

# Hard ones... about church planting



We've been learning - but many questions about church planting are still difficult! These ones for example:

Should those who are dissatisfied with their present fellowship be encouraged to begin a new church? What a nasty question! Obviously this is not the ideal arrangement. But it is not an uncommon concern. Martin Luther, John Nelson Darby, and the Community of Concern [evangelicals within the United Church of Canada] all have faced the same issue.

But under what circumstances should a dissatisfied group be encouraged or permitted to leave with some dignity and support?

First we must recognize that we have very little control over other people's minds and actions.

Secondly - if they mean well and are morally and theology "pretty stable", we have nothing to gain by holding them back or by sending them off with a cloud of suspicion over their heads. They may even let us help them some day!

Thirdly - it's important to give others the freedom to make their own mistakes if they are determined to do so. Most of us learn that lesson with reluctance from our own children.

Should people who have been in conflict with their church leaders be considered as potential Church planters? Not an ideal arrangement either, is it? It all depends, doesn't it? What was the conflict about? Theology? Styles of ministry? Influence? Personalities? Is this person generally quarrelsome, or only occasionally? We must remember that there is probably a liberal sprinkling of people in our fellowships who were once considered quarrelsome in another church. The person in question may be a difficult person who should never be encouraged to consider church leadership. On the other, hand the person you consider a problem, may be a person of vision that God is raising up for a purpose you have not considered.

Should a church planting core group that is "too small" launch out in faith anyway? It is widely held that a healthy church planting core group should have at least 50 adults. In larger towns or urban areas the number should be closer to 75 or a 100. There are lots of exceptions to the rule but beginning too small can wear people out or make growth more difficult. Unless you are beginning a cell church, have an exceptionally gifted core group or have a specific sense of divine direction, it is better to wait until you have reached an adequate size. In many cases core groups meet to develop their mission, strategy as a small group, and wait to grow to a "stronger" size before they launch formal public services.

Should someone with few church connections or low levels of financial support be encouraged to "step out in faith"? This is tough. Some planters have natural ties and alliances that make their work so much easier. But should we say to someone who does not have such benefits that they shouldn't plant? We should help them be realistic, knowledgeable and full of faith. But if we are going to encourage them to step forward in faith we should be prepared to be advocates for them before God and His people.

Should someone who has the right heart but questionable maturity or leadership skills be encouraged to consider planting? No. But don't ignore them. They need partners. If their heart is right they can find a role in a new church plant. And, they can learn. God does surprising things!

Should a church consider "hiving off" or "daughtering" if nobody seems to want to do it? If the church is alive and in an average worldly community, a Paul-like desire would be for it to grow and reproduce. Its natural! "Some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred." Leaders regularly seek to instill in others concerns for; Bible study, prayer, witnessing and honesty - we must to the same with church planting. It is the duty of leaders to raise a vision and strategy for planting. That is what leaders do.

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Gord  
Martin