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MARKS

OF A HEALTHY
CHURCH PLANTER

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CHURCH PLANTER

SEND Network

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Introduction

Matt Rogers

Anything that's made to sound simple, probably isn't. Most of us have tried to put together a piece of furniture by following a few "simple" instructions. After hours of toil, mixed with childlike tantrums, we throw up our hands in disgust, pledging we'll just make the entire thing from scratch the next time.

Church leaders can be guilty of the opposite extreme. We can take something meant to be relatively simple and make it so complex that it confounds and frustrates even the most seasoned practitioner. Such is certainly the case with church planting.

That's not to suggest that starting a new church is easy. It's not. Missiological and ecclesiological challenges abound for one seeking to bring the gospel to bear in a new community. Yet the biblical roadmap is clear. God is not a God of confusion, nor has He asked us to unlock some mysterious puzzle in order to see a new church birthed. He's given us a clear path to follow.

This e-book is designed to guide you along that path by pointing out the five marks of a successful church planter and pastor. The authors are not theoretical experts, but capable practitioners who have walked this path ahead of you. In the pages that follow, they've attempted to distill the key factors that make a planter effective. Their guidance isn't derived from their individual insight, but from the authoritative wisdom of God found in the Scripture. Let's journey together to discover and embody God's five markers of a church planter.

Disciple

One who follows the person, work, and ways of Jesus.

Rick Duncan

You've heard it so often that you probably tune it out whenever you fly: "In the event of emergency, put your oxygen mask on first." But have you ever wondered about what might happen if you didn't follow the flight attendants' instructions in case of an emergency?

In an emergency at 35,000 feet, a depressurized airplane cabin triggers something called hypoxia, a technical term for a lack of oxygen to the body. On a plane, the symptoms would include a reduced level of consciousness. As a passenger, you would have seconds to put on your mask before oxygen-saturation levels drop to a dangerous, deadly level. Destin Sandlin, on his YouTube channel, *Smarter Every Day*, shows us, the science behind the flight attendants' instruction.

The temptation is to help a child or the elderly before helping yourself. After all, isn't that what heroic people do? But by helping others first, you might pass out. You can't help others if you don't first help yourself.

Church planters who have missional hearts to share the gospel sometimes fail to take care of their own lives first. They can preach the gospel to others, but not apply it to themselves.

A church planter who fails to be a disciple who is growing in his understanding and application of the gospel is like the passenger on the plane who forgets to put on the oxygen mask. The gospel is like oxygen. It is life-giving, not only at the beginning of our Christian lives, but every single day we live and serve.

So, don't forget to put on your oxygen mask on first. Here's how:

1. Fight to uncover the roots of your own gospel blindness

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a winner — to succeed. I was pretty good at baseball, a decent student, and, as a kid, a good musician. Somehow, I started to believe that I had to perform at a pretty high level to get the approval and applause of important people in my life: parents, coaches, and teachers.

So I became driven. For many years, I was able to keep up the facade of competence. I received a scholarship to play baseball in college. After graduation, I spent a few years playing baseball professionally. I was seen as one of the good guys. I got married and started a family.

Then I felt called to plant a church. My wife and I, both Southerners, parachuted into a Northern city to plant. I thought, “I didn’t make it to the major leagues in baseball, but I’ll make it to the major leagues as a church planter.” Deep inside, I felt like I didn’t quite measure up, but nothing was going to stop me from winning. I developed a “do more, try harder” identity, which is, of course, the antithesis of a gospel identity. I thought, “I’ll show myself, others, and God that I’m worthy by my performance as a planter.”

As a child, I had believed the gospel. I knew that Christ died on the cross in my place for my sin, that He rose from the dead, that He had forgiven me and accepted me, even though I was undeserving. But as a church planter, I was not applying the gospel on a day-to-day basis.

Things went fairly well for us in church planting. I got some measure of respect and appreciation. And ... I became even more driven. What I didn’t understand was that driven people — like me — might gain admiration from others but, in the process, lose connection with Christ.

The pressure to perform began to take its toll. Ministry wasn’t as joyful as it should have been. I wasn’t truly life-giving for the people around me. I was trying to do too much to prove my worth and value. A failure to apply the gospel to my own life was taking its toll.

I remember the day when my oldest son said, “Why do you work so much? Why aren’t you at home more on weekends with us?” My drive to succeed was doing damage to the people I loved the most. It didn’t have to be that way. Author Paul Tripp provides a helpful reminder:

When you forget the gospel, you begin to seek from the situations, locations, and relationships of ministry what you have already been given in Christ. You begin to look to ministry for identity, security, hope, well-being, meaning, and purpose. These are things you will only ever find vertically. They are already yours in Christ. So, you have to fight to give the gospel presence in your heart.

I unnecessarily carried performance-based baggage for many years. No matter how well things went, I thought, “I’ll have to do better next time.” I wanted to be in the big leagues.

Someone encouraged me to go to some counseling training. I thought I was going to learn to help others. Instead, I gained a whole lot of insight about myself — how I was driven by shame and how I had adopted a persona of competence that I hoped would win approval.

I began to realize that I have great worth apart from my performance — apart from my success or lack of it — simply because Christ gave His life for me and gave great value to me. No matter how badly I perform, I am deeply loved and fully pleasing to God. The pressure is off. I now fight to see that my intimacy with Christ is the greatest gift I can give my family, my friends, and my church.

Again, Paul Tripp writes:

When you live out of the grace of the gospel, you quit fearing failure, you quit avoiding being known, and you quit hiding your struggles and your sin. The gospel declares that there is nothing that could ever be uncovered about you and me that hasn’t already been covered by the grace of Jesus. The gospel is the only thing that can free a pastor from the guilt, shame, and drivenness of the hide (“never let your weakness

show”) and seek (asking ministry to do what Christ has already done) lifestyle that makes ministry burdensome to so many pastors.

What are the root reasons that cause you to fail to live in the freedom of the gospel? How can understanding your ungodly motivations cause you to lean into the gospel more?

2. Get the “exclamation point,” not the “question mark”

I’ve seen it happen too many times.

A gifted young leader plants a church. Because he’s energetic and compelling as a communicator, he draws a big crowd. The church grows. It’s the talk of the town in Christian circles. His network put him up front at conferences. What this leader is doing becomes the model for others.

But as time goes by, a faulty foundation is exposed. The planter typically sees himself as the victim and never the perpetrator of problems. He talks about how it’s all being done for God, but with success a shift occurred. Instead of wanting to reach a generation or a city for Christ, the planter wants to be known as the leader who reached a generation for Christ. Tragically, this church planter leaves in his wake an inordinate number of wounded and dead bodies.

Could it be the planter has a question-marked heart?

Many of us go through life with a question mark in our hearts and not an exclamation point. The question-marked heart is asking this question: “Am I loved? Do I have worth and value?” There’s a void, an emptiness in the heart. Some of us have the question-marked heart because of our upbringing or because of failure. So we develop all kinds of ministry strategies to answer the question: “Am I loved?”

At the end of the day, the people around such a leader feel used. Why? Because that leader is using others to answer the questions.

The exclamation-pointed heart is making a statement: “I am loved! I do have worth and value!” There’s a fullness, a satisfaction, in the heart. Some of us have the exclamation-pointed heart because we’ve understood and applied the gospel. We’ve deepened our relationship with Christ Jesus. We know He loves us. But we are wanting others to know this same love.

At the end of the day, the people around us feel served, feel loved. Why? Because we truly have been serving them — sacrificing ourselves, laying down our lives — to help them find an answer to their own “Am I loved?” questions.

Who are you? Are you the question-marked heart or the exclamation-pointed heart?

God wants you to know you are loved.

May you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God (Eph. 3:18-19, NLT).

Knowing how loved you are will fill you up and give you a way to love others. Today is the day to really lock in on your union with Christ, your identity in Christ — to know who you are in Jesus. Then you can plant a church with others with an exclamation point at the core of your being. You’ll be saying, “I am loved! I am worthy!”

When that happens, you will live with strategies and tactics that are coming from a full and healthy place, not from a void. And the people around you will know they aren’t being used. Instead, they feel they are being loved.

Many years ago, I heard a quote from a book called *Search for Significance* by Robert McGee. He writes, “I have great worth apart from my performance because Christ gave His life for me and, therefore, imparted

great value to me. I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, totally forgiven, accepted and complete in Christ.”

Maybe this is a statement you can put to memory too. I need to keep reminding myself of these truths. I am beloved. And if you are in Christ, so are you. Do you believe it? If you want to serve and love your church planting team, instead of using and abusing them, it all starts with believing you are beloved. That’s the way you live out the gospel.

When, where, and how have you seen leaders hurt others because they operated out of a question-marked heart? How will you cooperate with Jesus to straighten out the question mark in your heart so it becomes more and more an exclamation point?

3. Apply the gospel to your life all day, every day

A go-to tool for many church planters for presenting the gospel to people who are far from God is called *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide*. When I train people how to use the 3 Circles, I say, “If you can remember 3 circles, 3 arrows, and 9 words, then you can share the gospel!” A key moment in the presentation is when we ask, “So how can we get from brokenness (Circle 2) back to God’s design (Circle 1)? It’s by repenting and believing the gospel (Circle 3).”

Then I encourage someone to pray like this:

My life is broken — I recognize it’s because of my sin. I need you. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in you. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Now, why review the 3 Circles? It’s because every church planter needs to access this same gospel every day, all day. In Colossians 2:7 we read, “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” Repenting and believing the gospel is what we must do to be saved initially. It’s also what we keep doing subsequently.

Look again at the prayer of salvation. Even if you have been a follower of Christ for decades, is there a part of that prayer you can't pray today?

I am fully aware that J.D. Greear wrote a book entitled *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*. I affirm the truth he shares in the book: "It's not the prayer that saves; it's the repentance and faith behind the prayer that lays hold of salvation."

But what I want to say to church planters and to every follower of Jesus is "Keep on repenting and believing the gospel"! I am pretty sure J.D. Greear would agree.

Why? It's not only unsaved people who find themselves in a place of brokenness. It's also every church planter. And because of our fallenness, we tend to try to deal with the brokenness in ways that actually take us farther away from God's design. Church planters can become workaholic, driven leaders who pursue ministry success in order to deal with their brokenness. When that happens, they end up hurting themselves and everyone around them.

Every fight you had with your spouse, every blow-up you've had with your children, and every ungodly conflict you've had with a staff member or church member has its roots in you living out of that Brokenness circle.

Just like when we were first saved, we need to repent and believe the gospel. This is the way we remember that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make God love us less. Repenting and believing the gospel day after day after day helps us live in grace with grace. It allows us the freedom to interact with spouses and children and church leaders in loving and supporting ways, without trying to manipulate and control them.

Let me close with a prayer that I hope can help you saturate in the gospel on a daily basis:

In Christ, there is nothing I can do that would make You love me more, and nothing I have done, or could do, that would make You love me less.

Your presence and approval are all I need today for everlasting joy. As You have been to me, so I will be to others. As I pray, I'll measure Your compassion by the cross and Your power by the resurrection.

What do you see as some personal benefits of an ongoing lifestyle of repenting and believing the gospel? How will you train yourself to more deeply and more consistently repent and believe the gospel all day, every day?

Living out of this deep-rooted gospel understanding allows us to actually pastor effectively. In the next chapter, Jamie Limato will help us see how disciples of Jesus and church planters can embrace their calling to shepherd others.

Reflection questions:

1. How does this chapter contribute to your understanding of what it means to be a disciple?
2. What are three steps you can take to grow in your belief of the gospel?
3. List two people who can help you take those steps.
4. How can you help others in your church plant grow in repenting and believing the gospel?

Shepherd

Shepherds lead themselves well and nurture and protect their family relationships.

Jamie Limato

“...as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you,”

1 Peter 5:1-2

Shepherding was one of the greatest privileges I had as pastor and planter of Aletheia Norfolk for nine and a half years. I don't think I always realized this. Looking back now, I can see it was a joy.

One of my favorite memories was meeting Phil and Karen for the first time. On the first Sunday they attended Aletheia, they were hung over from the previous night. Both were raised in the church but had strayed far away. Phil and Karen came in wandering and searching. They were in need of the gospel and a shepherd to guide them back. Over time, I developed a friendship with Phil and Karen and began to disciple them and shepherd them to God.

In their time at Aletheia, they were part of serving and community groups. Four years later, we had the privilege of commissioning them to help plant a church. How was this possible in only four years? It was only possible by shepherding them with the gospel.

One of your primary roles as a church planter is being a shepherd. You will have a multitude of responsibilities in your church plant; none is more important than being a shepherd. Why? Because without a shepherd, the sheep are in trouble.

The church planter as shepherd

As a church planter, you are busy. You have a vast number of pressures.

You must maintain a multiplicity of relationships. A fast pace becomes the routine. When it comes to leading, we can feel overwhelmed, which can lead to neglecting our duties, taking on too many responsibilities, or having unrealistic expectations.

Your role is too important to respond in these ways. Our calling is to faithfully follow the Shepherd, love our family, and lead the flock God has given us. The apostle Peter echoes these concepts: “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (1 Pet. 5:2-4)

Peter gives the pastor/church planter clear answers about what it means to be a shepherd. He answers these questions in the text:

- *What is my responsibility? To shepherd and exercise oversight.*
- *Who am I responsible to shepherd? The community God gives us.*
- *How am I to carry out this responsibility? Willingly, humbly, and with joy.*
- *When will this responsibility stop? When the Chief Shepherd comes back.*

As church planters, we shepherd God’s people faithfully, humbly, willingly, and with joy on behalf of Jesus, our Chief Shepherd. Even though the culture has vastly changed since Peter wrote these words, this calling has not changed. There may be pressure and the demands may be high, but our calling is still the same. We are to shepherd the flock of God that is among us.

So, what are some practical ways you can manage the demands and obey what God has called you to do? Here are three ways we can live out the calling as church planter shepherds.

1. The shepherding church planter follows the Chief Shepherd

Leading well begins with following well. The church planter must never forget that before we exercise authority, we are under God's authority. Following is an essential element to "shepherding the flock of God that is among you."

The apostle Paul encourages his *protégé* Timothy to faithfully lead by following the leader. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul says, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Paul is telling Timothy: "If you are going to be worthy of following as a shepherd, you need to faithfully follow the Chief Shepherd and set a godly example for others." Timothy was not in a position to lead because he was the right age. Timothy didn't have the right amount of experience, nor was he a part of some grand succession plan. Timothy was qualified to lead because he followed the Chief Shepherd.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." What is Paul saying? He is saying that leading begins with following. The writer of Hebrews says something similar in chapter 13:7: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." If you are going to be a church planter worth following, then you must follow the Chief Shepherd.

When Phil and Karen walked into our church plant, they didn't find a church planter who was the right age. They didn't find a church planter who had the right experience. What they found was a shepherd who was following the Chief Shepherd. I was worth following because I was following the Chief Shepherd.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Are you a shepherd worth following?
- If people followed your "way of life," would their life look more like Jesus?
- What steps could you take today to more intentionally follow the Chief Shepherd, Jesus?

2. The shepherding church planter leads his family

No one can shepherd the church planter's family like him! You cannot outsource, delegate, or disregard this responsibility. Before you are a pastor/shepherd to others, you are to be a shepherd in our own home. Timothy Whitmer, in his book *The Shepherd Leader*, says this, "Leaders must be good shepherds of their little flocks at home before they are qualified to serve as shepherds of God's flock, the church" (p. 164). No one can do the job of shepherding your family for you.

The apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:4, says a qualification of a pastor is being able to "manage his own household well." This does not mean the church planting family has to be perfect. The way you lead your family, however, will be instructive to the people in your church plant. The men who attend your church plant will look to you to see what it looks like to love and lead their families well. What will they see?

As a church planter, I didn't always take this responsibility as seriously as I should. I will never forget coming home from one of many discipleship meetings and my wife saying: "I wish you bent over backward for us as much as you do for those people." Wow ... that cut me deeply. I needed to hear it, because it was true. I was failing to see that my responsibility of leading the church was starting to override my first and primary responsibility, leading my family. The first step to change is taking responsibility. I needed to take responsibility.

One of the biggest changes needed in leading your family well is asking for feedback. When my wife spoke directly to me, she was giving me the gift of feedback. What I needed to learn was to ask for feedback, not wait for it to be given. Church planter, if you wait for your family to give you feedback, it may be too late to receive it. Thankfully, it wasn't too late for me. Feedback is a gift. What I learned is that I needed to ask for feedback. I needed to be quick to repent. I needed to faithfully lead my family first. No one can do that for me.

Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What would it look like for you to take responsibility for shepherding your family?

- How could you ask for feedback from your wife/kids about your leadership?
- What changes do you need to make?
- What steps could you take today toward making that change?

3. The shepherding church planter loves his sheep

Shepherding is a labor of love. The responsibility is not about simply completing tasks. Shepherding is about loving the sheep. God has given us the great privilege of loving the flock of God.

Jesus, our Chief Shepherd, is described in Isaiah 40:11 as one who “will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” This describes the love and care our Chief Shepherd has for us. How do we do this with the people God has given us?

I will never forget the day my wife and I found out we were going to have our second child. We were a couple of years into church planting. We were doing everything we could do to just keep up. I remember calling my parents to share the exciting news that they were going to be grandparents again. I said to them, “We are excited, but what are we supposed to do? We are overwhelmed already with what we have.” I’ll never forget what they said: “Son, you will do the same thing you did with your first child. You will feed them and love them.” The same is true for the people God sends to your church plant. You are to feed them and love them. This is just what a shepherd does.

The apostle Paul tells Timothy the same thing as a shepherd. He says, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). One of the greatest things we can do to love our people is to faithfully feed them from God’s word. Paul is telling Timothy the same thing my parents told me: Feed them and love them.

Conclusion

On the day we commissioned Phil and Karen to be part of the church planting team, I asked them a question: “What made you come back after the first Sunday?” They basically said: “You faithfully shepherded us back to Jesus. You lived by example what it looked like to follow Jesus. You certainly weren’t perfect but you lived what you taught. You loved us well by feeding us from God’s word and you did this by pointing us to Jesus and His word. That is why we kept coming back. You shepherded us and loved us.”

The scriptures say many things concerning your role as a shepherd. Personally following the Chief Shepherd, leading your family, and loving the flock of God are three areas we must all be growing in as church planters. Focusing on these three areas will enable you to shepherd the flock of God that is among you. And, in time, we’ll see God create more Phils and Karens.

Reflection questions:

1. How does this chapter contribute to your understanding of what it means to be a shepherd?
2. What would faithfully feeding the flock of God look like in your context?
3. How could you intentionally love the people in your church plant?
4. What steps could you take today toward lovingly shepherding in your church plant?

Missionary

One who is sent to embed their life and the gospel into a local context.

Peyton Jones

“Your homework this week is to go back to your communities and win one person to Jesus.”

Most of the heads in the church planting class snapped up and stared at me in wide-eyed disbelief. Half of them expected me to smirk and assure them I was only joking. I put it in perspective: “Listen, I’ve read so many church planting newsletters over the years, and in each one of them, you guys always talk about how you’re going to transform this city or take that city for Jesus. OK, rock stars, all I’m asking is that you lead one soul to Jesus this week, and you’re looking at me like I asked the impossible?”

Truth told, many of the planters I was working with were eager to start a Sunday service but didn’t have the first clue about being church planters. Church planters don’t have to be awesome organizers of a Sunday service, but they do need to be able to speak with lost people and share the gospel fluently. This is because church planters are first missionaries before anything else. What motivates and dominates a missionary is the mission itself.

Much of what we call church planting really is church starting. We speak of reaching critical mass, fancy marketing, and business models, yet talk little of mission. If we aren’t sowing the seeds of the gospel as our means of planting churches, then we aren’t truly planting anything. What would happen if, instead of starting with a core team, bags of cash, and a sexy website, we:

- Got out into the city and identified its needs?
- Served the community based on the collective gifts of the group?
- Built relationships believing a sovereign God would act?

Here's the challenge to brave souls who believe that missionaries engage in a mission inherent with risk: Do this for one year as a type of experiment, then witness the crucial difference when you start your church. The alternative is renting a public space and crossing your fingers, hoping un-churched strangers will come. It appears to be the safe way, but this secure, safe mode of planting usually results in failure.

What if there was a way to take new ground for the kingdom that was more than throwing a church service? What if that way wasn't new, but old? The reality is that the spiritual, philosophical, and societal climate Paul and the other apostles stepped into is not all that different from the "brave new world" the church faces today. On a practical level, our post-Christian world is very much like the apostles' pre-Christian world, and if the challenges are the same, then so are the solutions.

If we want to reach the ones nobody is reaching, we need to go where nobody is going and do what nobody is doing. That is the missionary spirit and the secret sauce of the first-century church. The early church planters of the first century were missionaries to the core, and there were five crucial distinctives of a missionary that made all of the difference:

1. Start with the lost
2. Know their communities
3. Take risks
4. Penetrate their culture
5. Activate the gifts of others

Let's look at each of these in turn.

1. Missionaries start with the lost

The apostles never planted churches the way we attempt to. They didn't discuss critical mass, fund bags of cash, and stack the church with crowds from the mother ship to make it look "happening." Instead, they mixed in the marketplace, tracked with people, and shared the good news about Jesus. And try as we might to substitute that last part, there simply is no substitute. Much of what is trendy among leaders right now has been

a cheap substitute for good, old-fashioned, plainspoken sharing of the gospel. Your church plant will flounder whenever you approach people through marketing or substitute the new silver bullet for evangelism. Eventually, you've got to open your mouth and let the gospel out.

2. Missionaries know their communities

Familiarity may breed contempt, but for missionaries, it breeds compassion. Before you can go on mission, you need to understand the mission field to discover how to cultivate it. Paul spent an entire day walking around Athens and studying their worship before engaging them with the gospel. Nehemiah scouted the city by night. Joshua's troops circled the city for days. Circling the city beats circling the drain. Believe it or not, many planters never pause to answer the following questions:

- What's the suicide rate in your part of the city?
- What's the ethnic make-up?
- What languages do your neighbors speak?
- What's the socioeconomic makeup?
- What percentage of the population is unemployed or on benefits?
- What's the chief type of occupation?
- What are the statistics for how many are married or divorced, with or without kids? What percentage are single parents?
- Is the crime rate high? Which crimes are the most common?
- What social concerns do the mayor or other civic leaders address the most?
- Which religions are practiced, and at what rate?

All this information is at your fingertips by simply typing your city's name into the Google search window. You just have to care.

3. Missionaries take risks

God promised He would be with us if we went (Matt. 28:18-20), yet we still play it much safer than Jesus or Paul ever did. Our advances in technology afford a church planter with great opportunity, but beware

of mistaking great opportunities with great impact. They are not the same. The early church possessed none of the technology afforded us, and therefore didn't hide behind it, substituting social media for social interaction. They made the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:16) and therefore experienced great impact. No guts, no glory. What would happen if we stopped stripping risk from all our activities? Eating at people's houses may be trendy talk in missional circles, but it may be just another way of making mission safe. Going to dinner may be the start of something, but it's only a start. Playing it safe doesn't reach people. Playing it safe just isn't working. As I meet with church planters, missional Millennials confess they're still having problems reaching people. The silver-bullet strategy of inviting people to barbecues can only go on so long before you run out of people, or just end up where everyone else is: stuck.

Consider the following statistics from the book *The Unchurched Next Door*.

- One person in five among the unchurched is seeking God and would respond if the gospel were presented.
- Only one of 20 is antagonistic to Christians talking about their faith.
- In one survey from the Barna Group, 25 percent of the unchurched said they would come to church if invited by a friend.

This leads me to ask: What are we not doing that could result in more people coming to faith in Jesus?

Remember, when it comes to the hard work of actually saving a soul, God does all the heavy lifting. He's just looking for a faithful messenger who will deliver the right mail to the right people, and give Him the credit when they win the sweepstakes. As you pray, and faithfully venture into the risky business of gospel work, God will be faithful to act.

4. Missionaries penetrate their culture

Have you ever noticed that in the Gospels and Acts, ministry happened outside the four walls? The moment the Holy Spirit fell in power upon the apostles, they went outside. Buildings can be useful, but they also can become a bunker. Bunkers are good for hiding, for shelter, even a ready-made tomb. The disciples left that upper room because they wanted to go where the people were. Until you go where the people are, you've not penetrated your community.

Consider the following five key areas that provide relationship-building opportunities:

Recreational activities

There are sports teams, Cross-Fit groups, and individual fitness plans that people like to partner up on. Cross-Fit itself is one of the best parallels of church that exists. People take their kids to dance, gymnastics, soccer games, play groups for stay-at-home- moms, sewing groups, sculpting classes, and yoga classes. The possibilities are endless. Church planters think like missionaries when it comes to strategic engagement, but at the end of the day, they need recreational breaks as much as anybody. Recreation is there to help you to relax from the pressures of life, blow off steam, and have fun with other people. Let your enjoyment of life become part of the mission God has sent you on.

Intellectual pursuits

Art classes, reading groups, cooking classes, and even night school are where people attempt to learn more, feed their minds, and stimulate deeper thinking. Public libraries provide opportunities to teach writing workshops or to speak on an area of expertise. Going to art exhibits with your neighbors and engaging in discussions about an artist's work can provide amazing gospel conversations. Forming a film club can be a discussion forum recounting themes of redemption.

Social causes

You earn the right to speak to a culture when you serve a culture. The same goes for individuals. Gospel conversations abound and flourish when we serve the less-fortunate ones in a community. Unbelievers today are highly aware of the conditions in their world and socially awakened to do something about it. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has two major missional branches: The Send Network (church planting) and Send Relief (disaster relief/mercy mission). Nothing speaks so powerfully about grace than a group of people sacrificially serving others. Often when non-believers witness the love of God in action, they're moved to join in and help.

Hospitality

Everybody has to eat. For that reason, inviting somebody over to eat seems like a big ask, but it doesn't necessarily take a huge investment of time if you'd already planned to do it anyway. Instead of an hour around the table, you might spend two hours in conversation with your neighbors. You could host a block party on Memorial Day, grill hotdogs, and rent a bounce house. You can provide coffee for the commuters standing at the bus stop in an urban setting. Mark a day of the week, pick a bus stop bench, and own it. Go to a coin laundry and tell people you represent a program that pays for laundry on certain days of the week. When they ask what program, tell them about your church, and how you desire to be an embodiment of grace and love to the community by showing people with your actions, not just your words. Serve coffee and cookies. Make it a party. The opportunities are endless, and the more creative you get, the more fun you'll have. And remember: That's part of the power of it.

Proximity spaces

Finally, certain places in your neighborhood are the centers of activity. Belonging to a particular place of business can foster a sense of community. In Britain, it's the local pub. In America, it can be the coffee shop or a place to eat. These places are what missiologist Alan Hirsch calls "proximity spaces" — places where people congregate, establish an

unspoken relationship, and a sense of community is fostered. It could be a skate park, a secret surfing spot known only to locals, or a park in an urban setting. Whenever you see these places, consider doing business there, especially if it's a hub in the community you're trying to reach. To ignore these places is to ignore the way Paul operated when he entered a city. He set up a booth in the marketplace, visited the synagogue, and ate with the Gentiles. All of it was strategic.

5. Missionaries activate the gifts of others

People hunger for biblical evangelism because they were wired for it. It's just that our modern set-up doesn't let it take place naturally. This is why Jesus chose his words carefully in Acts 1:8, saying we'd be his witnesses. Note that he did not use the word "evangelists." There are some called to be evangelists, and they equip people for evangelism according to Ephesians 4:10-11. Nonetheless, although we may not all be called to be evangelists, being a witness is something much more natural. Being a witness is an unconscious thing. It oozes out of you. It also involves the Holy Spirit partnering with you in your everyday rhythms of life.

For centuries, the church has been staring at a solitary man on stage who works hard to master his one gift. For one hour every Sunday, thousands of people focus their attention on the gifts of one man, reinforcing the idea that their gifts don't matter unless they point back and support the gifts of this one man. Sunday after Sunday, believers sit and listen silently, completely unaware the Holy Spirit has supercharged them for ministry by equipping them with spiritual gifts, because their gifts lay dormant. But take that same believer on a short-term mission trip to Haiti or Thailand where they have opportunity to serve on the front lines of mission, and as their dormant spiritual gifts finally awaken, something within them springs to life! They feel the Spirit wearing them like a cheap suit and they feel alive for the first time in years as they serve, comfort, and share food, services, or the gospel. Having tasted the adventure, and having broken free from the mundane spectator Christianity they've known previously, they return to the States and eagerly await the time their church will use them. Now that they've been activated in their gifts, they've been ruined for simply sitting. They've tasted being used by God and they can't go

back to the same boredom. This holy discontent is the first stage of mobilization that births movements, and without the awakened gifts of individuals in a church, there will be no movement — no matter how gifted the church's leader.

The unleashing of our spiritual gifts, therefore, is the start of a developing appetite for true evangelism. This is why, on Peter's first evangelistic "big day" at Pentecost, he ties it in with the developing of their spiritual gifts. Have you ever thought it strange that Peter explains what's happening by referencing Joel's prophecy? Despite the odd choice of text from an obscure lesser prophet's discourse on a plague of locusts, the passage focuses on God pouring out His Spirit upon everyone, activating their gifts:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out My Spirit, and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18)

Peter emphasizes that old and young, men and women, free or servants, shall prophesy, see visions, and dream powerful dreams. This is body ministry in action, a releasing of the gifts of everyday believers. Peter is eager for the crowd to stop looking at his gift on stage as special. Instead he tells them the Holy Spirit will come upon each of them, activating them, mobilizing them to evangelize in the same way. Evangelism is intrinsically tied to our gifts. Acts 2:42 was the result of everyday believers being awakened in their gifts! Study that passage closely and you'll see that it was the groundswell of everyday believers — not the activity of leaders — that is in focus.

Conclusion

A missionary is not someone who crosses the seas, but somebody who sees the cross. Paul summed up that sentiment when he said: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no

longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” (2 Cor. 5:14-15, NIV)

Church planter, do you see the people in your community as people for whom Christ died? If so, you will be unable to help being a missionary to the people he’s placed in front of you. You will be “driven” or “compelled” by Christ’s love as your missionary heart and resulting gospel activity leads to planting a church.

Reflection questions:

1. How does this chapter contribute to your understanding of what it means to be a missionary?
2. List three steps you can take toward greater missionary activity in your context.
3. List two people who can help you take those steps.
4. How can you help others in your church plant be better missionaries?

Multiplier

One who convenes intentional worship communities for the eventual purpose of developing and deploying church planting teams.

Charles Campbell

“Next man up” is a phrase we hear over and over again in sports. In 2015, the KC Royals made it their mantra on their way to winning the World Series. The key moment happened in the bottom of the ninth inning of Game 5. The Royals were down one run, with one man out and a runner on third. The batter, Salvador Perez, tapped a grounder to third. The third baseman, David Wright, looked back the runner, Eric Hosmer, and zipped the ball to first base for the second out. Hosmer had other intentions and, as soon as Wright threw, Hosmer made a mad dash for the plate. The first baseman saw it all unfold, causing him to make a rushed, wild throw to the plate. The Royals tied the game and went on to win the World Series in 12 innings.

Hosmer’s role in that critical ninth inning was one of several examples throughout the series where players could be heard saying “Next man up.” Each guy knew his role, played his part, and did the little things he was equipped to do to create a winning team. Ned Yost, the manager, created that culture. He took a young team, with a lot of players no one had ever heard of, and created a winning team.

To keep the momentum going, players knew what they needed to do next. Whether it was moving the runner over to the next base, being in the right position on the field, or throwing the right pitch at the right time, every guy knew his role and how to execute it.

Coach Yost couldn’t win the game by himself; he had to make sure the team was equipped and ready to play the game. That’s the picture I want you to keep in mind when you think about the being a “multiplier” for your church plant. As the key leader in the church plant, what are you doing to create a culture of discovering, developing, and deploying the next generation of leaders? A culture that paints a vision for a

multiplication of churches being planted that replicate what they've seen.

Biblical rationale

I think Paul would have loved Coach Yost's plan. Why? Because we see Paul do the same thing throughout the book of Acts. He discovers the no-names and develops them into the leaders of the church. He goes to where the people are and shares the gospel. In Acts 14, we find Paul has been stoned to the point of death and, tucked in the midst of all this drama, we see these words:

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (vv. 21-23)

Don't miss what happened in those three verses. The gospel was preached, disciples were made, and leaders were developed and equipped.

Paul didn't recruit from the outside; he worked with the people God had brought to him from the harvest. Crazy how that works! Many planters and pastors are working in hard places, yet continue to be faithful in sharing the love of Jesus with those around them. Those they are reaching are the very disciples and leaders God is raising up to send. If planters are going to see their church reproduce and multiply, they have to lead the way in sharing their faith.

Here are some key questions I would be asking others and yourself: Does my daily time with Christ involve praying for the lost in my city and specifically for people by name? Am I taking the people I have discipled with me as I have gospel conversations? Are we celebrating and telling the stories of people being faithful to pray and share the gospel story?

Paul doesn't stop with gospel proclamation; he makes disciples. He

strengthened and encouraged those disciples to keep going. As the key leader in your plant, how are you using your words to build up the people you are leading?

One of the most impactful parts of the Send Network Train the Trainer (TTT) Retreat is debriefing the Encouragement module. The focus of our time together is “encouraging someone in a way that shapes their soul.” It is impactful because so many of the leaders we train have never been in environments where intentional encouragement has been given. In a recent TTT, one of our trainers said something to this effect: “Encouragement is the fuel for engagement.” I took that to mean that words have power to move people. That does not mean words should be used to manipulate people. As leaders, it always comes back to a heart, motivated by love for the Father, overflowing to our people. What can you do this week to either strengthen the culture of encouragement you have created or lead the way in creating a culture of encouragement? It will be foundational to the development process you build to make disciples who multiply themselves and prepare to be sent out.

Not only does Paul encourage them, but he also strengthens them. We don't have the details of how he does this, but the text gives us some ideas when it says “saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Paul is prepping them for the coming battle. We know from Paul's other letters that many of the believers in these early churches lost property, position, and their lives. It was going to be a challenge to live out their faith, but they served a faithful God. As the lead multiplier in your church plant, what you are doing to strengthen your people for the battle? Is your process intentional or haphazard? What can you do in the coming weeks to identify the key competencies your people need to know and have at the ready as they enter their mission fields?

Discovering and developing always need to lead to deploying. Paul appointed leaders in that local setting because he knew he was moving on. He empowered them to lead. He knew they had what they needed to get going, and he stepped out of the room. If he had stayed, he potentially could have become the bottleneck for multiplication to take place. As a leader, you need to develop your people to lead and empower them to

make decisions. Followers can go get things done for the cause; leaders need to be empowered to make decisions for the cause.

Application points

We all think we want to be like Paul. Why did I say “think” we want to be like Paul? Because if we get down to it, being like Paul requires complete dependence on the Father and a lot of sacrifice on our part. So are you ready to get to work? I mean that in a good way. I know you are ready, because you already have said yes. You are in the mix on the front lines, working to plant a healthy, multiplying church. But are you really ready to get work?

Becoming a multiplying leader is going to cost you. You are going to have to ask the Father to kill the pride in you, over and over and over again. It’s going to require more time and energy from you than if you did things your way on your time schedule. But at some point, you will hit a wall. We all do, no matter how much capacity you have, you will max yourself at some point. Multiplying yourself is the way through that wall. Here are some steps that will help:

1. Be intentional about your time with Father in prayer and study of the Word

I know it’s the Sunday school answer, but it’s truth. If you are going to discover the people God is preparing to journey with you, you have to be abiding with the Father. Start each day asking the Father for wisdom and to direct your steps. Then open your eyes to the opportunities. Too often, we will pray for opportunities and then bury our heads in the “work of the ministry,” only to miss the people God has put in front of us. Discovery is really about putting yourself in the middle of your mission field and seeing it with God’s eyes.

2. Create a process of development that is intentional and reproducible

When it comes to developing people, mountains of resources available

to you. The temptation will be to jump from idea to idea, hoping for the silver bullet that will take all your people from babies in Christ to the next apostle Paul. The key to success with development is creating a culture of personal growth that leads to good habits and discipline, which in turn lead to a lifetime of learning from Jesus. Model it for your people, give them clear next steps, create environments where they are encouraged to practice, take time to evaluate their progress, and challenge them to be a model for someone else. My friend and mentor Mac Lake says it this way: “When leadership development becomes reproducible, it becomes unstoppable.”

3. The day has come; it’s time for some people to leave

Tears will be shed, but releasing is at the heart of multiplication. A lot of churches do a great job with discovering and developing, but this final step of releasing is so hard. I get it: As a parent, I have worked for 18 to 20 years raising up a child, caring for them, loving them, encouraging them, challenging them, and now I want to reap the fruit of my effort. I want them to stick around so they can help me build up my thing. They owe me! That sounds pretty selfish and unhealthy, but how often do we take that approach to deploying our best leaders to the mission field? But here is the reality: We serve a generous God who knows what we need and will provide. The key questions: Do we trust him? Will he come through again and again and again? Are you ready to break through the wall, then step out of the room and release God’s people for God’s mission?

Being manager of a baseball team comes with a lot of work and responsibility, but at the end of the day, it’s about leading a group of men to win a game. Not only can the manager not win the game on his own, but he won’t even make it on the field to play the game. God has put a vision inside of you to bring glory to Himself by making disciples who will make disciples. My friend, Peyton Jones, in *Raiders of the Lost Art*, said: “Risk, Adventure, Power: They are all connected. The power of God often comes after prayerfully seeking Him and then stepping out to do the impossible. Without that flair of adventure that comes with the risk of failure, there is no place for faith.”

As the lead multiplier in your church plant, will you step out in faith and fully engage in discovering, developing, and deploying the next generation of church planters to plant a healthy, multiplying church? Who's your "next man up?"

Reflection questions:

1. How does this chapter contribute to your understanding of what it means to be a multiplier?
2. List three steps you can take toward creating a multiplication culture in your context.
3. List two people who can help you take those steps.
4. How can you help others in your church plant be better multipliers?

Collaborator

One who represents, champions and participates in kingdom ventures in the city.

Brad Brisco

What does it mean to collaborate? The Latin word is *collaborare*, which is the combination of the prefix “co” (derived from the Latin word “com”), meaning “with or together,” and the word *laborare*, which means “to labor, toil, or struggle.” To collaborate, therefore, is to labor together, even struggling for a common purpose. Collaboration is an active and deliberate effort at working together.

People often use words like “connect,” “coordinate,” or “cooperate” interchangeably with the word “collaborate.” However, this tends to limit the power of genuine collaboration.

When we connect with someone, we meet together. Share ideas. We may even know another person well. But that is not collaboration. We are simply connected.

When groups coordinate, it means they are going to work together, rather than compete. But this is not the same as collaborating, because the success of the two groups remains separate.

Collaborating also is not the same as cooperating. When we cooperate, we help one another. We assist others when they have a need. When we cooperate, we may work together for a common purpose, but usually none of the parties takes responsibility for the outcome. Further, cooperation often speaks of being passive, rather than active: We go along with what someone else wants to do. Lastly, cooperation is normally additive, not multiplicative. In other words, our efforts are not multiplied; instead we simply add the resources of the two groups together.

Collaboration, on the other hand, is doing more together than we could do alone. Inter-dependency is woven together for the greater good.

Instead of addition of resources, synergy multiplies when we do things together. The whole is always more than the sum of its parts.

The goal of collaboration as a church planter is the spiritual and social transformation of a city. Spiritual transformation occurs when people begin to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Luke 10:27). Societal transformation happens when people love their neighbors as themselves and, as a result, strive to bring about restoration of the broken places and systems of their city (Isa. 58:12).

But what does it look like to be a collaborator with others in your city? Here are three key characteristics of an effective collaborator:

1. Collaborators have a kingdom perspective

The “kingdom of God” (or “kingdom of heaven”) was Jesus’ favorite way of talking about the gospel. The language is unmistakable throughout the Gospels: “The kingdom of heaven is like this,” “The kingdom of heaven is within you,” “The kingdom of God has come near,” “until the kingdom of God comes,” “I must preach the kingdom of God.”

But how are we to grasp the way Jesus spoke of the kingdom? A good place to start is to understand that the word “kingdom” is a combination of two words: “king” and “domain.” It refers to the realm of a king’s dominion, including his decrees, codes, and commands. Citizens in a kingdom must abide by the laws of their king and give him their total allegiance. A kingdom refers to the king’s reign, where what the king wants done, gets done.

Now for our purposes, let’s understand the kingdom of God to be God’s active reign through history, bringing about His purposes in the world through Jesus. In the simplest of terms, *the kingdom of God* is what the world looks *like when King Jesus gets His way*.

In the book *Kingdom First*, author Jeff Christopherson challenges us to consider the kingdom this way:

Although brokenness abounds within individuals, institutions, and structural systems, there is good news. Jesus, our triumphant King, wants things to be much different in our damaged world. He desires to bring the peace of His atonement and His eternal victory into all the manifestations of brokenness in our world (according to Col. 1:19–20). While we now live in the tension that we will not wholly see the fullness of Christ’s peace until the new heaven and the new earth, there is a promise of peace where sorrow currently abounds. This is the gospel of the Kingdom....

According to Jesus, who is the gospel, He Himself proclaimed the good news, liberated captives, healed the sick, freed the oppressed, and brought the Lord’s favor to the least. All of this was Jesus’ activity on this earth and His fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. This work of our King is what brings the Kingdom of God to the dark and broken realities of a desperate world. Peace where there was chaos. Healing where there was pain. Comfort where there was deep sorrow. Wholeness where there was systemic fragmentation.

A church planter with a kingdom perspective sees the church as an outpost of the kingdom that exists to bring God’s influence into the affairs of the community. This will certainly involve proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, for the purpose of seeing people reconciled to God and each other, through the atoning work of Jesus. But a leader with a kingdom-centered perspective also will speak up about a broader range of kingdom concerns. They will see the necessity of working to address quality-of-life issues like health care, literacy, institutional and generational poverty, racism, and the environment.

Church leaders whose priority is simply to build *their* church are not functioning in proper alignment with a kingdom perspective. Church activities that function primarily to keep church members happy violate the true nature and essence of the church. We simply cannot fully understand the scope and depth of the congregation’s mission unless we see it in relation to the kingdom of God in the world. The church must embrace and embody a new narrative that is motivated by God’s mission and kingdom concerns rather than church issues.

Church planters with a collaborative vision will see their church as an instrument of something much greater than themselves. They are tools of the kingdom of God. We in the church often wrongly assume that the primary activity of God is in the church, rather than recognizing that God's primary activity is in the world, and the church is God's instrument sent into the world to participate in His kingdom mission of redemption. It is interesting to note that being an instrument of the kingdom represents an active role. In other words, we are actively discovering ways to join in the kingdom agenda. We are constantly looking for ways to participate in God's mission. For this reason, Paul can address Christians as "co-workers for the kingdom of God" (Col. 4: 11) and consider them to be "suffering" for the reign of God (2 Thess. 1: 5).

Collaboration is so closely tied to a kingdom perspective because when a church planter fully grasps the grand nature of the kingdom, they will begin to recognize this kind of work can't be accomplish in isolation. They will view their city through a wider lens, one that must involve collaboration with other churches.

One church inherently has a limited view of the needs and assets in the community. Churches working together for community transformation will have a much broader, more realistic picture and holistic understanding of the needs — and therefore can do a better job of meeting the needs.

2. Collaborators seek the welfare of the city

In the prophetic book of Jeremiah, we read how the nation of Israel had forsaken God's law and, as a result, found themselves taken into captivity and exiled far from their Jerusalem homeland. God had sent the Babylonian empire to discipline His people. As they were relocated to a foreign, idolatrous land, they began to hear that their time there would be short. False prophets were telling the nation of Israel that God would soon deliver them and that settling into this new, strange land was foolish. God's Word to the exiles, through the prophet Jeremiah, was quite different.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I

have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jer. 29:4-7, ESV).

The words of Jeremiah were shocking. The premise of his message was that the exiles would be in Babylon for several generations — at least 70 years, a time period that included not only the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar but of his son and grandson (Jer. 25:11; 27:7; 29:10), and that the Israelites would simply need to come to terms with this fact. God was telling them to settle down and get used to being in this hostile, ungodly place.

Toward this end, Jeremiah counseled his community to not be nostalgic for the past, for the past could not be recovered. He did not advise them to plan for insurrection, for there was no promise of their restoration in Jerusalem, at least not anytime soon. Nor was the community's survival tied to the remnant that remained in Jerusalem (Jer. 24:5-10). For Jeremiah, exile did not mean that God had abandoned Israel. Rather, exile was the place where God was at work. God's purposes with Israel, in other words, were served by the Babylonian invasion.

Jeremiah's instructions were more counterintuitive than they might at first seem. Jeremiah tells the Jews in exile to "seek the welfare" of their captors, to pray for the very people who destroyed their homeland, because the welfare of the exiles and the captors were bound together. If God's purposes with Israel really were being fulfilled through their captivity, then as the exiles pursued the shalom of the home of their captors — Babylon — God would provide shalom for those in exile.

What God instructs the exiles to do is actually rather ordinary. Consider the list from Jeremiah 29:

- Build houses and live in them

- Plant gardens and eat their produce
- Have children
- Marry off your children so they have children
- Seek the welfare of the city
- Pray for the welfare of the city

Nothing in this list is dramatic or miraculous. It is a list of normal, everyday activities. It could represent any person, regardless of income, social status, education, vocation, or geographical location. The way the kingdom of God takes root in the lives of people, and ultimately changes a city, is by exiles living normal, everyday lives as citizens of the King in every neighborhood and public place that makes up a city. We build houses. We plant gardens. We have children. We seek the welfare of our city. Far more often than not, the ways of Jesus are indeed local and ordinary.

What does it mean for a church planter to seek the welfare of their city? First, it means that a planter may need to be reminded that they have been sent to their city. They live where they live for a purpose. God has sent them there. Consequently, they need to put down roots. Incarnate. Stay. Then they need to ask what it means to seek the welfare of their city.

Second, they will collaborate for the sake of the city. They will search for ways to bridge the work their church is doing with what God is doing in other organizations. As mentioned before, this will certainly involve working with other churches, but it also includes collaborating with business, healthcare, schools, government, etc.

A great collaborator will serve as a kind of social alchemist — to create new social compounds; to gather together people's ideas, skills, and resources in configurations the city is not naturally aligned to produce. People typically self-organize around interests, work, and proximity. But faced with significant city-wide problems, collaborators will cross boundaries, pulling together people from different arenas, with different kinds of experience and expertise who can, together, build solutions that are new. To truly seek the welfare of our cities, we cannot operate in a bubble. Instead the church must collaborate with others who love and

care for the city. The church must show the world around us what it means to move from competition to collaboration.

3. Collaborators don't care who gets the credit

In a fascinating book titled *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, author David Bornstein provides 10 profiles of men and women from around the world who have found solutions to a wide variety of social and economic problems. For Bornstein, social entrepreneurs are transformative forces. They are people with new ideas to address major problems, who are relentless in the pursuit of their visions. They are people who simply will not take “no” for an answer.

While each of the profiles are inspiring, my favorite part of the book comes when Bornstein highlights common themes found in each of the stories. One of the most powerful themes, and one closely connected to collaboration, is the willingness to share credit.

There is a well-known adage that goes like this: There is no limit to what you can achieve if you don't care who gets the credit. Bornstein found this to be acutely true with each of the individuals he highlighted. Their willingness to share credit was a critical path to success, simply because the more credit they shared, the more people wanted to help them.

An equally important aspect of sharing credit relates to a person's motivation. Our desire to share the credit for success with others should flow out of our longing for transformation. In other words, if a church planter's true intention is to see genuine spiritual and social transformation occur in their city, then sharing credit will come naturally. However if the true motivation is to be *recognized* as having made change happen, sharing credit may run against the grain. The desire to see transformation should be so strong that it simply doesn't matter who may receive accolades for a job well done.

Reflection questions:

1. How does this chapter contribute to your understanding of what it means to be a collaborator?
2. List three steps you can take toward greater collaboration in your context.
3. List two people who can help you take those steps.
4. How can you help others in your church plant be better collaborators?

¹<https://youtu.be/kUfF2MTnqAw>

²<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/pastoral-ministry-is-war>

³Ibid.

⁴<https://www.namb.net/video/3-circles-life-conversation-guide>

⁵ <https://jdgrear.com/blog/a-tool-for-saturating-yourself-in-the-gospel-daily/>

⁶ Jeff Christopherson, and Mac Lake, Kingdom First, Kindle Edition (B&H Publishing Group), Kindle Location 2791-2798.