Where you authorize workers to start new churches and cells, existing churches and cells normally will reproduce. However, those workers must, in turn, both authorize and train new leaders as these emerge. To keep churches and cells reproducing, you must coordinate the continual extension of "mentoring chains," that is, existing workers authorizing and training new workers. An essential part of that extension includes identifying receptive pockets in the population, drawing maps that project new church plants, laying of plans to make contacts, entering homes and other social networks, enrolling willing workers in some kind of mentored training. This is the kind of work that Paul sent Titus to do in Crete and Timothy to ensure in Ephesus.

7. Authorize and enable leaders to integrate all of the above. If you are a senior pastor or a mission field leader, then it falls to you to ensure that all the above activities become normal operating procedures within your ministry's area of responsibility. Whatever stress may be added to your work load will be attenuated by the joy of seeing your co-workers become more fruitful, of your churches' faith strengthened, of your population visited by the Spirit of the Living God, and of the Word of God proving, again, to be the power of God unto salvation of all who believe.

Resources

Order P. O'Connor, *Reproducible Pastoral Training*, from a bookshop or at <www.WCLbooks.com>.

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