

BAKKE GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

**A REVOLUTION IN CHURCH MULTIPLICATION IN EAST AFRICA:
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS DEVELOP A SELF-SUSTAINABLE MODEL
OF RAPID CHURCH MULTIPLICATION**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
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BY

DAVID F. HUNT

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This dissertation is dedicated to the hundreds of church planters I now have the privilege of calling my friends. They are true revolutionaries, who have courageously dedicated themselves to carrying the message of the gospel behind enemy lines to the thousands of captive communities throughout East Africa. These “guerilla” fighters have given up much to follow their Leader to the ends of the earth, a level of sacrifice to which I can only aspire. Many have lost property, health, or family. Others have suffered violent attacks maiming them for life. Several have been captured and face long terms in horrible prisons. But they continue to persevere. For them nothing else matters. They have been called to a revolution and they know that revolutions are not easy.

May their revolution continue!

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Thirdly, I want to acknowledge my team of encouragers and supporters. Pat Robertson, President of CityTeam Ministries has courageously and tirelessly championed the kind of creative organizational development that has led CityTeam into global church planting as a whole new ministry direction. In so doing, without a controlling organizational directive, he gave me the freedom to follow the dream that God birthed in me to minister in East Africa. David Watson, now Vice President of Global Church Planting at CityTeam Ministries became my teacher and tutor, introducing me to a new paradigm of church planting and believing that someone with my lack of experience could play a part in a movement of church planting in East Africa. Markos Zemedede, founder of Horn of Africa Mission was an incredible example of a catalytic leader. Holding the ministry in an open hand he always encouraged innovation and local direction for the ministry. Harry Brown and Jerry Trousdale, Vice President of NewGenerations International and Director of Sub-Saharan Africa respectively have done nothing but encourage and support what I felt God was leading us to do in East Africa.

Finally I want to acknowledge the contribution of my family. My wife was willing to pack up and move to Addis Ababa Ethiopia. Not only has she supported me, but through a personal ministry of caring for children about to die, she has been instrumental in opening new communities to the gospel where churches eventually have emerged. My children too have been some of my best supporters while my parents were undoubtedly my strongest prayer partners.

ABSTRACT

The project began with a simple but ambitious goal – to catalyze the planting of ten thousand churches in East Africa by 2010. By the end of 2008 just over four thousand new churches had emerged with approximately one hundred and forty-thousand new believers. God is powerfully at work in this troubled region of the world!

From the outset it was clear that a different model of church and a different strategy of church planting had to be developed. The current model of church was too complex and sophisticated, and contained too many foreign elements to be quickly embedded into thousands of new communities. The strategy for planting new churches was too slow and resource-intensive to achieve the momentum necessary to reach the goal. And the current system of leadership development was simply not able to produce enough leaders to support this desired rate of multiplication of new churches.

At the same time the project participants had no desire to establish a new denomination or even to build a large organization. Instead we developed partnerships with more than one hundred existing indigenous organizations and churches looking for those transformational leaders who would be inspired by the vision and willing to break with the traditional models in order to find a new way.

The project was initiated with national level partners in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Sudan in late 2005, soon after I began my doctoral studies at Bakke Graduate University of Ministry. The project leadership in Ethiopia has managed the project in Somalia and Djibouti. In October 2006 our Eritrea partner and several church planters in that country

were imprisoned because of their mission activities. As a result the project in Eritrea is currently not operational.

Within the first year these key national leaders had adopted a whole new paradigm of church, had redefined the characteristics and role of the church planter, and were working diligently at implementing a new set of church planting principles. Results varied but in each country the new strategy began to take root as many new vibrant churches emerged. The development of a new kind of leader at the grassroots level quickly became the primary focus and so equipping centers (twelve to date) were established throughout Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Sudan. A simple curriculum supporting the new strategy that had evolved was developed and instituted in 2007 and 2008 and is currently in testing stages.

With two more years to go, we believe the project will achieve the original goal of ten thousand new churches by 2010. However, more importantly, what has happened is that a number of truly transformational leaders have emerged who have developed and are implementing a self-sustainable model that will see the church continue to multiply rapidly throughout this seven country region and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The provocative question was tossed like a grenade into the assembled group of CityTeam Ministries¹ executives seated around the table in the president's conference room. "What do we have to show for the \$75 million we've spent over the past ten years?" For a few moments no one dared break the poignant silence. It was almost as if we were holding our collective breaths. Minds whirled with defensive answers, responses no one wanted to express because they seemed too shallow; the question was just too penetrating. Most of this leadership team had been together for more than the past ten years. Diligent effort, commitment to excellence, and kingdom thinking characterized each one's contribution. There were many *good* answers. Just look at the reports. In ten years over five million hot nutritious meals and one million nights of warm safe shelter provided to the homeless. Thousands of inner city kids had been given the opportunity of a lifetime, a week at summer camp. Well over fifteen hundred babies were born to women in crisis pregnancy; many saved from abortion. Thousands of families had been cared for; many marriages restored. Hundreds of men and women had graduated clean and sober returning to jobs, families, and productive lives. And the list of *good* accomplishments could go on and on.

But the question still haunted as the hush extended. It became one of those God-moments when silence was the only appropriate recourse. Gently He stirred our hearts, "Yes, you have done many *good* things but I want you to do *great* things." We knew that,

¹ CityTeam Ministries was founded in 1957 in San Jose, California. Its mission statement read "to glorify God by serving people in need, proclaiming the gospel, and establishing disciples among the disadvantaged people of cities."

for us, the issue was “fruit that remained.” After ten years of service, how many real disciples of Jesus could we identify as a result of our ministry?

The grenade had exploded, shattering the complacent satisfaction with our ministry accomplishments and forcing a deeply introspective self-evaluation that was to lead to a ministry that looks fundamentally and radically different.

Since that day God has birthed a new vision in our hearts, a vision to raise up and empower truly transformational leaders who would be the catalysts to initiate *an explosion of literally thousands of new churches – caring communities of Christ – that consistently and rapidly replicate themselves among the poor in communities throughout the world.* As one CityTeam leader put it, “We are pregnant with a thousand churches!”

Perhaps there is no better way to communicate the intensity of the passion we began to feel than to quote Wolfgang Simson from *Houses That Change the World*.

Nothing short of the very presence of the living Christ in every neighbourhood and village of every corner of the nation will do. He has come to live amongst us – to stay on. We therefore need to initiate and promote church-planting movements that initiate and promote other church-planting movements, until there is no space left for anyone to misunderstand, ignore or even escape the presence of Jesus in the form that He has chosen to take on earth – the local church.²

And so began the quest for my part in this new vision; a quest that led me into doctoral studies at Bakke Graduate University of Ministry³ in the Church and Ministry Multiplication Specialization. Within a year I found myself living in Ethiopia, assigned by CityTeam Ministries as the Regional Coordinator for East Africa. I had little idea at the time what that really meant but had a strong sense that it was part of God’s plan for the revolution of our ministry, a revolution that would take CityTeam from doing *good* things to

² Wolfgang Simson, *Houses That Change the World* (Waynesboro: Paternoster Publishing, 1998), xxvii.

³ Bakke Graduate University was then called Northwest Graduate School of Ministry.

sustainable self-replicating ministry through the catalyzing of communities of believers, who would bring transformation to thousands of communities. This dissertation tells the story of that revolution.

Part One describes the church multiplication project that began when I moved to Ethiopia in 2005. These chapters describe the background and some of the discovery process that was initiated in the quest for a strategy that would be the catalyst for a dynamic movement of church multiplication. The specific goals that emerged are then outlined at the end of chapter two.

In Part Two the results of this search for a culturally relevant and thoroughly biblical model of church and church multiplication strategy are presented. Chapter three describes the new paradigms – a new understanding of church, a different kind of church planter, and a new strategy for rapid church multiplication. Chapters four through seven outline briefly the principles that have been implemented and are being used to plant thousands of new churches throughout East Africa.

The theological foundations under girding this project are integrated throughout part two with special attention to the biblical foundations included in the discussion of the new paradigm of church in chapter three and each of the church planting principles in chapters four through seven. In addition, several Scriptural sources are listed after each of these subjects.

This paper is an attempt to make clear a process that spans several years, includes thousands of participants, and is spread over several countries. It looks at the institutional or the traditional church in contrast to a new paradigm of church. It introduces a strategy of church planting that while seen more and more in North America and around the world, is not consistent with the majority of church planting that is done today. Inherent in all this is a

significant risk of misunderstanding. Thus it is important that a few terms and concepts are defined at the outset of this paper.

Church Planting. The term church *planting* is used throughout this paper because it is part of our normal terminology when talking about church growth and multiplication. However, it is important to understand that missionaries or church planters or denominations don't plant churches. Planting churches is the work of God, a divinely produced phenomenon. Jesus said, "I will build my church...." (Matt. 16:18). The church's job is to discover what He is doing and cooperate with Him. David Watson teaches in his workshops that effective church planting goes to the "edge." It is discovering "where God is working [emphasis mine] by His Holy Spirit and through His representatives to seek out and meet lostness for the purpose of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting...."⁴

Imagine being part of that seminal event when "everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43). The account of these awesome events makes it clear that the apostles were not the builders of the church but the catalysts. Following the description of that simple first church, "They broke bread in their homes, and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people," it says in verse 47, "And *the Lord added* to their number daily those who were being saved."

New church development should be spontaneous and natural. Church planting becomes the natural and essential expression of the missional church as the gospel is proclaimed in word and deed, and believers are gathered together for fellowship, worship, and mission. What the Church needs to do according to Christian Schwarz is to

⁴ David L. Watson, "Definitions." Lecture in CPM Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, June 2006.

“concentrate on the removal of obstacles to church growth and multiplication within churches. Then church growth can happen *all by itself*. God will do what He promised to do. He will grant growth (I Cor. 3:6).”⁵ *All by itself* has the underlying thought of *performed by God Himself*.

Church planting today is often understood as essentially a program or strategy which church leaders develop and implement. They gather the financial resources, appoint a charismatic leader, establish an organizational structure, secure property, construct a building, and initiate a marketing program to draw people into the church building for various programs and activities. So the concept becomes one sided – the human side, and the real meaning is lost. Throughout this paper the word *planting* is still used although the concept of church *emerging* is also used and is perhaps a more meaningful description.

Church Multiplication: Multiplication refers to an exponential growth in the number of new churches emerging in a region. It is different than church growth that tends more to focus on growing larger churches. A strategy of addition adds one generation of *daughter* churches to the *mother* church. For example, the *mother* church adds one new church, then a few years later one more, then perhaps another one for a total of four churches. In multiplication a church seeks to catalyze multi-generational self-replication. For example, a church establishes three new churches. These three in turn quickly establish three more churches and each one of those establishes three more for a total of forty churches perhaps in as little as two years.

Model of church: Since labels often mislead, this paper avoids terms such as the post-modern church or the New Testament church, the emerging church or the alternative

⁵ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 10.

church. The term *model* is used to identify what the church looks like in the context of this project. This model that has emerged in East Africa is more fully described in chapter three.

New: Throughout the paper reference is made to a *new* model of church, a *new* way of “doing” church, a *new* kind of church planter, or a *new* church planting strategy. It should be understood that these are *new* in the context of the people involved in this project. Likely little if anything about this church planting revolution in East Africa is really *new* in the broader sense. But it has become a whole new paradigm with a whole new outcome for those involved in the project.

Church Multiplication Strategy: This paper frequently uses the term Church Multiplication (or Planting) *Strategy*. As discussed above it is not the intention to say that the establishing of new churches is essentially a human process. It is not. The term is used rather to define the human role as I have seen it in this project. It asks, “What, according to the Scripture is the Church called to do in terms of building the community of believers?” Rather than a step by step methodology, this strategy is defined in terms of church planting principles that are detailed in chapters four through seven. It should also be understood that it is not my intent to say that this *strategy* is the final word on how to plant churches. Many have gone before upon whose work we have the privilege and responsibility of building.

Catalyst: Believing that church planting is the work of God and that churches emerge spontaneously and naturally, perhaps the term *catalyst* best describes the human part in this process of church multiplication. God calls believers to be His servants. As such when they allow Him to inject them in His way into the church planting equation they can become the catalysts for an explosion of new churches. In this project in East Africa it appears that the training in a new understanding of church and a different strategy for church planting have become the catalysts to an explosion of new churches throughout the region.

Church Planting Movement: The term *Church Planting Movements* has gained extensive usage in recent years with many evangelicals since being popularized by the International Mission Board in 1998 and David Garrison's⁶ book of the same title in 2004. Perhaps it's the new buzz word overtaking the former *Church Growth* terminology initiated much earlier at Fuller Theological Seminary. As such it is often used haphazardly and as a result may fail any longer to differentiate from various other strategies or processes of church planting. Because of this frequent mishandling the term is largely absent in this paper.

At the same time the concept of *movement* is foundational to this strategy of church planting. Movements in the context of Christian renewal or church planting are supernatural acts of God. They are outside of human control. They are not institutional, tradition-bound, managed, or owned. In this East Africa project the movements have been characterized by young believers still in a discipleship and maturing process themselves, passionately in love with Jesus who go from their newly established community of believers to make new disciples in a new region from which a new community of believers quickly emerges. For the participants in this project this rapid multi-generational self-replication of indigenous churches in a region defines church planting movements.

Community of believers: *Church* and *community of believers* are terms used interchangeably in this paper. The concept of *church* set forth in this paper is dramatically different than the concept of church for most Christians today; thus the inherent danger in using a term which we interpreted so differently. However, church is the biblical term and its true meaning should be recaptured as many have tried to do. Sometimes using an alternate term such as *community of believers* helps to remind the reader that I am talking

⁶ David Garrison. *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004).

about church in a different way than most people would think of it. The understanding of church in the context of the project will be discussed in chapter three.

Institutional or traditional church: Reference to the existing mainstream twentieth and twenty-first century church is problematic. While the terms *institutional and traditional* are used in this paper they are not meant to reflect negativity toward the existing church but to differentiate between them and what has emerged as a new way of *doing* church in the context of this East Africa project.

East Africa and Horn of Africa: Strictly speaking there is no designation for the seven-country region that is part of this project. Throughout this paper the reference to East Africa, or Horn and East Africa refers to the countries where the project has been initiated namely, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Finally, this project is about a revolution; it is not about a rebellion. Someone has said that a rebel attempts to change the past; a revolutionary attempts to change the future. This paper is about the future. Nevertheless, even revolutions are messy. They are chaotic. They are often out of control. And always revolutions are a dramatic departure from the past or the existing norm. By their nature they upset and change what has been. In all revolutions there are casualties. Some things cease to be. New untried realities become the new reality. As the new paradigm of church emerged, as a different understanding of the church planter was arrived at, and as a new strategy for planting churches evolved, it became clear that much would change. Through the determination and commitment of many godly and courageous men and women, a revolutionary process of church planting has begun. In places where the church has been stagnant a new energy has emerged and hundreds of new churches have been planted. In places where there was no church, courageous disciples have gone to declare the message of the gospel and hundreds of new communities of believers are

now seeking to follow and obey Jesus. Often there has been intense persecution and sometimes opposition even from inside the existing institutional church, but the revolution continues to spread as a new generation of transformational leaders confront today's challenges. Boldly they are charting a new course to plant churches in every city, town, village and community so that their nation “. . . will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

It has been my privilege over the past four years to initiate, oversee, and support this project. My role has been to develop the original network of partners in the seven countries, and then to provide the initial training in the new concepts of church and church planting. More than two thousand people were in workshops I conducted during the first three years. As young leaders began to grasp hold of the new paradigms they carried the training forward, and my role changed to one of discipling and mentoring these emerging new paradigm leaders. I also had the privilege of visiting hundreds of church planters and churches throughout the region often traveling for hours into the African bush mostly encouraging and praying for them. In the final year of the project I focused exclusively on the coaching and mentoring of national leaders and on the development of region-wide leaders to take my place. I thank God for the African leaders He is raising up to do even greater things throughout East Africa.

PART ONE: SEEDS OF THE REVOLUTION

CHAPTER 1

PLANNING THE REVOLUTION

Nothing about Ethiopia or East Africa would have caused me to choose it as the location for a ministry project to develop a new self-sustainable model of rapid church multiplication. But God knew otherwise, and so I moved with my wife to Addis Ababa on October 26, 2005, never dreaming that an opportunity of such magnitude awaited us. What we found in East Africa was a church of highly committed mostly “uneducated and untrained”¹ workers, passionately in love with Jesus, but who were often bound within an institutional church structure that restricted rather than released and empowered their zealous witness of the gospel. Immediately we connected because we too had been struggling with *status quo church* and God was taking us and our ministry through a revolutionary process. Thus the project was formulated as a quest for a new way of *doing* church and a new strategy for multiplication through a new kind of church leader.

¹ “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13 NKJV.

Desire for Change

The church in East Africa, as in most of Africa, has gone through or is going through a period of persecution and great struggle. Many are the martyrs who have given their lives as the ultimate sacrifice for their faith. But rather than diminish the fervor of their witness, the result has been a people highly committed to the propagation of the gospel and fervently in love with Jesus and the community of believers.

At the same time many are struggling with their imported model of church that reflects a foreign culture, is highly controlled or influenced from the outside, and is disempowered because of an unhealthy dependency on resources beyond themselves. For them the struggle or the expectation to “be like the Western church” has resulted in stunted growth and significant barriers to expansion while the general population and, in many areas Islam, continue to multiply rapidly. These leaders, disenchanted *with church as it is* are eager to engage in a revolution that will change the current way of *doing* church to culturally relevant alternatives that will propel the church forward.

Gathering together some of the key leaders from the church in East Africa we began to explore and engage in a new way of *doing* church – a church that is culturally relevant and focused on a transformational multiplication strategy that has become the catalyst for an explosion of new churches primarily among unreached people groups in several regions of East Africa. Embedded in this model of church are the elements that have enabled it to experience exponential growth as thousands of new communities of believers have emerged in cities, towns, and villages throughout the region.

Convergence of Three Streams of Influence

This project of church multiplication in East Africa came about as a result of the convergence of three distinct streams of influence. The first stream was a series of decisions

at CityTeam Ministries over several years that culminated in 2003 in fundamental changes in ministry from a focus on providing humanitarian assistance and doing evangelism among the poor in American cities to a focus on catalyzing church planting movements around the world. The second stream was a series of ten annual short-term mission trips to Ethiopia and Tanzania that led to my participation as a founding member of Horn of Africa Mission in 2002. The final stream was launching into the doctoral program at Bakke Graduate University beginning in 2004 to study transformational leadership particularly in the context of church multiplication. The convergence of these three streams resulted in the launching of this project of catalyzing church multiplication in East Africa in 2005.

First Stream: CityTeam Ministries Changes Its Mission Focus

CityTeam Ministries began in 1957 as the San Jose Rescue Mission with a mandate to care for the homeless on the streets of San Jose, California. In the early 1980s, at the board's direction, the new young leadership team embarked upon a process to rename the organization. Frustration throughout this process led to the understanding that the real issue was lack of a clear mission, and so the effort was refocused on drafting a new organizational mission statement. Extensive deliberation and seeking the Lord culminated in the establishment in 1983 of this mission statement:

CityTeam Ministries exists to glorify God by serving people in need, proclaiming the gospel, and establishing disciples among the disadvantaged people of cities.

As each element of the mission statement was pondered, restated, and reworked over a considerable period of time, two aspects were incorporated that had more far-reaching impact than was recognized at the time. The first is the aspect of *establishing disciples*. Although, even at that time there was a growing passion for planting churches in depressed communities and much discussion about incorporating church planting into the mission statement, in the end it was just too great a step for even these entrepreneurial leaders to go

from being a rescue mission to planting churches. The language in those days followed the lines of “we are an *arm* of the church,” and “we are here *to serve* the church.” The idea of *being* the church or *planting* churches was just too big a stretch.

The second aspect of the mission statement that had implications far beyond what was perceived at the time of drafting it is the final word of the statement – *cities*. Even while writing the plural form *cities* into the statement, the writers had no great aspirations or expectations that the ministry would extend beyond San Jose, California, where it was born. But in the years since then God has catapulted CityTeam into several U.S. cities and through partnerships into many other countries.

With a new mission statement after two years of wrestling, it did not take long for the new name to emerge. In 1983 San Jose Rescue Mission became CityTeam Ministries. New ministries were initiated, additional staff enlisted, and facilities acquired, as over the next fifteen years CityTeam grew from the early humble beginnings with around fifteen staff on First and Julian Streets in San Jose, California, to the present 180 missionaries and staff in 6 U.S. cities and partners in 38 foreign countries.

Brief forays into church planting included starting several churches for refugees during the influx of Vietnamese and Cambodians into the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1985 the Church Advancement Team was established as a department of CityTeam with a mandate to help launch and grow churches targeting the poor and ethnic communities of San Jose. Although one church was trained and coached through growth from eighty-seven congregants to five hundred, the team disbanded within a few years as team members pursued other ministry. In 1994 another attempt at church planting was initiated in San Jose resulting in the establishment of New Generations Church, a cell model that grew in its first

five years to a congregation of about six hundred, almost all new converts from depressed communities.

Meanwhile CityTeam was also expanding its ministry into other U.S. cities, first Philadelphia then Jonesboro, Arkansas, Miami, El Paso, and with a merger with the Peniel Mission into Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle.

At the same time partnerships were being formed with organizations internationally. These relationships focused primarily on challenging partners to develop replicatable indigenous outreaches targeting the poor of the cities. In Cuba the focus was on encouraging local pastors to expand their ministries through the application of a cell church model, small groups of believers meeting mostly in homes, the groups splitting to form two cells when a specified number was reached. These churches literally exploded in growth within a few years rapidly expanding from a denomination of one thousand to ten thousand believers. CityTeam was abuzz with excitement as leaders attended numerous conferences and seminars on cell churches, house churches, and small groups and began to talk about a new vision for CityTeam Ministries. However, too entrenched in established means of ministry, bound by traditional models of church, and overwhelmed by current ministry demands, it became difficult for many to grasp this new vision for CityTeam. While there were occasional *sightings*, the new vision remained largely obscured on the horizon as more pressing issues and economic realities demanded attention.

But God continued to do His work, constantly bringing His vision before the CityTeam leaders. It couldn't be avoided. It couldn't be left behind. They could not escape.

Over time the leadership team had come to acknowledge that the ministry had done well at the first two parts of the mission, namely *servicing people in need* and *proclaiming the gospel*. However, it was also clear that CityTeam had not done well at the final objective of

establishing disciples. The leaders were driven back to a study of the Great Commission with the challenge to “. . . go and make disciples . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20.) Over the years attempts were made to recruit “foster parents” for those receiving Christ by connecting them with local churches. But in most cases the cultural gap between the addicted and poverty-stricken and the local church was just too great. Integration into local church fellowships was extremely limited.

One of the “ah-hah” moments came while considering the question of what should be the measurement of ministry success? As a leadership team we recognized that our criteria for success were much too limited. Ministry success typically had been measured by the number of meals served to the homeless, the number of salvation decisions, how many men graduated from sobriety programs, or the number of families receiving food boxes and other basic household necessities. Although discipleship was also a part of the process, particularly for those in the longer-term recovery programs, there was not a significant number of long-term committed disciples and there was virtually no replication beyond the program itself. It was a single generation ministry. This evaluation led to the determination that all ministry programs must be evaluated based on their potential to become self-sustaining and multigenerational. The inevitable conclusion was that the making of disciple-makers who replicate themselves and establish new communities of believers was most important. The replication DNA must be built in. This had not been the case to this point. A new ministry focus was clearly needed.

The culmination of all this introspection and self-evaluation came at a leadership retreat in 2003. Recognizing that “good is the enemy of great,”² the team began to consider what *good* needed to be let go of in order to be *great*. Collins calls it the Stockdale Paradox:

² Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001), 1.

“You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND *at the same time* have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”³ The hedgehog concept was borrowed from *Good to Great*. Quoting Isaiah Berlin who expounded on the ancient Greek parable about the hedgehog and the fox Collins says, “The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing.”⁴ The issue that Collins was dealing with is that the truly great companies had been able to discover the one thing at which they were capable of being the very best. Applying this parable as Christ’s followers led to the question, what do we as leaders believe God wants CityTeam to be the very best at for His glory? After considerable deliberation we wrote our hedgehog concept this way:

We can be the best at catalyzing self-replicating discipleship groups among the poor and disadvantaged.

This led to a discussion of a variation on CityTeam’s mission statement:

CityTeam Ministries exists to glorify God, **catalyzing self-replicating discipleship groups** by serving people in need, proclaiming the gospel, and establishing disciples among the disadvantaged people of cities.

There was considerable debate about whether the new line should say that the goals should be to catalyze self-replicating *discipleship groups* or *churches*. Alas, the idea of going mainstream with church planting was still a very big stretch. Some were concerned about competition with churches on which we depended for the majority of our support. But mostly the problem was with a faulty, or at best limited, definition and understanding of church.

³ Ibid., 13.

⁴ Ibid., 90.

By late 2003 the leadership team was intent on the new direction. Under the tutelage of David Watson⁵ they began to study church planting and Church Planting Movements. More and more the catalyzing of church planting movements became the vision for the future, convinced that was what God wanted CityTeam to be great at. In an executive planning session on January 21 and 22, 2004, a purpose statement and an overall objective were established that would give direction to the new vision of planting churches among the poor.

Purpose Statement: To catalyze self-replicating communities of Christ⁶ among the urban poor and their communities.

Overall Objective: To catalyze at least seventy-five church planting movements among the poor in the current fifteen established regions of influence within the next three to five years.⁷

Finally it was done. We had planted the flag. The new direction was set. Now the hard work was about to begin.

Second Stream: Founding of Horn of Africa Mission

Slowly emerging from a state of shock after the first few days of our first visit to Ethiopia in August 1996 my wife and I began to make an assessment of the surrounding environment. Extreme poverty was everywhere. Malnutrition was easily spotted in the bodies of thousands of suffering children. Hopelessness spread across the faces of many parents desperate for the tiniest bit of assistance for their families. Gradually the filth of rotting garbage, badly polluted air, and ever present animals faded into the background of our minds as the dignity and hospitality of the people captured our hearts. From shoe shine

⁵ David Watson is the founder and was president of Asian Partners Inc. He was a major player in the development of the whole concept of Church Planting Movements.

⁶ At this point alternate wording for *church* was still being used.

⁷ The “fifteen established areas of influence” means the areas/cities where CityTeam Ministries is currently involved.

boys living on the streets and struggling students desperate for a different future, to simple pastors and peasant farmers we quickly made many wonderful friends. By the end of the three week mission at the Hope orphanage we knew we would be coming back.

After the fifth annual mission to Ethiopia in 2000, it was clear that God had more than just these summertime visits to the Hope orphanage. By now many lifelong friends had been made who repeatedly asked us to come and be part of their vision to reach Ethiopia with the gospel and to meet the needs of a people struggling under seemingly impossible poverty. The greatest challenge was from the young pastors and evangelists.⁸ They were incredibly committed even to the point of a willingness to die in the course of taking the gospel into dangerous communities. What they wanted were training, strategic direction, and resources.

During 2000 I met a small group of Ethiopians in San Jose, California led by Markos Zemedede, a medical doctor who had immigrated to the United States from Ethiopia as a young person during the time of the Red Terror under the Marxist Derg regime. Along with other Ethiopians in the San Jose area, he had founded the Ethiopian Medhane Alem Church with a clear missions mandate to reach the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Within the first year this newly formed church was supporting seventeen missionaries⁹ in these two countries. It became obvious very soon that this new mission would outgrow the church, so in 2002 an independent ministry called The Horn of Africa Mission was formed with this mission statement:

The Horn of Africa Mission exists to establish viable, reproducible and culturally relevant churches in every people group of the Horn of Africa.

⁸ *Evangelist* is the term that is used in Ethiopia primarily to define one who is sent out by the local church to do evangelistic work in a new community. In the North American context the term “missionaries” would typically be used but in much of Africa that term, unfortunately, has been reserved primarily for white people coming to Africa from abroad.

⁹ These missionaries were all Ethiopian and Eritrea nationals.

The ministry of Horn of Africa Mission quickly expanded into Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and later into Tanzania and Sudan planting three hundred churches by early 2005. Near the end of that year CityTeam Ministries reassigned me to Addis Ababa to serve as the Africa Director for Horn of Africa Mission.

Third Stream: Doctoral Studies at Bakke Graduate University of Ministry

When I began my doctoral studies in the Church and Ministry Multiplication Specialization at Bakke Graduate University of Ministry, it quickly became clear that it was part of the revolution God was doing in my life and in the life of CityTeam Ministries. Although I had been involved with the start-up of a couple of churches, my ministry background was not in the mainstream of institutional church but in what is commonly referred to as the para-church movement. From the first course in Building Movements for Church Multiplication the church planting focus of this project began to emerge.

Studies at Bakke Graduate University, in the midst of adaptation to a new culture and ministry in East Africa and a major shift in ministry philosophy at CityTeam, helped to formalize my thinking, develop a new paradigm of church, and eventually articulate a new strategy for church multiplication. Other likeminded people contributed to the concepts and principles that were evolving in my experience and as I grappled with the arguments of the detractors a clearer vision and stronger passion for a new model of church and a rapid church multiplication process started to develop. I began to recognize the absolute criticality of developing transformational leaders, especially in order to chart a new course.

Thus the three streams came together in 2005 in East Africa. With a new ministry vision CityTeam had released me to move to Ethiopia and given me the mandate to seek to catalyze church multiplication in the seven countries of the Horn and East Africa. While supported by CityTeam Ministries I would serve as the Africa Director for Horn of Africa

Mission, with which by now I was deeply involved and which provided access to hundreds of leaders and church planters. My dissertation project at BGU began to take shape as a project to work with the church in East Africa to help catalyze a self-sustainable model of rapid church multiplication.

Goals

The project's intention was to work with the national and local leaders primarily of indigenous denominations and ministries to develop a culturally relevant model of church and a strategy for church multiplication that would result in the exponential replication of new churches so that whole communities would be transformed.

First Goal: Establish a Simple Form of Church

In many cases the existing model of church, bogged down with complex, usually foreign organizational structures, excessive extra-biblical requirements, and crippling external dependency, simply could not produce exponential growth. However, entrenched as it was an organizational and theological deconstruction had to precede the development of a new church model. The new model had to be easily reproducible within the context of the third world environment of East Africa's cities, towns, and villages.

Second Goal: Develop a Strategy of Rapid Church Multiplication

A second goal of the project was to work with the African church leaders to develop a strategy of church multiplication that would empower the indigenous church to replicate rapidly *by itself* throughout the entire region arresting the advance of Islam and bringing restoration and transformation to thousands of struggling communities. The strategy to be developed would have to be one that would mobilize the entire community of believers empowering workers *from the harvest* to be the revolutionaries that would catapult the church forward.

Third Goal: Develop Truly Transformational Leaders

The development of truly transformational leaders was an essential component of this project. Unless a new kind of leader emerged the multiplication strategy would not succeed. A process of mentoring and training transformational leaders and disciples of other leaders who would embrace a new paradigm of church and employ a new strategy for rapid church multiplication was necessary for the project's success.

Although churches in East Africa have had decades of sometimes dramatic growth, in many cases they have not been "salt and light" in effectively addressing the systemic ills of their society and transforming communities. Rather than engaging entrenched evil, all too often leaders of churches and ministries have completely isolated the church from the community. Where the church has abdicated its mandate to bring the Kingdom of God into the communities of need, the society has continued to spiral hopelessly downward.

Thus the development of transformational leadership had to be a fundamental goal of this project. African leadership in the church must be freed from the bondages of outside control and influence and be empowered to determine the appropriate relevant model of church and church expansion in their cultural context. Too many African leaders today are constrained by their struggle to emulate the pattern set by the missionary; and thus, they perpetuate a foreign model of church that is not easily reproducible in their cultural environment. Hierarchical patterns of leadership, reinforced by decades of white missionary dominance, have left much of the church disempowered without motivation or opportunity to be agents of transformation in their communities. Inherent in this project had to be the discovery and engagement of a new kind of African leadership in the church, one that throws off the strictures of outside dominance and dependence, and recognizes that the hope for the future of Africa and the African church is within Africa, within the harvest. It is the

people of God who make up the community of believers that are the hope for the transformation of the communities to which they belong.

Summary

This project to develop a model for rapid church multiplication in East Africa grew out of a *Godly discontent*. African church leaders were looking for a new way to grow the church. Although the church was expanding, in some areas ground was being lost to Islam, and the church was not even keeping pace with the general population growth. A change, some would say a complete revolution in the way of *doing* church and growing the church, was desperately needed. At the same time, leaders at CityTeam were discontent. After many years of wonderful ministry they were seeking more; a more sustainable ministry model that would raise up and disciple leaders from the harvest who would carry forward the Kingdom vision establishing transformational communities of believers throughout the nations. Establishing such a model of ministry certainly would mean a revolution within CityTeam. It was within this soil of discontent that this project was launched to develop transformational leaders who would discover and implement a self-sustainable model of rapid church multiplication that would spread like wild-fire throughout the region.

CHAPTER 2

LAUNCHING THE REVOLUTION

Having begun to understand where God was leading and what He was calling the project leadership team to do, it was now necessary to turn to the hard work of moving the project forward. It was necessary to understand the specific context in which the project was to be applied and to learn what others were saying and writing about that would help to inform the successful development of the project. Careful selection of participants was critical particularly leaders who were passionate about the church, open to revolutionary thinking, enthusiastic about charting a new course without fear of challenging the status quo, and eager for the rapid multiplication of churches in their countries. Finally, developing and monitoring progress involved constant assessment, evaluation, modification, and re-direction. Eventually a model emerged that today is flourishing as thousands of new churches are being planted throughout East Africa.

Assessment of the Context

Long referred to as the *Dark Continent*, much of Africa has for centuries languished hopelessly in the recurring trauma of horrific wars, devastating poverty, crippling disease, brutal dictatorships, and enslaving spiritual darkness. Senseless local and national conflicts repeatedly drain the economic and social life from struggling communities. Extreme poverty is pervasive. Applying nearly any measurement, the nations of Sub-Saharan Africa have among the lowest standard of living of any major region of the world. Even before the AIDS pandemic, this region had the highest death rates in childbirth and the lowest life

expectancy where most premature deaths are caused by preventable or curable diseases. In recent years, country after country has suffered under the iron grip of brutal tyrants, who have brought death and destruction to fledgling nations still struggling to emerge from the crippling bondage of colonialism.

Unfortunately, it has not only been the socio-economic-political problems that have plagued Africa. In spite of a significant growth in the number of Christian believers much of the continent has experienced a great spiritual darkness as well.

The Christian church has existed in parts of East Africa for centuries. Some of the roots of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are thought to reach back to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and even to King Solomon and Queen Candice of Sheba. A dynamic Christian Kingdom dominated a part of Northern Sudan for a thousand years from the sixth to the fifteenth century. During the last century missionaries from the West came establishing mission outposts in many places throughout this region providing schools, hospitals, and in some cases new political structures.

Unfortunately Islam has also been making inroads. Openly declaring Africa to be its prime target for expansion, Islam is exploding across the continent as Arab countries pour billions of dollars into the region. Nowhere is that impact felt more powerfully than in the Horn and East Africa – on the fault line of the Christian/Islam conflict.

For too long many have thought that the West carried the answer to the systemic problems wreaking havoc in Africa. The solution was thought to be more international aid, more missionaries, and more Western management and control. This project will affirm, however, that the source of Africa's hope is not outside Africa. It is not a continued crippling addiction to the infusion of outside resources. It is not a suppression of local leadership in favor of the more educated and better resourced outside leaders. The hope of

Africa will not come from the outside, it will come from within. *The Hope of Africa is in the Harvest!*

The region covered by the project includes the seven countries that lie on the easternmost part of Africa (see Fig. 1). The Horn, aptly named because it resembles a rhinoceros horn juts into the Bay of Aden with the tip of the Horn being only a few miles from the south coast of the Arabian peninsula, wherein are located Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, and Oman.



Fig. 1. Map of East Africa

Much of the region is made up of pastoralists, although the cities are crowded with people looking for a better life than the arid weather dependent life of the harsh rural landscape.

With 77 million people Ethiopia has the largest population of the region, the second largest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Orthodox Christians make up 43.5 percent of the population, Muslims 33.9 percent, and Protestant Christians 18.6 percent.¹ A 2005 survey by the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, which this project helped to sponsor, placed the number of evangelical congregations at 29,805² with a total church membership of 10,446,017. For the evangelical leaders, one of the most startling findings of the study was the future plans of the existing churches. The combined goals of all denominations and churches for the establishment of new congregations over the coming five years (2006-

¹ Capital Newspaper, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (December 7, 2008), 1.

² Because of varying denominational criteria some of these congregations are listed as “fellowships.”

2010) was 4,225 churches, a number that even with high average church size would not keep pace with population growth.³

Sudan's forty million⁴ people are currently locked in a north-south struggle that may be as much about religion as it is about economics and ethnicity. The largely "Christian" South is to determine at the end of a six year referendum in 2011 if it will remain with the predominantly Muslim North or form a separate country. Although the northern Nubian Kingdom was Christian in the eighth century, with the invasion of Islam beginning as early as 642, the country began a slow transition with Islam today claiming 75 percent of the more populous North. No reliable research has been done on the number of Christians or Christian churches but most estimates place the Christian population between 4 and 10 percent, comprised primarily of the majority of South Sudan's six million people.

Experiencing the influence of Christianity from the days of David Livingstone the 39.3 million people⁵ of the mainland of Tanzania are 45 percent Christian, 34 percent Muslim, 20 percent indigenous beliefs, and 1 percent other.⁶ Historically the center of the Arab slave trade, Zanzibar has one million people of whom 99 percent are Muslim. Several groups are trying to make inroads with the gospel, but the number of Protestant churches on the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba are likely still in the single digits.

³ Lemma Degefa, *A Research Project on the state of the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE), May 2005).

⁴ U.S. Library of Congress. *Country Studies*. The latest official census was done in 1983. Estimates place the current population at about forty million.

⁵ "U.S. Department of State: Background Notes." [Http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2843.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2843.htm). Accessed September 15, 2008.

⁶ *Dar es Salaam Church Planting Congress Handbook* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Remaining Task Mission, 2003), 11.

Djibouti's population of 650,000 is comprised primarily of Somalis and Afar people; 94 percent are Muslim and 6 percent Christian.⁷ Largely dependent as a shipping gateway for Ethiopia, this tiny coastal state experiences extreme poverty with unemployment currently at 60 percent.⁸ The few Christians are primarily in the Ethiopian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches with a very small number in Protestant churches that are largely restricted through state control.

The 3.6 million people (est. 2004) of Eritrea have lived in a state of war, primarily with Ethiopia, for the past several years. Politically a secular state, religion of all kinds is barely tolerated in the struggling country. Half the population is Christian most of them sharing their Orthodox tradition with Ethiopia. Muslims comprise 48 percent and indigenous beliefs 2 percent of the population.⁹ Persecution of people of faith, particularly Protestant Christian believers is high in the tightly government controlled country. Many Christian leaders have spent long terms in prison.

The most Christian of the East African countries, Kenya's 37.9 million (est. 2007) people are 80 percent Christian, 10 percent Muslim, 9 percent indigenous beliefs, and 1 percent Jewish.¹⁰ Although suffering severe trauma in the aftermath of the 2008 election, Kenya is considered to be the most stable and progressive of the seven countries involved in this project. The Christian church, however, still struggles to shed the strictures of the traditional colonial church and has not experienced significant transformation of many

⁷ "U.S. Department of State: Background Notes." [Http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5482.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5482.htm). Accessed September 15, 2008.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "U.S. Department of State: Background Notes." [Http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm). Accessed September 15, 2008.

¹⁰ "U.S. Department of State: Background Notes." [Http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2962.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2962.htm). Accessed September 15, 2008.

particularly rural communities. With some of the world's largest slums, the burgeoning city of Nairobi is on a desperate drive to become a world-class city. Along with thousands of rural communities, transformation is urgently needed in Nairobi.

Making it an almost totally Islamic state, 99.9 percent of Somalia's almost nine million inhabitants are Muslims.¹¹ With no effectively functioning national government in the country since 1991, the people of Somalia live in some of the world's poorest and most chaotic situations. Ethiopia's recent invasion, in an attempt to bring the extremely weak transitional government into operational power, has ended badly with the country slipping back into a near state of anarchy as warlords battle internally for control of various regions. Millions are currently displaced and living in the harsh conditions that lead to considerable loss of life. Only the northern state of Somaliland continues with some semblance of structure and government control, and some Christian church planting activity is taking place here. Attempts to establish churches in the southern part of the country, including Mogadishu, have met with extreme opposition. Several Christian groups are attempting to provide various types of humanitarian aid to this poverty-stricken country, but few evangelical churches are known to exist.

Literature Review

In addition to assessing the context of the project, there was also a limited amount of research done into the available literature that would inform the project's objectives as they eventually evolved, namely establishing a simple model of church, developing a strategy for rapid church multiplication, and developing truly transformational leaders. This section will highlight the prevailing themes present in the literature that was reviewed. These themes,

¹¹ "U.S. Department of State: Background Notes." [Http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2863.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2863.htm). Accessed September 15, 2008. This is a 2006 estimate. No official census exists.

often repeated throughout the literature, significantly impacted the thinking of the project's implementers creating whole new paradigms, particularly in understanding the nature and mission of the church and in forming a new perspective on transformational leadership. Many of the principles of the church planting implemented in this project flowed from these new paradigms, although included in the study was a small amount of literature in terms of practical application of church planting methodology.

Revolution

One of the strong themes in much of the literature reviewed for this project is that of the need for a complete *revolution* of the contemporary church. The clear perspective of these writers is that over the past two millennia the church has lost its way and nothing short of a radical transformation will bring it back to its roots and to the place where God wants it to be. The term *revolution* appears frequently throughout much of the recent literature on the church suggesting that *evolution* or simple adjustment will not do. A total and comprehensive change is needed. Some boldly suggest that while Martin Luther's Reformation fundamentally changed the theology of the church, a *new* reformation is needed today to radically change the nature and practice of today's church.

Many of the book titles alone emphasize this point; *Revolution* by George Barna, *The Second Reformation* by William A. Beckham, *Liberating the Church* by Howard A. Snyder, *Revolution in Leadership* by Reggie McNeal, *Rethinking the Wineskins* by Frank Viola, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* by Darrell L. Guder, and *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* by Eddie Gibbs to name a few. Throughout much of the literature this need for revolutionary change in the nature and practice of the church is defined in a variety of ways. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch call for

a *re*-orientation, *re*-activation, *recalibration*, and *rebuilding* of the church. Robert and Julia Banks, Brian McLaren, and Wolfgang Simson express the need for the church's *re*-invention; Craig Van Gelder and Wolfgang Simson describe it as *re*-discovery, *re*-incarnation, *reformation*, and *reconstruction*; Frank Viola and Charles Van Engen challenge a *rethinking* of the church as it is today, and George Barna and Gene Edwards confront the need for a complete *revolution*.

Missional Church

Perhaps the most powerful theme flowing through the literature reviewed for this project is that of the missional nature of the church. One of the leading voices is Darrell L. Guder, project coordinator and editor of *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.¹² He gathered together key thinkers on this subject of the missional nature of the church producing this outstanding volume which includes chapters by Lois Barrett, Inagrace T. Dietterich, George R. Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder.

God is a missionary God. A Christocentric understanding of *God with a mission* (*Missio Dei*), sending Jesus with His message to the world, sets the stage for the nature of the church that followed as a sent people, God's missionary people,¹³ a community of witnesses,¹⁴ God's continuing messenger to the world. Mission in this sense is not a function of the church but the essential nature of the church.¹⁵ This missional nature of the church is

¹² Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998).

¹³ Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People. Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991).

¹⁴ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000).

¹⁵ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

in contrast to what many would consider the nature of much of the contemporary church, a consumer church rather than a *people sent*. This consumer Christianity looks for the benefits: “what’s in it for me?” or, “where do I go to get blessed?” rather than considering the witness of the church a priority function. Too many churches, particularly in the West, depend largely on marketing techniques to invite people into the four walls of the church rather than using a missional strategy of the gospel being lived out in the various communities of secular culture through the infiltration of missional Christians. Frost and Hirsch define this Christian living within the secular culture as the incarnational form rather than the attractational form of church.¹⁶ Under the theme of the church in the post-modern world, authors like Brian McLaren,¹⁷ and Eddie Gibbs,¹⁸ are speaking out strongly against the isolationist model of church that has emerged as the church struggles to protect its eroding privileged position in society. The resulting segregation from everything secular has fostered among Christians a sub-culture of alternatives – Christian schools, Christian bookstores, Christian music labels, Christian TV, even some Christian businesses, so that Christians will not become tainted by being in the world. However, the problem is that for many these alternatives have led many believers to the attempt to completely separate from the world, from society, even from community and sometimes from family. These Christians are no longer “*in the world.*” No contact means no contamination, but no

¹⁶ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come. Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).

¹⁷ Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, 2000).

¹⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

contact also means loss of influence. The church rather is to be missional, the salt and light, taking the gospel witness into the community of need.

Although it may be true that much of the contemporary church in the West and around the world has largely lost its missional roots, some writers are arguing strongly that the missional nature of the church is nonetheless part of the church's DNA; Hirsch and Frost call it a *latent built in tendency* that needs to be recovered.¹⁹ Witness to the world and inviting others into its community is what the church will do naturally if barriers are removed and the people are disciplined to be obedient followers of Jesus according to writers like Christian A. Schwarz in *Natural Church Development*. And almost a hundred years ago Roland Allen wrote about this natural bent of the church toward mission, expressing it as the *spontaneous* expansion of the church when it is released from man-made controls and empowered to be the witness to the world around it that it was intended to be.²⁰ Frank Viola insists that churches will grow and replicate as God designed them to when the *pagan* nature of the contemporary church practices is removed.²¹

Church as Spiritual Community

Another of the common themes in much of the literature reviewed relates to the nature of the church as spiritual community. Although community-togetherness is a well-known and widely practiced part of African culture, when it comes to the church, much of this culture is set aside as the Western institutional and highly structured form of church is adopted. Thus the voices calling for a new understanding of church as spiritual community while generally focused on the Western church are relevant for Africa as well.

¹⁹ Frost and Hirsh, ix.

²⁰ Rolland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962).

²¹ Frank Viola, *Pagan Christianity* (Present Testimony Ministry, 2002).

Most writers on this theme focus on Jesus and Paul. Spiritual community is clearly illustrated in the *one-anothers* of the New Testament writings. Although there is a heavenly dimension to the concept of spiritual community the *one-anothers* directly impact the normal everyday relationships between the believers of the new churches. Throughout the New Testament, particularly in Paul's writings, several metaphors strongly demonstrate the relational, community, and family nature of the church; the church as a body, the church as a family, the church as the bride of Christ. First century churches generally began in family households, later expanding to include a broader community.

Using Paul as primary biblical source, Robert Banks²² is one of several voices on the subject of this unique nature of the church, suggesting that spiritual community is about unity in the midst of diversity, in contrast to the distinctions along national, social, and gender lines common in New Testament times. Women were treated as equal members in this community of believers. The distinctions of priest and layperson, highly demonstrated in his day, Paul completely eliminated from his communities. Rank was also not to be a means of distinction, Paul even referring to himself often as servant or slave. Officials did not retain greater authority; the responsibility for the organization, welfare, discipline, and growth of the community was the responsibility of all members of the community. While tasks in the community were recognized, no titles, ordination, or formal positions could be found in Paul's communities. Even Paul does not exercise authority over the communities, choosing instead to move quickly away allowing local leadership to emerge.

This kind of spiritual community which diminishes issues of rank, position, academic education, centralized authority, complex organizational structures, and extensive

²² Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 1994).

programs is also a significant theme of Roland Allen,²³ writing in the early part of the twentieth century. His was a lone voice in that day, but these themes are now being raised again by many contemporary missiological writers.

According to many of the writers on the subject of the contemporary church, this spiritual community nature is another of the concepts of church largely lost today. They point out how for many people church has instead become a theological concept, mystical and heavenly, but largely removed from the day to day life of the people. Some see the church only in organizational and institutional forms. For others it is essentially a place where one practices a once-a-week religious ritual that carries little meaning beyond the building's four walls instead of the gathering together of a changed people whose mission it is to transform their world. Gene Edwards sums up this genre of literature well; "If you put the Christian faith in a building, cover it with ritual, employ a clergy, take away the informality, outlaw the spontaneity, and end the functioning, *you cease having the ekklesia.*"²⁴ Frank Viola voices perhaps the strongest challenge asserting that the Church, needs to completely transform the *wineskin*, the church, from an organizational institution to a relational community unflinchingly declaring that today's institutional form of church has no basis for existence according to the New Testament.²⁵

Simple Church

The concept of a more simple form of church also runs through much of the literature reviewed. Many are the voices now calling for a rejection of the institutional style

²³ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London: World Dominion Press, 1930), and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*.

²⁴ Gene Edwards, *How to Meet in Homes* (Jacksonville: SeedSowers Publishing, 1999).

²⁵ Frank Viola, *Rethinking the Wineskin; The Practice of the New Testament Church* (Present Testimony Ministry, 2001), and *Pagan Christianity: The Origins of our Modern Church Practices*.

that the church has become with its multifaceted programs, complex systems, and sophisticated structures. Robert and Julia Banks, Gene Edwards, and Frank Viola are key voices in the clarion call for a simpler model of church. When the church meets, these and others say, it should be in the simple setting of the home without elaborate buildings, formal programs, or highly trained, paid clergy. In this simpler church every believer is a minister. Without the encumbrance of expensive facilities, costly operations, and compensated staff, the simple church will function with the people as witnesses in the natural environment of their daily life rather than through the elaborate techniques and expensive programs designed to draw people into the church building and retain their interest as spectators with the best offerings in town. Some writers even go further saying that many of the complex elements that have been built into the current typical form church are in fact barriers to the spiritual health and reproduction of the church. These obstacles must be removed, they declare if the church is to regain its missional nature and be all that God intended it to be.

Much of the literature on this model of simple church speaks primarily to the West, although there are significant applications to much of the world to which the Western form of church has been exported. Many, like Eddie Gibbs,²⁶ are challenging today's complex form of church because the current generation is disillusioned with most everything institutional especially religion. As they search for spiritual answers to the chaos and uncertainty that characterize their lives and culture, they are not looking to the modern institutional church with its easy answers and pervasive technology to meet their needs. Rather they are looking for a spiritual experience through the simple authentic relationship with real people in the discourse of everyday life.

²⁶ Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*.

House Church

Closely related to the theme of simple church but with a more singular focus is the idea of house church. The emergence in recent years of cell churches and house churches has spanned a whole genre of literature on the subject as well as created networks, organizations, websites, and de facto denominations in addition to holding conferences, symposiums, and consultations in some way directly related to what is often called the house church movement.

The literature reviewed for this project included some that declared the house church to be a reflection of the New Testament model and the only way to authentic spiritual community,²⁷ while others assert that the house church is the only effective means for rapid multiplication of the church²⁸ or the only way to reach the urban centers.²⁹

Another perspective on the church in the home is offered by writers like Frank Viola³⁰ who declares that the very idea of church buildings is a pagan one and reflects a departure from the essence of church as the community of believers.

Culturally Relevant Church

Another theme in the literature that was reviewed for this project related to the cultural adaptation of the church. This theme comes through much of the writing on the postmodernism, of which Brian McLaren, Eddie Gibbs, Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, and

²⁷ Robert Banks and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), and Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*.

²⁸ Simson, *Houses That Change the World: The Return of the House Churches*.

²⁹ Harvie M. Conn, ed., *Reproducing House Churches: An Autobiographical Pilgrimage in Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 222.
D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee: Francis Asbury Press, 1997).

³⁰ Viola, *Pagan Christianity*.

Robert Webber³¹ among others are key thinkers and writers. Arguing for looking ahead rather than trying to capture the Christianity (*churchianity*) of modernity's past, the challenge is to assess the culture and determine how church should be expressed within that culture. It declares that the church today, especially in the West, is essentially irrelevant since it does not speak to the culture of the post-modernist. A generation earlier Donald McGavran expressed the same view saying that "people should not be required to cross racial, linguistic or class barriers in order to become Christians."³² While he was speaking primarily of cross-cultural church planting in other parts of the world, the more contemporary proponents of this cultural adaptation are applying the same missiological principle to the post-modern generation in the West. Eddie Gibbs³³ speaks to the danger of our Christian cultural blinders hindering the cultural adaptation necessary to reach this new age.

*China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*³⁴ is one of the works that addresses the issue of cultural adaptation from primarily a sociological rather than a religious perspective, but makes a significant contribution to this subject. This collection of papers presented at the International Conference of Reflections for the New Millennium held in San Francisco in October 1999 includes discussion about the advantages of Buddhism's "spontaneous diffusion" as compared to Christianity's "guided propagation." One other interesting study in this collection was that of

³¹ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*. Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America* (Loveland: Group Publishing, 2001). Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

³² Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, ed. C. Peter Wagner, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 163.

³³ Gibbs. *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*.

³⁴ Stephen Uhalley Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu, ed., *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk: Sharpe, Inc., 2001).

“social embedding.” Some early Christian communities in China were organized around families rather than parishes. These communities were patterned on Confucian or Buddhist models and reflected a cultural adaptation to the Chinese way of social organization.

Rapid Church Multiplication

More and more literature is becoming available on the theme of church multiplication. Dr. Steve Ogne’s three-course series on this subject at Bakke Graduate University’s School of Ministry with their accompanying course manuals, provides a good overview of this subject. In 2004, David Garrison published *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*. His research project was designed to “reverse engineer” a phenomenon being called church planting movements that was being seen in a few parts of the world. It “discovered” ten elements in *every* church planting movement, ten additional elements in *most* church planting movements, and seven deadly sins [barriers] for church planting movements. These themes are repeated in several other publications that were part of this review. Again Roland Allen was way ahead of his time in the 1930s with his thesis that the church is made for multiplication and it is man-made controls that often inhibit church replication.³⁵ Wolfgang Simson joins the chorus of those eager for a rapid replication of churches in *Houses That Change the World: The Return of the House Churches*.

Nothing short of the very presence of the living Christ in every neighbourhood and village of every corner of the nation will do. He has come to live amongst us – to stay on. We therefore need to initiate and promote church-planting movements that initiate and promote other church-planting movements, until there is no space left for anyone to misunderstand, ignore or even escape the presence of Jesus in the form that He has chosen to take on earth – the local church.³⁶

³⁵ Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*.

³⁶ Simson, *Houses That Change the World*, xxvii.

Transformational Leadership

A final recurring theme in the literature reviewed for this project was that of transformational leadership. Indeed this literature along with other influences turned the primary focus of the entire project toward leadership development.

Many are the voices now calling for a new genre of leaders; Eddie Gibbs calls them “new paradigm leaders.” These leaders, oriented toward fathering spiritual sons and daughters,³⁷ follow Jesus’ model of accountability through relational discipleship rather than climbing the bureaucratic hierarchical pyramid of control through positional authority and the chain of command of bishops, pastors, and directors. David Bosch³⁸ is another of the voices calling for a leadership through discipleship. For him discipleship is not about what happens in the classroom or even in the church but in the crucible of everyday life in the world as the leader is in relationship with Jesus and demonstrates this life-directing relationship to those who are being developed as the next generation of leaders.

Rather than capturing power, these new leaders give power away. Unconcerned about protecting their own position or status, they recognize that the key to transformation is the empowerment of others. Even from a secular business perspective, although not frequently evident, this quality of leadership is being recognized. Jim Collins³⁹ discovered in his study of highly effective organizations that dominant charismatic leaders are in fact one of the greatest *hindrances* to an organization becoming great. With John Whitmore⁴⁰ and many others he believes that coaching is a far more effective means of leading people than

³⁷ Larry Kreider, *The Cry for Spiritual Fathers and Mothers* (Ephrata: House to House Publications, 2000).

³⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

³⁹ Collins, *Good to Great*.

⁴⁰ John Witmore, *Coaching for Performance* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1996).

command and control. The tape series *Empowering Leaders through Coaching*⁴¹ takes up the same theme with practical steps for raising up successful leaders. This entire genre of literature postulates a style of leadership development much more like that of Jesus and Paul. Through a quiet discipleship process, spending time together in the course of everyday life, Jesus taught a few simple ordinary men to be the kind of transformational leaders who literally turned the world upside down. Paul took young men like Timothy and Titus into his sphere of influence and taught them to become exceptional leaders.

Interestingly, in spite of an overwhelming amount of resources available for the training of leaders, the number of truly transformational leaders seems totally inadequate to meet the challenges of the day. This shortage of leadership is a dilemma that several authors have tried to address with respect to the church. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, and Reggie McNeal⁴² have joined C. Peter Wagner and David Cannistraci and others in developing the concept of the new *apostolic* leader. Apostolic leadership has to do with moral authority exercised through relational influence and personal service rather than through hierarchical position and organizational control. This kind of leadership results in the expansion of the church. In fact, Hirsch even claims that unless this apostolic leadership is in place there will be no significant missional expansion. Eddie Gibbs⁴³ discusses this type of leadership around the concept of apostolic networks.

Throughout all of the writings of these authors and others on this genre of leadership literature, the message is clear; a new kind of leader is needed today. Some make this claim

⁴¹ Steve Ogne and Thomas P. Nebel, *Empowering Leaders Through Coaching* (Carol Stream: Church Smart Resources).

⁴² Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids: BrazoPress, 2006). Reggie McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow's Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

⁴³ Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, 151.

because the past type of leadership has become corrupted and has departed from the biblical design. Others identify the need for a new kind of leader because the culture has changed demanding that leaders function differently in the postmodern world. Whatever the reason, all agree that leadership matters, and leadership style matters. Without this new kind of leader there will be no rapid church multiplication.

Network Partners

Understanding the context in which this project was to be launched and being challenged by the broad spectrum of literature reviewed, it was clear that the selection of partners to participate in the project was of critical importance. This project was blessed with a multitude of eager participants. Some were early adopters; others took time to study the success of the project's strategy before becoming fully engaged. Some were seasoned ministry workers; many were new workers from the harvest.

In the primary three years of the project from late 2005 until the end of 2008, participants included over 1,000 church planters, 76 coordinator/trainers, 131 indigenous organizational partners (denominations, churches, organizations), 4 national level leadership teams (Tanzania, Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia⁴⁴), and 2 international organizations. Numerous foundations, churches, businesses, and individuals in the U.S., Canada, and Europe provided financial support.

Church Planters

By the end of 2008, the majority of the more than one thousand church planters⁴⁵ were self-supported. Along with about three hundred church planters who received

⁴⁴ The Ethiopian Leadership Team took responsibility for project implementation in Djibouti and Somalia. Early in the life of the project (October 2006) the Eritrea team was imprisoned and therefore was unable to participate significantly in the overall project.

⁴⁵ It is impossible to provide an accurate number of church planters. While the project attempts to track the growth of the movement, frequently new churches are discovered that have a direct link to one of the church

approximately fifty dollars per month in support, these dedicated and extremely diligent men and women courageously plotted a new course and set a new standard for church multiplication in East Africa. They became the true revolutionaries in this project. For some it meant sacrificing the security of the traditional institutional relationships to engage in a whole new way of *doing* church and to initiate a new strategy for rapid multi-generational multiplication of new churches. For others it meant expecting persecution from an opposing religious community intent on defeating their efforts by burning property, attacking families, imprisoning leaders, and destroying means of livelihood. A few had years of experience in traditional church planting but were willing to bravely adopt a new paradigm and join the growing group of revolutionaries. Others brand new in their faith planted their first new church within the first three months as a believer. For them it just seemed like the natural thing to do. Some remained within the cultural context of their Muslim background as secret witnesses of the gospel bringing many fellow Muslims into the fellowship of a group of Jesus-followers. They came to believe that in the New Testament definition even these groups of Jesus-followers were really churches. Still others served diligently with an eagerness to bring renewal to their religious community by forming fellowships, often of significant size, of obedient followers of Jesus within the context and structure of their beloved Orthodox Church.

Coordinator/Trainers

The church planters are networked together through an informal structure of regional coordinator/trainers, currently seventy-six throughout the seven-country region.

Coordinator/trainers represent or are employed by various organizations, churches, or denominations, or they support themselves and serve voluntarily as coordinators for the

planters in the network. Of course, this “out of control” church planting is precisely what the movement is

project. In most cases they meet together quarterly on a nationwide basis for one week of ongoing training, fellowship, and reporting. Having planted several self-replicating churches themselves, these coordinators who continue to plant churches become the mentors and trainers of the church planters within their geographic region. Their role is to provide a series of cascading levels of training to the churches and emerging leaders in the region. Local church planters within the region are brought together periodically for three to five days of training, but the real focus is a discipleship mentoring style of on-the-job training through the relationship of the coordinator with the church planters. The project has attempted to provide motorcycles to these coordinator/trainers, especially those covering a very wide geographic area perhaps representing a whole people group and requiring extensive travel. In many regions some still travel to parts of their areas by ox-cart “taxis.” Some coordinator/trainers have now developed a next level of trainers in their regions following the principle of replication that runs throughout this church planting strategy. Some coordinators must conduct their training and mentoring of the church planters within their region clandestinely and at significant risk; for example, one coordinator of about forty church planters is also the Sheikh of the local mosque.

Partner Organizations

At the outset of the project it was decided that it was not desirable to establish a new organization or a branch of an international organization in the target region of East Africa. Instead, the plan was to minimize structure while not becoming a project that only provided training absent from accountability for implementation. Accountability, on the other hand, was to be through cascading levels of relationship, not through organizational control. Leaders would be taught that transformational leadership was primarily about life-to-life

about.

influence, not organizational power and management. Revolution had to be an ethos, not a structured set of policies, procedures, and job descriptions.

It was also determined that the nature of the primary objective - church replication on a large scale - would require the participation of many people and organizations with varied backgrounds, experiences, and connections. These became the critical partners that chose to be informally networked together to implement the project of rapid church multiplication through their existing structures. Few partnership documents exist as groups and individuals simply choose to be connected through mutually beneficial relationships. Among the 131 partners are local churches, denominational organizations at a local or a national level, and non-government organizations (NGO's) involved in a variety of humanitarian aid and social work such as education, medicine, water development, and food distribution.

Lead Country Partner

In each country a lead partner emerged, and ongoing activity was structured around the relationship with these national leaders. All other partner relationships were between this lead country partner and local partners in the country. Ten to twelve national leaders representing the lead partner organizations gathered together bi-annually, usually in Nairobi, to discuss strategy, set goals, and share best practices.

International Partners

CityTeam Ministries through its international division now called NewGenerations International and Horn of Africa Mission were key catalysts to the launch of this project. The story of both organizations is fully described in the introduction to this dissertation. Now merged together, the goal is to continue to support the rapid church multiplication

project in East Africa through assistance with strategy development, training, and strategic financial support. NewGenerations International is sharing the story of this East Africa project in an effort to challenge similar movements in other parts of the world.

Financial Support Partners

Finally, the list of stakeholders in this project must include the foundations, churches, businesses, and individuals who provided the funding to develop the partner networks, training systems, and curricula that now support the growing movement. Total funding over the primary phase of the project from 2005 through 2008 was approximately one million dollars. A total of four thousand one hundred new churches emerged during this phase, bringing the average cost to the project to launch a new church to just over \$244.

Project Implementation

With an understanding of the context, a review of applicable literature, and the emergence of strong national level partnerships, the process of implementation of the project began in earnest. The first step was to work with the national partners to develop and articulate a specific strategy for rapid church multiplication. The next step in the process was to provide extensive training on the new strategy throughout the region, both at the national and local levels. As components of the strategy were tested and confirmed by local church planters and coordinator/trainers, curricula were developed out of the interaction with these field practitioners, along with others on an international level. Determining the strategic use of available funding was a critical step, as sustainability of the ministry beyond the life of the project was considered to be very important. Monitoring and evaluation were key to the strengthening of the strategy as mid-course corrections needed to be made.

Strategy Development

The first step in the process of developing the strategy was to conduct a series of Church Planting Workshops for the new partners in their countries. Participants were primarily grassroots church planters and mission workers, but also included national church and organizational leaders, mission trainers, pastors, evangelists, theological college students, and other believers. Most workshops were five days in duration and included formal presentations on various aspects of church planting, small group discussions and feedback, prayer times, and interactive role-playing on various church planting themes and scenarios. Through the process of these workshops the strategy began to emerge and participants, many who had struggled for years with the challenge of planting new churches were inspired and left enthusiastic about implementing a new strategy of planting churches in their areas. A few were never heard from again, but many became part of the network that now numbers approximately a thousand church planters and 131 partner churches, denominations and organizations.

Early on in the process it was discovered that one of the critical tasks in establishing a new strategy for church planting was what came to refer to as a de-construction of theology relating to the church and traditional methodology of church planting. Small group discussions were held in each workshop around the question of “What are the current barriers or obstacles to the proclamation of the Christian gospel and to the planting of churches in your community?” Almost always the obstacles first listed were external, but as discussion continued most groups eventually developed a list that included more internal than external barriers. While some participants were tentative at first, reluctant to be at variance with the current mindset of their church or denomination, others were ready to explore new ways because they felt strongly that the current reality was not able to produce the results they were eager to achieve. The following, typical of most workshops, is a

composite list from the small groups that met in these workshops of the internal barriers to church planting.

1. Poor lifestyle testimony of the believers.
2. Conflict between denominations and church leaders and among believers.
3. Using of unfamiliar religious or Christian terminology.
4. Excessive shouting - in prayer, preaching and in casting out evil spirits.
5. Ethnocentrism among the believers
6. Manner of dress - foreign (e.g. suit and tie) or immodest to the host culture.
7. Believers' isolation from the social life of the community.
8. Disrespectful attitude toward beliefs and practices of other religions.
9. Foreign nature of most meeting places (church buildings).
10. Confrontational approach in witnessing.
11. Worship style – very loud music, raising hands, bowing, shouting, muttering, formal program, foreign musical instruments, speaking in tongues, etc.
12. Disrespectful treatment of the Bible (holding carelessly, hitting, waving).
13. Greetings within the church which are foreign to the community.
14. Titles of leaders - bishop, pastor, evangelist, etc.
15. Formal membership.
16. “Christian” marriage customs (primarily adopted from the West).

Another component that quickly became part of the new church planting ethos was the process of establishing goals. If they set goals at all, most partners had been accustomed to choosing a somewhat arbitrary percentage increase over prior years. Ten percent growth in number of new churches in a denomination or network was typical, although those goals were seldom met. In formulating a new strategy for rapid church multiplication, part of the driving motivation was the realization that the number of non-believers was escalating each year because population growth was rapidly outpacing the increase in the number of new Christians. Rather than focusing on incremental growth, the network of partners began to look at the number of new churches needed to saturate their countries with the gospel and bring transformation at a national level. The goal became to have a worshipping community within walking distance of each person. The formula of one church for every one thousand people became the target. As such the number of churches needed in a country to achieve this level of saturation became the overarching goal. In Ethiopia, for example, the

population in 2006 was estimated to be seventy million. At the time about thirty-thousand Christian churches⁴⁶ existed throughout the country. At one church for every thousand people, the existing churches would cover a population of thirty million. To reach the remaining forty million would require an additional forty thousand churches. Such staggering numbers, similar in each of the countries addressed by the project, led country leaders to search diligently for a new ministry strategy of rapid church multiplication.

Driven by a new understanding of this enormous challenge, many in the network began to seriously address the question of what it would take to get the job done. It was immediately clear that business-as-usual would not lead to the desired results. A re-definition of church and a new understanding of the profile of the church planter quickly emerged and became a necessary component of a new multi-generational church multiplication strategy. The characteristics of the church and church planter that emerged from these strategy-development events are discussed at some length in Part Two of this dissertation.

Armed with a new understanding of the church and the characteristics and role of the church planter, the key participants then began to develop a whole new strategy of church planting for their regions. No longer content with the incremental percentage growth, they were looking to implement a strategy that would result in exponential increase in the number of new churches throughout their entire countries. Much of the new strategy that subsequently emerged was in fact dramatically different, even opposite to their previous methods demanding a paradigm shift in their thinking. Rather than doing extensive personal or mass evangelism, it seemed counter-intuitive to many to adopt a strategy to *go slow* at

⁴⁶ This number did not include Orthodox churches. It is understood that there are many true believers in the Orthodox Church and the project's network includes a significant number of Orthodox leaders who are working diligently to bring renewal within the Orthodox Church.

first in order to eventually go fast, and to *focus on a few* to eventually win many by looking for the person of peace and spending a few months discipling a single family that would open the community to the gospel. Understanding that the *new insider* is more effective than the highly trained mature outsider is counter-intuitive to the leader who is oriented to traditional academic training and credentialing. Those who use a traditional evangelistic model may reject as counter-intuitive a process of gospel sharing that *starts with creation*, instead of Christ and that encourages even the lost to *lead* Bible studies. A process of *discipling people to conversion* does not support a get-them-saved-quick model of ministry. For the seminary trained, the idea that it's not just about preaching but about training the new believers to *discover truth* from the scripture for themselves, rather than being fed all the answers by the "professional" pastor may go against their battle to protect orthodoxy and may challenge their sense of self-worth. The conviction that the *best time for a church to plant a new church is when it is new itself* (six to twenty-four months old) is counter-intuitive given the current typical practice of planting new churches that usually takes ten years or more. Expecting the *hardest places to produce the greatest results* in terms of multiplication of new churches challenges the widely held notion that it is nearly impossible to plant churches in many restricted places in the world. Yet these counter-intuitive strategies are now leading to an explosion of new churches in many parts of East Africa. These principles are the subject of Part Two of this dissertation.

Training and Equipping Church Planters

Having developed a new understanding of church, a new understanding of the characteristics and role of the church planter, and a new strategy for church multiplication the model was extended through extensive training throughout the region. Initially large

groups of church planters were brought into a central location for quarterly training seminars of approximately one week duration. An extensive pre-deployment training for new church planters was also initiated. Within the first year the number of church planters in the network grew so rapidly that the training process was decentralized through a network of coordinator/trainers, currently seventy-six throughout the region. Ethiopia has twenty-eight coordinator/trainers;⁴⁷ Kenya has fifteen, Tanzania twenty, Sudan eleven, Djibouti one, and Somalia one. These trainers gather quarterly in a central location within their respective countries,⁴⁸ usually the capital city, for training, sharing of best practices, and reporting. They then conduct training at the grassroots level within their assigned regions. During the past year, one region established a next level of trainers because of the escalating number of church planters, particularly self-supported church planters.

During 2008 the Grassroots Equipping Center concept was developed to meet the growing demand for church planter training throughout the region and to sustain the church multiplication process. To date twelve such centers have been launched with the anticipated need for fifty within the next two years.

These Grassroots Equipping Centers are designed to take training to the church planters, most of them self-supported and living in their own local community. Here at the grassroots level, while on-the-job, they are trained in the principles of church planting.

The Equipping Center is at the core of the discipleship and leadership development process and is more of a strategic concept for training and equipping church planters in a given region than a physical facility. Some Grassroots Equipping Centers are established under a tree; it just needs to be a place where several committed believers within a

⁴⁷ This includes only the coordinator/trainers at the first level. There are now sub-levels of trainers who are trained by the first level coordinator/trainer in several regions but this number is not tracked.

⁴⁸ Coordinator/trainers in Djibouti and Somalia meet in Addis Ababa with Ethiopia's trainers.

reasonable traveling distance can meet together to pray, encourage one another, and to be trained by the coordinator/trainer to plant new self-replicating churches throughout the area. Other Centers meet in homes, in a small mud walled church, or a rented storefront facility. The place is not important except that it reflects the local culture and is not an imported institutional and academic approach to training. It must be fluid, sometimes even mobile, and able to shift to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding church planting movement in a given area. Since many of these church planters are oral learners and communicators, training is often done in story, pictorial, or dramatized format, a system that enables them to pass on the principles to the next generation of church planters and leaders.

New church planters are first given a weeklong exposure to church planting principles. This pre-deployment training helps to shed some of the misconceptions of the church and church planting, particularly in the areas of required educational levels, credentialing, support from outside, buildings, and so on. It prepares the church planter to begin the new church with the right DNA, a DNA that makes them devoted to the needs of the community, ready for rapid multiplication, and committed to every-member discipleship and to the exclusive authority of the Scriptures.

On-the-job, non-extractive training is a critical element of this church planting strategy. The church planters are provided opportunity through the Grassroots Equipping Center to continue their training both in the understanding and the implementation of effective church planting strategies and in increasing their theological understanding as they study the Scriptures with other maturing church planters.

The Grassroots Equipping Center also serves as a place of prayer. As a prayer center it helps to provide the real power for the ministry of church planting. Church planters come to pray. New believers from nearby communities come to pray. Visitors may come to pray.

Part of the DNA reinforced by the Equipping Center is that the ministry moves forward under the power of prayer.

The goal is for each Equipping Center to train a minimum of fifty new church planters each year and provides ongoing on-the-job training for others. It becomes the center of a hub of church planting in a given region that cycles church planters and leaders back through the training center periodically to ensure the consistency of the DNA in the church planting strategy.

The Grassroots Equipping Center is under the leadership of the Coordinator/ Trainer, an individual who has had extensive experience implementing the principles of church planting and has planted several churches that have become self-replicating.

Coordinator/trainers are part of a team of leaders who meet together quarterly for approximately one week at a Regional Equipping Centers to continue their own on-the-job training, to share best practices (and failures), and to pray for and encourage one another. More of a mentoring style, this training also is not highly academic but focuses on direct current on-the-field issues seeking to equip the coordinator with all the tools needed to ensure the effectiveness of the church planters at the grassroots level. Higher levels of practical leadership training constitute much of the curriculum while principles of the church planting strategy are regularly revisited. Regional Equipping Centers become the hub of an equipping strategy throughout an entire nation.

Curricula Development

The next step in the implementation of the project was the development of curricula. Once the strategy had been developed, tested, and modified in a number of regions, it was time to assist the training and equipping process with some support materials. There was a concern that the development of published curricula would encourage an academic approach

to learning these principles of church planting rather than the much more effective transfer of principles through the life-to-life discipleship process in the field. Experience to this point in East Africa indicated clearly that the principles of church planting had to be experienced in the field not only studied in the classroom. The primary goal of the curricula must not be the transfer of knowledge but the transformation of entire communities and nations through the rapid church multiplication that results from this equipping process.

This project in East Africa was greatly enhanced through interaction with similar emerging projects in other parts of the world especially as relates to the development of curriculum. The curriculum development process began in August 2007 as an international team of church planters was formed to take on the task of developing curricula to help equip leaders at all levels of these emerging movements. Representing several nations and almost every continent most of these leaders were not experienced in curriculum development but were practitioners involved directly in church planting. They met twice in Sweden and once in Thailand. This task force divided itself into four groups each with a different series of lessons called Discovery Guides to be developed. An editorial team was established for the purpose of reviewing, standardizing, and ensuring a similar level of quality among the four series. Upon completion of the writing and editorial process the discovery guides were published and distributed for field testing in more than twenty-five countries. As field testing was conducted, evaluations were sent back to the editorial team to inform future development of these equipping resources. In mid-2008 a draft of the entire four series of lessons was published in English to all participants. At this time, these draft curricula have been translated into several languages and are in regular use.

One of the fundamental principles in this church planting strategy, which strongly impacted the curriculum development, was fundamental principle that the *Word of God is*

the central authority. For the church planting practitioner what that means is that everything is not only grounded in Scripture but everything begins with Scripture. The goal is not to teach a set of doctrines or a systematic theology but to equip people with a process of Biblical discovery removing the authority from the church planter or pastor. The Scripture becomes the authority. Although few would argue with this premise, the application varies widely among evangelicals. Some would seek to ensure *purity of doctrine* by becoming the authoritative teacher from whom all interpretation and application of Scripture flows. The church planting principle of the centrality of Scripture leads to the learner understanding *how* to study the Bible and a focus on obedient response rather than on the acquisition of Biblical knowledge. Thus the curriculum development task was not to develop a series of manuals for the trainer, the church planter, or pastor. Rather the task was to develop a series of Bible study guides that would lead the learner through a *discovery* of what the Bible says and through a process of application which is called *obedience-based discipleship*. (Because of this focus, what began as *Curriculum Development* by the second task force meeting in December, 2007 had changed to *Bible Study Guides Development*.)

The curricula now in use is structured around four modules of Discovery Bible Study Guides that lead the student through a process of discovering first hand from Scripture the principles of new life in Christ and their responsibility in mission. The first module – *Discovering God* is a study from creation to Christ.⁴⁹ The discipleship process in this case begins even before the point of salvation. *Obedience-based Discipleship*, the twenty-six-lesson second module, leads the new believer through a biblical discovery that strongly

⁴⁹ At this point only the first fourteen lessons of this module are available.

emphasizes personal commitment to mission. Principles in this strategy of church

| | |
|--|--|
| Discovery Guide Module: | |
| Lesson Title: | |
| Scripture: | |
| Principle: | |
| Supporting Passage(s): | |
| Discovery Questions: 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| Practice: | |
| Obedience Questions: 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| <hr/> | |
| Biblical Case Studies | |
| <i>(Insert Biblical examples of obedience and disobedience to this passage.)</i> | |
| Historical Case Studies | |
| <i>(Insert Historical examples of obedience and disobedience to this passage.)</i> | |
| Local Case Studies | |
| <i>(Insert Historical examples of obedience and disobedience to this passage. Write them in story format and identify the country and people group.)</i> | |

Fig. 3. Format for Discovery Guide Modules

planting constitute the third module of thirty-one studies. The final module of twenty-four lessons is for *emerging* leaders with leadership training particularly for church planters. A level-two leadership series is planned for development which will target coordinators and others at higher levels of leadership.

All ninety-five lessons in the four modules are distributed in a simple format as illustrated in Fig. 3.

Strategic Financing

In the early life of the project funding was raised from U.S. churches, businesses, and foundations to provide support for the various components. Since the project was

working primarily through partner organizations administrative costs were minimal and the support could be focused on church planters. However, it quickly became clear that a model of church planting that involved the raising of outside funding for the support of church planters had built-in limitations and barriers. First, a ceiling was created by the limitation of funds. If church planting was to multiply rapidly and exponentially it could not be limited by the availability of outside funding. A dependency on outside funding significantly slowed the replication process. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the funding of church planters introduced a significant *foreign* element into the model since it was clear there were not sufficient inside funds to support the hundreds of church planters that were being deployed. If the model was to work it had to be a model of church planting that was reproducible *by* the thousands of communities throughout East Africa. Although from the beginning church buildings were not considered a priority in the model, there were often requests for funds to build a church structure. While these costs were only around \$3,000 and Western donors respond easily to such requests, it was considered a limitation to the replication effort. Churches planted only as Western support was provided for the structure greatly restricted growth. Furthermore, churches built with Western funds had a distinctively *foreign* flavor and inhibited the wholly indigenous nature of the church thereby also restricting replication.

As the project matured the focus of the funding moved from support for church planters⁵⁰ to training and other catalytic elements such as access ministries and tentmaking⁵¹ where dependency was not engendered. Access ministries can provide the reason and means for the church planter to enter a community. Often entering the community as a missionary or religious worker generates immediate barriers to relationships if not outright rejection.

⁵⁰ Of the current approximately 1,000 church planters, 296 receive ministry support.

Some of the access ministries funded by the project included providing food aid, conducting medical clinics, starting simple rural schools, installing water purification systems, and setting up grinding mills. These are typically one-time projects not dependent on continued infusion of funds but that provide vital services to the community while opening the door to communication and eventually relationships that lead to sharing the message of the gospel. Tentmaking is used to refer to the means of self-support for the church planter, often a small business, ideally one that can also serve as the means of access to the community. By early 2008 the percentage of self-supported church planters surpassed that of those who received ministry support and continues to increase while most coordinator/trainers continue to receive ministry support. In late 2008, the concept of *apostolic* church planters was introduced to identify those cross-cultural church planters who travel from their home area to a new community to initiate the church planting ministry in the new area. These apostolic church planters receive ministry support for up to two years in that new community, at

⁵¹ Access ministries and tentmaking will be discussed fully in Part Two.

which time it is expected that a new church will be launched and local leadership established as the apostolic church planter moves on.

Some Grassroots Equipping Centers are also funded from the outside while others are supported locally. As described above these centers are not primarily facilities but a training concept. As such they are often mobile and meet wherever it is typical for small groups to meet in the environments where they are located. Sometimes funding is provided to cover transportation costs for the mostly self-supported church planters and other church leaders who come to the center and for one to two weeks room and board. The trainer may also receive ministry support. Currently, the typical cost of one year operations for a Grassroots Equipping Center is \$11,000. Funds for these centers have been provided by several U.S. foundations and churches.

One of the challenges of the funding model has been the transition from supported church planters to self-support. It was expected that by providing funding for the startup of business or other means of generating income most church planters could be transitioned to self-support. However, that did not occur, leading to the current model where most church planters already have an income as teachers, farmers, aid workers, business people, or some other work when they begin as church planters. As such they are more effective in recruiting other self-supported church planters.

Research Methodology

The primary research methodology for this project was observational field research. While data collection included quarterly reports from the various areas where the project was being implemented, because of the limited literacy of the primary participants it was critical to also use personal observation extensively to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data being collected. This direct observation was very time consuming but also provided the

forum for the monitoring, evaluation, and mentoring that was needed to implement appropriate course correction. By employing primarily unobtrusive observation the natural temptation of the participants to disclose only those issues that were of a positive nature or considered to be demonstrative of their success in implementation was avoided. Further, using a research methodology of continuous observation provided valuable information on the dynamic nature of the project particularly as relates to growth curves and growth hindrances. While significant differences are evident from one region to another, or even between neighboring communities, comparative data provided tools for evaluating the effectiveness of variables within the implementation of the core principles.

Initially there was concern that the research inform the development of the project, but as the project matured the focus of the ongoing observational research was for the purpose of sustainability of the project in the long term without significant outside involvement. Thus internal systems of feedback, monitoring, and accountability were developed. The quarterly coordinator/trainer meetings throughout the region served as forums for observation and feedback on the various elements of the strategy. Research data was collected as area coordinator/trainers reported on what was happening in their areas: what was working, what was not working; what corrective steps were being taken or were being considered; how many leaders were being trained; and how many generations of churches had emerged? As each one simply told the story of what was happening in his or her ministry areas the needed course corrections were discovered, and other coordinator/trainers identified how they might improve their ministries. In this process of peer review, challenges that surfaced sometimes required a search for answers beyond their own group or led to changes in overall strategy. These review meetings moved from area to area to better enable *direct* observational research of what was happening on the ground

throughout the region. It is in these group meetings that participants learned to ask the tough questions. Since there are no hierarchical relationships within these groups, peer accountability served to address challenges and problems and keep the process of church planting moving rapidly forward.

| Country Quarterly Statistical Ministry Report | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|
| Country: | _____ | | | | |
| Year: | _____ | | | | |
| Prepared by: | _____ | | | | |
| Date prepared: | _____ | | | | |
| | 1st Qtr | 2nd Qtr | 3rd Qtr | 4th Qtr | YTD |
| CHURCHES PLANTED | | | | | |
| 1 New first generation churches planted | | | | | |
| 2 New second generation churches planted | | | | | |
| 3 New third generation churches planted | | | | | |
| 4 New fourth (or more) generation churches planted | | | | | |
| 5 TOTAL new churches planted this period | | | | | |
| 6 TOTAL active churches at end of period | | | | | |
| NUMBER OF BELIEVERS | | | | | |
| 7 New believers this period | | | | | |
| 8 % "Christian" <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | |
| 9 Believers baptized this period | | | | | |
| 10 Total church attendance (new churches so far this year) | | | | | |
| 11 Total church attendance (all active churches) | | | | | |
| PRE-CHURCH PLANTING ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| 12 New small groups (DBS, Ev. Bible Studies, etc.) | | | | | |
| 13 New Persons of Peace identified | | | | | |
| 14 New people contacted | | | | | |
| LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | | | | | |
| 15 New church planters (including lay) | | | | | |
| 16 Leaders/church planters in training (including lay) | | | | | |
| 17 Leaders/church planters completing training | | | | | |
| 18 Current number of church planters (including lay) | | | | | |
| NEW ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Fig. 4. Quarterly Statistical Report by Country

In addition to my own research through direct observation,⁵² monitoring of the project was also done by national leaders who regularly visit the areas throughout their countries where they are planting churches. These are partners who have chosen to be part of this network and as such have no organizational tie or accountability to a central project manager. Instead they meet together periodically as country leaders to discuss the findings of their direct field observation and to chart the way forward without centralized control.

As a part of the research process, key country partners submitted formal reports that helped to assess levels of implementation of the church planting strategy and results at the field level. (see Fig. 4). These reports were collected from church planters at the local level and consolidated, first at the country level, then as a single multi-nation report. The collected reports were often incomplete illustrating the criticality of personal observation in conjunction with the collection of report. Appendix Two provides the Annual Statistical Report for 2008 but shows the limitations of some of the responses. (Note: this Appendix has been removed for security reasons).

Narrative reports were also received that provided anecdotal information about the progress of the ministries and often were useful in helping to suggest course corrections or an increased focus on specific principles of the church planting strategy.⁵³

Conclusion

Since the inception of this project in 2005, more than four thousand churches have been planted throughout East Africa by the partner network that was formed. This chapter has attempted to provide an understanding of the context in which that occurred, the influences which helped to guide this project's development, the network partners who boldly stepped out to chart a new course, and the implementation steps over the three-year

⁵² See Appendix One for a list of *Observational Field Research Trips* (This has been removed for security

life of the project. What emerged in terms of the principles that now guide this burgeoning movement is the subject of Part Two.

reasons)

⁵³ See Appendix Three which shows the format of the quarterly narrative report: *Country Ministry Report*.

PART TWO: STRATEGY FOR THE REVOLUTION

In Part One a project of rapid church multiplication currently underway in East Africa was introduced. It was born out of the intense desire of several African church leaders to discover a new way of multiplying the church in a quest to achieve their goal of saturating their countries with *communities of believers*. The section discussed the background that led to the initiation of this project, the context in which it was launched, the influences impacting its development, how it was implemented, and the key people who made it happen.

For these key leaders what has happened is nothing short of a revolution. Old paradigms have given way to new. Prior church planting practices have been completely transformed. And the results have been astounding. What God has done is truly amazing as tens of thousands have become believers in an explosion of new churches.

Part Two describes the factors believed to have been catalytic in the explosive growth of the church in this region. It summarizes the new paradigms¹ and specific church planting principles that have emerged and are now in practice in the ministries of the network's partners in East Africa.

As these new paradigms and principles became clear, it was discovered that when they were faithfully and consistently put into practice the church emerged quickly, often

¹ These are not really *new* paradigms at all but *old* paradigms from the New Testament.

spontaneously from among the new believers and it rapidly replicated itself to the second, third, and fourth generation and beyond.

The new paradigms and principles are presented here in a very brief format. They are not intended to represent complete teaching materials. At the same time, it should be understood that fundamentally this strategy of church planting is passed from generation to generation through a discipleship/mentoring process, not primarily through an academic learning process. And always the principles are gleaned from the process of Discovery Bible study, never “declared” by the trainer apart from the Biblical source.

These guidelines should be kept in mind with respect to Part Two:

1. It does not focus per se on formal theological, missiological, or ecclesiological constructs. Instead it focuses on practical principles relating to church and church planting. Theological, missiological, and ecclesiological concepts, although not specifically stated as such, are inherent in these principles.
2. It is not a fail-proof methodology of church planting. Jesus is the head of the church and the Builder of new churches. This outline reflects an understanding of the human role as what God is doing becomes clear.
3. These principles are not sequential steps. At any given time several may be in process. They must be revisited constantly.
4. The principles do not represent a buffet where one can pick and choose; all or most of these principles must be in practice if the church is to multiply rapidly. They must be considered as a comprehensive package.
5. The principles are interdependent. In many case, one won't work without another. All must typically be present in a multiplication movement.

6. While the principles listed here can be taught as individual lessons of a training program, they must become part of the day-to-day life of the trainer, church planter, and the church. As such they are much better transferred through the discipling-mentoring process than through formal training sessions.
7. Discovery is an important aspect of the training model. The church planter is taught how to “discover” the principles from God’s Word that relate to the church and church planting.
8. One may find considerable overlap among these principles. Sometimes themes are repeated from a somewhat different perspective. While this may be a bit frustrating to the linear thinker in a Western context it is part of the learning dynamic in much of the African environment.

CHAPTER 3

NEW PARADIGMS

A New Kind of Church

Perhaps the most critical factor impacting this entire project was the development of a new understanding of church. This new paradigm became one of the key catalytic forces behind the explosive multiplication of new churches throughout the region. But it was also a paradigm of church that brought a significant level of maturity to the newly emerging churches. Rapid multiplication was not at the expense of maturity of the church. Of course, this is not a new paradigm at all, but a re-discovery of the biblical paradigm of church.

I can't tell you how often during the past four years I have stood beside the lake as hundreds of new believers were being baptized or how often I have crowded into a simple mud-walled home with forty or fifty worshipping believers or sat on mats under a tree studying the Word with a dozen Christ-followers and thought, "This must be what the first century church was really like." These are simple believers, in love with Jesus, loving one another, learning to obey, and eager to share the message with their neighbors.

From the beginning of this church multiplication project it was clear that there needed to be a new way of *doing* church. Rapid multiplication of churches, a real movement would not happen using the existing forms of church. It would not be possible to generate enough money, sufficient professional leaders, or adequate management systems to expand the current model to the point of covering every city, village, community, and neighborhood in the region.

As the new paradigm of church began to emerge, supported and instructed by a significant number of writers and practitioners who also are addressing this same challenge, the “new” model was found in plain sight. It was the model of the New Testament. That was the model that exploded in the first century resulting in the spread of thousands of new communities of believers throughout the Mediterranean world.

What came out of that study and what is now being implemented in this project in East Africa is a whole new way of *doing* church. And the results have been incredible, not just in terms of multiplication of churches but in the health and vibrancy of these *new paradigm* churches. Some people remain skeptical. They have not been able to shake off the institutional/traditional model of church with which they have grown up and are more comfortable. However, now that churches are emerging at the fourth, fifth, and sixth generation, most of the current leaders have come *from the harvest* and have little or no exposure to the institutional model of church. Theirs is a refreshing and encouraging view of church, driven by a faith and passion that is propelling the church forward into many previously unreached areas of their countries.

This new paradigm is primarily about the way church functions. It is not a new theology of church. It is the practice of church that is being reformed. How the believers *do* church has fundamental implications for how the church is established, how it grows, and how it replicates. Everything about these new practices of *doing* church is thoroughly biblical. They are also intensely practical. And they encourage rapid multiplication.

This section presents a brief description of this new paradigm of church, drawing from the biblical passages and narratives that present the New Testament model of church. Nine key elements of this paradigm of church are briefly stated. These elements are repeatedly reviewed throughout the entire training system to ensure the consistency in the

DNA of the newly emerging churches. Although not covered in this paper, the training process also includes an in depth study of the key metaphors of church in the New Testament. It is from these metaphors that much of the understanding of this paradigm emerges. They constitute a significant amount of the Bible Discovery Process that is used in the training of church planters in understanding church.

*Key Elements*¹

While 100 percent implementation of the key elements is not always achieved, it is important to recognize that the elements together form a cohesive system. It does not work well to choose some and not others. The whole model is the goal. Where the church in East Africa looks most like this model, it is the church that is strong and moving aggressively forward, replicating itself consistently.

Natural

In the natural order of the universe that God has made, life reproduces itself. New life comes from the inside. It does not come from the organization of elements from the outside. So the natural, or often called the organic church, is a product of *birth* not of organization. It is biological. “A new church is born when the seed of the gospel is planted into the hearts of women and men and they are permitted to gather together naturally.”² This is often described as the church emerging. The church should be allowed to emerge naturally. This natural emergence is in contrast to a very structured model of church that is typical of the institutional/traditional church where everything is organized and highly controlled. Spontaneity is generally not acceptable. The form is cookie cutter, so much so

¹ In describing the key elements contrasts to the institutional/traditional church will sometimes be made. This is done to help bring clarity to the understanding of the subject matter.

² Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 45.

that with a bit of experience one can even look at a church building and assert, “Oh that is a _____ church,” describing its denomination or at least genre of church.

The form of church should instead reflect the life and culture of the believing community. The Jesus followers of one people group in the northeast part of the Horn of Africa *do* church in cultural ways that are very different from those of the Maasai of northern Tanzania.³

Supporting Scriptures: Rom. 12:3-8. I Cor. 3:5-9. I Cor. 12:12-31. Eph. 1:15-23. Eph. 4:15-16.

Headship

No evangelical would argue theologically that Christ is the head of the church. In practice, however, much of the institutional/traditional model would say that the pastor is the head of the church. In too many cases the pastor, or the common concept of the pastor, has usurped the role of Christ as head of the church. This potential usurping of Christ’s headship is why these new paradigm church planters teach people to follow Christ not simply the dictates of the church or denomination. The believers are taught not to obey the church planter but rather to discover for themselves what the Word of God says and to obey the Word. The image of the church as the body helps to bring understanding to this critical element. The believer is not a *member* of an organization led by a pastor, but part of a body with Christ as the head. In Christ lies all the authority for the church.

The New Testament church functioned under the sole headship of Christ. Christ as head established the “order of service” for the church. He was the one in charge. He chose

³ In fact, some among this northern people group who have become believers through this ministry do not refer to themselves as Christians because of the baggage of the Muslim/Christian conflict but rather as Followers of El Messih Isa. Nor do they use the word church for the same reason.

through whom he would speak. There was no obvious human leader always speaking on His behalf.

Supporting Scriptures: Col. 1:18. Eph. 1:22.

Holy Spirit Directed

It is the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers the church. It is not an organizational connection to a denominational hierarchy. It is not the paid professional staff. And it is not a system of creeds or operational policies. The Holy Spirit works through the people of God to guide them forward in the mission of God.

In the gathering of the believers it is the Holy Spirit who guides the time of gathering. As such there is a refreshing spontaneity and authenticity to the times of togetherness. It is not mass confusion. Where the people have been taught to listen to the Spirit of God they bring to the gathering the messages that God has for the gathered church. Everything is orderly. And the people are edified.

Supporting Scriptures: Jn. 15:28-16:15. Acts 13:2-3. I Cor. 3:9-17.

Full Participation

A striking difference from the institutional/traditional church is that in this new paradigm of church everyone participates. The clergy-laity separation is removed. While there are leaders, they lead through *influence* as elders⁴ not from *positions* of authority. The people are the ministers of the church. Theirs is the responsibility under the headship of Christ for the church. If they fail to function, there is no church.

In the gathering of the believers it is the believers who provide the content during the time of gathering. It is their responsibility to do so. It is not some specially appointed person

⁴ Not elders as in the organizational structure of a church but as the wiser more experienced people of the community of believers.

who does all the officiating. So there is an openness and spontaneity in the time together so that God can speak to the people through those whom He chooses. The believers should also create their own music and worship style as an authentic expression to God rather than *borrow* the time worn and often culturally distant hymns from the outside. Prayer should be an authentic expression of the people, not on behalf of the people. If it is truly a body, *all* the parts of the body must function in the way they were created to function (Eph. 4:11-16). Everyone participating: that is the example of the New Testament church. "...When you come together, **each** of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation...." (I Cor. 14:26).

Supporting Scriptures: I Cor. 3:9-13. I Pe. 2:4-10. Ex. 19:5-6.

One-anothering

The body of believers has a significant responsibility to serve one another. The church is to be characterized by the fact that the believers *love one another*. This love expresses itself in actions as well as in encouragement and challenge. "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another...." (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

In the typical institutional church meeting there is very little that could be classified as "one-anothering" since it is primarily a one-way street from the pastor to the believers sitting quietly in the pew. The exhorting or edification spoken of throughout Paul's letters as a *mutual* function of the church comes down that same one-way street. But mutual edification is a primary purpose of the assembling of the believers as seen in Hebrews 10:24, 25. It is not a function to be left to the paid professional staff of the church.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 2:42-47. Acts 4:32-35. I John.

Leadership

The subject of leadership in the new paradigm church goes directly to the issue of the clergy-laity dichotomy. Essentially, leadership of the institutional/traditional church is in the hands of a few paid professionals. These are usually individuals with a significant level of academic education and who have been ordained by a credentialing body to lead/manage on behalf of that body. While the church may have a small group of “official” leaders, sometimes called board of directors, or elders (not in the biblical sense) sometimes “elected” by the people, leadership is primarily the domain of the pastor, or senior (or executive) pastor depending on the size of the church. While “volunteers” may *lead* certain divisions within the church such as the women’s ministry, or Sunday school, the real issues affecting the fundamental life of the church are questions that are decided upon by the leadership *staff*.

The model of leadership of this new paradigm church is very different. Initially the church planter is the apostolic leader of the newly emerging church. Paul was the “father” of many of the churches but he quickly moved on to allow the church to be the independent self-led community of believers under the headship of Christ that it was intended to be. So the church planter, as apostle, initiates the church through a focused discipleship of the early believers, and then soon moves on. If the people have been taught to be obedient disciples of Jesus they will take their proper place of responsibility and leadership so that the community moves forward to maturity. It is the community of believers, under the headship of Christ, without human intermediaries that is responsible for the church. That role should not be abdicated to a single individual or to a chosen select few.

At the same time, God does provide special leadership *gifts* to the church to help fulfill the purpose of preparing the people for the work of the ministry. These gifts that God

gives to the church soon become evident in the life of the church, and they should be free to serve the church. These gifts emerge from within, they are not “official” leaders assigned by some external source. The people acknowledge these emerging leaders because their maturity and wisdom, and their compassion and service are in evidence. As Paul agreed when the church acknowledged certain elders among them, the church planter to whom the people may still look for apostolic guidance may affirm the emerging elders from among the believers. These leaders/elders emerge not because of education, status, or skills, but because of the character of their lives, a character shaped by their time with Jesus.

These leaders are acknowledged by the church to be the elders and serve the community of believers through the *gifts* given to them by the Holy Spirit. Among them are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Note that *pastors* is plural. The New Testament model does not allow for a pastor, singular, nor for the pastor’s function to be elevated above all the others. As with the others, “pastor” is a function, it is not a position, and it is one of the gifts given by God, emerging from among the people to *serve* the church.

In summary, God raises up the church which often emerges through the catalytic work of the church planter in a given community. He or she does not become the “official” leader. The people of the new believing community are charged with the responsibility for their community under the headship of Christ. While not completely separating himself or herself, the church planter leaves the church in the hands of the people who have been taught to be obedient followers of Christ as they discover for themselves what God says to them in His Word. Eventually from among the believers, *elders* with maturity, wisdom, compassion and service emerge and are acknowledged by the believers and affirmed by the church

planter. These elders function according to the *gifts* given them by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 23:1-12. I Th. 2: 7-16. I Pe. 5:1-4.

Simple

Perhaps the best way to describe this element of the new paradigm church is to describe the exercise that is part of the training for church planters in East Africa on the subject of church.⁵ It is especially meaningful for those who have a background in the institutional/traditional church.

“Let’s draw a picture (on the black board, white board, or in the dirt on the ground) that will represent the perfect, or the ideal church. I’m not much of an artist so we will use stick figures and simple designs to illustrate the elements of this ideal church. You tell me what is your image of the perfect church and I’ll draw it here.”

As the participants share elements of the perfect church, the picture begins to fill in with praying Christians, pastor, building, lighted cross, hymnbooks, Spirit of God, pulpit, discipleship books, baptismal, choir, choir robes, Bibles, offering, benches, offices, lights, air-conditioning, flowers, ushers, decorated painted walls, organ, drums, parsonage, electricity, powerful sound system, internet connection, Sunday school rooms - the list goes.

“I would love to be part of a church like this. But war has broken out and the rebels are killing Christians and burning churches. What in this church can we give up and still be a church?” As participants say those things that can be given up and still be church, those are erased from the picture. “None of these are required. What’s left? The people, the Bible, and God.”

⁵ David L. Watson, “What is Church?” Lecture in CPM Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, June 2006. This training exercise is adapted from this lecture.

“If this is the basic church – the people, the Word, and God, then this is the beginning point of church planting. How the church turns out depends on God as He distributes ‘gifts’ to the church. What the church looks like emerges from the culture of the community of believers as they study the Word of God together. Church then becomes an indigenous expression of the people of God who obey the Word of God.”

Without a building, a paid professionally trained pastor, multiple programs, organizational structures, or a host of other things, the simple church can multiply much more rapidly. Led by the people of God themselves who are learning to be obedient disciples, this simple community of believers gathers together frequently to share their life with Christ, to worship, study, pray, and to support, and encourage one another. Functioning in this way it is truly the church that is the continuing witness of the life of Jesus upon the earth.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 18:18-20. Acts 2:46-47.

Authentic Community

The first century church was certainly an authentic community. In the midst of a hostile political and religious environment “they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship.... All the believers were together and had everything in common. Every day they continued to meet together.... They broke bread in their homes and ate together....” (Acts 2:42-46).

Although the concept of community is alive and well in the rural African context, because of the Western influence upon the church, the church reflects more of the Western individualism and corporate organizational structure than it does the African culture of community.

The new paradigm church brings back the authentic community nature of the church. The organic nature, the simplicity, the leadership ethos, and the relational nature of this church lead more easily to authentic community.

The New Testament image of the church as family may bring the best understanding to church as community. Throughout the New Testament the language of family is used: “brothers, sisters, little children, infants, mothers, fathers, sons, new birth, households, etc.” (I Cor. 4:15; I Tim. 5:1-2; Ja. 2:15; I Jn. 2:13-14; I Pe. 2:2; Eph. 2:19). In the family the members love one another, spend time with one another, encourage one another, teach one another, correct one another, challenge one another, and care for one another. Their lives are significantly intertwined. They are a community within a community, bound together in their relationship to Jesus. This familial community becomes the corporate witness to the broader community of the incredible transforming power of the gospel. Without evidence of such a community, the world has little opportunity to see the life of Christ upon this earth. On the other hand, when such community is evident it becomes the attraction to this life in Christ that expands the church.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 2:42-46. I Tim. 3:14-15. Eph. 2:11-22. 2 Cor. 13:11. I Pe. 3:8.

Equipping Center

As an *Outpost for Kingdom Expansion* the local body of believers is trained and equipped to respond in obedience to Christ by serving the people around them bringing transformation to the community. They will also seek to extend God’s reigning Kingdom by reaching beyond themselves and their own community to the communities beyond them establishing new outposts – new communities of believers. As such the church becomes the equipping center to train and mobilize the people of God so that the Kingdom is extended as communities of believers are established saturating the entire region with gospel witness.

“He gave [to the church] some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the *equipping* of the saints for the work of the ministry....” (Eph. 4:11, 12). Equipping the saints must be a fundamental focus of the church if rapid multiplication of churches is to occur.

Supporting Scriptures: Eph. 4:11-13. I Cor. 14:26-31.

A New Kind of Church Planter

A new paradigm of church necessitates a new paradigm of the church planter. In any rapid church multiplication movement the character and function of the church planter is critical. If the church planter is focused on a position of leadership or a future as bishop of a new group of churches, he or she may succeed in building a small denomination but will not succeed in launching a *movement* of rapidly multiplying churches. If the church planter is highly controlling with a sense of ownership of the emerging church or churches the replication process will eventually stall.

In the institutional/traditional model, the church planter is often expected to be a *superman* or woman. Often chosen because of high commitment, approved level of academic training, and qualifying experience he or she is sent out by the denominational headquarters or by a larger local church, with part of the goal being to expand the size of the denomination by planting a new church with many new converts. Generally the new church is to be a near replica of the sending church. The church planter may be given a small budget with which he or she is expected in a specified period of time (usually fairly short) to build an attractive building and fill it with people who are drawn by dynamic programs, lively worship (read: singing), and promises of a better future life. In most cases the church planter then settles into the life of a “pastor” spending the next several years building the church into a larger group with more sophisticated programs, better facilities, and multiple trained

and paid staff. The idea of multiplication is usually not part of the equation, and so although outreach programs may be added there is little attempt or expectation to replicate.

The church planter in the new paradigm is a very different person with a very different function. He or she does not typically have extensive Bible college training or managerial expertise but has a passionate love for Jesus, a heart to serve people, and a proven track record of obedience to the Word.

In this project in East Africa there are two types of church planters. First, there is the outside church planter who is typically referred to as an apostolic church planter. The apostolic church planter crosses cultural boundaries or at least goes from one village to another where he or she is really an outsider with the express purpose of planting a new self-replicating church. The second is the local church planter who plants a church or churches within his or her own local community. In both cases the role is catalytic in that the church planter does not really *make the church happen* according to some pre-determined plan of exactly what he or she wants that new church to look like but plants the seed of the gospel so that as people become obedient followers of Jesus a new *community of believers* emerges. He or she operates from a position of influence not power, control and money.

Jesus came to earth as a baby, a position of powerlessness. For a time He was a homeless refugee. His family carried no pedigree. His hometown was not esteemed. Jesus' entire ministry was characterized by servanthood. He did not lead an organization. He held no "official" office. He rejected titles. He was not accredited or degreed.

Paul never defended himself by declaring his credentials or education. Rather he speaks of himself as a servant suffering for a cause, powerless from a human perspective. He was beaten, shipwrecked, and imprisoned, all sacrifices he considered himself privileged to

make on behalf of Christ. He did not start an organization, carry any titles of honor or position, or *own* the churches he is credited with starting.

What is characteristic of Jesus and Paul, and what must be a driving characteristic of church planters is that they led through influence rather than through positional power. And their influence along with that of other apostles literally transformed the world through the proliferation of communities of Christ-followers that eventually spread to the ends of the earth. The goal of church planters must not be to amass a following for themselves but to transform followers into leaders through a mentoring/discipleship process that releases them to be and do all that God calls them to do.

So the primary function of the church planter in a rapid church multiplication model is to *disciple* people into leadership, a leadership model of humility and servanthood that reflects that of Jesus. Training in this kind of leadership is not done primarily in the classroom but in the day to day life of being together actively functioning in the service of others and the sowing of the seeds of the gospel.

Apostolic church planters are often self-supported. They enter into a community as a business person, a cattle herder, a teacher, or a government worker. As such they are able to get to know the community and build relationships with local people in a non-threatening way never forgetting that their primary intent is to look for ways to initiate discussions about God in the process of everyday life.

Following the model of Luke 11, the church planter's first goal is to find the person of peace – that spiritually sensitive person that God has ordained to open the community to the gospel. Thus, apostolic church planters share the gospel regularly but are not primarily evangelists. They also don't really *plant* the church. Their focus is to disciple the person of peace or the family of peace and through that family the gospel spreads throughout the

community to the broader family, friends, and neighbors, and a new body of believers emerges.

The church planter does not become the pastor. His or her role is to teach the people how to study the Word of God, discovering for themselves what they must do to obey Him. From day one, the goal is for the church to be able to function independent of the church planter. Dependence on the church planter creates a church that is not fully mature, not fully indigenous to the community and that is less likely to replicate in nearby communities.

Full time apostolic church planters may be in the process of planting churches using this method in several different communities at the same time. It may be better if he or she does not spend full-time in one community. Sometimes suspicion is aroused if a church planter spends too much time in a specific community with no visible means of support. Additionally, the new believers are not as readily empowered to take the responsibility for their newly emerging church if the church planter is always present.

Teaching the new local believers is vitally important. But the church planter must avoid the tendency to be the “answer” person focusing instead on training the people how to discover for themselves how God wants them to live their lives and be His witness to their community. Preaching is not emphasized because the church planter is not the primary source of understanding about God. The Word of God becomes central. The goal is to train toward independence.

Passionately in love with Jesus, often new believers are eager to take the message of the gospel to a new area. They want to see the wonderful spiritual community which they have recently become part of replicated in the neighboring communities. Some just go with a refreshing delightful enthusiasm about sharing the truth about Jesus. Others have to hear, “Yes, it is OK for *YOU* to plant a church.” These become *local* church planters. Always self-

supported, they are the farmers, shop-keepers, or local artisans who sense God's call and the support of their believing community to go with the gospel message to the next nearby village, or to another community within their town or city. They follow the same pattern of looking for the person of peace in that community (often the *community* is not a geographic area but an affinity group). They usually take one other person with them whom they may be training to go to the next community. The majority of churches in this East Africa project are now being planted in this way.

A key issue for the church planter is knowing when to leave. Many churches in the institutional/traditional model never reach a level of spiritual maturity, local leaders do not emerge, and the church does not reach out beyond itself because the church planter never left. The church planter is there to plant the seed not to stay until it is a full grown church. Bringing the church to full maturity is the work of the Holy Spirit. Once a simple church is established in the community where people are learning to obey and follow Jesus, the church planter must move on trusting the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the new believers so that they mature into the kind of church God wants for them to be. The church planter will typically continue in a regular discipleship/mentoring relationship with the emerging leaders of the new community of believers focusing primarily on discovering what the Bible says about the life and function of the church. He or she will also be available in this way to deal with more serious issues that arise that need a "father's" caring and guiding hand.

A New Church Planting Strategy

A new understanding of church and a new understanding of the character and role of the church planter require that one thinks differently about church planting strategy. While a simple form of church has been presented and the role of the church planter described as servanthood rather than directive, it does not mean that church planting is easy. In fact,

many have paid a very high price in personal sacrifice to see the church planted in difficult places. Underscoring this strategy of church planting is the understanding that church planting is the work of God. In God's economy establishing church should be the natural outgrowth of families and individuals coming to know Jesus Christ. Churches should erupt spontaneously from the soil of the gospel.

Much of this church planting strategy has to do with removing the barriers so that the church can more easily emerge. These barriers are largely those systems, structures, and demands which are added to the biblical requirements for *doing* church. When these are removed, people are introduced to and fall in love with Jesus. As they are disciplined to obey all that He has commanded them, they will naturally want to gather together in fellowship to worship, learn, support and encourage one another and work together to spread the good news. As such, they become the continuing presence of Jesus in the dark places of the world.

The church planting strategy that God is using in East Africa to birth thousands of new communities of believers is the subject of the rest of this dissertation. There are no "ten easy steps to church planting." There is no "how-to" manual. The instructions are in God's Word. What follows is not a *method* of church planting but principles discovered from Scripture that should govern how the church planter goes about being part of how God wants to build His church in communities around the world.

Some of the principles are certainly not unique to this strategy of church planting. However, rather than assume some of the foundational principles particularly, they are included here in an effort to outline a comprehensive and cohesive list of the church planting principles that have led to the current explosion of the new paradigm churches in East Africa.

CHAPTER 4

FOUNDATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING PRINCIPLES

Prayer Accesses God's Power From On High

The most important principle in this church planting strategy is prayer. It is the source of power for the task of church multiplication. The church planting effort is begun and sustained with prayer.

The following story illustrates the power of prayer for the church planting effort.

The enemy had advanced now occupying ground once held by the sovereign nation. Evil and vile, his intent was no less than total conquest, absolute subjugation of an entire nation and brutal elimination of any resistance. His forces were potent, passionate, and persistent. With a hopeless acquiescence the people crumbled under the overwhelming weight of his nasty aggression.

But then a tiny band of fanatically zealous resisters rose up in a desperate act of defiance against the hostile adversary with the audacious intent of reclaiming their country. Calling on a powerful ally with a desperate plea for help, a daring but simple battle plan was developed that would enable this tiny band to overcome the powerful aggressor. For days the ally's precision air force pounded away at the enemy. With the air cover as protection, this little band began to mount an offensive. Heartened by their small but decisive victories other countrymen joined the resistance, striking blow after blow upon the now retreating enemy army. The tide turned in favor of the now emboldened band desperate to rid their country of the foreign tyrant. Victory was soon achieved, an entire nation maintaining their

independent and sovereign position because of the air support of an allied nation and the bold actions of a tiny band of people who stood up to the enemy and said, “No!”¹

This conflict could describe any number of real life military invasions in recent years. It also illustrates the incredible spiritual battles raging in millions of communities worldwide. The enemy has advanced and there is often only a tiny band of resisters who want to reclaim their community for God. The point of the story is that without the air support of the ally nation a counter attack would have been futile. It was the covering from the air that enabled the tiny band to drive out the enemy and achieve victory. Likewise it is *prayer* covering that will defeat the enemy reclaiming communities for Christ. “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12).

The whole idea of planting churches in occupied territory is an aggressive counter attack on the enemy. As Christians engage in this spiritual warfare, they must recognize that they are facing a far more powerful and persistent adversary than themselves. Without a comprehensive and complete spiritual covering of prayer it would be foolhardy to engage in this battle. No matter how great the battle plans or how powerful and skilled the army, unless the Lord visits with His presence and power the battle will be lost. Unless every aspect of this new church planting initiative is saturated with prayer, intercession and spiritual warfare, the church planter will be hopelessly ineffective and soundly defeated in the attempt to *take the land* for Christ.

The first and most critical action that must be undertaken in church planting is to develop a team of intercessors to under gird and sustain the ministry. All praying is not

¹ Tim Roehl, “Praying in the Harvest.” Doctoral Dissertation presented to Dr. Steve Ogne, Bakke Graduate University of Ministry, 2001.

intercession. Many petition God for things but do not engage at the level of intercession. “The gift of intercession is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers to a degree much greater than what is expected of the average Christian.”² No amount of planning, strategizing, organizing, witnessing, training, or modeling can accomplish God’s vision of reaching entire communities without paying the price in prayer.

Generally the practice is to saturate a community with prayer several weeks prior to launching a new church planting initiative into that community. Prayer walks and prayer teams assigned to pray specifically for the target community are part of the process of preparing for entrance into the community.

Supporting Scriptures: 2 Ch. 20:1-30. Matt. 6:5-15; 7:7-11. Jn. 10:27; 17; Acts 4:23-32.

The Spirit of God is Always Actively Present in the Church Planting Process

On the night before Jesus’ death He told His disciples that after He left them He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever just as He had been with them. He warned them not to try to minister in His name without this coming power and presence. Jesus began His Great Commission by speaking about the spiritual authority that was entrusted to Him, and ended it by promising that He would forever be with those who go and make disciples. If church planting is ever to become a movement it will only happen through the guidance and empowering by the Holy Spirit—never on human power.

The most fundamental characteristic of the church is that it is led and taught by the Spirit. Often one looks to the structure, the programs, or the rituals to define the church. Is it incorporated or registered? It is credentialed by some higher body? Does it have a registered

² Peter C. Wagner, *Prayer Shield* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1992), 48.

membership? Does it have a paid leader (pastor)? Are the five-fold gifts present? The list could go on. But the real question in determining if a body of believers is truly a church is to determine if they are corporately led and taught by the Holy Spirit. Do they do what they do because the Holy Spirit leads them to do it? Do they do what they do because they discover it from the Word of God as the Spirit teaches them?

The Holy Spirit guides the new body of believers in understanding the truth of the Word and in understanding how they should function as a church. It is a supernatural process. I Cor. 2:10 declares that “God has revealed to us through the Spirit” the things that must be known and understood. When the new emerging church has the Word of God and is being taught by the Spirit of God, it has all the resources it needs to be the church of God.

The church planter must realize that it is the Spirit of God that “will draw all men unto Himself” (Jn. 12:32). It is not the skill of the church planter. It is not the dynamics of the church’s programs. And in this strategy of church planting it is not the “access ministries” by which the community is engaged that brings people to Jesus. It is uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit.

Unless the work of the church planter is guided by the Spirit of God, the church with the right DNA will not be planted. Unless the church is guided by the Spirit of God it will not replicate throughout the community as God intends that it should.

Supporting Scriptures: Jn. 15:26-16:15. Matt. 28:18-20. Acts 1:4-8. Acts 2.

Only the Word of God is the Authority

It must be the Word of God not the church planter or the pastor/leader who is the authority. Believers are taught how to “discover” from the Word how they should live. When the church planter becomes “the answer person” the people are taught to be dependent upon the church planter rather than on the Word. When a believer asks a question the church

planter should point them to the Word perhaps providing several passages for them to study to discover the answer rather than yield to the temptation to wield power through greater knowledge.

One of the best protections against heresies is to teach the believers to be totally dependent on the Word of God for themselves. If they learn from the model of the church planter that one or two become the teachers of the Word and fail to study the Word directly for themselves they are placed at great risk of following someone who may not always remain true to the Word. When the entire community of believers is taught to be obedient followers of the Word through personal study of the Word, the church is protected from departing from the truth. That is not to say that the gift of teaching will not emerge from within the body of believers. Teachers of the Word are a gift to the church, but, they must never become the authority. Only God's Word is the authority.

Many unreached people in the world remain trapped in non-literate cultures, which is the reason culturally relevant methods of communication must be used in these contexts. Those methods may include audio Scriptures, pictorial storying of the Bible, and biblical themes put to music. Often it is a child with a sixth grade education that becomes the reader for the community.

Simple Bible study outlines have been provided following the Discovery Bible Study method.³ Essentially no other curriculum is used. The goal is to plant the seed of the Word directly into the hearts of the people removing the barriers between God's Word and God's people by removing the middleman, depending instead on the author and illuminator of the Book – the Holy Spirit.

Supporting Scriptures: Heb. 4:12. Deut. 6:1-9. Psa. 119:142.

³ The Discovery Bible Study method is described in chapter Two.

New Believers Are Quickly Formed into Churches

In an institutional/traditional model of church planting, the church planter often spends a significant amount of time doing extensive evangelism in a given community. Often it takes months or years to develop enough believers to form a church. So as people become believers they may gather into Bible study groups, fellowships, or some other form of gathering. However, in this new method of church planting, the goal is to gather the new believers together very quickly through the formation of church. When there is a clear understanding of church as a simple gathering of followers of Jesus obedient to the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church can emerge quickly starting with a very few new believers. Without encumbrances of extensive systems and structures they can begin as a body to mature under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The church will then grow and expand through the witness of the first few believers as they are disciplined. Thus the church planter is more of a discipler than an evangelist. The church planter remains connected to this new body but does not allow the new church to become dependent on him or her. When this new community of believers is taught to obey they will respond by reaching beyond themselves to other communities who need to hear the same good news message and experience the same spiritual and social transformation. Thus the replication process will begin immediately rather than after a prolonged period of maturing by the first generation church.

The forming of the believers into a new church should not wait for a building, a trained pastor/leader, the appointment of elders, or many other elements that typically make up church. Instead, some of these elements should be seen as things that will come as the church matures.

When he was twenty-two years old, Ibrahim turned from being trained as a sheikh⁴ to becoming an ardent follower of Jesus. He was so thrilled that he had “found the truth” that he could not stop himself from telling others about it. First he led his wife to Christ, then his cousin Eyobe. Within three months, thirty of his neighbors had become believers in Jesus, creating no small stir in his Islamic community where his father was the current sheikh. Needing to band together, this small group of believers met regularly to support each other, study the Word together, worship their new-found God, and talk about how to reach still more. Ibrahim and Eyobe met regularly with the local church planter for discipleship, but the church planter was not regularly in the village and did not lead any church services. After a few more months, Ibrahim had a passion to take the “truth” that he had recently discovered to the next community so he took his cousin Eyobe and began to look for an open listener in the neighboring village. After initial resistance it was the sheikh of that community who first responded to the gospel, and through his witness a new community of believers quickly emerged. Ibrahim and Eyobe moved on to the next community where again God moved and a church was born. Eyobe planted three churches in less than twelve months because no one told him he couldn’t! He did the thing that naturally came out of the passion of his heart to share Jesus with his community and those around Him. Today these communities of believers are continuing to grow and mature as the people learn how to become obedient follow of Jesus.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 16:31-34. Acts 2:41-42.

God Often Uses Signs and Wonders to Catalyze Rapid Church Multiplication

Entrance into a new community for the purpose of evangelism and planting a church is often a difficult, in some communities a dangerous process. In most cases some kind of

⁴ Muslim spiritual teacher/leader.

religious atmosphere reigns over the community. In the case of East Africa it is usually Islam or traditional beliefs that are the prevailing religious/social power. A challenge to that religious control is never accepted easily. It is in this kind of environment that God often breaks through in a powerful supernatural way evidencing that He is greater than the existing spiritual forces. Sometimes it is a miracle like the sending of rain to a drought stricken community. Sometimes it is the healing of one sick for years with a debilitating disease. Visions are commonplace among Muslims who often see and hear God pointing them to Jesus as the Truth for which they have been seeking. And sometimes it may even be the raising of the dead.⁵ Many times these signs and wonders become the catalyst for an explosion of new churches throughout a resistant region where God has chosen to move.

Sheikh Amir shared with me about his wife's illness for twelve years. Having sought healing for his wife from the local witch as well as from the nearby Western medical services, the sheikh had finally come to the end of his resources. Eager for their mother's healing, the two teenage daughters finally persuaded their reluctant father to allow them to become the local *healer's* wives, a payment he was requesting for his healing services. After a day of intense praying and incantations by the witch the sheikh's wife remained unchanged. The daughters were spared. As a last resort Sheikh Amir agreed to have a Christian from a nearby community come to visit him. Declaring that he had no money to pay for healing services he was told that the prayer by the Christian would cost him nothing. The church planter came and prayed. God choose to miraculously heal the sheikh's wife, and almost overnight a church was born as many became believers, a testimony to the surrounding community to the superior power of Jesus Christ.

⁵ I went to Africa in 2005 from an evangelical tradition that gave scant attention to the miraculous, considering supernatural healings, visions, and miracles essential *past* acts of God. However, I soon discovered that they are indeed *present* acts of God as I personally witnessed such signs and wonders on a regular basis in this project in East Africa.

Miracles are found throughout the Old Testament from Moses and Aaron, to Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, and Isaiah. In the New Testament miracles abound in the ministry of Jesus, Paul, Peter, Stephen, and Philip. God continues to use miracles today in the planting of His church.

Supporting Scriptures: Lu. 10:8. Acts 14:1-18. Acts 20:7-12.

Churches Multiply Rapidly When It Is Part of Their DNA

The DNA is the gene structure that makes up the human body and determines how it will function and what and when it will reproduce. Thus the *correct* DNA is vitally important. In church planting part of the correct DNA is that the new-born church has the intention to reproduce quickly. Many existing churches do not have this intentionality as their DNA. They do not intend or plan to reproduce themselves at all, or their DNA is that they will try to start another church when they become mature and stable, a process that depending how it is defined may take ten years or more. This damaged DNA is in part the reason that most churches never start another church. In America only 4 percent of churches ever start another church.⁶ In Ethiopia, each year only 1.4 percent of churches intend to start a new church.⁷ The secret to rapid multiplication of churches lies in the starting of the first church. If the church is formed where the people are led to rely on the church planter rather than themselves through the study of the Word of God, this dependent mode will not lead them to move out quickly to form new churches.

Rapid reproduction is part of the DNA of the rabbit.⁸ Rabbits reach sexual maturity within four months. After a pregnancy of just one month an average of seven baby rabbits is

⁶ Clegg and Bird, *Lost in America*.

⁷ Degefa. A Research Project on the State of the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia.

⁸ It is difficult to determine where this illustration originated. Garrison refers to it in his or her book, *Church Planting Movements*. David Watson used it frequently in his early workshops I attended.

born. The cycle resumes in four more months. Elephants are different. Sexual maturity is not until eighteen years and twenty-two months after conception a single baby elephant is born. So in twenty years you could have three elephants or millions of rabbits.

Paul's expectation as he established new churches was that they should then reach beyond themselves to the communities and regions about them. He did not feel that *he* had to establish all the churches in a region. (Rom. 16:19-23). Rapid church multiplication is about churches that plant churches that plant churches and so on.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 28:16-20. Jn. 20:21.

Rapid Church Multiplication Will be Accompanied by Spiritual Conflict

Rapid church multiplication is an aggressive attack into enemy territory. Attempting to capture and occupy for Christ territory that has long been Satan's domain ensures that there will be a major spiritual battle. In some cases, the enemies' tactics are very obvious. Peoples' lives are indwelt and controlled by demonic beings. These powerful evil spirits maintain a stranglehold, primarily through fear, and demand obedience from the people through sacrifice and daily material offerings. Many look to the human leaders of the occult who seek to appease the spirits and ask for favors on behalf of the people. Individual lives, families, and entire communities are often totally enslaved to these demonic powers.

Demonic spirits may also seek to attack the church planter and certainly the new believers in a community by bringing persecution upon them. Sometimes it is the health and well-being of the church planter or his or her family that becomes the point of attack. Sometimes it is major family challenges in the lives and families of the new believers.

More subtle forms of attack may be in the areas of the non-biblical aspects of traditional church life that become barriers to an unreached community receiving the message of the gospel. If the enemy cannot stop the spread of the gospel in a given region he

may seek to discredit it by making sure it is wrapped in a foreign package so that it is rejected by the people. Another subtle attack may be aimed at the character of the church planter or the leaders. Pride, seeking after personal gain, or many other problem character issues may be tools of the enemy to hinder the spread of the gospel.

Paul understood this conflict from the beginning of his ministry. On the Damascus road he was commissioned by Jesus to go to the Gentiles "...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...." (Acts 26:18).

In rapid church multiplication there is a spiritual war for the very lives of millions of people. But one must also be clear about the nature of the conflict. The battle is not against people. People are not the enemy, even the aggressive fundamentalist Muslims. Satan and the spirits of darkness are the enemy. It is a battle against the fallen angels and powers of evil. Therefore, the weapons must be spiritual. To go up against this enemy with only education, strategies, or programs would be foolhardy. Powerful spiritual tools must be employed.

Jesus Christ is the Commander in this war. He is far more powerful than the enemy and will lead to victory. He has given armor for protection and the weapons needed to fight this battle. Prayer and obedience to the Word of God are our greatest weapons. The battle should never be fought without them.

Supporting Scriptures: Eph. 6:1-18. II Cor. 10:3-6.

Christian Culture Often Imposes Barriers to Rapid Church Multiplication

Perhaps the single greatest barrier to the rapid multiplication of the church is the church itself. Much of the modern church culture has become an obstacle to planting churches in new communities. Until the church planter is able to rightly discern that which is biblical and that which is simply traditional church culture he or she will struggle to

overcome this obstacle and may largely fail in the effort to see thousand of new churches emerge. If one is to be an effective church planter there must be a willing to give up church culture even that which may be considered to be very precious.

So, church planting often becomes more about removing the man-made barriers and allowing the church to spontaneously emerge than it is about the diligent efforts of the church planter to put the pieces in place to make church happen. Out from under the controls imposed by most traditional church planting processes, new churches should be fully equipped from the beginning with all the spiritual authority, so they can multiply on their own. The church is made for expansion. It will do so naturally, as God intended it to if the barriers that often come from man's insecurity, self-reliance, and self-aggrandizement are removed.

Supporting Scriptures: Phil. 2:5-11. I Cor. 9:19-22. Matt. 23:1-30.

Keeping Things Simple is Critical to Rapid Church Multiplication

Most traditional church planters are overburdened. They have been given a near impossible task. With limited resources (sometimes none), they have been sent to unreached communities to begin a church that is a replica of the well-established sending church (or an improvement). Their task includes building an "appropriate" (usually foreign styled) church structure, providing furnishings and equipment, initiating a variety of programs, developing a leadership and management structure initially from "volunteers," and a host of other challenging responsibilities. However, the more complex the church and church planting process becomes, the less likely a new church will emerge, and if it does it is unlikely to replicate.

Jesus demonstrated the simplicity of the community of believers in the establishment of His first group of twelve – the church in embryo. The gatherings of these first followers were always *informal meetings with Jesus Christ at the center*.⁹ And everyone was engaged.

Paul went about planting simple churches. His was a simple message of the gospel without complex creeds, confessions, or a systematic theology. After a few weeks or months of instruction he left behind a church that not only survived but thrived. It was a church left without buildings, paid clergy, a form of meeting, a hierarchy of leaders, a written creed, a church statement of faith or doctrine, or a music/worship program to follow. These early churches did not even have a written gospel nor did they appoint elders until much later in the life of the church.

The early church functioned as the church was intended to. As a simple gathering of believers who cared for one another, they became the foundation upon which the Christian church down through the ages has been established.

A special word about buildings: The Christian culture currently has completely locked the church building and the people of the church into one cultural understanding of church. As such many are unable to comprehend church apart from a physical structure. Indeed often one can even determine what *kind* (denomination) of church it is from the architecture of the building! Unfortunately, the building is one of the key cultural elements that often becomes a barrier to planting and multiplying the church. Many church buildings look *foreign*. In part the medium becomes the message and as such a foreign church building restricts the presentation of a truly indigenous form of the gospel. Usually outside funding is used to build such a structure, introducing the element of dependency into the church planting process. Most of all, the tendency is that church becomes formed around the church

⁹ Edwards, *How to Meet in Homes*, 34.

building rather than around the community of believers. When the focus is on the building the people suffer. Immediately church is institutionalized heightening the risk of unnecessary conflict with other religious institutions in the community.

The natural setting of the home, or for many rural African communities, under a tree, becomes the better environment for the practice of one *anothering* as the people of the church begin their life together as new believers in Christ. This simple, non-threatening environment empowers the people and brings a spiritual vitality to the emerging church that is difficult to obtain in the more institutional atmosphere of a church building.

Supporting Scripture: Acts 2:46.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING PRINCIPLES

The Truly Indigenous Church Will Multiply More Rapidly

When God began to establish His church upon the earth He sent His Son Jesus to incarnate – to live among the people. Jesus was born and grew up as a Jew. As He began to share God’s message of love and salvation He did so from inside the cultural context of His own people. It was a truly indigenous form of communication, and the message was presented in the cultural context of the day. Although a message from God – from the outside, it was presented by Jesus, an insider.

The message of the gospel today so often arrives dressed in the culture of the presenter, the church planter. The listeners have to overcome the great hurdle of accepting the outsider’s culture before they can accept the gospel.

The goal of this process of church planting is to sow the seeds of the gospel in the new community, largely absent the sower’s culture, and allow the insider who first accepts the message to then communicate the message throughout the community in a way that only a cultural insider can do because of his or her understanding of the community’s worldview. The first acceptors of the gospel are special people who can overcome cultural transmission problems and take the pure gospel to their community in a way that a truly indigenous church emerges.

Such an approach means that the training of the emerging leaders is critically important. If these new leaders are extracted from their community for training for an extended period of time, the gospel to which they are exposed and the form of church which

they experience are undoubtedly full of cultural elements that would not be appropriate for their community. Instead if they are discipled within the cultural context of the community they are better able to help a truly indigenous church to emerge. This indigenous church, free of foreign elements will replicate much more rapidly throughout the area where that culture is dominant.

Such a strategy would argue against sending large teams into an area from the outside, using a technology or methodology of communication that is not familiar to the community, or using outsiders as the primary communicators of the gospel. Instead it argues for a process of discovering the insider whom God has prepared to be the means of the communication of His message to that community. The work of the church planter then is not to do broad-based evangelism but to disciple the one or few insiders who will be the messengers to their own community. The new believers become the local evangelists. The church emerges as an indigenous expression of the gospel in that community.

Supporting Scriptures: Rom. 15:19b-24. I Th. 1:10.

Rapid Church Multiplication Must be Supported by Continuous Training

Training is at the core of this method of church planting. Rather than academic training, however, it is primarily a discipleship process as the challenge and understanding of church planting cascades down from one generation to the next. Training is done on-the-job in brief gatherings of church planters and in mentoring relationships between church planter and trainer. While Peter and John were declared by the religious leaders of the day to be “unschooled and ordinary men,” they nevertheless succeeded in turning the world upside down. It was because “they had been [in a discipleship relationship] with Jesus (Acts 4:13).”

Training is provided at the level of need. Church planters receive basic training in church planting principles. As a church planter moves to a level of regional coordinator,

additional training may be needed. One who advances to a level of training regional trainers may need even more in depth training.

The mode of training is also critical, particularly at the earlier levels of training. The problem with a Bible college or seminary-type training is that it uses a classroom-academic methodology that is inconsistent with the model of church that is being planted. The college-trained church planter may often feel uncomfortable with the informal atmosphere of the home gathering or the church under a tree. He or she wants to preach extensively rather than equip the people to discover the truth from God's Word for themselves so that they can become mature believers, not dependent on the church planter. The mode and tools of training should be consistent with the expected model of church.

Extractive training should also be avoided if possible. When emerging leaders are removed for significant periods of time from their local community they become an outsider to their own community. They often return from the training (if they return at all) with an outsider (and academic) view of church and ministry, with strange ideas and habits and are no longer able to relate naturally to their people.

On-the-job training is much more effective in terms of rapid church multiplication. This continuous training is done primarily through a discipling/mentoring relationship between the coordinator/trainer and the church planter. It reflects Jesus' model of training with the disciples. They were almost constantly *with* Him.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 4:13. Acts 11:22-26. Phil. 3:8-11. 2 Tim. 2:2.

Self-Supported Church Planters Are Generally More Effective Than Supported Ones

One of the mistakes that has been made with respect to church planting is to assume that the church planter must be a paid professional. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, non-paid, self-support people with relatively little training can plant churches using this

model partly because in this model the church planting is not attempting to grow a denomination with strict systems and procedures and doctrinal creeds that must be followed. The church planter is not to be the *primary* evangelist or the primary teacher/preacher of the Word. The church planter is to be the catalyst to initiate the process of establishing a new church in a given community, a church that is led by the people as they are in a discovery of God's Word with the empowering and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

One of the reasons that self-supported workers do better at church planting has to do with the issue of access. If one enters a new community as a religious worker, the immediate unspoken message is confrontational. It says, "I am here to bring an opposing religion and start a new church so that the people of this community will leave their current religion and adopt the new religion which I am bringing to you." Of course, instantly barriers go up. Resistance builds. Persecution begins. In many such cases church planters are run out of the community before they meet the first person.

A self-supported church planter, on the other hand, can enter the community for business, or as a teacher, or government worker. Through this vocation he or she builds relationships with people in the community. As relationships strengthen they begin to share their life looking for people whose hearts are open to hear a new message of good news. An informal Bible study begins. In a Muslim community it may be a comparative study of the Qur'an and the Bible. A few come to Christ and are discipled. It is then within these early believers that the church is born and begins to impact the broader community.

Another benefit of self-supported church planters is that the goal of saturating a region or nation with churches will never be reached if the process is dependent on a model that uses only paid church planters. Tens of thousands of new churches are needed in every nation of the world if everyone is to have a church within easy access of where they live.

This kind of church saturation calls for a different strategy: one where laypeople are the church planters and church leaders. In every area of the world where the church is multiplying rapidly, the majority of church planters are self-supported local workers passionately in love with Jesus and the community of believers and are in an ongoing discipleship relationship where they mature as leaders.

Using such a strategy means a change in training systems as well. Business people, farmers, teachers, government workers, etc. cannot leave their places of employment to attend training in a central distant location. Instead the training must be taken to them in ways that they can easily access it such as a model of discipleship/mentoring training. Each one trains a few who then pass the training on down to the next level. It is in this discipleship/training system that modeling communicates loudly. If the laity in the newly planted church is expected to be active in ministry, what better way to encourage and empower them than for the church planter/leader to be an example of a committed worker without support from the ministry.

Some church planters in this project continue to receive support, particularly those who go from one region to another. It may not be possible to have a business or get a job in the new region. These people are called “apostolic” church planters. Essentially they are cross-cultural even though the cultural divide may not be great. In cases like this they must overcome the obstacle of “why are you in my community?” Typically an apostolic church planter will engage in planting several churches at the same time by traveling from one local community to others nearby. By not being constantly present in one community for an extended period of time, local leadership is more readily encouraged to emerge and is empowered to provide leadership early in the church planting process.

Jesus chose twelve lay people, local workman to be on His leadership team, the leadership team that would launch the church that has endured down through the ages. These first church planters represented various professions but were not originally known as religious workers. They were simply followers of Jesus.

For most of his career in ministry Paul was a tentmaker. That means that he supported himself through business as he went about the work of the ministry. And in many places those who assisted to plant the church in a given city were also self-supported as business people, teachers, government officials, or other tentmakers.

Supporting Scriptures: Lu. 9:1-62. I Cor. 9:1-23. Acts 20:32-35. I Th. 3:6-15.

The Model of Church Must Be Reproducible by the Target Community Themselves

This system of church planting is all about rapid replication. It is not about super-church planters, those who go about planting thousands of churches themselves. One church planter planting many churches is an addition model. Instead, in this multiplication model, one church planter plants a few or several churches; *those* churches each plant several churches, which in turn, each plant several more. The planting is done quickly, most churches planting another within the first six months to two years. Using this model some churches have multiplied into two hundred within four years.

While this concept of multiplication is certainly not new, it has often been bogged down by the complex nature of the traditional/institutional church. If a multi-generational explosion of churches is going to be achieved, it is imperative that the model of church be easily reproducible by the target community themselves. Achieving this kind of multiplication means that there must be no elements in the model of church that the community is not able to produce. If it is dependent on something from the outside, then the replication process is slowed, sometimes brought to a complete halt.

The question of the place for the church to meet is one consideration. Meeting in homes is done easily from one community to another. Each community is able to provide such a place to meet *all by themselves*. If a building is to be erected, it should be a model of building that fits the community and is built *all by themselves*. Such an approach to the place where the church will meet makes it easily replicatable without restrictions in any community.

Leadership of the newly formed church is another critical element to be considered. If the model of church requires that the leadership have a level of education or credentialing not easily available in the community, the process of replication will be slowed. Instead, the same multiplication pattern from person to person and church to church can provide the training necessary to support the expanding movement.

This principle may also apply to the type of meetings held by the church. Foreign elements such as unfamiliar music styles and communication processes should be avoided. If it is to be easily reproduced these elements must also be indigenous so they can be reproduced by the people in the next community *all by themselves*.

An additional element to consider here is financing. If the church receives support, either in the form of support for the *local* church planter or pastor, or for the construction of a building, then the model of church carries a foreign element because that support came from the outside. It was not something that the community was able to produce *all by themselves*. For the church then to replicate in the next community, it must wait for additional support from outside.

Supporting Scriptures: I Cor. 9: 19-23.

Minimizing External Influence Intensifies the Replication Process

In communities where the church has been largely insulated from the outside, it has often multiplied more rapidly than where there is considerable external influence. This multiplication within a context of isolation was seen very vividly in China, where it was discovered after the missionaries were expelled during the Boxer Revolution that the Chinese church was more capable of rapid expansion in the absence of Western missionaries rather than through the ministry of Western missionaries.¹

Often outside influence comes in the form of denominational control. In an effort to expand the denomination the newly emerging church is required to follow certain prescribed systems and doctrines even though these may be at significant variance with the local culture. Sometimes simply trying to meet denominational standards keeps the new church inwardly focused for years rather than seeking to reproduce itself in neighboring communities.

Another powerful external influence is money. The source of the money almost always exerts a significant amount of power. When the power (control) is located outside the church a dependency is created that works against the replication process. Attention can be easily diverted from the lost and the resources within the community to collecting resources from outside.²

There may be some legitimate strategic uses of outside support such as support for apostolic church planters for a limited time or support to the community during times of famine or disasters. While a huge amount of money and materials in the name of “aid” has hurt much of the Third World, there are times when the broader outside church can come to

¹ Tetsunao Yamamori and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Witnesses to Power: Stories of God's Quiet Work in a Changing China* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000).

² Garrison. *Church Planting Movements*, 224.

the aid of the local community. Done with appropriate cultural sensitivity, this support can be a witness of the church to the community or in some cases an access to the community for the purpose of establishing relationships that would lead to the planting of a church.

Supporting Scripture: Acts 11:29-30.

CHAPTER 6

OPERATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING PRINCIPLES

Community Engagement Provides Access for Church Planting

Community engagement is about an incarnational approach to the community. Much of mission effort in the past has used a direct, often confrontational approach to the community with a heavy-handed presentation of the gospel. Sometimes the church planters would go in with a powerful team and blanket the community with the gospel message from a foreign perspective. Or they would loudly proclaim the message in the central marketplace using foreign technology at an offensive volume. In many such strategies there is no engagement with the community.

It is interesting that Jesus lived in His Nazarene community for thirty years before anyone really knew who He was.¹ He was incarnate in the community. He became part of the community working alongside Joseph as a carpenter. As he began His ministry He went about healing the sick and caring for the poor, engaging in the everyday life and struggles of His people.

As Paul and Jesus traveled from place to place they connected with people who were engaged in their communities. Aquilla and Priscilla were business people in the community. Cornelius was a military leader of his community. Lydia ran a fabric store. This community engagement became the platform upon which the church was born in these communities.

Thus the gospel is incarnated in the community. It comes from the inside through the human relationships of everyday life. Establishing and building upon these relationships is

¹ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 133.

fundamental to this model of church planting, which is what community engagement² is all about – gaining access to the community. It is a reason for being in the community, so that relationships can be established that will lead to the planting of a church. In areas hostile to the gospel it is particularly important to engage in the community prior to being exposed as a Christian.

Access ministries can be business, employment, human services, or even sports, travel or research. It must be a legitimate reason for being in the community. Preferably it is the type of engagement that leads to connection with a broad number of people. It should be something that is a felt need of the community; something the community wants. It should be simple so as to allow the church planter significant time for the development of relationships.

Access ministries should not create dependency on outside resources. Small for-profit projects often yield much higher long-term access and goodwill than charity or free services. They can become the beginning of the transformational impact on the community through the planting of a church(es), which will address not only the spiritual need of the community but the social and physical needs as well.

Community engagement should also be from the perspective of servanthood and humility. Jesus did not engage in His community from a position of power. Often the mistake is made of going into the community with more education, more money, more experience, and thus more power. If there is success in establishing a church, unless Jesus' model is followed, it will be a church that does not easily replicate because it is built upon positions of power. Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever

² Sometimes referred to as access ministries or platform ministries.

wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 23:25-28). Typically people without power, simple fisherman and farmers, small shop keepers and domestic workers, students and laborers, goat herders and ox cart drivers can become excellent church planters.

Community engagement is the means it is not the end. It must never become a substitute for evangelism, sowing the seeds of the gospel. It is the beginning of a continuum that leads to planting a vibrant functioning church that is bringing transformation to the entire community.

Many communities have been evangelized and churches planted without particular attention to community engagement. Many times God by His Holy Spirit chooses to move miraculously in a region, and whole communities are transformed through the direct proclamation of the gospel. Jesus said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me” (Jn. 12:32). Church planters should always be looking for those places where God is moving in a supernatural way.

At the same time, the mission landscape is littered with well meaning evangelism ministries that are now only dispensing humanitarian aid. They have lost their *reason for being* in their focus on goodwill and community involvement. This principle of community engagement addresses a strategy for rapid church multiplication. Unless the results are relatively immediate in terms of self-replicating churches being planted, the goals will not be met even if significant and valuable services are provided to the community.

Supporting Scriptures: I Pe. 2:12. Jn. 2:1-12. Matt. 23:25-28.

Evangelism is Done Primarily by New Local Believers

The work of the church planter is not primarily to do evangelism. Mass evangelism or even extensive personal evangelism by the outside church planter is not part of this church planting strategy. Instead the church planter is to find the local insider, the spiritually sensitive person that God has prepared to be among the first to respond to the gospel. As this local person is disciplined to salvation, he or she and the other new believers become the primary communicators of the gospel to the rest of the community. This method avoids many of the problems created through the cross-cultural attempt at contextualization of the gospel. Once the gospel is understood and accepted by the insider, the communication is of an indigenous form.

The church planter then, rather than being primarily an evangelist, is the equipper of the first few disciples, and the responsibility for evangelism rests upon these early believers, who can naturally present the gospel in the cultural context of their own people.

Paul did not embark upon his missionary journeys to do evangelism. He went to plant churches that would replicate themselves throughout the entire region and eventually throughout the world. From the beginning, the early converts became the local messengers to spread the gospel through their community. The fact that Paul never stayed long in any of these communities attests to the fact that the gospel spread through the local believers. No doubt it is *because* Paul was largely absent that the local believers were empowered as the church to be the continuing witness of the gospel to the community. Paul's absence did not result in a weaker gospel ministry but in fact a more powerful ministry that spread like wildfire through many of those cities where Paul had ignited the initial flame.

Supporting Scriptures: Lu. 10:1-2. Acts 2. I Cor. 9:19-23.

Focusing on Families is More Effective than Extracting Individual Believers

Over and over the pattern of church establishment and even church replication in East Africa has been through the natural web of family relationships. Previously a pattern of extraction of an individual who showed interest in the gospel was followed, which often led to the isolation of that individual from the community, thus actually hindering the process of church planting. A focus on the family instead may move the process of evangelism forward more slowly but will result in a broader acceptance of the gospel later with the establishment of a community of believers. In clan cultures individual decision making is not the norm. It is culturally insensitive to target individuals with the gospel and to encourage them to break with family tradition to embrace a different religion. Such a cultural misstep may lead to years of frustration in attempting to plant a church in the target community.

Sometimes it is better wisdom to say to the interested person, often a young man or woman, “Talk to your family about what you are hearing about God before you make a decision to follow Jesus.” Those who begin the family dialogue before conversion have often avoid the hostile resistance and family alienation that usually follows a decision independent of family consideration.

The general flow of the New Testament stories of evangelism and church planting readily support this principle. The only known cases of individual conversions are those of Jesus, Paul, and the Ethiopian eunuch who were baptized individually. In all other cases presented in the New Testament it is about families; the jailor and his family, the temple ruler and his household, a tentmaking couple, and Lydia and her household.

When an entire family comes to Christ, as is often the case in East Africa, there is a built-in support system for the new believers. The church can begin almost immediately in that home. As transformation takes place within the family they can begin to share the

message of the gospel beyond their own family unit, repeating the process again by bringing another family to Christ. Certainly the family unit is the most logical of places to establish the local church.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 10. Acts 16:11-15; 16-34.

Finding the Person of Peace Accelerates the Establishment of a Reproducing Church

Perhaps no one principle in this strategy of church planting has had such a singularly powerful impact as the principle of finding the person of peace. From a strategic perspective it becomes one of the key elements in this overall process. Many church planters have been freed from the overwhelming burden of an institutional/traditional method of church planting by adopting the person of peace principle.

Nekarat is a diligent and committed church planter. For years he worked tirelessly succeeding in establishing thirteen churches throughout his region. By most accounts he was a very successful church planter. But for Nekarat it was not enough. Learning the principle of the person of peace he immediately changed his whole approach and began looking for that special person or family that God had already prepared in each community to receive the gospel message and to open their community to the gospel. Within the next two years seventy new churches emerged in his region.

Fundamentally the person of peace principle recognizes that church planting is a spiritual activity whose process and results are ordained by God. It is not a man-made implementation of careful planning and effective execution, although God may call church planters to do both those things. Church planting that results in rapid multiplication is about going where God directs, when He ordains, and according to His strategy and plan.

Many church planting strategies focus on selecting a communities that fit pre-determined criteria, developing a massive plan for saturating that community with the gospel message, then initiating a follow-up plan to scoop the responders into a religious building.

In Luke 10 Jesus outlined a different plan. He sent out the seventy-two into all the towns and villages *where He was about to go*. The instructions were specific. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him, if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house” (Lu. 10:5-7).

The role of the church planter is to find the person of peace. Once discovered he or she should then spend considerable time with that family discipling them to Christ and teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. The family of peace may then become the initial expression of the church and as they follow their natural web of relationships they will lead others in the community to join their fellowship. This church, growing out of a household of local believers will be an indigenous form of church that will be much easier to replicate in the next communities than many other more complex models of church.

The person of peace is someone whom God has already prepared, who is interested in spiritual matters, and who opens the community to the gospel. This principle is reinforced by the stories of many of the persons of peace in the Bible; Cornelius, Lydia, Aquilla and Priscilla, Stephen, and perhaps even the Samaritan women who met Jesus at the well, to name a few.

Finding the person of peace grows out of the process of building relationships in a community. As friendships are established spiritual statements can be made, spiritual issues addressed. The church planter must be deliberate about finding the person of peace. It

cannot be a matter of entering a community and waiting for the right persons to declare themselves. If careful and frequent connections with many people with the intent of engaging them in spiritual conversation do not reveal the person of peace after perhaps six months, it may be an indication that this is not God's place and time and the church planter should move on, "shaking the dust off his or her feet." Leaving does not mean abandoning the community forever. The church planter should continue to pray for this community and at some point may return. It just means that he or she is following the strategic process described in Luke 10 to bring the gospel message to new communities.

Initially in the East Africa project the Muslim sheikhs were avoided. They were considered to be the enemy. As the principle of the person of peace began to take hold, some church planters started to focus on the sheikhs. They were indeed often the *spiritually sensitive* people in the community. They were influential with the people. Many sheikhs were discovered to be the person of peace to bring the gospel into the community. In one part of the Rift Valley the church planter began to seek out sheikhs with the gospel message. Within three months, five local sheikhs had become believers and were deeply engaged in a discipleship process with the church planter sometimes meeting together several times a week. These five then began to carefully share the newly discovered "truth" with other sheikhs in nearby communities. Within twelve months, seventy-two sheikhs became followers of Jesus. The goal in this area is to see one thousand sheikhs become Christ-followers and then to "go public." The desire is that the entire community will be transformed through the power of the gospel.

Supporting Scriptures: Lu. 10:1-11. Acts 16:11-15. Acts 18:1-4 with Rom. 16:1-5.

Discipling Every Believer Creates a Multitude of Needed Ministers

Every believer, specially gifted by the Spirit of God, is to be a minister in the work of the Kingdom. Kingdom work is not the domain of the “professional” trained paid church planter/pastor/leader. In fact, the separation of clergy and laity has perhaps become one of the greatest barriers to the engagement of the believers in the ministry. This unbiblical class distinction leaves most believers with a secondary role in the work of the ministry.

Classified as laity or volunteers they are generally expected to *serve* the professional leaders in secondary functions leaving the important roles to those who are trained, credentialed, and paid.

In this new strategy of church planting, it is clearly the laity who are the ministers. They are the leaders of the newly emerging church. In many cases, they are really the ones who launch the church as they are discipled through the process by the church planter. The outside church planter who comes into the community is the catalyst who finds the persons of peace, discipled them, but leaves the real work of the ministry to new local believers as they become obedient followers of Jesus. It is a strategy that believes that all the resources for the work of the ministry God has put in the harvest.

The criticality of discipling every believer, because every believer is to be a minister using the gifts assigned to them by the Spirit, leaves no one out. There are no spectators. Everyone must be empowered to do what God has ordained them to do.

This fundamentally changes the role of the church planters. They must resist the temptation of *doing* the work and focus on equipping the new believers to do the work of the ministry. From the very beginning nothing is done by the church planter that could be done by the local believers. It becomes part of the DNA of the new church. The ministry is done by the believers and unless the believers do the ministry it doesn't get done. It is an

unhealthy church where the church planter or paid pastor is the minister and the people are the spectators, or are relegated to secondary roles of ministry.

When the people are the ministers there is a ready army of workers. The local believers win their neighbors to Christ. The local believers lead the newly formed church including all the functions of church. The local believers minister to the needs of the people in the community. The local believers go out and plant new churches. Rapid church multiplication simply cannot happen through a strategy of “professional” paid ministers. It will only happen when the believers are empowered and engaged in the work of the ministry.

Supporting Scriptures: I Pe. 2:4-12. I Cor. 12. Matt. 20:25-28.

Teaching Obedience Produces Mature Disciples Rather Than Knowledgeable Converts

Much of modern day discipleship is based on the acquisition of knowledge. In many circles it revolves around teaching the doctrines of a particular denomination. Books, tapes, videos, and materials of all sorts have been produced to support the discipleship process. Much of this leads to knowledgeable converts but does not make mature disciples. Converts may be religious, but they may not be obedient.

What is a mature disciple? It is one who is obeying *all* the commands of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20) and teaching others to do the same. A mature disciple is a disciple-maker.

This strategy of church planting is about replication. Disciples replicate by making other disciples. Leaders replicate by developing other leaders. Churches replicate by planting other churches. If a believer is not making other disciples, that believer is not an obedient disciple of Jesus. Church planters are encouraged to monitor carefully who they are training. If the people they are discipling are not obedient, the church planter should discontinue the discipleship process. Participants are told, “This discipleship process is

about obedience to the Word of God. If you choose only to study the Word but not to obey, this process is not for you.” Only obedience, not knowledge will produce mature disciples.

As maturing disciples follow Jesus the church will expand.

Supporting Scriptures: Psa. 119. Josh. 23:6. Deut. 6:4-9. Matt. 28:19-20.

Discovery Bible Study Increases Obedience to the Word

In a strategy where the church planter is not the long term leader, where the leaders of the newly formed church emerge from the harvest in a relatively short period of time, and where every believer is truly a minister, it is critical that the believers are taught how to learn from the Word of God for themselves. It is not enough that an itinerant church planter periodically comes to their community to teach or preach. Rather the people themselves must be taught how to read/hear the Word, understand what God is telling them to do, and what they must do to obey.

When the people hear from God themselves through the study of the Word, it is much more likely that they will obey. Instead of obeying a set of institutional rules or regulations which may vary considerably from one church to another, they determine what God is saying to them and how they are to obey in their cultural context. Instead of obeying the teacher who is interpreting the Word and often telling the people how to obey, the Holy Spirit becomes the One to guide them into understanding the truth, convicting them of sin, and convincing them to obey. The church planter must be careful never to take the place of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people. Christ must be the true functioning head of the church not just during the time of the gathering of the church for worship but throughout the everyday life of the people of the church.

The argument that the Bible is too difficult for the average believer, or at least the new believer to understand, minimizes the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is always

active in the life of the believer. He can be depended upon to instruct and bring understanding to the student of the Word. Extensive curriculum that explains the Scriptures may in fact rob the believers of the opportunity to hear God speak to them as they study the Word together. In the context of community the believers should function together hearing and obeying the Word of God.

The Discovery Bible Study³ process is a simple method for such a study of the Word. It looks at a passage of Scripture in three ways: what does the Scripture say, what does it mean, and what must I do to obey? Using this simple process the Holy Spirit will guide the believers into an understanding and a response of obedience to the Word of God.

Using Discovery Bible Study does not mean that there is not a place for teachers. The New Testament says that teachers will be given as gifts to the church for the edifying and building up of the believers. The point I am making here is that these teachers emerge from the community of believers as their gifts are exercised. It is not the outsider who is the long term teacher. Instead the church can quickly function on its own because it is under the headship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The teacher must never rob the people of their opportunity and responsibility to hear from God themselves both individually and corporately as they study the Word.

Supporting Scriptures: Deut. 6:1-9. Acts 17:11.

Culturally Appropriate Witness and Worship Quickly Opens Hearts to the Gospel

The spiritual life is at the core of every person. God has made people to be in relationship with Him. Human beings long for the kind of community where they touch other each at this very center of their being. Every society goes to great length to fill the

³ The Discovery Bible Study process is discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

spiritual vacuum within the human heart that is the result of sin which destroys this community, separating people from God and from one another.

Outside of the West much of the world functions in a trade language or official national language that is different than the mother tongue. Often Bible translations are in these official or trade languages, making it difficult to communicate to the core of the human spiritual being. When addressing this spiritual part of the people it is important to use their heart language.

Not only is this important for understanding at the deepest level, the choice of language also communicates *foreign* God or God *of the people*. If the gospel is to have a truly indigenous expression among the people it must be presented in the mother tongue, the language of the heart. When the message is in the everyday language that the people speak at home, then it more readily becomes part of the everyday life of the people. Obedient response is not to a foreign or outside influence but to that which is part of one's own culture.

It takes years for someone to learn to communicate in the heart language of another people. Most never become fluent at the very deepest level. They will always have a cultural accent. Because they will always be known to be from the outside, the strategy of using the insider is critical. The insider communicates in the heart language of his or her people. When the person of peace is discovered in a community, the Holy Spirit will interpret the message from the church planter to this first respondent who will be able to overcome the cultural and language variance. It's a supernatural act of God. The person of peace and the first few believers who are discipled by the outside church planter will then communicate the gospel message in the heart language of the people who will much more quickly and readily respond. The receptivity of the people at Pentecost was significantly heightened

because the people heard the message of the gospel in their own heart language. "...That day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

Heart language may not only be an issue of the words that are used. In many oral societies stories are the means of communication of fundamental truths to that society which are passed this way from generation to generation. Jesus used the heart language of the people when He spoke in His society using parables. "And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them" (Acts 4:33, 34). Speaking to people in their heart language may mean using a style of communication that is typical of their culture.

Music also touches the heart. More than speaking, music will minister at the deeper levels of the spiritual core of the being, so it is critical that the music is also in the heart language of the people. Not only the words but the music style should come from their culture. It is a tremendous learning and worship experience for the new community of believers to create their own music. In some cultures music is the means of conveying critical messages from generation to generation but if the music used is *foreign* it will convey from generation to generation that our religious life is foreign, borrowed from another place and time.

The majority of unreached people groups belong to societies where minority languages are spoken creating a significant challenge for church planters who go from one society to another. To learn these minority languages in order to speak in the heart language of the people is a daunting task. The strategy of using the insider whom God has prepared to be the communicator of the gospel to his or her own people helps to address that issue. If the church planter with significant language limitations disciplines the insider and the insider takes the message to the people, the people will receive the message in their heart language,

significantly increasing the response and resulting in a more rapid multiplication of the church.

Supporting Scriptures: Acts 2:1-12.

Persecution Dramatically Accelerates the Expansion of the Church

In almost every case where the church has been persecuted, it has grown dramatically. Communist governments, for example, have confiscated properties, burned Bibles, jailed pastors, and harassed the believers. In spite of their attempts to shut down the church it has most often exploded exponentially during times of persecution, while growth has slowed when persecution stops. This explosion also happened in the New Testament world. "...Those who had been scattered by persecution in conjunction with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message" (Acts 11:19).

Sometimes the persecution comes in the form of repression by national or local governments. These regimes, intent on stamping out the church have succeeded in martyring thousands of believers. Militant members of other religious groups also attack Christians and their leaders. Sometimes the persecution is internal, when other Christian groups attack the church planting strategy, or worse attempt to prevent the spread of churches not connected to their denominations.

Persecution is a *normal* part of Christian ministry. Almost all the biblical leaders and prophets were persecuted, many of them martyred. Perhaps something is wrong today if the church faces no persecution. Paul said, "... everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). And Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of me" (Matt. 5:10-12).

While persecution of any rapid church multiplication movement is to be expected, this strategy of church planting attracts less persecution. Because they are not as visible, churches that meet in the home or under the tree are less vulnerable to attacks than those that have more elaborate structures and highly organized programs. It is interesting that during times of severe persecution when the church has been forced to function without buildings, pastors, programs, etc. it has grown dramatically. Perhaps it is as much the change of form of *doing* church as it is the persecution that has caused the explosion in growth.

While not rejecting persecution, church planters should not bring it upon themselves by doing unnecessary things which arouse suspicion and anger in the community. Communicating in a way that is not culturally acceptable may be one example. Loud music and shouting that offends an entire neighborhood may bring on persecution unnecessarily. The message of the gospel should be declared boldly and continuously but not without sensitivity to the people of the target community.

In 2006 church planters in one East African community known for death and destruction, reported that fundamentalist Muslims had risen up against the Christians instigating a series of violent attacks. When it was all over, two hundred believers had been brutally murdered because of their refusal to deny their faith in Jesus Christ. However, their deaths were not in vain. Two years later from the soil that was watered with the blood of these martyrs, there was an abundant harvest as over two hundred new churches were planted in the midst of this hostile community.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 5:10-12. Matt. 10:16-23. II Cor. 12:10. Acts 11:19-26. Acts 7.

Departure of the Outsider Empowers Local Leadership Leading to Greater Expansion

Perhaps one of the saddest legacies of the twentieth century missionary movement is that the missionaries failed to leave. With a well-meaning commitment many stayed for a

lifetime in the community where they began their ministry. In much of the current church planting, the expectation is that the church planter becomes the pastor and stays for an extended period of time.

The strategy of the church planter staying for a long period of time is self-defeating in terms of the maturing of the local church, leadership development, and multiplication of churches. It is critical that the church planter has a clear exit plan from the beginning. He or she must intend to leave soon and that should be clear to the newly forming church. From the start the church planter should be working toward departure. The aim is to work oneself out of a job, developing from within the community indigenous leaders to lead from an even greater position of strength.

A timetable cannot be set for the departure of the church planter. Each case must be considered individually. However, typically it will be from three months to a maximum of two years. While at the time of departure the church planter may not completely separate from the church, he or she should not be engaged in the leadership of the church but give mentoring oversight and encouragement to the leaders and to the body as a whole.

The on time departure of the church planter accomplishes several things. First, it creates the expectation that leadership must come from within. Often leaders will not emerge in the presence of the church planter. It is only as the church planter begins to withdraw that the local leadership is challenged to take up its rightful responsibility. Secondly, it empowers the local believers to step into the roles for which God has appointed them. Typically elders are not present as long as the church planter is engaged in the church. As the church matures and the church planter departs, elders will begin to emerge and will be recognized by the believers. The church planter then will also acknowledge these elders and leave the people to take full responsibility for their church.

Dependency is a significant problem in many churches today. The church may depend on outside resources and influence, or it may depend on the outside church planter for leadership and guidance. The church planter, however, must never take the place of headship of the church, rather always directing the people to seek direction from Christ as head of the church. The church must be dependent totally on Christ and on the resources He has placed within them.

Jesus did not remain long upon the earth. He said, “Unless I go away the Counselor will not come to you” (Jn. 16:7). From the very beginning He understood that His role was to bring God’s message of salvation to the lost and dying world and then to leave it in the hands of the church to be His continuing presence and witness on the earth. The church needed to take responsibility for that message and take it to the ends of the earth as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28.

Paul also did not stay long with the churches that he planted. In most cases he stayed from three to six months sometimes visiting back again in a year or sometimes not for five years. When Paul left these newly formed churches he left them without books (even without a Bible), pastors, educators, schools, and buildings. He even left them without pastors or leaders!⁴ But these new believers functioned; they were the church as it was intended to be. And they quickly replicated. These are the churches that soon multiplied into the thousands and now into the tens of millions around the world.

Supporting Scriptures: Jn. 16:7-11. Acts 8:26-39.

⁴ Edwards, *How to Meet in Homes*, 52.

CHAPTER 7

LEADERSHIP CHURCH PLANTING PRINCIPLES

A Clear Vision of the Target Area Saturated with Churches Propels the Church Planting Effort Forward

In initial training programs that were conducted as part of this project, many leaders acknowledged that a lack of vision had allowed them to be satisfied with only incremental growth. Unable to formulate a clear vision of their city, region, or nation saturated with churches, they set goals based only on their perceived capacity to expand, rather than looking at the overall need. They thought in terms of addition rather than multiplication, known resources rather than God's promised provision of everything that is needed.

Thinking in terms of actually seeing an entire community, city, or country transformed through the presence of churches in every community and neighborhood brings a whole different dynamic to the church planting process. With this kind of vision several questions arise. Why has there not been this kind of growth? What are the barriers? What is different about the church in the places of the world where exponential growth is happening? Should something be done differently so that God might move in such a way that churches are planted everywhere?

The first church was moved by vision. Jesus had taught the people to expect to do greater things than he had done. His principle of the harvest was that there should be an abundance. Before He left the earth Jesus' final command to His followers was to go and make disciples of *all* people groups. That is the central vision. The first church did multiply rapidly from the initial apostles to 120; then thousands were added, sometimes in one day.

The truly transformation leader must be a person of vision. Not concerned about prestige, status, or position he or she must be willing to take risks, to embrace change, to innovate, and to ask the very hard questions about the condition of the church. The vision must be focused on building the Kingdom not growing the denomination or organization. But vision cannot be static. Beginning with the end in mind, the leader must also be able to put actions to the vision. And the leader cannot be the sole keeper of the vision. He or she must be able to arouse a vision in others inspiring and empowering them to work together toward a common goal.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 6:10. Lu. 10:18. Lu. 19:11-27.

The Leadership Model is Critical to the Health and Replication of the Church

This strategy for church planting and rapid church multiplication requires a whole different leadership model. According to the world's standards (and even to most of the standards of leadership in the modern church) it is an upside-down model of leadership. It essentially says that leadership of the church is in the hands of the people. It is the people, not the church planter or pastor, or even subsequently the elders who are ultimately responsible for the church.¹ Gone are the hierarchical patterns of leadership that place one person at the top with near absolute authority in all matters concerning the church, with various levels of leadership authority falling below until at the bottom it comes to the majority of the believers who have no responsibility or authority at all. It is not even possible from the New Testament to assert that leadership in the early church was "official."

In this model of leadership that recognizes the priesthood of all believers, the church planter or pastor functions as coordinator, equipper, and shepherd, leading not as

¹ Note that Paul's epistles are addressed to the believers, not to the elders with repeated challenge to the believers to "be of one mind." Consensus among the believers was the mode of decision making.

hierarchical head (Christ is the head of the church), but as one of the community of believers.² Furthermore, they do not do the ministry on behalf of the believers. The believers are to be the ministers. They are to do the work of the ministry.

As the apostolic church planter withdraws, elders³ appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) give oversight to the church. They are always indigenous, part of the local community of believers. They emerge as elders by character, not by knowledge, status, or election. As overseers their function is to be examples to the people not to control them. (I Pe. 5:1-4). They do not make decisions on behalf of the people, the church.

There is simply no justification in the New Testament for the single leader model that is common in the church today. There was always a plurality of elders, and there is no indication of hierarchy among them. They had different functions and may have been at various levels of maturity, but not differing levels of authority.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 23:1-12. Matt. 20:25-28. Acts 20:17, 28-29. I Pe. 5:1-4.

Replication of Appropriate Leadership is Essential for Rapid Expansion

Godly leadership is critical to this strategy of church planting and replication. Truly transformational leaders will continuously replicate themselves. They do not hold authority in. They do not fear competition from new upcoming leaders. If there is to be a movement of rapid multiplication of churches there must be a rapid multiplication of leaders. These will primarily be indigenous leaders from the harvest. They will not typically be academically trained, ordained, or paid, but as insiders their leadership will be essential to the development of the movement.

² Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

³ In most of the churches Paul planted elders were appointed several years after the church was established. Acts 14:23

Developing this kind of leadership is essentially a discipleship process. Peter and John became great leaders of the early church because, “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Paul said, “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1) This leadership development is not about extraction to a cloistered place of academic learning but an active engagement in the community of need. It is an on-the-job learning process. In this day by day walking together process leaders emerge. They evidence their capacity to be leaders by a willingness to follow, to sacrifice, to learn, to serve, and to be brutally honest.⁴ Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 4:18-22. I Cor. 11:1. 2 Tim. 2:2.

A Culture of Empowerment is Essential for Rapid Church Multiplication

One of the greatest tragedies in the modern church is the clergy-laity division. Initiated a relatively short time after the explosion of the early church it has stolen ministry from God’s people and concentrated it in the hands of a few, the so-called priest, bishops, and pastors.⁵ As such, it has relegated the role of the believers to secondary responsibilities if they are engaged at all in the work of the ministry. Most of the leadership roles are strictly reserved for the ordained recognized pastoral leader(s). Perhaps like nothing else this has contributed greatly to the shortage of available workers and leaders in today’s church.

The truly transformational leader, on the other hand, understands that leadership is about the stewardship of power. The power is not inherent within the leader. It is delegated from God. Part of the response, therefore, rather than hoarding the power, is to delegate it to others, empowering them to be the leaders God intends them to be.

If rapid church multiplication is to occur, the current culture of control by leaders must give way to a culture of empowerment all throughout the church. The people must be

⁴ David Watson, “Leadership.” Lecture given at CPM Training Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, June 2006).

⁵ Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, 221.

released to be the ministers of the church God intended them to be. Young leaders must be disciplined and empowered to start new churches.⁶ They must have the freedom to make mistakes. Women must be freed to engage on an equal level with men in the work of ministry.⁷ Power must be given away.

Supporting Scriptures: Matt. 20:25-28.

⁶ I Tim. 4:12-13. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”

⁷ Gal. 3:28. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This project began with a simple but audacious goal – to catalyze the planting of ten thousand churches in East Africa by 2010. I have to admit that when I “adopted” the goal along with a supporting mission team in San Jose California just prior to the launch of this project, I was secretly a skeptic. Why would I be bold enough, some might say foolish enough, to think that God might use this mission team to help establish ten thousand new communities of believers throughout East Africa? Carried along by the momentum of the others on the team, who I later learned were also skeptics, I moved to East Africa and began the process of research and implementation of a strategy for rapid church multiplication. And God began to move in an incredible way. By the end of 2008, 4,276 new churches had begun. The stunning thing was that the number of new churches emerging each year almost doubled from the prior year. The first few months of 2009 indicate the momentum is continuing. If it doubles again by the end of 2009, the network that has been developed will have planted 8,552 churches. It seems now that the 2010 goal of ten thousand churches will be reached.

Success Factors

What were the factors that led to this explosion of new churches? I believe the key factors are these:

1. It is clearly a movement of God. He chose to “build His church” in this region at this time.

2. A new paradigm of church, a simple church that has been able to replicate rapidly has been widely adopted.
3. The emergence of hundreds of empowered church planters *from the harvest* because of the new understanding of the qualifications and role of the church planter has provided a huge army of workers.
4. A growing number of transformational leaders have been willing to break with the status quo and embrace a new strategy for church planting. These are leaders who have given up hierarchical control, large organizational development, and personal status to serve and empower those to whom God has called them.
5. A high percentage of partners have consistently followed the principles of this church planting strategy and have been truly effective in terms of rapid church multiplication.
6. Sustainability has been built into the model so that by avoiding dependency on the outside except for the initial *apostolic* vision and impetus, the church is able to be established and to replicate *all by itself*.

Some regions continue to struggle. In most cases these are areas that have not been consistent in the implementation of the full strategy. In these cases it is usually the leadership that has not yet made a complete transition. The East Africa church planting experience has clearly demonstrated that when only some of the principles are implemented churches do not replicate consistently. Nor, is the church as strong. It does not move as quickly toward maturity. Maturity and replication seem most often to go together.

The Future of the Revolution

A revolution has clearly begun to take hold. In cities, towns, and villages throughout East Africa, thousands of revolutionary grassroots *communities of believers* have emerged,

bringing transformation to their entire communities. Marriages and families have been renewed as members learn to love and care for one another. Businesses have started to operate with moral integrity. Local leaders have begun to work for the benefit of the people they serve. Slums are being transformed into communities where caring people help one another, bringing new life and vitality to previously dark and dangerous places. All throughout the region the light of the gospel is spreading as churches plant churches which plant churches which plant churches.

Almost four years exactly from when I came to Ethiopia to start this project God is moving me on. I am leaving East Africa in a few months. The project here is in God's hands and He has chosen several wonderful transformational African leaders who will carry the project forward. There is no question that God's mantle is upon them and that they will do even greater things in the years to come.

Threats

Will the revolution continue? I believe that the revolution is unstoppable, although it faces many threats; there are many counter-revolutionaries both internal and external who would seek to stop the advance.

One threat is prayerlessness. Success can breed an attitude of independence from God. If the new church becomes an "organization," dependency shifts to systems and structure, to policy and procedure, and to money and management. Prayerlessness becomes the expression of independence from God.

Another threat can be money. Money can often draw leaders away from the revolution toward personal benefit. Well intentioned but destructively placed Western support can stall the grassroots spread of the revolution.

Local leadership can stifle the revolution by seeing themselves as indispensable and creating a kind of internal dependency that shifts the focus inward, inhibiting replication. Hungry for power, leaders can turn on the people tearing the revolution from their hands. Instead of empowering the people they use them for their own personal advancement and aggrandizement.

A protectionist mentality can arise where leaders, in the name of safeguarding the purity of doctrine (their brand), attempt to impose controls over the revolution for the benefit of their organization, or they seek to capture the success of the revolution for the benefit of their denominational advancement. In some cases newly established churches are captured and *brought under* the “covering” of (perhaps a well-meaning) denomination. Usually the replication process stops if the new church, having gained status within a recognized denominational structure must now follow the denominational directives which typically mean that expansion/replication is the responsibility of the distant headquarters and not the local community of believers which instead pays a tax to the headquarters to do the job for them.

The desire for a perceived position of status can also be a threat to the revolution. The new community of believers sees the outward signs of “success” by other churches – paid staff, buildings, equipment, and large congregations, and it becomes inwardly focused. Instead of focusing on the next community in need of hearing the gospel, they focus on the development of the church organization. They discover that they too can have keyboards, a neat cement block and steel roof church structure, the prominence of an educated and ordained pastor sent from a denominational headquarters in the capital city, and other perceived benefits if they will cultivate the support of the international Christian community. Multiplication no longer becomes the goal. Instead internal development takes over as they focus on acquiring more and more “success.”

Too many emerging revolutions have been thwarted when the outside influence catalyzing the revolution becomes the controlling entity that stymies the movement by staying on to control and manage the revolution. It must be grassroots. Once it has caught hold it must spread like wildfire on its own fanned by the winds of the Holy Spirit, driven forward by the local revolutionaries, the guerilla fighters who can bring about the revolution from within.

The Christian leaders in the West may be tempted to ask, “How do we keep the revolution going?” Perhaps this is the wrong question. Probably the question should be “When should we abandon the revolution leaving it in the hands of the local believers?” It is the church planter’s role to help ignite the flames of revolution but then to get out of the way leaving the new Christians to the Holy Spirit. Too many leaders think it is the organizational structures that they have put in place, the local leaders they support (read *control*), the money they provide, and the picture of success they generate that will sustain the revolution. Could it be rather that the long-term success as a revolutionary movement is dependent on leaving the local leaders alone? If these leaders have been training in the right paradigm of church and the ethos of multiplication with dependency only on the Spirit of God through the discovery of the Word, can they be left only in the hands of the Holy Spirit? If what has emerged is a revolutionary ethos of an alternate spiritual community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God spreading like a guerilla force of committed revolutionaries intent on “taking the land,” rather than an organizational structure with its attendant systems, controls, and resources, can the outside leaders then step away and leave the new revolutionary community in God’s hands? Could it be that through the indwelling Holy Spirit the new revolutionaries will “do even greater things?”

Long Live the Revolution

What is happening in East Africa in terms of explosive church multiplication is not a revolution made by human hands. It is God's revolution. He started it when He sent His Son to live upon the earth for a few short years. After three years of ministry Jesus left. He did not leave behind an organization. What He left behind was a community of believers, a small band of revolutionaries who succeeded in turning the world upside down. He left them with a paradigm shift in thinking about God and His Kingdom. And He left them with His Holy Spirit as a guidance counselor and teacher. That same Holy Spirit will guide the emerging new church in East Africa. Great care must be taken to not provide any substitutes that would draw the emerging communities of revolutionaries from a complete dependence on God for the guidance and means of carrying the revolution forward so that the "glory of God covers the entire nation like the waters cover the sea."

Long live the revolution!

APPENDIX ONE – Observational Research Field Trips¹

(removed for security reasons)

APPENDIX TWO – Annual Statistical Report 2008

(removed for security reasons)

¹ Many of these field trips included multiple agendas. Training, mentoring, coaching were often done in addition to observational research.

APPENDIX THREE – Country Ministry Report Form

Country Quarterly Report

Country: _____

Quarter: _____ Year: _____

Prepared by: _____

Date prepared: _____

Notes:

1. *The statistics relating to the Quarterly Report should be provided on the “Country Quarterly Statistical Ministry Report” (Excel document).*
2. *Please provide all the information you can. The boxes will expand as needed.*
3. *If there is nothing to report in a given section, leave it blank.*

Provide two stories of specific results of the ministry during this quarter. This could include the testimony of someone who has come to Christ, evidence of how God has moved in a community, an experience of one of the church planters, or some other aspect of ministry. Add as much space as needed to provide the entire stories. *(Please make the stories “**security sanitized**.” That means if there are security issues surrounding the story or the people in the story don’t use real names of people or places. Tell the story in such a way that it does not jeopardize the security of the people involved.)*

How have you seen God at work in your ministry during this past quarter?

What difficulties/challenges have you encountered in the ministry in this past quarter?

Provide prayer requests *(Be sure that prayer requests are “security sanitized.”)*

Specific answers to prayer

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VITA

David Hunt is a founding director of Horn of Africa Mission. After four years as coordinator of church planting ministries in East Africa he is transitioning to the role of Vice President for North American Church Planting for NewGenerations International, the church planting division of CityTeam Ministries with which he has served in several capacities since 1984. He graduated from Prairie Bible College in Alberta, Canada, did post-graduate work at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree at Bakke Graduate University in Seattle, Washington. David and his wife Lynn currently reside in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia along with their Ethiopian son, Tariku. Sons Ryan, Jason, and Brooklyn and five grandchildren live in San Jose, California.