

THE



PLANTER



AS



GENERALIST



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THE PLANTER AS GENERALIST

CONTENTS

1: The Real World of Church Planting

4

2: Preaching

7

3: Leadership Development

11

4: Missional Engagement

15

5: Counseling

19

6: Fund Raising

23

7: Administration

27

8: Delegation

30

CHAPTER ONE

THE REAL WORLD OF CHURCH PLANTING

MATT ROGERS

The label “intern” used to be code word for the person who does anything and everything their boss doesn’t want to do. Interns are the best when you are in charge. Don’t want to scrape the gum out of the carpet at the church? Don’t worry. The intern’s got that! Tired of pestering people to sign up and pay for the next church event? Forget about it; the intern’s got that, too. There’s no shortage of responsibilities you can pawn off on a good intern, right?

When you are the intern, however, this is the worst! You didn’t sign up to clean carpets or make the fifteenth call for Mr. Ralph to get his money in on time. You wanted to teach, lead, and do all of the other tasks that, at least in your mind, were a central part of God’s mission in the world.

Fast forward a few years and you're now a church planter. You've been groomed under pastors in a large church with a highly developed staff. You've watched from afar as mentors wax eloquently on a big stage. And then, you plant a church. Soon you realize that the life you are living feels far more like that of an intern than the life of a "real" pastor.

The romanticized notion many have of pastoral ministry implodes quite quickly when the mundane, tedious reality of church planting begins. Sure, there are still meetings to lead, vision to cast, and sermons to preach, but there are also millions of other details that someone has to do. In most cases, that someone is either the church planter or his wife. A fortunate few are blessed with a team of co-laborers who can carry some of the weight as well, but there's simply more to do than people to do it.

The first option is to bow your back in pride. Many planters have been interns in the past, but now they're married with seminary degrees and a pedigree that says they shouldn't have to do these menial tasks anymore. Yet, it's hard to square a posture that says, "I'm too important for that" with the biblical imagery of the Son of God stooping to this Earth in the form of a servant.

The next option is to let things go undone. There are certainly times when this may be necessary. The perfectionism that drives many planters will need to die a painful death. There are tasks that simply won't get done, and that's OK. But then there are other responsibilities that have to get done. There are reports to fill out, emails to send,

budgets to balance, graphics to create, conversations to have, conflict to navigate, and on and on the list could go. Neglecting certain tasks may bring harm to Christ's body or hinder the effectiveness of the mission moving forward. Not to mention the fact that dropping balls time and again doesn't communicate that all the details of life are meant to be done whole-heartedly, as an act of worship to God.

The final, and preferable, option is to assume the role of a generalist and find ways to maximize your gifts and abilities, while building a team around you that can make up for your deficiencies. There may be a time when you have administrative assistants who can handle various details of your schedule, a time when you have 30 hours each week to invest in research, writing, and teaching and a time when you have a robust staff made up of specialists in the various dimensions of church life. For most church planters, that time is not now. And, more than likely, it's not coming anytime soon.

That's why we've designed this e-book. We've invited skilled practitioners to weigh in on their journey and speak to certain facets of the planter's role in the early years of planting. Our hope is that this series will encourage more planters to persevere during these seasons and find contentment in doing the mundane well.

CHAPTER TWO

PREACHING

NOAH OLDHAM

Early on in the church planting process, every planter figures out this painful truth: To be a successful church planter, you must become a generalist. There are a lot of things that must be done, especially in the beginning stages of a church plant, and many, if not most, of them fall on the planter's shoulders.

For instance, a planter must focus on evangelism. He must grow in his knowledge and ability in evangelism. He must also grow his entrepreneurial skills—building relationships and the art of starting things. Further, he must grow in organizational leadership: learning how to inspire and manage volunteers and encouraging others in the work they are called to join him in.

Yes, there are a number of *other* things a planter must do well. But one of the greatest things he must keenly focus on in planting a church is preaching. Recently, I read a blog by a famous Christian leader with a very wide readership, explaining how planting must be more than

just preaching. As I've already pointed out, that is absolutely true. But let's be clear: **While planting a church is much more than preaching, it is not less.**

A planter must do a number of other things, and he must do them well. But, even if he does all of these other things very well, without preaching, he doesn't have a church. He can have a non-profit. He can even have a strong parachurch ministry. He can start all kinds of things, but without the ability to teach and preach the word of God, he won't have a church.

So church planter, if God is calling you to plant a church, He is necessarily calling you to grow in the art, craft, and skill of preaching. To that end, I'd like to offer a couple exhortations.

DO NOT NEGLECT PREACHING.

Many planters have a lot of God-given charisma. They've been able to "get by" with their quick wit and attractive personality. In social settings and even small speaking engagements, they've found a moderate level of success in the popular leadership philosophy known as "fake it to make it." This may have worked in your youth ministry days, or even when you were support staff in a church, preaching every once in a while. But it will not be sustainable once you are responsible to feed the sheep you've been entrusted with by the Good Shepherd, weekly, with the rich food of His Word.

To that end, I would challenge you to give one-fourth to one-third of your work week to preaching preparation and delivery, especially

in the early years of planting. As a generalist, you may have to get creative with your time. We don't always have large chunks of hours to sit at a desk, uninterrupted, studying the text and poring over commentaries. Instead, you will have to grow in the art of piecing together thoughts from sticky-notes and ideas from napkins. You'll need to develop a rhythm of preparing your sermon all week long as you weave in an hour here and 15 minutes there between other meetings and responsibilities.

IF GOD IS CALLING YOU TO PLANT A CHURCH, HE IS CALLING YOU TO BE THE BEST "YOU" YOU CAN BE IN PREACHING.

If God has called you to lead a people, then those people need *you*. If God has called *you*, He wants *you*. He doesn't need or want or desire a replica of some other famous preacher. I've known planters who have gotten tired and begun preaching someone else's sermons, emulating someone else's style, even copying someone else's manuscript. They believe (a lie) that with all the other things they have going on, preaching is the thing they can afford to drop and instead borrow from someone else and still see success.

But I would argue that your preaching is the most important thing you will do. In your preaching, you will multiply disciples. You will equip those disciples for the work of ministry. If you give all your time to personal and individual ministry, and you don't give the time necessary to preaching to equip the saints for the work of ministry, you will have a church whose growth is severely stunted.

Planter, you've been called to a gloriously high task. There is so much for you to do. But in those moments you feel overwhelmed, be reminded of Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word."

CHAPTER THREE

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PEYTON JONES

Church planting, when done properly, is proof that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. This was brought home forcefully to me when I planted a multiplying church in the heart of Long Beach. We had just sent out our second church plant in two years and were gearing up for a third, when I realized we were sending out our best and running out of leaders. The problem was that I was trying to leave the hub in Long Beach and go plant another one. Like George Bailey, I just wanted to get the heck out of Bedford Falls. That's no easy task when you repeatedly send out your best people in teams to plant churches.

After the third church plant, there was nobody left behind with leadership potential. Or so I thought. I asked God what to do. The answer was so simple, I'm embarrassed to share it. *Disclaimer: No brilliance exists in the next few sentences.*

I felt I was being led to simply disciple the people directly in front

of me to the best of my ability. Here's the kicker: Not a single one of them were what we'd consider ministry candidates. If we were picking "ministry hopefuls" like players for a soccer team, they'd have all been picked last. Nobody would have considered them leadership material. But, they (and I) would have been very wrong. Nevertheless, I obediently started discipling those in front of me, despite their apparent lack in potential.

And incredible leadership emerged as a result.

To this day, that team leads Refuge Long Beach effectively and continues to make Spirit-led decisions.

I've since changed my view of leadership. I used to believe that people were "called" to leadership, but I've found that *more often than not, the people we call leaders are really just people who were disciplined well*. I now believe that when you really disciple people, leadership emerges as a result. Besides, Paul never mentions people having "a call" when he lists out things to look for in an elder or deacon. Their character is the main focus, with a slight nod to their gifting. Leadership emerges as they are developed in their role.

The problem with looking for leaders is that we often focus on people whom *we* think should be leaders and bypass those *God* thinks should be leading. Case in point: no self-respecting team of elders or mission board would have picked the 12 disciples for ministry, but after Christ spent three years discipling them, their leadership qualities emerged. Faced with all my best leaders gone or preparing to go,

I stopped looking for leadership candidates and started producing them.

Planting in urban Long Beach wasn't my first rodeo. I'd already been training church planters, but what nobody tells you about training church planters in your church plant is that they all want to go and plant churches. (I'm a little slow on the uptake.) I remember it happened in a small group.

We were getting ready to do some heavy outreach in a park where we'd seen a lot of conversions. The problem was, now that the "A" team was gone, I thought that the Hulk would smash these puny weaklings if they tried any frontline mission work. As I asked them to pray for God to raise people up in their gifts, Steve, a chain-link fence salesman said, "I can run a barbecue." His wife nudged him with a reality check and said, "For two hundred people?" He just smiled a smile that I came to know as the "I'm going on an adventure" smile.

That Sunday, hundreds turned up to our barbecue in the inner city, and as I looked over at the grill, Steve was grinning like the Cheshire Cat—when his mouth wasn't moving. Steve—ordinarily a reserved, quiet man—was animated, talking, smiling, and patting people on the back as he handed them cheeseburgers, tacos, and ribs. Steve had found his gift of serving and once that was unlocked, the Spirit coursed through him. We couldn't shut the guy up. People came to faith. It was the reawakening of our church. And it started with the gifts of ordinary people.

Perhaps what C.S. Lewis said in *Weight of Glory* is more fitting: “There are no ordinary people. You’ve never talked to a mere mortal.” Those planters who love and serve the “mere mortals” of the world must focus on leadership development if they hope to plant a church that engages effectively in God’s mission.

CHAPTER FOUR

MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

BRANDON CLEMENTS

In church planting, you are trying to lead a group of people to make disciples through everyday, ordinary life in your community. Some of us stumble on a stark reality: this will not happen by accident. Non-Christians in your community are unlikely to somehow sense that a new church has been started, look you up on Google, and wander into your first services. So, if your church is going to reach those far from Christ, you will need an intentional strategy to do so.

A VISION AND A PLAN

Whether you are starting with seven or 75 people in your church plant, you can help set a culture of missional engagement by having a vision for why your community needs engaging with the gospel, and a plan for your team to do so.

In developing this plan, start with the Bible. Study the pages of the New Testament, noticing how Jesus reached out to people and made disciples, and how His disciples made disciples. Be sure you are start-

ing with a sound, biblical model for how you will train your people to engage your community.

Next, it's helpful to contextualize your plan for engaging your community to your specific context. Ask questions like:

- What is the general attitude toward Christianity here?
- What evangelism methods are most likely to work effectively in this context?
- What are the areas of greatest need in our community?
- How could we start by meeting practical, tangible needs as a way to reach out to others?
- Are there specific sub-groups or areas of our community that we feel called to prioritize in missional engagement?

TRAIN AND EQUIP

Once you have your strategy for engagement set, it's time to put it into action. Some people on your church planting team likely have some maturity and gifting in how to engage others with the gospel, but it would be a mistake to assume everyone does. The reality is, the group you are starting with will likely need lots of equipping. Paired with some vision casting, paired with more equipping, then some reminding, and then some more reminding.

You get the picture.

Training your people to reach out to those who are far from Jesus will need to circulate in your teaching and equipping as long as your church exists, but especially so in the first few years. It needs to be

something they get tired of hearing, because some will need to get tired of hearing it before they even attempt to do it.

And take advantage of every chance you get to tell stories of the people who are faithfully engaging the lost around them—regardless of the outcome. Celebrate the faithfulness of your people engaging others, and tell those stories often. By doing this, you will keep the vision of missional engagement in front of your people and teach them that this is something to be celebrated.

MODEL IT WELL

In this area, the old adage rings true: “You can teach what you know, but you reproduce who you are.” The demands on your time and energy as a church planter are many, and there are certain priorities that you must protect and accomplish. But if you want your church to be a group that engages needs and reaches out to non-Christians in your community, you’ll need to prioritize that in your own life. Because the best thing you can do to teach and inspire them to practice this is to actually show them through your life.

TRUST THE ULTIMATE MISSIONARY

Lastly, if the idea of you being the model missionary freaks you out a little bit, I have good news for you. As Christians surrounded by great spiritual need, we carry urgency and weight to our calling to spread the good news about Jesus, but we aren’t called to carry pressure. We are simply called to join God in what He’s already doing in our community and trust that He will use our imperfect and lacking efforts how He sees fit.

And at the end of the day, our heads can hit the pillow and we can sleep soundly, because the Holy Spirit is the ultimate missionary pointing hearts to Jesus, and He never sleeps nor slumbers.

CHAPTER FOUR

COUNSELING

MILTON CAMPBELL

Anyone who has ever attempted to start a business learned this truth: There is a major contrast between what you thought you'd be doing versus what must get done. You thought working for yourself would give you more time to do what you love doing. However, the grunt work of start-up CEOs sounds much better on paper than it does in practice. The things you envision outsourcing to others, quickly become your responsibility.

If this is true in the marketplace, then it is multiplied in ministry. Church planter, perhaps you entered this calling excited about the opportunity to persuade people with God's Word. That is certainly our primary responsibility as planters, to proclaim God's truth. However, we often find that our sermons birthed more often in the chaos of counseling than in the quietness of study.

Now, let me be clear that the planter must be vigilant in guarding his preparation time to proclaim God's Word. Like the budding young entrepreneur, planters discover they must quickly become the gener-

alist. Counseling for the planter is a must-have skill set if you are truly reaching the lost. No skilled fisherman expects fish to jump into the boat already clean, so the planter must recognize that his strongest team member will be found in the harvest. We discover that they join Christ's mission marred by sin.

That is where the skill of counseling comes in. Now, I imagine you consider yourself lacking in that area. Perhaps you are not wired to counsel and see the greatest way to serve these individuals is to pass them over to a more qualified team member. The solution to you is to pray and recruit someone with a stronger counseling bent. That is one way, but bear with me because it may not be the best way. Here are a few points to remember.

REMEMBER THAT WE PREACH THE GOSPEL TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

The same gospel that has transformed your life is the same gospel that will transform others. Counseling others is just another opportunity to remind ourselves and others of the power of the gospel. I say to my church often, that the gospel is not a one-time event, but it is the love and power of God to save and redeem us broken cisterns. View counseling as another opportunity to point people to Jesus.

POINT THEM TO GOD'S TRUTH THAT APPLIES TO THEIR CIRCUMSTANCE.

Hebrews 4:12 says, *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit,*

of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Our aim is to help them begin to comprehend and crave the truth of God's Word. God's Word is alive, and the Holy Spirit uses it to transform our hearts. One day we will be unavailable and the greatest work we will do as a counselor is help them to know how to rightly interpret God's Word.

MODEL THE BEAUTY OF COMMUNITY.

I struggle with a lone-ranger mentality and believe too many planters do as well. However, when we do it alone, we miss a beautiful opportunity to invite them into deeper community. The young Timothy you have been discipling will grow tremendously by watching you counsel others. That person also grows in their ability to shepherd and pursue others. Don't let the fear of you saying the wrong thing keep you from involving others. Those you lead need to see you don't have all the answers, which makes room for grace and reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

KNOW WHEN TO PASS THE BATON.

There is a time to point them to trained and licensed counselors. Cultivate relationships with licensed Christian counselors. In this information age, finding a Christian counselor can be done in a matter of seconds by searching the internet. However, take the extra step to meet this counselor to see where they stand theologically, because you do bear some of the responsibility once you make the referral.

Active engagement in counseling, instead of draining time from more important tasks, will actually make you a better preacher and leader, so give yourself to this work wholeheartedly and see what God does.

CHAPTER SIX

FUND RAISING

JOSEPH VELARDE

I was recently in an all-too-familiar conversation with a friend. It had to do with fundraising. As we began to talk more, I could see the anxiety rising, and he looked completely overwhelmed. He told me he would rather be doing the ministry stuff and not have to do fundraising because it's not fun to talk about money.

My response to this person was that it's time to put the *fun* back in *fundraising*! People are surprised I see it that way. They think it's because it is my natural bent, but it hasn't always been something that came naturally. When I began the fundraising process for Riverbend, I had a lot of people say no to me. When did I start seeing fundraising as fun and not just something hindering me from doing the real ministry? It's when I began to affirm a few key truths regarding fundraising.

KNOW YOUR WHY.

I determined the “why” behind what I was doing. My “why” is to serve like Jesus and share what He has done for all people. In order for

that to become a reality, I would need to pray for and cultivate partnerships. When I read stories of those involved in great movements, I discovered they never went it alone.

Even the greatest church planter of all time, the apostle Paul, cultivated partnerships. You see this play out in 2 Corinthians 8–9.

Fund raising is often seen as a hindrance. It's a burden to the one raising the money and to the person being asked to give. But in reality, *not* asking is a hindrance. We prevent the giver from receiving the joy that comes from investing in Kingdom work, and we miss the blessing of seeing God provide.

We must change our perspective and see these fundraising relationships as more than getting funds, and take Paul's view, in which we see the people as precious partners from God. He loved them and cultivated relationships.

When you keep the “why” in front of you, it will keep you motivated to keep going! What is your “why”? Do you have it written down somewhere? Keep it in front of you.

LET YOUR “WHY” DRIVE YOUR “WHAT.”

The “why” will drive “what” you will do. What are you doing in light of your “why” when it comes to fundraising? It starts with taking time to pray about who could help and start reaching out and updating them about what is going on. This means when you schedule your week, you put fundraising in your schedule.

Nothing will replace hard work and time invested in order to get others to invest into the good work God has called you to do. I have heard many point leaders who are waiting for it just to come together with the fundraising. If your church plant is going to succeed, you will need to prioritize partnership development and fundraising. No else one in the organization can own that but you. It will take energy to cultivate these types of relationships.

WORK YOUR PLAN.

How will you work on your fundraising process this week? Write out what you will do, and give yourself a deadline. Answer the questions: What can I share with my potential partners, and what can I ask them to join in with? Tell a coach or friend your plan, for the purpose of accountability.

How can you share in a clear, creative, and concise way the vision God has put in your heart? Don't leave out what it costs. Every God-size vision comes at a cost, but it's worth it. Don't let your fear keep you from having fun in the process. There is a word for doing hard things even when you are afraid: courage.

At times, this will feel like lifting weights at the gym and eating healthy. It doesn't feel fun, but if you stick with the weight lifting and eating healthy, you will enjoy the results. The same is true with fundraising. It doesn't always feel fun, but that doesn't change the fact that it's necessary. You can't change that fundraising is an important part of church planting, but you can change your attitude about it.

We live in a culture that likes quick fixes; we want it fast, without inconveniences, and according to our preferences. It is great to have options, but fundraising will require working a plan.

Working a plan means you have a focused tenacity. It's what Paul refers to in Galatians 6:9: *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* We often give up too soon and forfeit seeing the fundraising harvest. We will miss out on the joy that comes from the fruit that God brings. Your Heavenly Father doesn't want you to miss out either. Work your plan, and see what God does. You don't control outcomes; you can only surrender and be obedient to the task God has given you.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ADMINISTRATION

DEAN INSERRA

On a scale of 1 to 10, my administration skills fall somewhere into negative numbers. In other words, I am a walking train wreck when it comes to anything administrative.

There's a big problem with this on the surface, because administration is a 9.9 when it comes to importance in church planting. While you are fulfilling the biblical role of pastor, elder, and shepherd, the part that never gets mentioned is being the leader of a non-profit. The church is so much more than an organization, but it is definitely not less. You have to make sure your church does not drop the ball when it comes to administration, because it is essential for systems and the overall function of the church, but also because you need all the credibility possible when you first get started as a new church. People won't tolerate a church that can't seem to get it together and has regular blunders—especially a church plant.

If you aren't very savvy in the gifting of administration, find someone who can carry the load for you in this area and make sure the individual

is trustworthy. The pastor must have zero hesitations with the “who” when it comes to fulfilling this important role. By “trustworthy,” I’m not only referring to character and integrity, as those matters should be without question. The “trust” comes in having someone who can speak, make decisions, and manage on the pastor’s behalf.

As a church plant, this person can, and realistically should, begin serving as volunteer, but I would argue the actual position should be the first “hire” when that opportunity becomes available. For some reason, churches have a tendency to first hire a worship leader. I have never understood this line of thinking. Other than the lead pastor, the most important role in a church plant is someone who can get stuff done in an organizational and administrative context. If the lead pastor is strong in this area, I would still hand it off as soon as possible, because the church doesn’t need the pastor getting bogged down in all the details of administration. The church does need to be strong in the area of administration, and that’s why finding the right person to carry this load is essential to success.

A church plant needs the pastor to be fundraising, building relationships, investing in ministry teams and, of course, preaching the Word. The nuts and bolts can, and should, be handled by someone else. As the pastor draws the picture of the church plant, he must have someone who can color in the lines—one who can take the vision and execute it. A pastor who has an administrative gift is a blessing, but one who lacks this gift is not cursed. There is one condition to the previous statement, and that is that the pastor must have someone

who can handle the load. If not, there will be a bunch of over-promises that are under-delivered. The church must function in the “day-to-day,” and far too many times, that is something planters realize too late. Yes, you are a church where people come together to hear the Word and be in community, but you are also an organization, and it must be stewarded well for the glory of God and His Church.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DELEGATION

BEN PILGREEN

What is the vision God has given you for your church? What dreams do you have for transforming your city? What would you love to see happen in the next 12 months?

I'm sure you can easily answer these questions. But I also think there's something that could be standing in the way of your dreams becoming reality. You might think it's better preaching from you, and perhaps that would help. You might think you need a better location or facility, and those things are important. You might even think you should be praying more, and of course, that's always a wise thing.

But what if one of the most important things standing between your present reality and your ultimate goals is whether or not you become great at delegation? We tend to think delegation doesn't sound all that spiritual. And yet it was a key component for the leadership of Moses, Jesus, and the first-century church.

In Exodus 18, Moses is doing so much of the leading all by himself. His father-in-law, Jethro, says to him, "What you are doing is not

good.” He goes on to tell Moses that he needs to select capable people who can do much of the work.

In Acts 6, the 12 disciples realize that if they are going to serve everyone in the community, delegation is a necessity. Even Jesus knew that if His mission would be carried out after He left earth, He had to delegate responsibility to His disciples.

If this is true for Moses, Jesus, and the early church, then there’s a good chance it is critical for us as well. Here is what delegation can do for you and others:

- It will keep you from being exhausted all of the time.
- It will remove the limitations that exist when you’re the only one doing the work.
- It will allow you to operate more in your area of giftedness.
- It will allow others to operate more in their areas of giftedness.
- It multiplies the amount of ministry impact your church can make.

When it comes to any task, there are four ways to categorize each task:

1. TO DO

In every season of your church plant, you need to gain clarity on what you must do personally. What falls into this category for you right now? Here are the things on my “do” list in this season of our church: give overall vision to the church, primary Sunday communicator, lead

our staff team, oversee our Frontline leadership team, and be closely engaged with our board. What are the things you must do in this season?

2. TO DELAY

There are some things we will have to do, but they don't need to be done today, this week, or maybe even this month. I believe so much comes down to how we spend our time each day. And we need to be crystal clear about the things that need to be done today and the things that don't need to be done today. I keep a list of things that need to happen at some point, but it's not time to do them yet. There are other things more urgent and important. What are the things I need to do at some point, but they aren't my main things right now?

3. TO DELEGATE

Some things need to be done in our church, but they don't need to be done by me. They should not be on my personal "do" list. Delegation can involve a staff member or a volunteer. As you consider what the task is, think clearly about who would be the ideal person to do the task. What are three things you're currently doing that should be delegated to someone else?

4. TO DUMP

Sometimes we simply realize there are things on our task list that shouldn't be done by us or anyone else. We should simply erase them and forget about them. What is on your list that probably doesn't need to be done by anyone?

CONCLUSION

Pastoral ministry in general, and church planting in particular, is a glorious, weighty work. There is far more than meets the eye when you step into this work, and it's easy for pastors to get bogged down by the massive new responsibilities.

With God's help and a bit of intentionality, it is possible to skilfully navigate these challenges. This e-book is one step in the right direction. Now we challenge you to apply the principles we've discussed to your unique situation and allow God to align your passions with your priorities. If we can be of any help in the process, please don't hesitate to let us know at *namb.net*.