



# Replant Journal

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**SEND Network**

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# God Always Provides

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Dear Potential or Present (Bivocational) Replanter,

When we went to seminary or Bible college we hoped—or more likely, *expected*—upon graduation we'd embark on a ministry path that would lead us to full-time pay and benefits. Unless you were independently wealthy, academically brilliant or came from a family who was blessed to pay for your education, you likely took out school loans or worked hard supporting yourself through school.

If that was the case, your mindset was likely something like this: "I'm so committed to pursue God's call on my life, I'm happy to do whatever it takes (financially, vocationally) to follow His lead."

Remember those days when the math didn't work out on paper, but you still had enough to pay rent, utilities, have groceries, with even a little left over? Remember the time when the car needed repairs and

someone from far away sent you a letter with a check that covered your need? Remember the time someone graciously and generously blessed you, so you could take a vacation, go on a date, purchase that much needed computer?

Remember how, in your heart and mind, you just knew God would take care of you because He promised to do so in His Word?

What changed?

You're perhaps decades older now; your kids need braces, shoes, contact lenses and school books. Your wife would like a new wardrobe. You have to buy a new set of tires, and then there's the summer AC bill, which seems more like a mortgage payment than a utility bill.

You may find yourself struggling to sleep at night, dreading to look at the offering report from Sunday and fantasizing about receiving a call from a bigger church that could pay you a living wage, allowing you to have some left over.

What changed?

You've gotten a little older, and your expenses are a little larger.

But God has always provided.

Don't fall for the illusion that pastors at larger churches with full-time salaries have it easier. Don't succumb to the belief that you must not be important because you have to work another job to support your family. Don't let the discouragement of not having enough time to do what you would do in ministry—because you can't devote yourself to it full time—overwhelm you. Why?

- You have automatic credibility in working a job outside the church.

- You have a better understanding of what it's really like to work, have a family and participate in the life of a church.
- You are around more people who need to hear about Jesus every week than a pastor who works in a church building and has multiple meetings every week.
- You are more free to risk being bold in leading your church to radically embrace God's call to mission. As a full-time pastor, you might be tempted to "back off" and avoid rocking the boat and stepping on toes to keep your job.
- You have the opportunity to serve a church that otherwise couldn't afford to pay a pastor full time, and this allows the church to maintain a gospel witness in the community.

Things will break, kids will outgrow their clothes and offerings will rise and fall, but please remember: *God always provides.*

# **Bivocational Replanting**

The Call, The Challenge, The  
Necessity and the Delight

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In a culture that is quickly secularizing—one in which the pastorate is increasingly mocked and minimized and pegged as an illegitimate vocation—bivocational ministry just may be the normal situation for pastors. Where pastoral ministry used to have at least some recognition and respect in the public square, recent trends show that seminary students and future pastors have less reason than ever to assume that in stepping into a ministerial position, they are stepping into a full-time-plus-benefits career. As such, it is crucial that those in the ministry, and those pur-

suing the ministry, carefully consider bivocational ministry as a realistic possibility. The following four articles by Adam Wyatt are reflections on the call, the challenge and the delight of bivocational ministry.

# THE CALL OF BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY

How do you know if you are “called” to a bivocational church? I think the answer is pretty simple. You simply have to answer the following questions: Do you think God is calling you to the church? Can that church pay you a full-time salary, or can they pay you enough to provide for your family?

If you are called to the church, and the answer to the second question is no, then congratulations! You have been called to be a bivocational pastor.

While we are starting to see a multitude of men seeking to be a part of a movement that embraces serving and replanting dying churches, I have not seen a lot of talk about going to a church that cannot pay a decent salary. We know that Paul told the church to pay a pastor well, especially those that “labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17-18). We also know that Paul, at times, paid his own way in ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). So what do we make of this tension?

Depending on the situation and circumstance, a pastor must be willing to humble himself in regards to his salary. I understand that this can be problematic and challenging, and it will certainly bring up a host of questions. However, Paul makes it clear that the calling of ministry is more important than our finances. We can, and must, trust God to provide for our needs.

By humbling ourselves in regards to our financial stability, we get to trust God to provide. Trusting God is a supremely important tool in replanting. You will not be successful in replanting unless God has surely

called you to that task, and if He has called you to the task, He will surely provide. The same God Who can heal and revitalize a dying church is the same one Who can provide for you and your family financially.

Do not be afraid of the challenge of bivocational replanting—embrace it! Doing so may be the difference between the death and life of a church.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY**

While I hope that I have made a case for the need of bivocational replanting, I do want to urge caution. This is not easy. This is not for everyone. Bivocational pastoring will spread you thin. In order to do it, you must trust God more deeply than you have probably done in the past. While this is a good thing, it is hard because you can easily feel everything is out of your control. You will be tired, stressed and overworked. This can lead to an attitude of despair, desperation and spiritual drought if you are not careful. You can find yourself resenting the ministry God has given you. These feelings are the beginnings of spiritual warfare. A lot of the guys I serve with in replanting have all experienced some of the worst spiritual warfare they have ever experienced in ministry. Prepare for this, or it will punch you in the soul.

### **LEARN HUMILITY**

Depending on a specific outside vocation, a pastor can easily find himself overwhelmed because he feels that he cannot truly serve his church well. I have suffered from this in an incredible way as of late. I feel that I cannot do enough (say enough, plan enough, study enough, pray enough, etc.) to be a good pastor. Like a lot of pastors, I think if I could just do

more, my church would be better. After a lot of self-reflection, and repentance, I have seen the horrible error of seeing myself higher than I ought.

We are not talented enough or good enough to be the reason our churches are “better.” That is up to Jesus! We have a part to play in replanting and revitalizing a church, but we must not see ourselves as the main catalyst in this. This is pride—even if it is clothed in false humility. By thinking our church’s health is dependent on ourselves, we think we are competent enough in our own power to serve our churches.

John Piper warns us well:

A pastor who feels competent in himself to produce eternal fruit—which is the only kind that matters—knows neither God nor himself. A pastor who does not know the rhythm of desperation and deliverance must have his sights only on what man can achieve. But brothers, the proper goals of the life of a pastor are unquestionably beyond our reach. The changes we long for in the hearts of our people can happen only by a sovereign work of grace.<sup>1</sup>

Replanting a church is extremely difficult. Doing it as a bivocational pastor is even harder. Despite these challenges, it can be one of the most rewarding things you can do within your ministry. Understand your limits. Understand that you cannot do this without the Holy Spirit. Understand that you will suffer. Understand that you will encounter spiritual warfare. Understand, in spite of all of these challenges, it is worth it. This can be the difference between faithfulness in your ministry and tapping out.

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Brothers we are not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Unity* (Broadman & Holman: Nashville, 2013), 69.

## THE NECESSITY OF BIVOCATIONAL REPLANTING

Bivocational ministry is on the rise. At least 30 percent of all Southern Baptist pastors are bivocational or part-time. Additionally, if we consider more churches are continuing to die, it only makes sense more churches are going to struggle to pay a pastor a full-time salary. I truly hope, for the glory of Christ, men will be willing to consider bivocational ministry so churches can be shepherded and replanted. However, I know of many who are not willing to even consider a bivocational ministry as an option.

This question must be asked: “Are pastors willing to do whatever they can do in order to serve the Lord?” If a man cannot answer this in a resounding “yes” then replanting and, dare I say, pastoring, might not be a good fit.

Regardless of their size or budget, a replant needs a pastor. I continue to have conversations with men who want to pastor but will not consider a church that cannot pay a certain level of a salary. While I understand the need for a certain level of financial security, I regretfully see a certain level of comfort that is being sought.

I currently serve a smaller church that pays me a bivocational salary. In order to provide for my family (which is *my* call, not my church’s) I do a number of things. I teach English at our local high school, coach football, drive a bus, teach some adjunct classes at Belhaven University and other things. I understand the challenge of this, but without doing other work, I could not serve where God has called me. Sure, working as much as I do is difficult, but this is the only way I can serve my church, and I gladly (although sometimes tiredly) do it.

While a full-time church might be desired, we cannot simply ignore the smaller churches. Jesus loves His bride. Jesus faithfully serves His bride. So should we; this is what replanting is all about.

## THE DELIGHT OF BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY

While challenging, bivocational ministry is a great opportunity for replanting. It gives us an incredible opportunity to grow in our faith and our leadership abilities. It allows us, no, *makes us*, learn to rely on the sufficiency of Christ as we serve our church. What an incredible gift that God has given us in this! As a bivocational pastor, I see at least three glorious delights God has provided us within the context of bivocational replanting.

**1. We are not burdens to our church.** In a replant or small church context, there are numerous things a pastor may want or need to do. If a church is spending a considerable part of its budget on a pastor's salary, it may not be able to do other things. Recently my church needed a new roof. While the insurance paid, thankfully, we were initially looking at spending \$10,000 on a roof. We had the money, but if I had been paid a higher salary over the last few years, it is probable that the money would not have been there. Bivocational pastors give their churches a better opportunity for health because they are not a financial burden on them.

**2. We learn to say “no.”** If a pastor is doing other things to provide for his family in addition to serving his church, his time will not just be limited, it will be something that must be protected. In a full-time position, a pastor sometimes finds himself having to do a lot of things that he might not want to do because it makes him less effective in the

things that he needs to do. As a bivocational pastor, we simply cannot make every visit, meeting or event. Learning to say “no” gives a pastor the opportunity to prioritize his schedule, protect his family time and it makes the church realize ministry can be done without the pastor, thus making people embrace leadership and take responsibility within their church. This is a great thing!

**3. It gives a great opportunity for ministry.** As bivocational pastors, we have opportunities to make relationships in the community which help us serve it well. People see me not just as a pastor, but as a coach and teacher. I have the opportunity to have a better gauge of the condition of the community and make valuable connections in the community. These connections make us better pastors because we see the community as a whole in addition to the group that we are called to lead. This is a valuable thing for ministry, especially in a replant context, because a pastor can help his church see the community outside of its walls and slowly embrace its role in the community.

While not for the faint of heart, bivocational pastoring is an incredible way to be faithful to the call of God. I think some men see this as simply a way to be good to the church, but I truly see bivocational ministry as way to be blessed *personally*. I feel in the coming years, more and more churches will require bivocational pastors and many, *many* pastors will need to begin to embrace bivocational ministry. It is an opportunity to be stretched and blessed by the God who loves His bride.

# Emotional Intelligence

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## **WHERE REPLANTERS OFTEN FALL SHORT**

I was recently asked, “As you work with church planters and replanters, if you had to pick one key area of pastoral leadership where more teaching and training is needed, what would it be?” This was an easy one to answer. But before I share my response, let me introduce you to a young pastor I’ll refer to as Pastor Alpha.

Pastor Alpha graduated from the seminary at the top of his class. He excels in Greek, Hebrew, and theology and is well versed in biblical hermeneutics. He can explain difficult biblical prophecies and complex theological truths, and can quote a dizzying array of texts from memory. He has an extensive vocabulary, a full and resonant voice and the ability to paint powerful word pictures and command audiences with dramatic

pulpit mannerisms. He is tall, personable and striking in appearance. He is happily married. He seems the ideal pastoral prospect with a promising future ahead.

Unfortunately, however, Pastor Alpha's ministry has not really taken off. Mired in mediocrity, he transfers from one pastorate to the next, leaving behind a string of problems, complaints and disgruntled church members. Everywhere he pastors, the record is the same. He has talent and technical skills, but does not get along well with people.

Pastor Alpha lacks the ability to deal with his own emotions and the emotions of others. Though intellectually brilliant, he lacks the emotional skills necessary to relate successfully to others. As a result, he continues to experience failed relationships with his church members (*Description of Pastor Alpha adapted from Delbert Baker*).

Sadly, Pastor Alpha's story is not dissimilar to many other gifted young pastors coming out of seminary. As I shared with my friend, what Pastor Alpha is missing, and what I believe is missing in the training and development of so many younger (and older) pastors and leaders in the church, is intentional teaching and growth in the area of *emotional intelligence*. This is especially critical in the task and calling of church replanting and revitalization.

What exactly is emotional intelligence (EQ)? Emotional intelligence can be defined as, "the capacity to be aware of, control and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically." At its core, EQ consists of the following four leadership skills or competencies:

- 1. Self-awareness:** The ability to know yourself and your emotions, not as you wish they were, but as they truly are.

2. **Self-regulation:** The wisdom and ability to understand the impact you have when you take action or refrain from action.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to read other people and understand their emotions.
4. **Relationship management:** The ability to incorporate the other three skills to navigate and build positive relationships with all types of people.

Regardless of one's proficiency in any or all of these leadership skills, a disciplined approach to improving these skills can, and will, lead to greater emotional intelligence. One's EQ, unlike one's IQ or other personal characteristics, can be improved. The good news is that even though many of us need to grow leaps and bounds in our EQ, by God's grace, He can help us mature in this critical area of leadership.

## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE POINTS OTHERS TO CHRIST**

At the heart of emotional intelligence are lifelong skills that allow a replanting pastor to be more empathetic and have greater interpersonal relationships. Personal growth in EQ helps us as leaders to not hold grudges, be forgiving as well as become more patient and caring with those in our life and ministry who are difficult to love and lead.

Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34-35,

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

The first thing we see here is that Jesus has raised the bar as to how we are to treat our brothers and sister in Christ. We are commanded to

love each other as Christ has demonstrated love to us. This is a sacrificial, costly love that can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Yet, we simply do not become more loving in this way by “hoping” it will happen. It is a cooperative effort by both the Spirit of God and the intention of the believer. We have a responsibility to grow in our ability to love. If this were not the case, then the Lord would not have had to issue this “new commandment.” So the question is, how do we as Christians in general, and replanters in particular, become more loving, learning to live lives that honor these instructions from our Lord?

Growing in EQ helps us as leaders and pastors to become more aware of our strengths and weaknesses, along with our propensities for anger and strife. Moreover, it shows us ways we can be more aware of others, better understanding how those we interact with and lead are hard-wired by God Himself. Many of the strategies found in developing greater EQ deal with relationship management and how to deal with others in difficult situations. As we humbly seek to grow in our EQ, seek to become more loving and thereby fulfill this new commandment of Jesus by the Spirit’s power, it will have a great impact on our lives, ministries and various personal relationships.

Second, the Lord issued this command because He wanted us to understand that as believers, the way we treat one another is the very basis in which the outside world will make its determination about Christ. If we stop and realize our neighbors, friends and co-workers are watching us, a greater weight is added to how we, as replanters, relate to those both inside and outside our churches. The opinion and verdict about Christ may in fact be shaped by what “outsiders” observe in our inter-

actions with one another within the body of Christ. Developing strong interpersonal skills through relationship management must be a priority in the life of every believer, as well as every church replanter, for the sake of the lost and for the glory of our great God!

# A Replanter Needs Scripture

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*Seinfeld* is the greatest sit-com of all time. Hands down. Even though the series ended in 1998, it's still unrivaled by any modern show. One of my favorite episodes is called "The Dealership." In it, Jerry goes to a car dealer to purchase a new car. While he's trying to finagle a good deal for his black Saab, his neighbor, Kramer, takes the car for a test drive. Kramer has no intention of buying a new vehicle. Rather, he wants to know how far he will be able to drive Jerry's new car without having to refill it with gas (he's kind of a mooch like that). So throughout the episode, Kramer's goal is to see how close he can get the needle to E without completely running out of fuel.

This is a humorous illustration of a serious problem all-too-common among church replanters. Too many of us try to turn a dying church around without taking the necessary pit stops to refuel our own souls

with Scripture. I suspect many replanters allow the needle to get dangerously close to empty. I want to remind you of something you already know, but you may be failing to practice. You need to regularly intake God's Word. Not just for sermon prep, but for yourself. The reasons for this are numerous. Here are just three:

**1. Scripture is indispensable to your relationship with Christ.** First, you are a sheep before you are a shepherd. This means if you fail to spend time with your Shepherd listening to His voice through reading His Word, you will inevitably wander away from Him. Your ability to serve and minister to others is closely related to the depth of your relationship with Jesus. If you are not regularly communing with Him, your relationship will quickly shrivel, and the consequences will be manifold.

**2. Scripture helps you recall what you need to remember.** Another reason is because you are forgetful. Forgetting does not merely mean the inability to recall certain information. It also means no longer being influenced by that information. Without being regularly exposed to the truth of God's Word, you will forget (i.e. you will no longer be influenced by it). Paul Tripp powerfully summarizes this concept,

No matter how theologically trained my brain is, my heart is still prone to forget. So once more today, I will remind myself of the truths of the Bible, not because my brain needs to be taught a new concept, but because my wandering heart needs to be ushered back into the throne room of grace.<sup>2</sup>

God's promises, warnings and instructions are things we regularly forget, and thus regularly need to hear if we are going to live in light of them.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Trip "Wednesday's Word: Afraid" paultripp.com

**3. Scripture sustains your soul for the task at hand.** Replanting is not an entrepreneurial enterprise, but, rather, it's a spiritual endeavor. Our battle is not with flesh and blood. It's with principalities and powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). We labor for the souls of men, women and children. Because of this, our own souls must be strengthened and invigorated by Scripture. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to successfully turn a church around if our tank is running on fumes.

David, in Psalm 119, uses the word "delight" 10 times to describe his disposition towards God's Law. Before we can even begin the work of replanting a church, our souls, like David's, must delight in God's Word. And the things we delight in, we will always make time for. Jesus regularly escaped to spend time alone with His Father (Mark 1:35). If it was good enough for Jesus, then it's certainly required for us.

Church replanters, don't be like Kramer. Don't try to see how far you can get in ministry without stopping to refuel. You need Scripture. Be sure to spend the necessary time reading, memorizing and meditating on God's Word.

## **CHURCH REPLANTS NEED SCRIPTURE TOO**

It's not just church replanters who need Scripture; church *replants* need them as well. Let me explain why. Many of the reasons already listed certainly overlap here, but I also want to include a few additional reasons.

**1. Scripture is needed for true conversion.** Many church replants are full of nominal Christians. Some are people who are Christian in name only. The Spirit has not done a work of regeneration in their hearts. This is one reason why many churches need to be replanted in

the first place. Spiritually dead people are put in decision-making positions, which proves to be disastrous for the church.

Only Scripture has the power to change this. People won't be converted by a leader's charisma or personality, no matter how much of it he has. Only the Spirit of God can bring spiritual life. But replanters cannot be nominal preachers. They need to do more than just affirm the need for preaching. Replanters must labor in the text, accurately interpret it, clearly explain it and specifically apply it to their people.

They also need to demonstrate how Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture. His worth and work is presented throughout the entirety of the Bible. So when people hear that the judgment they deserve for their sins does not fall to them because it fell upon Jesus, people will be converted, Lord willing. This is why it is imperative that replanters devote their ministries to expositional preaching.

**2. Scripture is needed for spiritual growth.** It is impossible to grow without food. This is why Jesus repeatedly told Peter to "Feed my sheep." (John 21:17). In order for a church to grow in holiness and a sacrificial concern for others, they need to be fed a regular diet of God's Word.

William Still in his book, *The Work of the Pastor*, explains that this is the critical role of every shepherd:

The pastor is called to feed the sheep, even if the sheep do not want to be fed. He is certainly not to become an entertainer of goats. Let goats entertain goats, and let them do it out in goatland. You will certainly not turn goats into sheep by pandering to their goatishness. Do we really believe that the Word of God, by His Spirit, changes men?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> William Still, *The Work of the Pastor*, rev. ed. (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2010), 23.

The Word and Spirit are the means by which God's people are converted and grow in godliness. This is why the preaching of Scripture is indispensable for replanting. If you want to entertain a crowd, go into show business. If you want to replant a church, you must feed your flock what their souls desperately need, the truth of God's Word.

**3. Scripture is needed for sending disciples.** Apart from being regularly exposed to the Word, your people will have no idea what it looks like to live on mission. Disciples go tell others the good news because they have been commissioned to do so. How can we expect our people to go and tell if they aren't continually told that Christ has sent them? We can't, and they won't.

Scripture reminds us that we exist for a purpose greater than ourselves. We exist to showcase the glory of God, and the primary way we do this is by fulfilling the Great Commission. Christ's plans for executing the Great Commission are found in His Word. Thus, to neglect the preaching of His Word is to abandon our very purpose as a church. If we are going to send disciples into a lost and dying world to tell them of their need for Jesus, we must not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God.

# Building Community in a Replant

On Embracing Community as a  
Replanter, Fostering Community  
in a Replant and Reflecting On  
the Impact of Community

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of community seems today to be both trendy and foundational to the Christian faith. Particularly within the millennials, the drive for “authentic community” or “life on life” has replaced the one-time church growth staple of free coffee and convenient parking. The question, however, is exactly how do we “do life together?”

To begin, let me state we are in danger of making community the idol of our worship. We are created to be in community and to want to

spend time with other people. If we were not, we simply would not. It is too messy and cumbersome of a burden. I would argue that it is most often when we are broken emotionally or spiritually that we retreat from the group, personal quiet time with God notwithstanding.

So, without being too detailed, let me suggest a few must haves in Christian community and, on a few, point out the counterfeit so many have come to accept.

## **JESUS CENTRIC**

Christian community, like Christian anything, is focused on Jesus. You can and do have community around other lesser things like crossfit, yoga, being a parent of a toddler or whatever. But, Christian community has as its main hub in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. If all your group does is get together and have dinner, you may all be Christians, but your community is self-satisfying and does not actually encourage one another toward a more Christ-like existence.

## **INTENTIONAL**

Community is difficult. There has to be an intentionality to it. All people involved must take the ownership of the group. What so often happens is one or two people will do all the investing, while the mass simply takes. There can not only be one person planning all of the get-togethers, that same person praying and that same one person doing all of the follow up, “We missed you” messages. It is draining and turns what should be a group effort into a commodity.

## **DIVERSE**

Look around. If everyone in your group is the same as you, you may not be sharing Christian community. This is where our community is different from other knock offs. It is also where our community is so fulfilling and purposeful. Because our community is centered on Jesus, any life stage can participate, any race is welcome, every education accomplishment is free to speak and invest.

We could, no doubt, add to this list but these three are, from my perspective, key to the true formation of Christian community. Next, I will outline some tips in fostering this type of community in various settings such as church leadership, the church family and the broader geographic community.

## **EMBRACING COMMUNITY AS A REPLANTER**

If anything is going to take root within a church family, it is going to have to be modeled and celebrated by the leadership. This is true for everything, but it's particularly true of Christian community. Increasingly, it is becoming more and more evident people simply do not know how to relate to one another. Given that the fall drastically affected normal human-to-human and human-to-God relationships, this is not shocking. That being the case, the church leadership needs to reflect a positive and healthy relationship to one another. There are two helps and one challenge that should accompany Christian community among church leaders.

### **DON'T FORCE IT.**

Here is a truth; not everyone is going to be best friends. My generation (millennials), and probably others, deal with this reality in the most unsettling way. From observation, I am convinced we try to collect friends as an attempt to validate our own existence. We have no desire to be friends. We only want everyone to be our friend. We put unreasonable expectations on each other and create relational tension when those expectations are not met. As leaders in a church, we must accept the reality that everyone will not be best friends. The elders, deacons and staff should get along. They should encourage each other, and they should spur one another on toward a more Christ-like way of life, but they will not all watch football together every week.

More importantly, if you serve in a church leadership role, you must come to the conviction that you can be in community with another per-

son without being their BFF. For instance, if you are on staff at a church, do not assume you will be the pastor's best friend. You may not. Assuming that will create all kinds of tension. The same goes for the pastor's wife. My approach has always been to create environments in which leaders have an opportunity to build relationships. Some of those will develop due to divine providence and common interest. Those relationships exceed any sort of assigned partnerships. There are implications here for other avenues, such as mentorships, leadership development and discipleship.

### **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO MODEL IT.**

Some church leaders I know are afraid to model their community to the church as a whole because they are worried it may be perceived as elitism. But you are robbing yourself of a tool that could be used to spur on Christian community in the church family as a whole. Let them see you all joking and enjoying each other. You ought to paint a desirable picture of what they might have or strive for in the workplace and relational circles. Don't neglect to model both the joy and the hardship. It may be appropriate as the preaching pastor to share on occasion a time when you were challenged, corrected or had your attitude adjusted by a "subordinate." Think of the amazing lesson you teach when you show the humility to hear and be corrected by those perceived to be less than you in authority.

### **DON'T STOP BECAUSE OF OTHERS' INSECURITIES.**

Some within the church will likely see the leadership in Christian community and will construe it to be a form of elitism. Some will aspire to

be part of that and will force themselves into the “power huddle,” as they see it. Others will villainize the leadership and speak poorly of them all as if they are in cahoots or one collective persona. Combat that with direct teaching and correction. When you stumble upon these attitudes, simply point out that any group working closely on a common mission will naturally grow closer.

Model an attitude of acceptance, and let all leadership in. Don't exclude the lower leadership or create unreasonable divisions. Don't be exclusive yourself. I have nearly always, as a pastor, lead a small group. The small group is usually my closer friends. We bond as a small group. None of the staff are in my small group. This dual role for me has always allowed me to stay above that fray. I am available to a wide range of people in an appropriate manner. I do not expect everyone on staff, or in leadership, to be my best friend exclusively, nor do I expect that of the members of my small group. I simply minister and encourage others to do the same. The key here is not to allow the fear of someone getting upset to keep you from doing and being what God created you to be.

Christian community is hard in any setting, but it will be nearly impossible if it is not valued by the leadership of the local church.

## **FOSTERING COMMUNITY IN A REPLANT**

As pastors, and particularly church revitalizers or replanters, we struggle with providing a robust family experience with little to no resources. But when a church leverages Christian community correctly, they can often see positive effects in the areas of discipleship, church growth, membership participation and even church discipline. Here are a few factors

to consider in the pursuit of fostering Christian community within the church.

## **SIMPLIFY**

Often, it is the pastor and leadership that chokes out genuine community in a church. No one has time to live life together when they are running from committee meeting to luncheon to service to volunteer rotation. Keep in mind every person you are asking to spend at least an hour with their small group is also being asked to spend an hour volunteering in the church, a weekend with the disaster relief team, a night or two a month on the finance team and don't forget men's breakfast, women's retreat and children's summer program. They also work 40 or more hours, commute an hour each way and still have to mow the yard and try to get in a work out. The best thing a pastor can do for his church is to simplify what they do. Stop with all of the programs and events, and make the community aspect the second greatest emphasis just short of the corporate worship gathering.

As my friend, Micah Fries, says, "Not every church can be simple, but every church can be simpler." As a point of encouragement, simply readjust your expectations of people, and then communicate those. At Sachse's Church where I serve as pastor, we emphasize three disciplines every church member should have—corporate worship, small group and service. This means I do not expect everyone to be at the Wednesday evening Bible study, I do not expect everyone to attend the Fourth of July event and I tell them this. I let them know the supplemental things we do and offer are good but not necessary. I tell them if they are volunteering on a rotation in the nursery they should feel no obligation to

work every clean-up day. Understanding your people only have so much time and energy should readjust what you try to do in the first place.

## **EMPHASIZE**

We call our primarily community program small groups. We talk about them regularly. We have regular events designed to emphasize the importance of being involved in a small group. We run our programs and events through the lens of the small group. Regularly, when I preach the application portion of my sermons, I will do so picturing the small group applying the message of the text together. Most of our small groups are sermon-based discussions. This lets us leverage the entire energy of the church toward the necessary discipline of Christian community as opposed to having it as an appendage we add to the long list of things you could do.

## **MODEL**

I am troubled by how many pastors I know that are not in a small group. They tell people to do it, their wives might attend and their kids never miss, but they are too busy to join. My friend, if your sermon is not done by the hour before the worship gathering begins, you have a time-management issue. If you are too stressed by interaction with other people before you preach, then you are, in fact, not preaching; you are performing. I have no issue with saying it is vital for the pastor to be in a small group. Furthermore, you should require all of your leadership to be in a small group. The church as a whole will not truly do what you do not. If they do, it signals a lack of true health.

What we do as revitalizers and replanters is toward the end goal of reaching more people and making disciples. These are good goals, however, I am constantly amazed at how many pastors neglect the most effective means of achieving substantial movement in both goals. Plan through and begin next season simplifying, emphasizing and modeling Christian community in the church life as a whole.

## **THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY**

Once Christian community is valued and modeled through the leadership and church as a whole, I believe it will spill out into a richer love for our neighbors and, more importantly, an avenue by which to express that love.

The principle of upside-down economic is at play here. Within Christianity we benefit when we serve. It doesn't make worldly sense, but it is true. We get when we give. We are loved when we love. We experience forgiveness fully when we forgive. This same axiom is true in community. We are most in community when we offer community to others.

We expect the exclusivity of our faith to be the true source of our acceptance. We feel because we are special or chosen or in, we will feel accomplished or fulfilled. The reverse is true. We experience fulfillment when what we have been given freely (acceptance, love, faithfulness, compassion) is given away freely to others—especially others whom we would assume do not deserve it.

As we experience Christian community in our church family we will see:

## **OTHERS WELCOMED INTO THOSE POCKETS OF FAITH EASILY AND READILY.**

You will notice the outsider and stranger coming in through the natural front door of the small group more so than the larger worship gathering. This is because the church member knows their friend will be accepted and loved and encouraged there. They feel comfortable inviting them to the meals, bowling games and park walks, as well as the weekly Bible study or sermon discussion.

## **A SYNERGY IN OUTWARD FOCUSED COMPASSION.**

In the smaller setting of Christian community, individuals are free to share what God is laying on their heart and what the Holy Spirit is empowering them to do. The passion is contagious. The small group then rallies around causes in which they have ownership. These “missions” may not be something the formal church leadership is aware of or passionate about. However, the group finds pleasure in working together to share what they have found in Christ, the church and each other.

## **THE GOSPEL WITH FLESH AND BONES.**

One of the more impressive embodiments of the gospel is the unity that is found when a group of diverse people has a bond that makes no sense. The people who comprise a Christ-centered diverse small group would not ordinarily be friends. Their kids usually do not play together. They would not share the challenges of their lives with each other. However, in Christ, they do. The gospel transforms our social norms and fears into

something of strength and beauty. This is what a world obsessed with building walls finds so attractive.

Ultimately, Christian community flows from the compassion and acceptance we find in Jesus. It never stops in the church community. It is supposed to flow outward and is most powerful when it does.

# Loving and Leading Weak Sheep

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If God has called you to pastor, then you cannot escape your calling to shepherd weak sheep. This is true no matter your context, but I have found it to be especially true in the context of replanting. Thankfully, we aren't shepherding on our own. Jesus, the Great Shepherd, has demonstrated and taught us how to shepherd His flock.

Weak sheep can present themselves in several different ways.

## **NEVER BEEN DISCIPLED**

A church doesn't find herself in need of replanting due to a robust discipleship environment. Actually, if you are going to do the work of replanting, you are going to be building on the foundation of previous pastors. I found many members from the existing church had experienced programs, but they never really experienced biblical discipleship.

What we did to communicate this expectation as clearly as possible was to include it in our membership covenant. We let all members know we should all be connected to a group of people that knows us and cares for our souls. A new disciple and a long-term Christian are expected to be engaged in discipleship because it is expected of everyone who professes to be a follower of Christ.

## **NOT FULLY COMMITTED**

Many weak sheep just aren't fully committed. Maybe they still dream of the experience from their last church or campus ministry. Maybe they allow their personal preferences toward introversion to keep them on the fringe of the biblical community.

## **CONFUSED ABOUT BEING HELPFUL**

Weak sheep are often confused about what it means to be helpful. These sheep, unfortunately, think they are being helpful when they play devil's advocate, view sarcasm as a spiritual gift or think their gift to the church is to be critical at all junctures.

Shepherding these sheep has been one of the greatest thieves of joy in my own ministry as a replanter. On several occasions, I have told people in this category I can't listen to their criticisms until they have expressed gratitude for one thing they love about our church. I have also tried to remind certain sheep, by nature, I am overly critical of myself, so sometimes, I need them to sit on their criticism until they have spent some time processing the topic at hand.

Just a few weeks ago, as I was in the midst of a painful situation, I was struck by the fact that Jesus shepherded Judas just as He did the

other disciples. Jesus didn't give Judas all of His attention. He actually spent a lot more time with Peter, James and John. On the other hand, Jesus didn't exclude Judas. They shared meals together and spent a good amount of time together during Jesus' earthly ministry.

Then, I stopped to think about how Jesus loves a weak sheep like me. I think about His patience. I think about His kindness that leads me to repentance. I think about His love as seen in how He disciplines me. I see His sacrifice and remember the good news that He took my place of punishment.

Then I remember the joy of God calling me to shepherd His flock. I remember when I love the weak sheep, I am in a small way demonstrating the love of Christ to them. I remember discipline isn't a sign of hatred but rather a sign of love. I remember loving weak sheep is just going out and doing what Christ has done in His love towards me.

Brothers, I know loving and leading weak sheep is difficult. Fortunately, we are not alone. I pray that the weak sheep in your care will drive you to your knees in intercession. I pray they will lead you to humbly seek support and assistance from your elders. I pray your weak sheep will be a reminder of how much Christ loves you.

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