

MODELS FOR RAISING UP CHURCH PLANTERS

How Churches Become More Effective Through Intentional Leadership Development

by Glenn Smith

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The absence of strong leadership is the number-one reason church plants fail. This sentiment seems to be a widespread view among pastors and ministry leaders who are seriously engaging in church planting.

“Everything rises and falls on leadership,” adds Nolen Rollins the missions pastor at **Summit Church** in Bonita Springs, FL (<http://www.summitlife.com>). “Our success is based on God being with us, but *church planters must lead!*”

Today a growing number of churches in our country desire to advance the kingdom of God through the multiplication of new churches. Many of these churches are catching a vision for starting multiple churches every year, churches that will then in turn reproduce aggressively. To accomplish this vision, these church-planting churches are very purposeful in how they train their church planters.¹ They see training as foundational to the success of a new church. However, they use a wide variety of models, all designed to address critical issues in an intentional manner. This concept paper will examine five leadership models for how to train church planters and then surface some of the critical issues that leading trainers of church planters most commonly address.

Intensive Approaches

One of the most popular ways that churches train church planting leaders is an intensive approach, often referred to as a **boot camp**. In a boot camp leaders come together for two to four days for a concentrated, intensive training experience. One example of this is the Intensive Church Planter’s Training Program designed by Bob Logan (<http://www.coachnet.org/en/churchmultiplication>). In this model church planting leaders invest a significant amount of time prior to the week of training. In their pre-training preparation they work through multiple worksheets and exercises. This is absolutely essential because the training experience itself is built around focusing and refining through personal coaching. The preparation has two primary objectives: 1) To provide the leader an opportunity for prayerful reflection and personal discussions about the specific church they anticipate starting, and 2) to prepare the leader to apply his or her reflections

in the boot camp when coaches will be present to help. The entire process is organized around five personal operating questions:

- *Who am I?*
- *What am I called to do?*
- *Who will do it with me?*
- *How will we do it?*
- *How will we evaluate our progress?*

In the Intensive Church Planter’s Training Program the emphasis is not on “presenting” but on “facilitating.” Effective facilitating is based upon the principles of discovery learning. Bob Logan says, “The great teachers of the past—Jesus as the best example—have always used discovery-learning principles.” Bob believes that this is the best way for adults to learn so he has made this a core philosophy of his training system. The obvious strength of this approach is the guided self-discovery which usually leads to a deeper integration of learning. However, some leaders desire more information and knowledge before engaging in the intensive reflection and coaching process.

Another example of an intensive approach is nicknamed **turbo training**. One group that offers turbo training is GlocalNet, a church planting network birthed out of **Northwood Church** in Keller, TX (<http://www.northwoodchurch.org>). Lance Ford, the director of GlocalNet and the Church Planting Center of Northwood says, “You can’t always have the church planters with you for several weeks or months of training.” He uses a curriculum entitled *The Essentials for Starting a Missional Church* developed by New Church Initiatives (see <http://www.nciglobal.org/training/index.htm>).

The turbo training approach is an intensive two-day experience where church planting leaders receive a substantial amount of content, interspersed with small group process and interaction. This system is designed to help leaders understand the “essential questions” that they must be wrestling with in their development process. Strong emphasis is placed on “principles of design.” This material does not promote any particular style or structure of church, but stresses that leaders must learn to think contextually and missionally. The essential questions and principles of design guide church planters in their

process of creating a new church. “It gives them an understanding of the fundamentals in church planting,” says Lance. “It puts planters on the right road for where they need to go.”

The two-day turbo training is then followed—typically a month later—with a **third day training** that focuses on making missional disciples and leaders in a new church. The strength of this system is its emphasis on a missional ecclesiology. It defines missional as acting and behaving like a missionary. Thus the church community both sees itself and functions just as if it was a missionary. This system challenges church planting leaders to think carefully and critically about what they are doing. However, while there is some processing built in to the event, this system does require intentional follow-through and coaching afterward for real learning and integration to take place. Follow up coaching is strongly encouraged through the turbo training experience.

Several other groups use a more content-driven boot camp approach. The Acts 29 Network (<http://www.a29.org>) offers such a training experience several times each year. The Acts 29 Network was birthed out of **Mars Hill Church** in Seattle, WA (<http://www.marshillchurch.org>). Mark Driscoll, who has become an extremely popular teacher and leader among younger pastors in America, is the primary presenter. The Acts 29 Boot Camp places a strong emphasis on Reformed Theology, male eldership, and contextualizing the gospel for current culture. Another example of a more content-driven approach is the Church Planter Training provided by Global Church Advancement (<http://www.gca.cc>). Steve Childress is the primary presenter for this multi-day training event, usually offered once or twice a year in the U.S. Bob Cargo of **Perimeter Church** in Atlanta, GA (<http://www.perimeter.org>) says, “I encourage all the church planters in our denomination—Presbyterian Churches in America—to attend this training.” A few of the denominational groups, such as the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, offer a similar training. These multi-day, content-driven events are very popular, in part due to the strength of gifted presenters utilizing substance rich material. Groups like Acts 29 and Global Church Advancement present a very strong theological

foundation as well. However, there is usually little opportunity or guidance for individual or group process.

Training Classes for Church Planting Leaders

While most church-planting churches value the boot camps or intensive training events, some believe that training needs to be spread out over several weeks or several months in order for there to be better assimilation and integration of learning. **West Ridge Church** in Atlanta, GA (<http://www.westridgechurch.org>) is one example. Jim Akins is the church planting director at West Ridge. Jim says, “I prefer to stretch the training out over nine months. We meet one Saturday every month for the entire day.” According to Jim, “planters don’t have time to process their learning when it comes too fast. They don’t know what to do with it.” West Ridge Church is a part of the GlocalNet Network. Jim and his senior pastor Brian Bloye use *Essentials for Starting a Missional Church*. They spread out the content of the curriculum over nine months.



At West Ridge training is spread out over several weeks or several months to increase assimilation and integration of learning.

Each month the planters in training receive assignments to complete. At the monthly meeting they report on how they are applying previous learning. This is sometimes done in written form but usually it is done orally within the group. They then share something new that they learned from that month’s experience. Finally, they share something that they have come to realize they need in their personal development. During these months the planters in training are exposed to key staff and former church planters from West Ridge. They all share personal stories and give examples of some of their best practices. Jim says “I want our planters in training to see both theory and practice.” He is beginning to work more closely with some Bible colleges and seminaries. “Our dream is to become an education site for church planters.” Jim expects his trainees to begin the planting process before the nine months are completed. Last year West

Ridge Church planted four churches, all of which launched with over 200 people.

A variation of this longer-term training approach is the Renovation Center concept developed by Jeff Shipman, pastor at **Columbia Crossroads Church** in Columbia, SC (<http://www.columbiacrossroads.org>). While Jeff encourages all of his church planters to go through boot camps and other intensive experiences, he focuses on an ongoing developmental relationship through the Renovation Center. “We want to use whatever resources are already available for training,” says Jeff. “But our focus in the Renovation Center is *breakthrough thinking*.” The Renovation Center concept is built around a monthly training meeting with strong emphasis placed upon coaching individual planters. The *breakthrough thinking* that they are looking for centers on two core values: 1) an understanding that the mission of the Gospel is to reach *every man, woman, and child*, and 2) each church identifies and takes responsibility for their *circles of accountability* within a geographical region. Jeff’s vision is to create a network of centers around the U.S.

(which he calls the Infinity Network) that are intent on planting churches with these two core values.

Summit Church in Bonita Springs, FL (quoted in the opening paragraph of this article) is one of the churches partnering with Jeff and the Columbia team.

Greg Kappas of Summit Church says, “We have a solid heart match with Columbia Crossroads Church and their ministry, as we are locking arms through the Infinity Network to reach every man, woman, and child in various circles of accountability throughout the country.” Todd Milby, the executive pastor at Summit Church says that the key to achieving breakthrough thinking is the one on one nurturing that happens within the Renovation Center. “Coaches drive this stuff,” says Todd. “Our greatest challenge is developing more facilitators and coaches.” Greg is currently working on a one-year training manual and formalizing their coaching system so that it can be replicated not only in the U.S. but around the world.

A key resource that has been influencing the development of the Renovation Center concept is the book *Journey into Mission Church* by Dwight Smith and Robert Mountford. Chad Clarkson, the pastor of missions and church planting at **Clear Creek Community Church** in League City, TX (<http://www.clearcreek.org>) is another partner in the Infinity Network. Chad encourages his group to work through the book while actually having Dwight come in periodically to speak to his planters. “We want our planters to reproduce churches with this DNA. That’s our aim.” The uniqueness of this approach is that it is geographically based. By saturating a city with new churches that live out this DNA the Renovation Center leaders hope to see cities experiencing real transformation. Jeff is praying for at least 20 of these Renovation Centers to be functioning in cities around the U.S. in the very near future.

Another church that uses a training class approach is **Redeemer Presbyterian Church** in New York City (<http://www.redeemer.com>). However, at Redeemer they prefer to limit their training to planters who are actively planting in the city. As Mark Reynolds, who directs the church planting center at Redeemer, points out, “Adult learning implies that you are aware of a need.” Because of this, Mark prefers “just in time” training that is presented in a sequential process over nine to twelve months. He believes that this is important to enable the planters to absorb the material.

At Redeemer, each instructional unit contains three phases: preparation and enrichment (e.g. homework, reading, assignments, etc.), instruction (class room sessions), and practice (applying and doing what one is learning in a live planting context.) Redeemer provides a training manual that is available for purchase.² It serves as a reader for all the planters in their class. “We don’t allow those not planting in New York City to attend,” says Mark. “Candidates are screened, assessed and properly placed in their location before attending training sessions. We seek to create a learning community based on experiential learning (actually planting a church) with reflection on experience, discussion and doing.” At Redeemer all the instructors are competent facilitators that implement this training philosophy. Their training program consists of 10

monthly sessions and typically enrolls 10 to 18 New York planters from a variety of denominational backgrounds each year.

A strength of a training class approach is the time allowed to process and absorb the learning. Content can be presented in a modular or sequential manner which can enhance adult learning. Opportunities to debrief allow for reinforcement and deeper understanding. The greatest limitation is that classes usually present a geographical limitation. Planters must live on the field or be able to commute easily to take advantage of this system.

Internship or Apprenticeship Approach

Some church planting churches prefer to have their trainees onsite for an extended period of time so that the trainees can experience the culture of the mother church, while receiving practical experience. This approach is typically referred to as an internship or apprenticeship approach. Northwood Church in Keller, TX offers an example of this approach. Lance Ford has



Team building is an important aspect of training teams.

designed the process where about a dozen high potential church planting interns are mentored every year. This group, which Lance refers to as a learning cohort, meets together weekly for assignments, debriefs and discussion. The group also engages in an online learning community process to help them learn from one another's experiences. Lance wants his interns to have experience actually doing most of the things that a church planter must do to succeed. He has created a nine-month path of experiences and discussions to supplement the *Essentials* training course for church planters. This cohort becomes the primary pool of church planters that Northwood sponsors each year. It is not unusual for them to sponsor up to 10 plants each year from this group.

Crosspointe Church in Orlando, FL (<http://www.xpointe.com>) illustrates another example of this approach. Chan Kilgore, the lead

pastor, has created a one-year apprenticeship for high potential church planting prospects. In this year long process apprentices participate in intensive training events such as the Acts 29 Boot Camp and the Global Church Advancement training. However, a key focus for Chan is on spiritual and theological formation. Much attention and accountability is built around developing spiritual disciplines, establishing a strong theological basis for church planting, and cultivating a strong missiology. "It's very important that our planters know how to exegete the culture," states Chan. "Plus, I have them set goals for each trimester for personal and missional development." It's not uncommon for Chan and his team to bring in well known national church planting leaders such as Ed Stetzer and Tom Nebel to supplement their learning. Monthly networking and training events are common at Crosspointe. Weekly classes on theology, outside readings, and multi-day retreats are also tools that Chan uses to develop his apprentices. Recently Crosspointe has partnered with Vision USA to hire a full-time training director and acquire land and facilities for a regional church planting training center. They see this as becoming the base for training their apprentices as well as others outside their church.

The strength of an internship or apprenticeship approach is the ongoing, personalized mentoring that is received by the prospective planter. There is also the opportunity to learn within a dynamic, thriving church environment. However, most interns and apprentices have to find ways to support themselves financially during the process. This is usually accomplished through a spouse's income, support raising, outside employment, or a combination of these.

Residency Approach

An approach that appears to be growing in popularity is the residency approach. This is very similar to the internship or apprenticeship

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approach. However, in a residency the trainees generally receive a full-time salary and are treated much more as an extension of the mother church's professional staff. Thus, while a church like Northwood might have a dozen interns; most *residency* churches have one or just a few residents. One example of a church planting residency is Perimeter Church in Atlanta, GA. Perimeter's residency is a two-year program. In the first year the focus is on training within Perimeter while the second year is devoted to actual work "in the field," assisting another church planter. The training currently revolves around three priorities: 1) Perimeter's best practices, 2) ongoing experiences at teaching and doing ministry, and 3) young church plant observation and experience. Perimeter encourages their residents to participate in other training events such as the Global Church Advancement training. During the last six months of the two year residency, the resident steps out and begins actually doing the work to prepare for his new church. Perimeter targets seminary graduates and young pastors who want to pursue church planting. Bob Cargo, who directs the residency at Perimeter, prefers working with these younger planters because "these young pastors are still highly moldable."



BOB CARGO

Hill Country Bible Church (HCBC) in Austin, TX (<http://www.hcbc.com>) has one of the largest church planting residency programs in the country. While they hope all their residents will plant a new church, one does not have to be totally committed to that direction before entering the program at HCBC. "Residency helps to prove out that they are ready to plant," states Craig Foster an elder at HCBC. "The goal is to learn through experience more than formal training." This residency lasts for 12 months, in hopes that it will guide residents into church planting. If so, then six additional months are devoted to pre-launch preparation.

Peter Horn, the director of church planting, recently interviewed nearly a hundred applicants in their process of selecting four. Peter points out that, "The key to the residency is mentoring." Of the four new residents, two are being mentored by staff while two are being mentored by lay leaders in the church. The emphasis in their mentoring is on personal development more than professional development. "What are the blind spots?" asks Peter. "That is what we think will sink them down the road." Peter and the staff do give attention to the professional development, but that is secondary to the personal development.

"Our original vision was to plant 10 churches in 20 years in the mid 90's," says Peter. But as HCBC began to think and pray more about their rapidly growing city their vision began to change. Their vision is now to see that every person in the Austin area will hear the good news of Jesus from a member of a Hill Country church. "Since there are now over 1.4 million people in the Austin area that means we will have to plant a lot more churches a lot faster!"

Their church plants form the Hill Country Association, and they are very intentional about instilling this vision in every Hill Country plant. To accomplish this HCBC builds their training around what they call the "Seven Characteristics of a Model (or healthy) Church." They provide self-study materials for their planters to learn the nuts and bolts of church planting (such as the *Church Planter's Toolkit* by Bob Logan.³) But their passion is instilling these characteristics in the genetics of the new church. And to ensure this, they have created diagnostic questions for accountability. (See sidebar.)



Leaders from Hill Country Bible Church.

Seven Characteristics and Diagnostic Questions from Hill Country Bible Church

1. *Reliance on God's Word*—All church life centers on a reliance on God, His promises, and the authority of His Word.
 - Q1: Are the elders setting goals based on the Word?
 - Q2: Are we preaching & teaching the Word at all levels?
 - Q3: Are we counseling people from the Word?
 - Q4: Are people learning and growing in the Word?
 - Q5: Are we risking, taking steps of faith showing our reliance upon God?

2. *Anticipation of God's Empowering Presence*—People approach all life and ministry with an anticipation of God's presence actively working in and through them.
 - Q1: Are we telling & retelling stories of life-change?
 - Q2: Do we see new life-change stories around us?
 - Q3: Are we actively praying for God to show up?
 - Q4: Are we connecting transcendentally with God in worship?
 - Q5: How many people have an active impact list, expecting God to intervene?

3. *Passion for Reaching the Lost*—Reaching the lost dominates the church agenda, relying on God for a yearly goal of at least 10% conversion & retention growth, maintaining a collaborative and aggressive regional and global plan to plant churches.
 - Q1: How many people are actually coming to faith & growing in our church?
 - Q2: Do we have a five-year planting strategy and are we firing on it (making it happen)?
 - Q3: Does this plan include measurable goals (locations & dates)?
 - Q4: Does the church reach the people in our area?
 - Q5: Are we creating an evangelistic church culture?
 - Q6: Do we know how many members are actually sharing their faith?
 - Q7: Is the leadership of the church participating in personal evangelism?

4. *Incarnational Leadership Development*—Leaders are taught and practice incarnational and servant leadership and a minimum of 10% of the men & women are being developed as reproducing leaders.
 - Q1: Are we moving people through the leadership pipeline (helping the next step)?
 - Q2: What are we using to move leaders from step to step (curriculum/relationships)?
 - Q3: Where do we look for these leaders? (peer ministry leaders, small group leaders)
 - Q4: What kind of coaching & mentoring is involved?

5. *Expanding Network of Small Groups*—The church is organized into reproducing communities of small groups committed to developing life-changing relationships with at least 75% participation of members and regular attenders.
 - Q1: If evangelism dominates the agenda, are we helping our REALife groups focus on evangelism at least once a year?
 - Q2: Are the REALife group shepherds leading people into life-changing relationships?
 - Q3: Do the REALife group shepherds understand their role in brokering relationships to help people take next steps, not hosting an event or weekly study?
 - Q4: Are our small groups experiencing 10% conversion growth each year?
 - Q5: How many of our groups are multiplying and reproducing leaders regularly?
 - Q6: How can we incorporate some leadership development into our small groups?
 - Q7: Are we pursuing the appropriate number of small groups to see 75% of our members and regular attenders actively involved in a group?

6. *Intentional Disciple-making (Maturation Process)*—The church maintains an intentional discipleship process (from conversion to maturity) that results in 65% of the church consistently practicing spiritual disciplines, personal ministry, evangelism, and person discipleship.
 - Q1: Are Christians maturing in their relationship with God, their relationship with the body, and their relationship with the world?
 - Q2: Are people relationally connected where someone knows where they are spiritually and can help them take the next step?
 - Q3: How many people are involved in ministry?
 - Q4: Are ministry leaders actually keeping up with the spiritual development of their people?
 - Q5: Do we have a once-a-year survey for our church so that we can determine how our people are doing in their maturation process?

7. *Biblical Stewardship*—Church leaders teach and model biblical stewardship resulting in 65% of members and regular attenders involved in regular giving to the local church.

- Q1: Is the leadership modeling biblical stewardship and sacrificial giving?
- Q2: Is compelling vision being cast to expansion of the kingdom so that people are giving to kingdom work, not church needs?
- Q3: What % of each of the following groups is involved in regular giving? (members, members & regular attenders, leadership community, REALife group shepherds, staff & elders, pastors & elders)
- Q4: How much are we preaching and teaching about sacrificial giving and telling stories about financial life-change?
- Q5: Does the church model faithful stewardship by giving to a % of undesignated funds to missions and church planting?

As part of the training at HCBC each resident and their family must visit the other church plants in the association and complete an evaluation form designed around the seven characteristics. The residents also help the HCBC staff with research and various tasks, but only if it gives them direct benefit for their plant. Each resident who continues to pursue the plan to plant a new church must begin by recruiting a core of potential leaders. These leaders are asked to make three commitments:

- *Attend the new church for at least one year,*
- *Commit to serve in a place of ministry for that entire year, and*
- *Make a financial commitment and disclose it to the leadership. This financial commitment will include a “first fruits” offering, which is a one-time up front gift, and a monthly commitment.*

To help the core group understand this stewardship commitment, the church planter will lead them through a four-week study series in a small group. After the leadership team completes this study they take others through it so that stewardship is a clear, biblical message and expectation. When the planter actually launches his new church, he begins with at least three elders (including himself) who govern the new church.

Another church that has recently begun to use the residency approach is **Bethlehem Baptist Church** in Minneapolis, MN (<http://www.bbcmpls.org>). Three years ago Bethlehem adopted a new initiative that they call “Treasuring Christ Together.” They describe this initiative as “a multiplying movement of congregations,

campuses and churches.” The residency program was born out of the Treasuring Christ Together vision to multiply new churches. Last year they graduated their first resident sending him to Memphis, TN to plant.

Bethlehem is making it their practice to look for mature, seasoned pastors who have a clear calling to leave an established church to start a new work. Their one-year residency gives that pastor the opportunity to refresh himself while preparing for his church planting venture. “When pastors resign from their churches to make the move to church planting they are often tired, but get very little opportunity to refresh themselves before jumping into the intensity of church planting,” says current resident Charlie Handren. “This residency is enabling me to prepare myself in every way before I start my new church.” Bethlehem wants this year to serve as a “fueling” time for the planter as they will have this entire time to think, pray, research, recruit, strategize, etc., without the pressure of the new work having begun.

Since their residents are experienced pastors, the resident plays a key role in determining what learning will take place and what goals will be set for the year. Kenny Stokes, the pastor who leads the Treasuring Christ Together initiative, takes each resident through a process of creating a learning contract. This contract focuses on seven areas:

1. *The pursuit of personal sanctification,*
2. *The pursuit of the spiritual nourishment of my family,*
3. *Being immersed in the Bethlehem Baptist ministry culture*

4. Strategic learning outside of Bethlehem Baptist Church
5. Strategic learning through reading
6. Developing a church planting vision and Treasuring Christ Together Church Planting Proposal
7. Humble pursuit of teaching opportunities at Bethlehem

Once Kenny and the resident agree on actions in each of these areas, a monthly outline of activities is developed leading to a transition from Bethlehem to their planting location. The resident then meets monthly with Kenny for accountability and coaching.

A church planting residency can be a deeply enriching experience for prospective church planters. It may give planters the best opportunity to explore, research, and learn as they prepare for

their church planting venture. Like internships, the personalized mentoring and the opportunity to learn within a dynamic, thriving church environment are great advantages. However, for most churches, a residency program represents a significant financial commitment. Because of this, very few churches are able to support more than one or two at a time.

A CHURCH PLANTING RESIDENCY MAY GIVE PLANTERS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE, RESEARCH, AND LEARN AS THEY PREPARE FOR THEIR CHURCH PLANTING VENTURE.

Informal Training Approach

Church of the Highlands in Lakeland, FL (www.lakelandhighlands.org) is an excellent example of informal training. Robert Beckman, associate pastor at Church of the Highlands stresses that the most important thing he wants their church planters to pick up is the DNA of their church. He says, "I don't have to know all the answers for where my kids are going, but I want them to hold on to my values. It's the same way with our church planters." The team at Church of the Highlands believes that this best happens through informal mentoring and training. Hal Haller, the founding pastor of

Church of the Highlands says that he invites guys to just "hang out with me." That's what Ricc Conner did. Ricc was a student pastor in another church when he began to sense God's call to plant a church. Not sure of how to best proceed, he accepted Hal's invitation to hang out with the team at Church of the Highlands. He raised some support and secured some additional part-time work to support himself during this period of time. He then sold his home and moved to the ministry area to begin his work with Hal.



The church plant team at Church of the Highlands celebrates as a new member is baptized.

The training at Church of the Highlands is not formal or structured. Guys like Ricc simply come and hang out for about six months, during which time they are given some responsibilities, some short-term tasks, and lots of time with leaders like Hal and Robert. "You get to know the church," says Ricc. "You get involved in all the ministries, greeting, ushering, children, drama, you name it. I go to seminars that Hal teaches and he even lets me give some presentations." There is a Paul-Timothy model of training. "We find ways for guys to be doing something the whole time" notes Robert. "We give them small assignments to see how they will follow through. We look for signals that the values are oozing through." He goes on, "It's not linear, but we are trying to establish standards to make sure every guy gets everything he needs." "We don't have a syllabus," adds Anthony Goff, another one of the pastors. "We just ask what we can do to expedite the process in God's timing. We want to move as quickly as God opens the door."

Typically every prospective planter will demonstrate the ability to effectively start a small group before any funding is considered for their church plant down the road. Trainees gather groups at places like Starbucks to prove that they can gather a following. Anthony points out that "a supervisor can't hand down the DNA. None of us are making any money. We're not here because of a material payoff, but because of the relationships. That's how you transfer DNA." Like

Ricc, all their planters find ways to support themselves so as not to be a burden to the church. Does it work? Indeed it does. They currently have 10 prospective planters engaged in this informal training, and they are effectively planting multiple churches every year, even though Church of the Highlands itself is only two years old!

Critical Issues in Training

In studying various churches that are aggressively attempting to raise up church planting leaders, several critical issues have commonly surfaced. Leaders of church planting movements feel it is vitally important for other leaders to be aware of these issues.

Spiritual Warfare

While almost every Christian leader is cognizant of spiritual warfare, some church planting leaders are particularly struck by the intensity of the battle. “One of the most significant a-ha’s for us this year has been the acute reminder that we are engaged in spiritual warfare,” notes Tom Walsh, missions pastor at **Church of the Savior** in Philadelphia, PA (<http://www.cosnet.org>). Realizing this as well, Bob Cargo of Perimeter church says, “Right now we need more emphasis on spiritual formation and renewal.” Doug Murrell, the executive pastor at **New Life Ministries International** (<http://www.newlifeprovidence.com>) adds, “We must build a prayer shield around our church planting efforts.”

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Some church planting leaders talk about how “surprised” they have been by the spiritual struggle and many confess to underestimating the need for intensive prayer to under gird their church planting work. Because of this need some training curriculums include major units on intercessory prayer. Those who are training church planters would do well to focus much more time and

attention on the critical issue of prayer and spiritual warfare in church planting.

Principles of Adult Learning

The best church planter training programs understand and embrace the principles of adult learning. Trainers should keep in mind that adults have life experience, and this experience enables them to dialogue in a manner that will enhance their learning. They also have the capacity to reflect on their life experiences in a way that enables them to gain insight into the knowledge and skills being taught. The best adult training programs incorporated practices such as a personal needs assessment, sequence of content, just-in-time information, and experiential learning. This understanding of adult learning was quite evident in many of the churches discussed.

Mark Reynolds and the training team at Redeemer Presbyterian Church are adamant about practicing these principles. Lance Ford at Northwood Church is equally committed to these concepts and is constantly looking for new ways to live these out. They understand that training is not simply delivering information, but is more about integration of learning. That’s why principles of adult learning are so critical.

Coaching

The best coaching models build on the principles of adult learning, but coaching is often misunderstood by many. “Don’t think about a sports analogy,” warns author and corporate coaching expert Jane Creswell. She prefers to use the image of a vehicle. “If you go back to the etymology of the word,” says Jane, “you discover that a coach was a vehicle. The passenger decides where you are going. The coach is the tool or vehicle to get them to where they want to go.” According to Jane, it’s all about the person being coached; where are they going, what are their strengths, what do they need to do next. She points out that asking questions that help leaders clarify and make good decisions is the heart of coaching. Margaret Slusher, director of Church Planting Leadership Communities for Leadership Network, emphasizes the need to teach people to think. She believes that good coaching does just that. “The concept of leadership development is to teach people to think outside the established

paradigm,” notes Margaret. “We must challenge our young leaders to think—if we keep giving them the answers, they will keep repeating old paradigms. If we want better results, we need new paradigms.”

One of the strongest coaching models in church planter training can be found at New Life Ministries International. Pastor Joseph Umidi of New Life has authored an excellent book entitled *Transformational Coaching*. This serves as the foundation of their training program for both national and international church planters. Joseph’s vision is, “to train 10,000 coaches over the next 10 years who can impact leaders from all professions.” Many of these coaches will be coaching their church planters.



Crosspointe Church members pose for a family photo.

Gregg Heinsch, of Crosspointe Church suggests that, “Coaching needs to be separated from the funding source. This is necessary to create safety for sharing.” Tom Walsh of Church of the Savior says, “Coaching forces you to be person oriented, which should

be foundational in all ministry.” Tom encourages churches to look for coaches “from multiple sources.” Jane even suggests that, “Maybe church planters would be better served by lay people who are good coaches who simply guide them to think versus the franchise mentality.” Jordan Stinziano of Summit Church agrees. He suggests that, “good small group facilitators are the best prospects to be church planting coaches.” By leveraging the practice of coaching, church planting leaders can discover new avenues of insight and creativity.

Engaging the Congregation and Building Teams

Many of the pastors in the church planting churches voiced the need to engage their congregations more. From 1994 until 2002 **Sugar Creek Baptist Church** in Sugar Land, TX (<http://www.sugarcreek.net>) planted 41 churches in the U.S. with an 85% success rate after five years. Today these church plants have a combined

weekly attendance of approximately 15,000. When looking back, many of the Sugar Creek leaders felt that their biggest mistake was not keeping the story in front of the congregation. They felt that they did not engage the church family enough in the wonderful things God was doing through their church planting.

Some church planting leaders have been surprised at the lack of enthusiasm for church planting initiatives among their lay leaders. Doug Murrell of New Life Ministries International notes that this is something they need to give more attention to. Last year West Ridge Church in Atlanta planted 4 new churches with well over 700 in combined weekly attendance, but Jim Akins says, “We need more elder involvement.” Kerry Jones, the executive director at Church of the Savior comments similarly, “We need elder buy-in. We’re getting to the point where we can see this multiplying all over the place.” Bob Cargo notes that one of their greatest challenges this year at Perimeter Church was to spread the vision within the body so that “we could build teams for our new churches.” Unfortunately it is not uncommon for the average congregation to be unaware of the incredible kingdom work being accomplished by these church planting churches.

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One church that has done a very good job of engaging the congregation is **Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church** in Houston, TX (<http://www.mdpc.org>). Three years ago Robert Westheimer, a layman at Memorial Drive, began “The Barnabas Ministry.” The purpose of this ministry was to recruit teams every year from within the congregation to be encouragers (e.g. Barnabas) to their new church plants. These teams do not typically leave Memorial Drive (although that’s not discouraged), instead they remain active within the congregation telling the stories and giving reports about their church planting activities. They share videos and testimonies in various departments and classes to not only let the congregation know what’s going on, but to also recruit new team members for the coming year. Each year the new Barnabas Team completes

the training course *The Essentials for Starting a Missional Church*, after which they engage in activities to assist and support their new church plant. As a result, there is a growing vision within the congregation around church planting.⁴

Online Training

Several churches are beginning to utilize internet technology for training. At **Seacoast Church** in Charleston, SC (<http://www.seacoast.org>) the leadership team needed a way to disciple believers and train leaders at their various campuses all over the state. They realized that a centralized approach would not work well for them. So they created an online program called “Next Steps” (see <http://www.mynextsteps.org>). This online training takes a person from salvation through leadership development. Their hope is that this tool will become a primary training system for developing campus pastors for the 10 new campuses they hope to launch in the next few years. They also hope that this will be a key delivery system for discipling the 20,000 people they anticipate reaching through all their campuses. Chris Surratt, the Campus Pastor at Seacoast Greenville says, “Our biggest hurdle is that many people are still scared of the internet. Getting them to think they can learn online and then finish the training is sometimes a challenge.”

Another church that is starting to use online technology is Northwood. Lance Ford has the interns connecting and learning together via an online learning community format. He is encouraging other GlocalNet churches to utilize the same approach. New Church Initiatives (<http://www.nciglobal.org>) offers an online training program for church planting teams. Utilizing audio lectures, reading, online discussions, and team applications each week a leadership team or core group can receive a team version of *Essentials* training. This ten-week course is facilitated by a veteran church planting coach and is designed for team building as well as church planter training.⁵

Multiple Church Models

In order to reach different segments of society, most church planting churches are realizing the need to train their planters to utilize a variety of models of church. Jason Dukes, a church

planter from Crosspointe Church in Orlando has a heart for planting churches in what he calls the “five spheres of influence; family, neighborhood, marketplace, world, and web.” His church, **Westpoint Fellowship Church** (www.westpointchurch.org), began in the neighborhood but quickly moved out into the marketplace. However, to penetrate the marketplace he realized that he would have to do church differently. His approach has been to open a coffee shop called House Blend Café and plant a church there. For more information about House Blend Café see <http://www.houseblendcafe.com>.



Jason Dukes began in the neighborhood but quickly moved into the marketplace with House Blend Café.

Westpoint has also stepped out and planted a church specifically to serve the many cast members of Walt Disney World Florida through **church@thecreek** (<http://www.churchatthecreek.com>). Both of these are very non-conventional models of church that are penetrating secular culture. In addition to marketplace models of church there are also campus churches being planted to reach university students (see <http://www.campusrenewal.org> and <http://www.campuschurchnetwork.org>), cowboy churches, recovery churches, theater churches, you name it!

Last year New Life Ministries International started a theater church and has been pleasantly surprised at the overwhelming effectiveness of this new model. Doug Murrell of New Life says, “We see the need for more models. Our people don’t know what all church planting can mean. We have mega-churches and community churches, but we need every model.” Church of the Highlands plants both large congregational models and smaller, simple church models. “We are in an age of multiple partnerships, multiple streams of relationships, multiple flows of income, multiple manners of expression in reproductive, multiplying church planting,” states Greg Kappas “We do it all,” notes Robert Beckman. Their staff offers training on how to “Launch Large” while at the same time offering training on how to plant house churches. Tim Hawks, senior pastor at Hill Country Bible Church says, “We’ve got to begin exploring

different models. I want us to begin experimenting with new ways to reach people for Christ.” Summit Church leaders have expressed the same desire. Increasingly church planting leaders are realizing a need to train their planters in multiple models.

A Robust Ecclesiology

As church planting leaders evaluate their new church plants, more and more they are concluding that there is a critical need for their planters to have what Mark Reynolds calls “a robust ecclesiology.” With the growing diversity

of American culture, the increasing secularization, the need for new models, and the seductiveness of popular culture, church planting leaders are discovering that they must train their planters to think more deeply from a theological perspective. Mark says, “We are very concerned about the theological vision for our churches. We are not methodologically driven. We want our planters to have a robust ecclesiology.” Because of

this, a clear vision of a biblical church is embedded in the content of all the training at Redeemer. Jim Akins of West Ridge Church prefers *The Essentials for Starting a Missional Church* curriculum primarily because, “It is more theologically based. I like how it starts off with the kingdom.”

Increasingly church planter training systems are including more emphasis on one’s theological understanding of the church. This theological perspective is typically rooted in their understanding of the mission of Jesus. Chan Kilgore of Crosspointe Church notes, “It’s very important for our planters to have a strong missiology.” It is becoming less effective to simply try to franchise an existing church just because it is large or successful. Church planting leaders are realizing that they must train their planters to think and work like missionaries in North American culture. In order to plant churches that engage culture without syncretism, it requires planters to have a robust ecclesiology.

Creating a Leadership Pipeline

If trained church planting leadership is the key factor, then where does one look to find or develop church planters?⁶ This is a question that is wrestled with by every church-planting church. Some churches like Perimeter, Redeemer, and West Ridge look to Bible colleges and seminaries. Increasingly more of these types of schools are placing emphasis on church planting. Church of the Savior in Philadelphia is not only planting churches themselves, but they have also made it a practice to partner with other churches that have already identified church planters. Tom Walsh says, “God has been using us to come alongside church planting teams to provide support that they otherwise wouldn’t have.” When **Calvary Fellowship Church** (<http://www.calvary-fellowship.org>) in nearby Downingtown recently began to engage in church planting, Church of the Savior immediately offered support. “They have been an incredible blessing from God,” says Phil Carnuccio of Calvary Fellowship. This year Phil identified five high potential church planters who need to be assessed and trained. Church of the Savior has committed to partner with Phil to provide the resources needed to make that happen. They are also partnering with Phil in planting **Providence Church** in neighboring West Chester, as well as creating a regional church planting center for the Philadelphia area. Church of the Savior also partners with CityNet (<http://www.citynetphilly.org>), another ministry in the city that has a heart for church planting.

More and more church planting churches are looking within to find their planters. This is particularly true at Church of the Highlands. Robert Beckman says, “Leadership development begins with a belief that every believer is a church planter. So we look at every person in our church as our next potential church planter. Everyone we reach, everyone we bring in is to be sent out.” As a result most of their planters are “home grown.” Robert goes on, “We want to plant 19 churches in the next 18 months. We’ve already got the areas targeted.” Their plan is to identify most of these planters through their normal discipling ministry within the church. **Emmanuel Faith Community Church** in



Leadership development at the Church of the Highlands begins with a belief that every believer is a church planter.

CHURCH PLANTING LEADERS ARE DISCOVERING THAT THEY MUST TRAIN THEIR PLANTERS TO THINK MORE DEEPLY FROM A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Escondido, CA (<http://www.efcc.org>) has the same idea. Pastor Dennis Keating says, “We try to raise up our church planters from within our church. That takes care of the DNA issue.” Emmanuel has created a program they call BILD (Biblical Institute for Leadership Development). This is a lay institute designed to develop character, knowledge and skill. Through BILD they offer

ongoing courses to equip people within their congregation for ministry. “Our hope is to see more and more church planters coming out of BILD” states Dennis.

Seacoast Church believes their best leaders come from within as well. Using the GE model of a leadership pipeline, combined with their online training, they have begun to implement a system for developing small group leaders, small group coaches, small group pastors, and

ultimately campus pastors. **Crossbridge Church** in Sugar Land, TX (<http://www.crossbridge.cc>) has been developing a similar approach. The

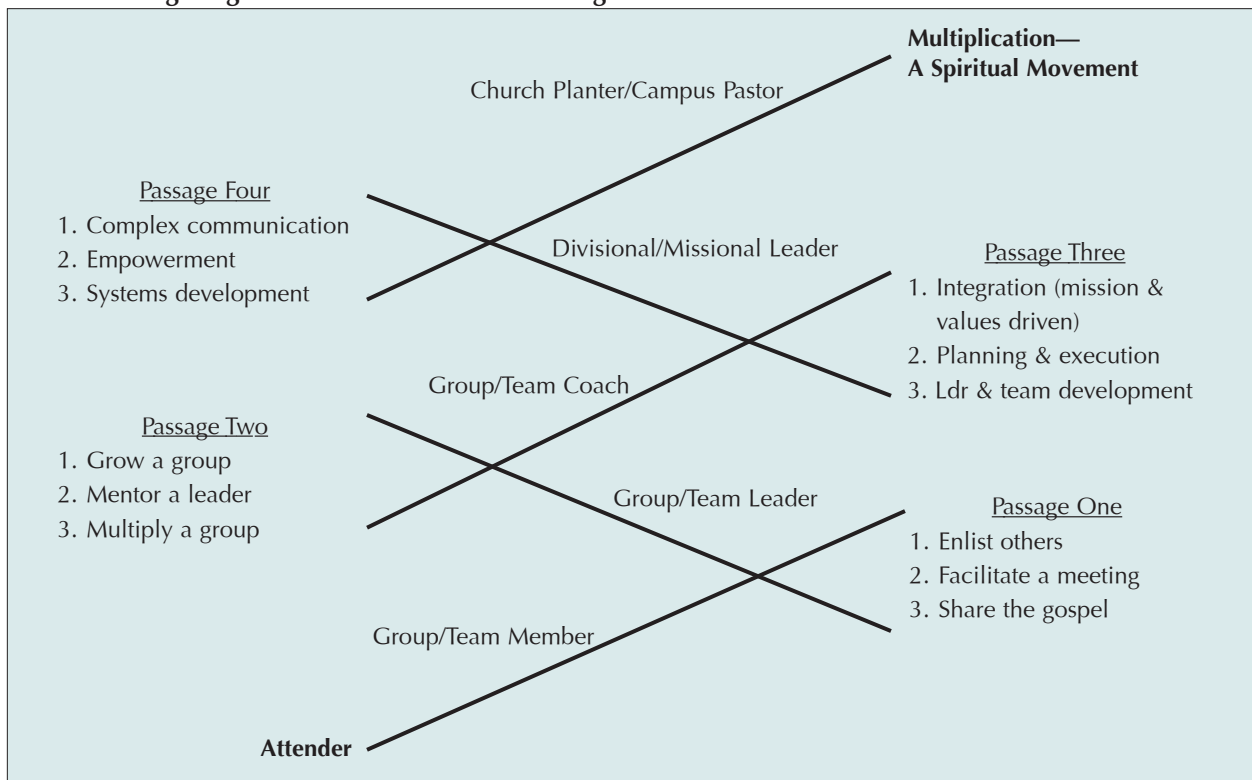
leadership pipeline model provides a system for always having the leaders you need. The model entails a series of passages that come with very specific values, compulsory skills, and time requirements. The Crossbridge application has four important passages that need to be recognized. Failure to recognize these passages will create a clog in the pipeline.

The first passage is from Group or Team Member to Group/Team Leader. The hope is that every Group/Team Member will experience personal transformation and engage in missional activity. The *skills* to make the passage from member to leader include: 1) enlisting others into a group, 2) facilitating group meetings, and 3) sharing a gospel testimony (e.g. the plan of salvation). The *time requirement* to become a leader is primarily an investment in outreach and meeting preparation. The *values* needed to make this passage are the values of connecting people and creating community.

The second passage is from Group/Team Leader to Group/Team Coach. The hope is that every Group/Team Leader will effectively shepherd a

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The following diagram illustrates the Crossbridge model:



group and mentor an apprentice. The *skills* to make the passage from leader to coach include: 1) growing a group, 2) selecting and developing a new leader (e.g. an apprentice), and 3) multiplying a group. The *time requirement* to become a coach is primarily an investment in one-on-one mentoring/coaching meetings. The *value* needed to make this transition is the value of mentoring, of developing an individual leader.

The third passage is from Group/Team Coach to Divisional/Missional Leader. This leader may be a lay leader, an elder, or a staff person. The hope is that every Divisional/Missional Leader will effectively assume a strategic leadership role such as a staff role, a major ministry director, or some other type of high level leader within the church. Their responsibility will include strategic planning and development within the organization. The *skills* to make the passage from coach to leader include: 1) integration—the realization that everything we do is mission and values driven, 2) planning and execution, and 3) developing leaders and building teams. The *time requirement* to become a Divisional/Missional Leader is time for analysis, planning, recruiting and delegating. The *values* needed to make this transition are the values of reflection, thinking and working through others.

The fourth and final passage is from Divisional/Missional Leader to Lead Pastor. This Lead Pastor may be a Church Planter, a Campus Pastor, or a Lead Pastor in another church. The hope is that this pastor will be able to be a long-term visionary both locally and globally, inspire larger followings, and resource strategic leaders who can one day be sent out. The *skills* to make the passage from Divisional/Missional Leader to Lead Pastor include: 1) complex communications, 2) empower key leaders to accomplish goals through others, and 3) develop systems for impact and sustainability. The *time requirement* to become a Lead Pastor is primarily thinking (visionizing, strategizing, and brainstorming on resources), and preparation time for effective communication. The *values* needed to make this transition are the values of holistic ministry, a kingdom perspective, and the value of sending others out. Lead Pastors must then continue to develop their skills of visionizing, communicating, and mobilizing people and resources.

Doing Whatever It Takes

“We need to do whatever it takes to mobilize as many church planters as we can,” says Hal Haller. “It doesn’t matter how we do it. Just like Paul said in Philippians 1, the important thing is that the gospel is being preached and people are coming to faith in Christ. So we’ve got to raise up the apostolic leaders who can be catalysts for church multiplication and get them on the field.” Pastors like Hal are aggressive and intentional in their attempts to prepare and mobilize church planters for the church planting adventure. They also understand the need for training in multiple church models. Todd Brady, who recently planted North Village Church in Fayetteville, NC took his core team through the GlocalNet Turbo Training before launching. He adds, “The training put our entire team on the same sheet of music. I can’t explain what we experienced; we are all talking the same language now. I feel as if I have received years of information that will protect me from a lot of mistakes.” Again, intentionality pays huge benefits.

Most of the churches profiled in this report have a deep desire to plant as many churches as possible, as quickly as possible. As a result, they are very purposeful in training their church planters. Their passion to fulfill the Great Commission along with their heart for the kingdom compels them to use a variety of models. Like Paul, they want to see the gospel preached in every way possible. They understand that the key to effectiveness in their equipping is intentionality.



HAL HALLER

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Leadership Network's mission is to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to a major research project of the largest church-planting body in the U.S., church planters that completed an intentional training process saw much greater church growth in their plants after the second year. For the complete research project see “An Analysis of the Church Planting Process and Other Selected Factors on the Attendance of SBC Church Plants” by Dr. Ed Stetzer.

² To purchase this manual go to <http://www.redeemer2.com/rstore/category.cfm?Category=23>).

³ For resources from Bob Logan see www.churchsmart.com.

⁴ To view a video clip of the Barnabas Ministry go to <http://www.mdpc.org/cgi-bin/MediaList.cgi?section=&cat=Barnabas>.

⁵ To learn more about this online training see <http://www.nciglobal.org/contact/onlinetraining.htm>.

⁶ To learn more about assessing prospective church planters see “Finding Church Planters: Discovering and Discerning Those God Has Called to Start the Next Generation of Churches” by Josh Hunt. This article can be found at www.leadnet.org.