

How Do You Plant Churches?

By Craig Cooper

We have been called to plant 7 congregations under the Relationship Church name in NW Georgia. How do we do this? This is a monumental task! We do not have all of the questions let alone the answers but this article gives a broad framework that the Lord has given us that we are operating in.

As we look at the book of Acts we will find the following 5 broad steps. These steps are a good model to begin with. The first four steps have been what we used to raise up the Dalton congregation and are currently using in Calhoun. The details of each step will be unique to each congregation. We will have to seek the Lord for the specific plans we are to follow in every location.

***Apostolic Team Sent Out -> Believers Matured ->
Leaders Raised -> Elders Chosen -> Church Governs Territory***

1. Apostolic Team is Sent Out to Start Church

Acts 13:1-4 – (KJV) Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

The church must be started with Jesus as the foundation. No one else is seen or gets the glory but Jesus. It must be built according to what the Head wants built as led by the Holy Spirit in us. It is very easy when starting a church, congregation, new site, etc. to start it with much hype. While some advertising may be necessary, it is important that our motives be discerned. It is very easy to get over into self promotion. We may say we are building His church but if we are not careful we are building our church in order to say that we are successful. What is success? Success is doing what we see the Father do and saying what we hear the Father saying. If we do anything outside of this guidance we are building the church the way we want to build it. It takes much self denial and introspection to analyze why we are doing what we are doing. We cannot be swayed by what the church world says we should be doing.

A team led by an Apostle goes first into the territory. This team can include all gifts, servants, deacons, etc. but it must have as a minimum the 5 fold ministers. These are the Apostle, Prophet, Pastor, Evangelist, and Teacher. It is not absolutely required that all 5 offices go but the work will go much quicker if the team includes all five. Sometimes the Lord will have just the Apostle to go in if the new work is brand new. If this is the case the Apostle will minister to the people but their primary job is to identify, train, and release the other 5 offices as quickly as possible.

Before a church is started the team going into the new territory must spend time in prayer ascertaining through intercession what Jesus wants to build and how. Timing is utmost importance! We must get the plan and the timing! The team must also spend enough time praying and living in the territory to understand the spiritual environment and territorial spirits that they will encounter. If this is not done then you will spend much time after the church is started doing spiritual warfare that you did not expect. It will 'catch you off guard'. You will have to recoup and get a plan how to fight back. Being prepared ahead of time and planning as much as possible will save much time later.

2. Saints are Matured

It is the goal of the new church to enlist unbelievers in the army of God, teach them how to encounter Jesus, and then equip them to be mature saints. This effort is led by the 5 offices that are sent into the new location. It is their primary job to raise up, train, and mature the saints.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Acts 14:21-22 – (KJV) And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

3. Mature Saints Become Leaders

Saints that are maturing are then challenged to find their place in the body. Through this process leaders are trained and raised up in the area of their gifting. The leader's primary job is then to become successful leaders that are well skilled in their gifting. The 5 offices continue to support and grow them.

We are currently using our *Growth Journey!* combined with much on the job training to implement steps 2 and 3.

4. Governing Tasks Of Church Are Turned Over to Elders

Successful leaders now take up the task of helping other leaders to become successful at what they do. Their responsibility grows to include overseeing others in their tasks in addition to being responsible for their task. These leaders now help govern the whole church. This is what the Bible calls an Elder.

Acts 14:23 – (KJV) And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Titus 1:4-5 – (KJV) To Titus ... For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee

5. Church Grows In Maturity To The Point That They Can Govern/Influence The Entire City

This stage is the place where a church truly has an impact not just spiritually on their area but also politically and economically. Relationship Church is not at this place yet but will some day. God will continue to give us revelation on how to truly impact our whole area as we grow.

Once Elders are raised up in a church then it will be time to once again look for another apostolic team to go to the next city. Each church/congregation raised up is not abandoned. They continue to receive apostolic oversight by the apostle and team that planted them. Here is an example of Paul speaking into a church that he had already founded and had chosen elders.

Titus 1:10-14 – (KJV) For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

We have raised up one congregation with mature saints and elders in Dalton. We are well on our way to doing this in Calhoun. Overtime you will see that the Lord will change the details of how we do this but this basic framework will be followed. As we follow these five steps we will raise up a strong church with mature saints who are walking in their calling with authority and power. This will produce a church that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against!