

MINISTRY COACHING NETWORK



Local Strategies



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CHAPTER 1

The Local Expression of Global Mission

God promise to raise up his Church and commission her, “to make disciples of all nations.” God has commissioned to work through his Church, expressed through many local churches.

Types of Growth

According to one taxonomy, there are several ways in which all churches grow (George Patterson): *internal*, *expansion*, *extension*, and *bridging*.

Internal growth refers to maturity and internal strength. It can include structural growth (such as youth groups, schools, etc.), spiritual growth as members grow in spiritual maturity and conversion growth as nominal members come to a genuine faith in Christ (E-0).

Expansion growth is the addition of new believers from the immediate community. It can include biological growth as children become church members, transfer growth as members join from other churches, or conversion growth as people are won to the Lord from the surrounding non-believing community (E-1).

Extension growth refers to the multiplying of the local church through reproducing and planting daughter churches. This includes the gifting and skills necessary for both internal and expansion growth, but also requires other skills. Patterson points out that relying on only *Internal* and *Expansion* growth and not planting new congregations (*Extension*) will cause a church movement to eventually stagnate.

Bridging growth is the extending of a church’s efforts beyond its own culture. It relies on E-2 and E-3 evangelism, planting churches cross-culturally among a people who may or may not be “reached.”

There is a progression to these types of growth, for if a church is not mature enough, it will be difficult for it to *extend* itself. Consequently, if members are not encouraged to evangelize, then stagnation will also soon occur. However, churches must not necessarily be numerically large, or exceptionally mature, in order to be involved in planting daughter churches. From his experience, Patterson emphasizes that the two principles necessary in order to see a church multiply is that its members are growing disciples and there is ongoing leadership development and training.

The Indigenous Church

An indigenous church is made up of growing believers who are embedded in a community. They have characteristics of that community, yet are looking to transform the community from within. This actually means that the more indigenous a church plant, the more culturally distant it will be from the external church planter (missionary), to the point that he or she may even feel culturally uncomfortable.

The missionary's role is really that of a catalyst and at best can really just create the conditions for the planting of an indigenous church. An indigenous church is something that develops and takes on a life and characteristic of its own from within the community in which it is planted, not just the transference of an outside model. Traditionally in missions, an indigenous church is one that is *self-governing*, *self-supporting*, and *self-propagating*.

Self-governing does not mean a western approach to church government, but may incorporate what self-governance means locally.

Also *self-supporting* does not mean that there cannot be any funds coming from external sources, but has more to do with how these funds are handled and disbursed. The important issue is who is in control, managing these funds and determining the priorities.

Finally, *self-propagating* does not necessarily mean that there is no longer a foreign component to the church, this component may be the very reason it is growing. Alternatively, a church is not necessarily indigenous just because it is growing with no external help.

The reasons behind these issues need to be understood and analysed in order to ensure that it is truly an indigenous church, not just a transplant from another culture and place, for if this is the case it will not multiply and reproduce. It will only survive as long as it is propped up and supported from an external (in relation to that community) source.

An indigenous church, that is a fit with the surrounding culture, will be able to speak to that culture and society. Jesus' commands are supra-cultural (above culture), they never change and apply in every culture. Yet it is possible (and desirable) to have varied cultural expressions from within the local community which those from within the community identify with (though the external church planter may not). Two extremes need to be guarded against. *Legalism*, where all aspects of the culture are viewed as negative or anti-Christian and *syncreticism*, where all aspects of the culture are seen as good or Christian.

What is your view of the role of the missionary in planting an indigenous church?

Is your church truly indigenous? Why is this important and what steps do you need to take to move in this direction?

Reaching *All Peoples*

a) Looking Within

God's heart is that his Church would reach *all peoples*. This is the macro, or large view, but we will also view it now from the perspective of a local church. While the goal of the Great Commission is the whole world, can every local church really reach *all people*? While strategies are many and varied, the simple fact is that the Gospel spreads through relationships. Local churches must also be realistic as to who they can best reach given their gifts and resources.

The first step is to determine the people-mix of those already attending, for it is unlikely that a church will attract (and keep) those who are very different culturally from existing attenders. This also can be related to the predominate gift-mix of a congregation or what gifts are most valued. While we are welcoming to everyone, it is important to understand this fundamental truth of human nature which is based in relationship.

In addition to an evaluation of who God has placed in the Body, it is also important to determine what is the cultural background of our leadership team. While leadership itself may not attract first time visitors, the style and personality of the leadership will determine if they come back and become members. Thinking throughout questions such as, *What kind of leader am I?* and *What kind of people do I naturally relate to?* can be helpful in reaching our potential and being effective as leaders.

b) Reaching Out

Understanding who we are and who God has specifically called us to (individually and corporately), will give greater purpose and direction to our particular role in reaching *all peoples*. While the message of the Gospel does not change (function), who we are best suited to reach as a church will determine how we present the Gospel for greatest impact (form). For example, the greatest church planter of all time, Paul, had a completely different approach depending upon whether the community was primarily Greek or Jewish. This had to do with who he was and who his audience was.

The questions we must ask ourselves are, Who are we (as leadership team and congregation) best suited to reach? What is the specific reason for our church to exist; who are we best targeted to reach?

Answering these questions will help us determine what styles of evangelism will work and how to best use what we have for the Kingdom. This does not mean that we compromise the Gospel message, but as Paul adapted himself in order to be able to reach others, so must we if we are to be effective as a local church.

Jesus himself recognized that he had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24); he had a focus and a target. In the early church, Paul recognized that he had been entrusted with the task of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7), while Peter knew his primary commission was to the Jews. Knowing our target is crucial if we are going to be effective and fulfill our specific mandate. Likewise, it is impossible for a local church to appeal equally well to all people. This is especially true of small churches, for while large churches have the resources (facility and people) to address a greater scope of needs and can target varied audiences, smaller churches often do not have this option.

How important do you think it is to have a target for your mission efforts. Explain.

Who are we “Called” to?

While the whole Body, world-wide, is commissioned to reach the whole world, it is freeing to know that each of us, and every local church, does not (and can not) do it all. We all just have a part to play. There are various ways to view those who we are particularly called to. Some have outlined these in four main categories: *geographic, demographic, cultural, and spiritual.*

a. Geographically

In a local church setting these are those that are a reasonable distance from the facility. In a mission setting, this means determining the area which we can realistically reach. In a rural area, we must decide if it is one valley, or one group of villages we can reach. If in a city, what particular part of the city? However, it is important to note that in mobile cultures and urban centers, geographic location is not always the most important homogenous factor. Due to cultural barriers, we may not be able to reach even those physically closest to us.

Another reality is that the size of the geographic target group will determine the size and scope of the local church. If the church is in a small rural community, it is likely that it will never become a mega-church (and that is okay). Accurately assessing “success,” means matching our expectation level with the reality of our situation.

b. Demographically

Church growth is not solely dependent upon a highly detailed demographic analysis of those in the surrounding community. Much beyond the ages, marital status, income levels, educational level, and main types of occupation of our target, is not needed. Each of these factors (age, marital status, education, etc) creates different needs and affects how the Gospel must be most effectively presented. Understanding this will help determine the similarities between the community and the church's membership and leadership.

It is critical that we understand the community to which we have been called to reach. We must be like the men of Issachar in the Old Testament who knew the days in which they were living and what they needed to do (1 Chr. 12:32).

c. Culturally

While there may be a variety of "subcultures" within the geographic and even demographic boundaries, there are some cultural similarities of those who we are called to reach that are important to understand. These are the factors such as their mindset, values, and worldview, which they hold in common and which tie them together as a community of people. As those going to minister in a cross-cultural setting need to be aware of the values, worldview and practices (and what they mean) of a culture, so within a particular society a local church must also be aware of the cultural makeup of the community which they feel particularly gifted and called to reach with the Gospel.

Making the effort to understand and identifying with the culture does not mean that we agree or condone its values; but we will only be as effective as we can incarnate the message of the Gospel into their cultural language. Most of the cultural subtleties are not easily perceived by a quick glance at outward appearances. Time must be invested and relationships developed in order to truly understand the needs of these varied groups.

Evaluate the cultural makeup of your community or target group? What are their values and worldview?

What characteristics of your church are cultural and cause a barrier in your ability to reach those in your community?

What steps do you need to take in order to remove these barriers and at the same time not alienate your existing attenders?

d. Spiritually

Knowing the spiritual background and presuppositions of our community is also necessary in order to know how to best witness to them. *Do they believe in God? In a universal being? In life after death?* and so on. Knowing the spiritual condition of our target community is the first step in being able to build bridges; we must begin with any beliefs or values which we already may have in common with them.

When we are new to a community, the best resource to determine the current spiritual climate of the community is other local spiritual leaders. While it takes time and effort to determine the spiritual needs of those we are targeting, without this understanding the “how” of evangelism becomes non-definable. Our methods need to be borne out of our understanding of the needs (evangelistic and other) of our target community. Without this, much time, effort and finances can be spent with little results for the kingdom.

We need to be wise so as to spread the seed of the Gospel in receptive soil. We need to ask ourselves what the particular spiritual condition of the soil is that we find ourselves in. In addition, we must be aware of the different season that we are in as a church, as a leadership, and the spiritual season of those in the greater community around us. We cannot ignore the cyclical seasons of planting and harvest or our efforts will not be as effective. This is applicable for both individuals and communities.

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Evaluate the spiritual condition and needs of your community or target group.
What is your definition of success in reaching this group?
What bridges of understanding are you building towards them?

Existing Churches

The reality is that most local churches are in a community in which they have been for many years. Perhaps when the church was first planted, it was effectively meeting the needs of those around it, and consequently it grew. However, over time, a local church may find itself in a community with which it no longer identifies, or in a community that no longer identifies with it.

Experience seems to indicate that it is virtually impossible for a church to completely change its culture and who it is. The likelihood of a church being able to re-invent itself is very low. If leadership does try to implement such a change (especially if attempted too quickly), either the congregation will leave (slowly or in large masses), or the leadership will be forced to leave. Neither of which are particularly effective church growth strategies!

A better approach is for the church and leadership to take some time for honest evaluation and determine what it is called to do and what gifts it has that particularly will meet the needs of the community it is in. Some options would be to begin another service and develop another congregation simultaneously, while continuing to meet the needs of those who have stayed with the church, or start a daughter church as a mission endeavour of the mother church.

Do you think it is possible for any local church to reach “anybody?” Why or why not?

Some Applications

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To be effective in reaching others for Christ we must have a strategy of how to apply the Gospel to the needs of those we are specifically called to. This demands that we are intentional about who we are called to reach (taking our gifts, abilities, culture, etc. into account) and then have a strategy to interact with them. We must make the effort to understand our target group and identify with them in order that we may understand them – as they are, not as we want them to be.

While the Gospel message is eternal, we must adapt our own culture or comfort level in order to make it relevant to those God has called us to. Without compromising the Gospel, or erecting unnecessary barriers, we need to learn to adapt our preferences in order to reach those we love and want to win for Christ.

This was the central issue in Acts chapter fifteen. The Early Church was wrestling with what were the necessary cultural practices that were necessary for the new Christians to adopt. To some degree we also deal with this today, for we must also differentiate between what is inherently *Christian* and what is mere *culture*, and learn to differentiate between the two.

The Gospel is always expressed within a culture, for culture has to do with the human experience. To be effective to reach *all peoples* we must also be willing to adapt culturally if we are going to reach the unsaved with the Gospel. Jesus condemned the religious leaders of his day, who put burdens on people that they could not bear. In contrast, Jesus' ministry was about removing any artificial barriers, in order that needy people could come to the Father.

We must be careful not to erect barriers that the Gospel does not erect. The only criteria for accepting Christ was accepting his work on the cross. Paul in his ministry learned this principle of adaptation from Jesus. He too tried to find common ground from which he could share the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:19-22). As Jesus and Paul, we are called to display this kind of unconditional love, accepting and loving others into the Kingdom.

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Church Planters have emphasized that a church does not need to be large in order to plant new churches. Do you agree or disagree?

Evaluate your existing attenders and leadership team. What have you learned about who you are as a group and who you may be best suited to reach?

What is your plan for equipping and training your members? Do you have a plan to release them into ministry?

CHAPTER 2

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Having a Multiplication Mindset

Ralph Moore, founder of the Hope Chapel movement in Hawaii and author of the book, *Starting New Churches: The Church Planter's Guide to Success*, states that "the true fruit of an apple tree is an orchard." (Moore, 255) This metaphor implies that the mindset of a church planter may include the idea that the fruit of their ministry can go beyond just making disciples or planting another church. Is it possible that a church may become part of a movement that results in many new churches being started? What are the nature of the leadership activities that produce this kind of growth?

1. Vision for church multiplication needs to be built into your leadership and congregation from the very beginning.

The possibilities and desire for a church planting movement need to be dreamed about, talked about and planned for by more than just the senior leader. It is a mentality that needs to be embraced by all involved.

What are some ways to realistically communicate a multiplication mindset? How will you know that the team has embraced this way of thinking?

Have you included church multiplication in your budget even if the next church plant may be a year or more away?

2. When making disciples, set a standard that is more challenging than just becoming a solid Christian.

Making disciples is the one ministry task that contributes to Kingdom expansion in both quantity and quality. A

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leader committed to discipleship has the opportunity to challenge followers of Jesus to be part of a church multiplication movement. This way of thinking will help leaders determine how to budget their time with people. Leaders must deliberately focus on people who possess the capacity to lead and reproduce themselves. These are the your next group of church planting leaders. The senior leader must also be personally secure enough to release people he/she has invested their life in and also celebrate the success of these leaders especially when their achievements may be greater or more dramatic than the senior leader's achievements.

Of those you are discipling and mentoring, who possesses the capacity to plant a church?

What changes do you need to make in your discipling practice in order to challenge people to actively participate in church multiplication?

How will you feel when someone who is currently following you becomes more successful than you will ever be?

3. When mentoring leaders, choose those who you know will be able to replace you someday.

Focus on developing leaders who have the capacity to launch a new church and will also be committed to leadership development to the same or greater degree than you are. This mentality will ensure that your ministry will outlast you.

Who are you mentoring? Who are your protégés mentoring? What evidence can you see that suggests your ministry will outlast you?

4. As you develop your leadership team focus on people who will think with you.

Teams are more effective than individuals. Effective teams are able to dream, discuss, plan, act, assess and evaluate. This requires thinking biblically, theologically, and philosophically about the task at hand. It will be helpful if your team members have good reading habits.

Why do you do what you do? How much thought have you put into this question?

How often does your team set aside time to think and discuss together what you do? How much time should be spent thinking and dreaming together?

What are you currently reading that is causing you to think more deeply about your ideas regarding ministry?

5. Encourage innovative people.

Innovators are those who think creatively about ways to engage the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These people will challenge the church to step beyond what they are comfortable doing in order to cross social, generational and ethnic boundaries in order to be more effective. These will become the leaders that help the church keep in touch with the changing world around them.

Do you view innovators as a problem or an opportunity? How do innovative people view you?

How will you respond to innovative ideas that fail? That succeed? How do you stay in touch with changing trends in the culture you are trying to engage?

6. Think through the process of replication at every level of church life.

Reproduction of ministry can happen at every level of ministry in the church as it currently exists. This requires training and encouraging all levels of leadership to identify potential leaders and provide opportunities for people to actively lead. Over time, this way of thinking will make church multiplication seem like a normal part of church life.

Is your congregation positive about change and new ideas?

How are you encouraging the leaders in your ministry to replace themselves? Are you setting the right kind of example?

7. Identify your church's next sphere of influence and begin to pray and plan toward future effectiveness.

We must resist the temptation of becoming comfortable with the current level of effective ministry. A multiplication mindset is able to look to the future without compromising or diminishing the present ministry. Future ministry should actually be seen as the natural extension of what you are presently doing.

How would you describe the next five to ten years of the ministry of your church? Describe the potential mission field of your church.

What do you need to do to establish a church multiplication mindset in your ministry?

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was focussed on the whole world. God's love for the whole world motivated him to send his Son. Jesus then commissioned his Church to fulfill this mission. God's mission is fundamental to who we are as Christians.

CHAPTER 3

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Building a Strategy

Researching Your City for Effective Outreach: Demographics - Who is Here?

Most of us really admire people who are hard workers. However, we also know that hard work becomes more efficient and productive when combined with working smart. Demographic research is a process that takes time and effort but also can lead to working smarter. In the church planting or ministry designing context, demographic research can help leaders and ministry teams discover the bridges that link the church or ministry to those who will be receptive to encountering the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Planting churches and designing ministries takes commitment and hard work. The purpose of this section is to help us to sharpen our focus on the task before us, enabling us to not only work hard but to work smart.

The temptation that may arise when doing demographic research is to get caught up in the facts and figures and become amateur sociologists. In this process, we must maintain the mindset of building relational bridges into the communities in which God has set us.

Let us consider two ways of defining these communities:

1. God has placed us in communities defined by *Geographic Location.*

Local churches are located in neighborhoods that may consist of "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the Earth". The realities of the neighborhood will have an influence on how we design ministry.

Questions to Ask When Developing a Community Profile

- What is the population of the community? Is it growing or shrinking? If it is growing, who is moving in and why? If it is shrinking, who is leaving and why?
- How is the population distributed according to gender and age groupings?
- What family structures are represented in the population?
- What is the breakdown of education levels in your community?
- What is the economic status of the citizens? Generally speaking, how many status levels can you identify? Who are the major employers of people in your community or what kind of employment might the citizens typically be engaged in?
- What specific ethnic or language groups are in your community? What percentage of the population do these groups represent? Are these groups exclusive or have they assimilated into the general community? Can you identify points of assimilation?
- What religious groups are active in your community and to what extent are they influential? Is their influence generally perceived as positive or negative?
- What attitudes and preferences are discernible in your community?
- Is there a discernible attitude toward the church or organized religion? How would you describe that attitude?
- Are there political preferences or attitudes present? How would you describe these?
- What are some of the social and moral values evident in your community? What community needs or strengths are created as a result of these values?

2. God has placed us in communities defined by *Relationships*.

This idea investigates the location of the church on Monday through Saturday as opposed to the location of the church gathered on Sunday.

These communities already defined by existing relationships are more immediately accessible to the local church because the material for relational bridge building is already supplied.

These relationships include:

- Families and extended families
- Friends
- Work place relationships
- Social networks
- Community service involvement
- Casual neighborhood connections

Many of the questions used to learn about the people living in the geographic location of the church can also be used to investigate the nature of the people within the relational community of the church.

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CHAPTER 4

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The Lay of the Land (1)

How Do I Gather Demographic Data?

Much of the information relevant to designing ministry is right in front of us. The place to begin then is with personal observation and assessment of the community.

This can be done through:

- Observational prayer walks (You can drive if covering larger regions).
- Casual conversations with people in the neighborhood.
- Targeted conversations or interviews with community leaders or long-time residents.
- Journaling or recording relevant data, attitudes and preferences observed during interaction with family, friends and coworkers.
- Random community surveys designed to discover attitudes and perceptions.

During the stage of ministry design there should be planned times for ministry teams to share observations, brainstorm ideas, discuss and pray regarding one another's perceptions. This would be the **low-tech approach** to gathering demographic data. The **high-tech approach** uses today's technology which provides us access to a great deal of demographic information.

Statistical information is readily available via the Internet. Anyone can view a statistical profile of any community in the country. The information provided by national research will answer many of the questions suggested in this presentation. Another great source of information on the Internet are the municipal and community web pages posted by the communities themselves. Even though many of these sites read like an elaborate commercial advertisement they do provide a lot of relevant information. Another option is to use a demographic research company or organization to provide professionally produced and analyzed reports. Some organizations provide these services specifically to churches. Other organizations may do this work for private and public sector clients. Keep in mind that these services can be expensive.

The Lay of the Land (2)

Using Demographic Information

Ministry design becomes effective when we are able to combine an honest assessment of the skills, gifts and capabilities of the church and match them to the sectors of the community which we can realistically expect to connect with relationally. Here are some things we can do with demographic information.

We can:

- Discover potential relational bridges into the community.
- Set ministry goals that are realistic and relevant to the community.
- Employ ministry style that recognizes the capabilities of the church and takes into consideration those with whom we are building relational bridges.
- Knowledgeably pray for both the people we are relationally connected to and those we have yet to connect with.
- Understand the specifics of expanding from "Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the Earth".
- This whole research process should be done prayerfully, with relationship building as a goal with an eye to discerning the needs of the community and with the objective of being a church who meaningfully engages the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.