

Maranatha Baptist Bible College

CHURCH PLANTING IN AN URBAN CITY
IN URUGUAY, SOUTH AMERICA

A Paper
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Church Planting
Taught by Ron Self

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Getting Started

Searcy and Thomas have described what they believe is the main ingredient for successful church planting: “In order to plant a successful church, you have *to know that you know that you are undeniably called by God*. Period...Thriving churches have always been-and will always be-built on a base of personal calling, not personal choice.”¹ While I would agree with these authors, I would further define “personal calling.” This was described in our course notes as being comprised of at least three elements: personal desire (1 Tim. 3:1), fulfillment of the Biblical requirements² (1 Tim. 3:1-7), and recognition of one’s local church (Acts 13; cf. 9, 26). With these qualifications in place, one may confidently embark upon the task of church planting.

In a chapter entitled “Essentials in Church Planting,” Charles Brock, missionary to the Philippines in the 1970’s, outlines the importance of the Holy Spirit. After quoting Philip Hogan, who believes the main ingredient for successful church planting is “simple dependence on the Holy Spirit,” Brock says, “an absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit is an indispensable essential in indigenous church planting.”³ The adjective Brock uses, “absolute,” is important to this discussion. Before the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, which marked a decisive break between Fundamentalism and American culture, Fundamentalism was known for a marked dependence on the Holy Spirit.⁴ After 1925, there seemed to be a gradual emphasis on empirical data to verify Fundamental evangelicalism, marked by the New Evangelicalism

¹ Nelson Searcy and Thomas Kerrick, *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), 34.

² I was *somewhat* surprised, when browsing the authors’ church website, to see that some of the pastors enjoy rock music and sitcom television, like *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*. I wondered if their definition of “personal calling” does not including fulfillment of the Biblical requirements, like being “serious minded.” I believe there’s a place for humor and laughter, but these programs are pretty worldly (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

³ Charles Brock, *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting* (Nashville: Broadman, 1981), 21.

⁴ For example, see A.J. Gordon’s *The Holy Spirit in Missions* (New York: Revell, 1893) and R.A. Torrey’s *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1897). These men wrote other books about the Holy Spirit, and were key leaders in the early Fundamentalist movement.

with its emphasis on irenic scholarship and cultural relevance. Presently, in conservative Christian circles there sometimes seems to be an over-confidence in empirical witness (truth perceived through scholarship) to the diminution of spiritual witness (truth perceived through the Holy Spirit). Rather, these must be held in balance.⁵ As the Spirit always works in conjunction with the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), the former is necessary to the latter; at the same time, however, the former loses all meaning without an equal emphasis on the latter. Scholarship that is not spiritual is foreign to the New Testament (Acts 6:4). All of this is to say that church planting, informed as it may be through scholarship, must be built upon an absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit whose power may be manifest through prayer (cp. Matt. 16:18-19 and 18:18-19). He is essential for the planting *and* maintenance of churches.

During the first year in the country, I will spend significant time studying Uruguayan culture. This may be done by watching how people socialize, exercise leadership, make decisions, manage corporate life, celebrate their culture, and deal with change and challenges.⁶ Specifically will I want to observe how Uruguayans worship. In the church, this may include a study of preaching forms, the kind of songs they sing and how they sing them, forms of the Lord's Supper, and forms of prayer and fellowship. With an understanding of the importance of symbol and ceremony,⁷ I can use Hiebert's four-step process of critical contextualization as a guide for knowing which cultural forms may be implemented in worship: 1) cultural exegesis of the custom from an insider perspective to discern meanings, 2) biblical exegesis of

⁵ In Latin America, just the opposite imbalance seems to exist; there is an emphasis on truth perceived through the "Spirit" to the diminution of truth perceived through scholarship (exegesis of Scripture).

⁶ Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 121.

⁷ Cf. Mathias Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples of All Nations* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997).

relevant Bible teaching, 3) critical evaluation of the custom in light of biblical teaching, and 4) creation of a contextualized practice.⁸

The headings below describe the essential elements of church as described in Scripture⁹ and as listed in our notes. Each heading includes at least a few paragraphs of research, followed by bullet-point lists of suggested applications. When getting started, I may visit each category chronologically (i.e., Congregation will not come before Evangelism), though eventually there will be overlap in the timing of each category's application. Evangelism is the first step in the planting of any church.

Application

- As many American churches do not seem to emphasize the third element in one's calling to missions service (recognition by the local church after prayer and fasting), I must understand and teach this concept upon every opportunity to do so.
- I must be a man of study *and* prayer. I will create a morning schedule filled with both. I will pray strategically with my family and disciples regularly.
- Make the use of Hiebert's four-step process a normal way of life.
- I will prayerfully learn to enjoy the people and the culture, as successful ministry is unlikely without this.

Evangelism

Latin America is less task-oriented and propositional than is America. The people are more interested in relationships, which in Uruguay are often developed through chatting while drinking mate or late night get-togethers. I made visits with one missionary who said his visit was "a waste of time" because the national did not seem to understand the missionary's non-charismatic brand of Christianity. This kind of attitude should probably be avoided, as "people are not objects or targets. They want to be

⁸ Ibid., 256.

⁹ Jerusalem model in Acts 2; Thessalonian model in 1 Thessalonians 1; Antioch model in Acts 11.

respected and understood. They are people worthy of love, respect, and *time*.¹⁰ The best way to build relationships is to be visible, interested, and involved: being proactive with neighbors, shopkeepers, mail carriers, gas-station attendants, and perhaps joining a community sports league or other organization are all great ways of building redemptive relationships. Also, because many want to sharpen their English speaking abilities, teaching it informally may be a great way to build such relationships. Of course, careful hospitality should always be exercised, which may include having a general “open-door” policy in my home.

Who the church planter should target for redemptive relationships is an issue that needs to be addressed. There has been a tendency in some circles, and apparently among church planters, to focus evangelistic efforts on children and teens.¹¹ This may be because children and teens are more easily influenced and do not usually have challenging theological questions. This simply is not a biblical approach, and may be a poor testimony to the unsaved world.¹² Ideally, the church planter may “win the adults and let them as Christians lead their children to the Lord in the context of a loving church.”¹³ This is the example found with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33), and has recently been an effective method with my Hispanic neighbors.

This student firmly believes in the usefulness of illustrated stories for effective teaching. For one year, I have “experimented” on my Spanish-speaking Sunday school by having a “story and a meal” once every three weeks. Adults and children are present, and all seem to be very engaged. This method has

¹⁰ Ibid., 211.

¹¹ Compare Vacation Bible School, Neighborhood Bible Time, and the popular bus ministries of the 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s, The Minute Men, and Cola Wars. Also, while visiting South America, I have sometimes noticed how the majority of one’s church is comprised of children.

¹² Enough sexual predators have emerged from churches of every denomination to evoke suspicion on those who may focus their evangelistic efforts on children and teens. There is a place for children and teen programs, but they should not be the focus. A church may focus on the family by targeting the head (father) of the household.

¹³ Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 70.

the advantage of bringing all ages together for one worship service, and is a fun way to expose the biblically illiterate adults (supposing there are some) to key themes and personalities in Scripture. The progressive and inductive nature of stories also helps ensure cognitive and lasting (not just emotional) decisions for Christ.¹⁴ Storytelling should be contextualized, which means Betty Lukens (complete with Caucasian Jesus) will not be appropriate.¹⁵

A more “adult-centered” approach is the indirect leadership one Brock promotes. This is best used when a missionary has no intention of staying around for more than a few years or even a few months. After due promotion, the missionary becomes the “Bible teacher” who guides an inductive Bible study which focuses on the life of Christ. A booklet may be used which only asks questions, listing suggested verses to find the answers. The benefit of this is that the people develop their doctrine straight from the Bible, not necessarily from a “denomination.”¹⁶ A few songs may be sung to reinforce the truths the nationals are learning. Though this method is highly reproducible, it may be used in modified form in South America as the mother-daughter approach seems to be working well there (i.e., the missionary may not leave upon completion of the study). While this may be done in homes, eventually there may be a need for a church building, whose evangelistic “boundaries” will need to be defined.

While there is a place for inviting people into the church building for special events, evangelism should usually take place outside the church building, as the building, though just a building, is a haven for believers. It may also be a visual reminder of the boundaries between believers and unbelievers.

Analyzing the metaphor of “the sower and the seed” (cf. Matt. 13), Brock comments on the nature of

¹⁴ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 220-221. Stories may also be used for discipleship.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

¹⁶ Denominational distinctives should not probably be taught formally at the very outset in evangelism (they may be discussed informally). Of course, never should the missionary be deceptive. Formal instruction on baptism, spiritual gifts, etc., is probably best done about a year after dedicated individuals emerge. It may also be a part of the new membership curriculum.

the contact between the seed (the gospel through the missionary) and the soil (the unbeliever): “It is a fact that a church planter must be out among the people. He must be aware of who the people are, where pockets of people are located, and something of the religious climate of the area. [The seed] spreads through interpersonal relationships when a correct vertical relationship with God has been established.”¹⁷ Most evangelistic endeavors, therefore, should probably take place outside the church building, meeting unbelievers where they are.

Single-sponsor events are a great way to introduce one’s church to the community, however, and may employ the use of the church building. The principle of “doing a few things, and doing them well” should generally be followed for these. In the U.S., Easter-egg hunts, Sportsmen expos, Superbowl and holiday parties are popular, whereas in Uruguay, Children’s Day, “the Carnival,” and the World Cup are extremely popular. While a church should take every opportunity to share the gospel with guests at these events, Searcy and Thomas believe they should be “low-risk” and “high-relationship.”¹⁸ Often, visitors will know what the church is about, and should be invited to attend a regular service where the Bible will be studied more in depth. It may also be appropriate to have attractive literature available which describes the church in more detail.

A church may also participate in multi-sponsor events. Usually these are community-based gatherings celebrating some element of culture, like music or history. A church may simply volunteer at these events to befriend other workers and the community, or rent an exhibitor booth. By having a booth they could provide free bottles of water, face painting for kids, or a rest station where people can sit and cool down.¹⁹ Attractive literature should be made available here as well.

¹⁷ Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 27-28.

¹⁸ Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

Searcy and Thomas have outlined a few outreach methods that may be used most effectively for special (i.e., evangelistic) events. After the leadership has made sure that the promotion material matches their city, clearly identifies the church, and clearly communicates expectations (“Join us on [date]), they must decide how they want to get it into the hands of prospective attendees. There are at least three options for this, including direct mail (low risk, low return), display/advertising media (medium risk, medium return), and direct delivery (high risk, high return). In the U.S., direct mail usually has a 1% return rate, and may be distributed as newspaper inserts or magazine “blow-ins.” Media advertising is more expensive than direct mail, but more can be known about the target audience, if there is one. Such media as magazines, TV, billboards, postcard rack displays, and radio station slots all may be used. Direct delivery “includes everything from personal invites to servant evangelism,²⁰ or any other type of face-to-face church promotion.” This is the most effective types of invitation, and may include simply talking about the special event to everyone a person meets, asking everyone the leadership knows to promote the event (and providing them with the appropriate stationery), or joining with an outside mission team to get the word out.²¹

Whatever and however many evangelistic methods are employed, the goal is to present people with a clear, spirit-filled gospel witness. Methods should regularly be analyzed for effectiveness; if any are found to be falling short of this goal, they will need to be discarded.

Application

- Initially, I will seek to immerse myself as much as possible in the community. I will first seek out and befriend like-minded Christians (who may or may not need a church). Then, I will discover

²⁰ Rick Grover notes that in suburban churches Sunday mornings drive ministry, whereas in urban churches ministry drives Sunday morning. When a team is planting urban churches, Grover says, “I recommend that the new urban church begins prior to the first public worship service with one need-meeting ministry in the community that can grow and be done with excellence.” See Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 228. I’m not sure how well this would work in Uruguay.

²¹ Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 130-131.

culturally appropriate means of meeting people and make this a part of life. I can begin by befriending neighbors, visiting the plaza, daily shopping trips, joining a sports-league, and finding at least one community event with which to help out. I will pray and prepare to present the gospel initially though not forcibly. People need to know who I am.

- I will consider with what errors I will automatically be associated because of my color, denomination, mission board, etc., and find creative, positive ways to combat those perceptions.
- In regard to families, I will tenaciously seek the conversion of fathers primarily, then mothers and children. I will treat all with deep love and respect.
- Besides meeting many adults in the above scenario, I will use reproducible promotional methods and provide a “family story night” where snacks will be provided. This night may even be done in the plaza (though it would be harder to control environment and snacks). If the feedback is very positive, I will provide another one in 1-2 months. If feedback is still positive, I will consider making it a regular, perhaps monthly, event.
- I will remain open to the idea of teaching ESL. The Bible would be the textbook. I’m not sure how providing free lessons would affect the community (would I be creating unnecessary competition?).
- I will provide a Bible study which follows the pattern suggested by Brock. Jeff Musgrave has produced an excellent evangelistic/discipleship series entitled “The Exchange,” which is being translated into Spanish. I will seek converts and plan to use this study with them. The three basic components of these times may consist of prayer, study, and snacks/fellowship. Later, singing may be integrated at the beginning. I will seek to discern the gifts of the attendees and give them opportunities to lead various aspects of the study. Some of them may become leaders in our church or in a daughter church.
- I will teach the first converts that they are a part of a “mother church.”
- Upon the gathering of the church, we will become involved in at least one or two single-sponsor events, probably centering on Children’s Day, Mother’s Day, or activities which offer an alternative to the ungodly Carnival. We will want to be careful not to appear as cultural traitors, but neither do we want our message of holiness to be unclear. We will provide attractive literature about our church, with perhaps a concise, engaging gospel presentation at the events themselves. I may use such events my home church sponsors as resource ideas.
- The church will become involved in one or two multi-sponsor events. The goal will be to represent Christ and our church well.

Conversion

Much has been said about the theology and method of leading people to Christ.²² Unfortunately in the United States, many “decisions” in Fundamentalist circles have not been substantiated through long-term church membership. Sometimes, these decisions were made in a one-time encounter with an unbeliever, or perhaps through the hasty baptism of a visitor. Brock believes that the key words for evangelism are “prolonged exposure.”²³ Because it may take weeks or months before a person can make an intelligent decision for Christ, he thinks something like weekly, guided Bible studies focusing on sin, repentance, Jesus, His cross and resurrection, and the necessity of man’s response is the best way to encourage meaningful decisions. Salvation testimonies may be given by various believers, while follow-up tracts could be given out after each meeting.

Of course, neither will a missionary want to spend years doing pre-evangelism. Some curriculae, like the *Building on Firm Foundations* series, emphasizes the element of story, concrete thinking, and oral communication. Abstract concepts such as God, sin, and redemption can become clear and help in the construction of a biblical worldview.²⁴ Used thoughtfully, this kind of approach will help ensure lasting conversions.

After preaching and praying for conversion, the missionary can actually expect to see them! He must prepare follow-up materials in advance, which may include a ten-step conservation class like the instructor uses in Argentina, a new members course, small group discipleship, and/or some kind of leadership training. Because materials for all of this are available, they should be secured unless good reasons exists to develop one’s own curriculum.

²² Evidence for this is the long standing “Lordship salvation” debate still raging in segments of Fundamentalism.

²³ Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 31.

²⁴ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 220.

Application

- I will preach for changed lives, not necessarily “decisions” for Christ. Altar calls are popular in America, and there may be a place for them in South America, but I will probably follow the method of asking enquirers to speak with me, my wife (assuming I have one then) or another church leader after the service. Cultivating an atmosphere of post-service fellowship may be important in helping people feel comfortable doing this.
- Please refer to application segment of “Evangelism” for ideas on “prolonged exposure.”
- From the very start of the church plant, I will have follow-up materials ready.
- I will try to strike a balance between “easy-believism” and Lordship salvation.²⁵ If after thoughtful discussion a person seems to be ready and decides he is ready to receive Christ, I will encourage Him to ask Christ immediately to save him. Then, I will explain the importance of attending Bible studies (if applicable) and church services, and formally and informally check-up on him regularly.
- I will train converts to discern between likely and unlikely prospective conversions (i.e., a child who cannot repeat and to a degree explain the essential elements of the gospel is not ready to receive Christ).

Congregation

It was mentioned in class how discipleship does not always have to be “one-on-one.” The instructor said that discipleship can be done from the pulpit and in small groups (and perhaps seldom if ever “one-on-one”). It seems as though good preaching can gather a congregation as well as *maintain and grow* one. George Peters has made an interesting observation in this regard:

The apostles seemingly did not go out to “plant” churches. They were not commissioned to launch out toward that goal. They were sent forth to preach the gospel. Yet wherever Acts 1:8 was faithfully discharged, a church was born. The functional tie between gospel preaching and church planting, nurture and growth, is clearly established. We may confidently state that the church is germinal in the gospel as evangelism is germinal in a New Testament church.²⁶

²⁵ It cannot be verified from the New Testament that enquirers had to understand every element of Christianity to receive Christ (cp. Matt. 4; Acts 8:13-24). It was a free gift, while further instruction often followed such a decision.

²⁶ George Peters, *Theology of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 20, quoted in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 23.

So, the first, most essential element in gathering a New Testament congregation is the faithful preaching of the gospel,²⁷ though it will also “nurture and grow” a church plant.

As people respond in faith to the gospel, some kind of screening process will be important for prospective members. A clear testimony of regeneration and baptism, followed by a membership class, may be the best way to do this. The class itself should carefully articulate the church’s doctrine (and perhaps a briefing on denominational distinctives) and constitution and describe expectations for membership. The church planter will not want to begin this class too early, as it is best for any prospect to experience church life itself (perhaps for 4-8 months) so as to avoid disillusionment.²⁸

While repentance and faith, *followed by baptism*, are essential for church membership, Searcy and Thomas have outlined a staff-hiring plan which may be applied in a modified form²⁹ in Uruguay for church volunteers. Using a hypothetical volunteer named “Bob,” they outline the following steps: 1) Bob begins attending church; 2) Bob volunteers for a ministry; 3) Bob does well as a volunteer and begins to lead other volunteers; 4) Bob continues to do well, and is given a small but appropriate weekly stipend; 5) Bob is hired for a part-time or full-time position.³⁰ If, somewhere during this process (probably before 2, but perhaps between 2 and 3), Bob is saved and baptized, *then* he may be given further leadership responsibilities. This plan, with less modification, may also work for church transfers, or members given from a mother church to help launch a new church. The planter must be careful, however, not to create dependencies.

²⁷ An unhealthy trend in many churches, which unfortunately seems to reflect the sacramentalism of the Catholic church, is the imbalance of emphasizing the death of Christ over and above His resurrection. Christ’s resurrection always formed the bulk and climax of apostolic preaching.

²⁸ Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 198.

²⁹ They don’t say much about baptism as a pre-requisite for membership. There should be no fudging on this principle, even if it means one’s “church” will not grow as fast. Church growth without biblical doctrine is more harmful than helpful.

³⁰ Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 112.

As a church works and prays for growth, it will want to avoid a common pitfall in its establishing phase; namely, as churches sometimes use the core-group process to get started, those churches tend to start small and stay small. Searcy and Thomas comment, “The reason has nothing to do with spiritual depth but rather with psychological laws: Individuals who meet together and work closely with each other for more than a couple of months will develop deep relationships and work to protect those relationships. In short, the group turns inward. This is not necessarily bad, unless you are trying to launch a church, which requires people to intentionally keep their focus on reaching out to others.”³¹ Besides the temptation to lose an evangelistic focus, a young church may face a number of other obstacles, including 1) a failure to exercise church discipline, 2) the missionary’s failure to view himself as one who empowers rather than leads,³² 3) a loss of focus and overcommitment, and 4) an unwise use of outside resources.³³

As the church grows, it must find an appropriate, indigenous building. Brock notes, “If the new faith is valid, it can and will live and prosper in the native context of things, the native neighborhood or community.” Building a Western-style building (and holding overly Western-style services) has a number of hidden dangers, including the need for rewards to encourage attendance; creating the assumption that Jesus is Western; and the removal of the sacred from one’s natural context.³⁴ When missionaries disregard local culture, their followers may be viewed as cultural traitors, or in some cases, as instruments of subversive foreign influence. Compounding the problem, “missionaries have often had condescending, paternalistic attitudes toward local believers, denying ordination to them for

³¹ Ibid., 143.

³² Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 264. The authors are speaking of an “apostolic” church planter, not necessarily a missionary-pastor of a mother church. Even the missionary-pastor of a mother church should remember his primarily empowering role.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 50.

decades, underestimating the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and exercising power over them through control of finances or by retaining positions of authority.” Of course, all of this creates a lousy environment for self-governance, an important goal of the missions endeavor, because local leaders never would seem to be ready for it.³⁵

While the church planter must be careful to secure the right kind of building, with the right attitude, he must also do it at the right *time*. If a church is relatively young, it may not have the resources to purchase a building. Hourly renting options should be pursued initially, as this allows for maximum flexibility and minimal expense. Ott and Wilson have provided a helpful list of questions to ask before securing property.³⁶

The indigenous principle also implies that technology, which is so important in American churches, must be used cautiously. The church planter may ask himself, “is this form easily reproduced?” In many parts of Uruguay, technology is available, but is used mainly by the middle- and upper-classes. As I plan to be working with these classes, I will probably use technology, but only as much as it may be reproduced by the people. It will perhaps be best to keep core activities (preaching, prayer, evangelism, etc.) free from all technological “crutches.”³⁷

Sometime during the process of church planting the planter may face the temptation to seclude or control his church plant so that they do not have fellowship with neighboring, like-minded churches. Brock believes, rather, that one major objective of the church planter should be a fellowship of indigenous churches. He believes such a fellowship may be observed between the churches of the New

³⁵ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 16.

³⁶ Ibid., 252. These include, “Is the space adequate,” “Are the rooms inviting and appropriate for the people,” “Are furnishings and necessities provided, or must they be purchased or stored,” “Will renovations or structural changes be necessary? If so, how will they be done or paid for,” “Is the area easily accessible,” “Will usage permits be necessary,” “Will we be disturbing the neighbors,” “How important is high or low visibility,” “Is the environment potentially disturbing or distracting,” and “Is the location perceived as safe?”

³⁷ Though I think using a video like “Flame in the Wind” is a good idea for house-evangelism. A lot of Uruguayans have TVs and DVD players.

Testament. Such a fellowship provides encouragement, sharing the joy of the new-found Savior, and sharing in problems, victories, and eventually, mutual projects.³⁸

The New Testament sets a pattern of interdependence between churches. For instance, the predominantly Gentile church in Antioch submitted to the decision made by the leadership in Jerusalem (Acts 15:30-31). The predominantly Gentile churches planted by Paul were expected to help Jerusalem saints during a famine (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8). Further, Paul recruited various workers from his church plants to minister and sometimes to exercise authority in other churches. This pattern suggests that a spirit of unity and cooperation should be instilled from the very beginning on a local, national, and international level. It is granted that sometimes, complete unity and cooperation may not be possible depending on local situations and theological concerns.³⁹

The modern age is one of many para-church organizations (Bible colleges, mission boards, social programs, etc.). Though the rise of these and perceived need for these are topics that deserve further research, they may represent a spirit of interdependence between churches. One temptation in such an age, particularly in the West, is to give the church a back-seat to such organizations. This must be resisted, as much as possible. As Leslie Newbigin has said, "An unchurchly mission is as much of a monstrosity as an unmissionary Church."⁴⁰ Though most Americans have a natural love for organization, they must resist the temptation to make "organization" an end in itself; rather, the local church must have the missionary's primary attention.⁴¹ Further, the missionary must find creative and effective avenues for interdependence so that, upon a growing demand for specialized instruction, fully

³⁸ Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 35.

³⁹ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 17.

⁴⁰ Leslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship, 1954), 169, quoted in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 26.

⁴¹ Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church, Including the Indigenous Church and the Missionary* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2009), 91.

functioning and gifted church members who recognize the primacy of the local church can be at the disposal of area churches in accordance with the perceived need.

Approaching a solution to the temptation stated above may be the process for training Paul himself used. It has been noted how he sometimes recruited workers from various church plants to minister and sometimes to exercise authority in other churches. Ott and Wilson note, “recruiting workers *from* the harvest and *for* the harvest was clearly a key to the reproduction of churches and the expansion of mission. In this way training and multiplication were integrated into the church-planting approach.”⁴² The church planter who adopts or modifies this method, however, must understand that Paul was an itinerant missionary, not necessarily the pastor of a “mother church.”⁴³

A few applications can now be drawn from this section.

Application

- I will preach expositionally in an effort to help the people read their Bibles properly. Because I may expect an in- and out-flow of believers in the mother-church, I will design a cyclical schedule of the Bible’s most important themes, and try never spend too long on any given book (i.e., 1 year in Ephesians; I will try to be thorough but concise).
- I can preach strictly gospel messages regularly (perhaps once a month) to define/reinforce the decisions of new converts. As unbelievers ideally would be present, I can encourage members to bring lost friends and acquaintances on these days. This will help us stay “others” focused. I may take this opportunity, especially, to remind members that we are a “mother” or “reproducing” church.
- Hodges notes that if the congregation ever lacks visitors, the missionary may elect to limit the number of services (perhaps to one weekly) and instead have nightly house meetings with his members, who invite their neighbors. At the end of each meeting, he may invite everyone to church. One pastor met and preached to over 68 people using this method.⁴⁴

⁴² Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 51.

⁴³ Paul told Timothy, “the things you heard among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). The pastoral epistles basically seem to be tractates of what Paul taught his disciples and in the churches; careful study of them will yield “reproducible” core content for training men who may function as recruits *from* the harvest and *for* the harvest (cp. Tit. 2:2).

⁴⁴ Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 185.

- In class, the instructor spoke about how denominations seem to mesh with a given culture. The charismatic church is doing well in Argentina and Uruguay because the people are emotional, want good health (their health system is bad), and want financial stability (they don't have much of this). I will consider what biblical elements can be emphasized in this context to draw people away from the bad doctrine of the charismatic church. I will seek to do the same with cultural elements in an effort to bridge the gap between culture and church.
- After attending a "new members" or "conservation" class, new converts will prepare their testimony beforehand (perhaps manuscript) and share it with the congregation upon being received into membership through baptism.⁴⁵
- I will not neglect church discipline. As soon as the church is ready, we will seek to define and record it in our church constitution.
- I will look for pastors/leaders within the growing congregation and delegate responsibility, perhaps eventually compensating them in a way that least creates dependencies. I will seek to efface self and empower the nationals. Titles will only come after the proving of character.
- Only upon reaching an appropriate "plateau" will we seek to own/build a building (though various factors may change this; i.e., small building, large property, great deal, with 80 members). I must determine what is the appropriate "plateau" number; perhaps 150-200.
- It is probable that unless the people have a say in the structure of the normal church service, both the mother church and daughter churches will be weakened. I must study what church "in Uruguay" should look like, but also ask the congregation for their advice. "Local people free from outside control and imported designs can, under the Spirit's direction, become the natural contextualizing community."⁴⁶
- I will strongly consider having the Sunday service at night. This works much better for the instructor's ministry. Though a lot of Americans don't understand this, one can "visit the plaza at 10 a.m. and then at 6 p.m., then decide which time is more conducive for the people."
- I will look for local and national opportunities for inter-fellowship. When ready, our own church may follow the instructor's example by hosting "expositional preaching" conferences. As much as possible, I will promote national leadership at these, perhaps spending focused time with prospective leaders before their presentations. It was stated above that "the missionary must find creative and effective avenues for interdependence so that, upon a growing demand for specialized instruction, fully functioning and gifted church members who recognize the primacy of the local church can be at the disposal of area churches in accordance with the perceived need." Such conferences may reveal which leaders are equipped for what ministries. Perhaps our or another church in Uruguay eventually can be the organizing "Bible College" as national pastors/leaders are phased in and out using an agreed-upon schedule and syllabi.

⁴⁵ The class will "carefully articulate the church's doctrine (and perhaps a briefing on denominational distinctives) and constitution and describe expectations for membership."

⁴⁶ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 112.

- I will seek to channel quality training (including some in the original languages) and resources to national leadership.

Instruction and Discipleship

Rick Warren teaches that a church must have a strategy which provides structure. That structure can be geared toward control or growth, but it cannot be both.⁴⁷ This author thinks a structure geared toward growth is most appropriate for cross-cultural church planting.⁴⁸ It also seems wise, as much as possible, to include within this structure a mechanism for control, not in the sense of micromanaging leadership, but of healthy doctrine and the propagation of it. Schindler notes, “To get to the place where discipleship is intentional, reproducing, evangelistic, and leaning into leadership development, we need more than gifted leaders. We will value and implement healthy *systems* of discipleship training that are better than the people using them (italics mine).”⁴⁹ So, while the church planter should plan for growth, he must also implement systems that ensure a healthy, reproducing ministry. This seems to be what Ott and Wilson envision when they say, “Church planters must seek to plant churches that have in their very DNA the vision and commitment to reproduce and ultimately multiply.”⁵⁰ A great church planter, then, should aim to produce generations of healthy churches, not just a number of daughter ones.⁵¹ Probably, none of this can be accomplished unless the church plant itself follows a very simple strategy.⁵²

⁴⁷ Searcy and Kerrick, *Launch*, 54.

⁴⁸ Many churches in America seem to be geared toward control, whereas cross-cultural church plants seem to be geared toward growth. This may be a commentary on the different needs between cultures (America has been saturated with conservative Christianity, whereas many other countries have not been), or it may be a commentary on the misplaced priorities of the American church.

⁴⁹ Dietrich Schindler, “Good-to-Great Church Planting: The Road Less Travelled,” *EMQ* (July 2008).

⁵⁰ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 15.

Besides training from the pulpit during services, it may be appropriate to establish some kind of institute for nationals wanting to be pastors. I have observed two such institutes in Uruguay. The first is through Archie Perez's church in Colonia. He uses Tuesday and Thursday nights for pastoral training. This seems to work well, as presently (June 2011) he has five pastors ready for deployment. The second is through Barry Secrest's church in Las Piedras. Though he is not returning to Uruguay, he used the mornings (9:00-12:00) on Tuesdays through Fridays to train young people interested in ministry. My impression was that evenings worked better for training Uruguayans.

Of course, training cannot exist where there are no prospective leaders. Hodges believes that when a man emerges who is ready to serve as pastor, the missionary's preferred place is as a member of the congregation. There he can be a resource as the church is young and struggles toward maturity. Hodges does not seem to have in mind the mother-daughter model, where the young man could be deployed as the pastor of a daughter church. In any case, he warns against two dangers: first, the missionary must make sure the appointed leader is mature and stable enough to lead. If he is not, the church will stagnate. Second, he must ardently promote the pastor's independence (this assumes he has prepared the pastor for it). If the missionary imposes too much leadership, other nationals will tend to view the pastor as "the missionary's man" and reject him as a puppet.⁵³

One way such "puppet" leadership may be avoided is by having nationals develop their own doctrinal statement and, eventually, church constitution. Concerning such indigenous development, Hodges notes, "The standard of doctrine and conduct must be an expression of the believers' own concept of the Christian life as they find it in the Scriptures...If the church is established according to the

⁵¹ Dietrich Schindler, "Good-to-Great Church Planting: The Road Less Travelled," *EMQ* (July 2008). Cf. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 95.

⁵² Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*, 61. He says, "there is one general standard to follow among the highly educated or the uneducated. Simplicity has a beauty appreciated by all who are searching for God. The strategy should be within the mental grasp of anyone who desires to plant a new church."

⁵³ Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 149.

missionary's standard and not their own, the believers will do nothing to see that it is enforced when the missionary is not there. But if the truth of Scripture has gripped their minds, they will say, "We must do this, not because the missionary says so, but because God's Word teaches it."⁵⁴ This reinforces the concept suggested above, namely, that nationals must be intimately involved in the doctrinal development and decisions of the church.

Application

- I will develop a visitation schedule which will include visitors, the sick and elderly, special events (birth of baby, 15th birthday, etc.), the spiritually weak, and general membership. I will always seek to bring a disciple with me, eventually delegating to him some visits.
- I will aim to be a facilitator more than a leader (Ott and Wilson, 97). I will decide on key doctrines and disciplines, and come up with a cyclical process of training and review. Upon completion of each section, I can let the believing men lead or teach in some capacity related to that discipline, perhaps developing his own statement on that discipline. These can be called "visionary discipleship" nights. An average man may expect three to four years of training; the process may be speeded with the more mature or those who have more time for study and participation.
- I will seek helpful reading materials and encourage all to be readers. "Readers are leaders."
- I will seek to teach the men to be men, to lead and make decisions! Many in Latin America have no idea how to do this as their culture is "machismo." Many take the "position" of leadership, then expect all the women to lead and make decisions. I will first study to be a leader in my own home. We will study leaders in the Bible, coupled with New Testament expectations for church leaders. Through collaboration the group may compile a checklist of leadership qualities as a quick-reference guide.
- I will become aware of the popular false doctrines of the area, and combat them through careful Scriptural instruction. I will consider where in the teaching calendar this series would be most appropriate. These lessons could follow this format: 1) Scriptural teaching, 2) Importance of doctrine, 3) Divergences, 4) Solution (or Defense or Application...).
- One suggested model for training is "MAWL" (Model, Assist, Watch, Leave), which may be adjusted to fit the mother-daughter model. I will tell the people from the first day that my leadership is primarily a model, and that they are biblical coaches of potential leaders. What are they doing well? What can they do to improve? Emphasis will be placed on providing scriptural critiques, though there is a place for preference and cultural critique. I'll meet with each man

⁵⁴ Ibid., 37.

afterward, and he will soon be given another chance, focusing on improvement. I will open myself to their critiques as well. My preaching must be often enough to provide consistency.

- I will teach others how to do story nights. I will develop or use appropriate curriculum.

Reproduction

The instructor spent much time in class comparing the “get-in and get-out” approach to church planting with the “mother-daughter” one. After 31 years of Bible study and practical experience in Argentina, he prefers the mother-daughter approach. He believes this approach fits the Antioch model of Acts 11, while Towns and Porter think it also fits the Jerusalem model.⁵⁵ This student agrees that the mother-daughter approach is a useful one for our historical context, and will probably use it in his own ministry.⁵⁶ Ott and Wilson have demonstrated how “even with ordinary gifts and resources, relatively small churches can launch multiplying movements” using this approach. Research suggests that while the mother church may never break a plateau membership, the cumulative movement of planting daughter churches will multiply the movement, perhaps even exponentially.⁵⁷ This approach also encourages a constant influx of new believers (“we’ve got to fill these seats!”), which aids the evangelistic zeal which befits a healthy New Testament church.

Dietrich Schindler, who ministered in a European context, believes mother churches should plan a “time-released” program for birthing daughter churches.⁵⁸ The reason for this, he says, is because churches often fail to begin with the end (the genesis of a new church) in view. He believes that high impact churches will plan to birth a daughter church at least every five years. Probably, this time-

⁵⁵ Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter, *Churches That Multiply* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2003), 18.

⁵⁶ I also need to be prepared to defend it; I know of some, probably on my own mission board, who may not like what I’m doing. This should not create too large a problem so long as my local church approves.

⁵⁷ Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 31, 34.

⁵⁸ Dietrich Schindler, “Good-to-Great Church Planting: The Road Less Travelled,” *EMQ* (July 2008).

released principle will need nuancing depending on one's target area. Also, the missionary may have a date for "birthing" in mind and communicate it to the church, but do so flexibly. In other words, if he rigidly sticks to the five-year principle and the church needs six years, the church may become discouraged. He should seek to be a goal-oriented but flexible motivator.

In the U.S., churches usually face growth barriers at four different points: when attendance reaches 65, 125, 250 and 500.⁵⁹ The temptation, at each of these points, is to "relax and slow down." Leadership must be prepared for this temptation, and use the momentum to each of these points (particularly, the first two) to their advantage. Rick Warren, whose pragmatism is understood, has suggested a wrong and right question to ask in dealing with growth barriers. The wrong question is, "How do I get my church to grow?" The problem with this question is that it makes growth the responsibility of the leader when it should be God's. The right question is, "What is keeping my church from growing?" This provides insight into barriers that can perhaps be removed.⁶⁰

Finally, David Garrison has composed the "Ten Commandments for Church Planting Movements" which deserves mention here:⁶¹

1. Immerse your community in prayer.
2. Saturate your community with the gospel.
3. Cling to God's Word.
4. Fight against foreign dependency.
5. Eliminate all non-reproducible elements.
6. Live the vision that you wish to fulfill.
7. Build reproduction into every believer and church.
8. Train all believers to evangelize, disciple, and plant churches.
9. Model, assist, watch, leave.
10. Discover what *God* is doing and join him.

⁵⁹ Searcy and Thomas, *Launch*, 201.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶¹ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 257, quoted in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 77-78.

Application

This application section will be a little different, focusing on an article entitled, “A Ten-Point Plan for Producing Better Indigenous Churches.”⁶² In it, Keith Bateman has given a tongue-in-cheek list of the practices of many missionaries supposedly operating under the indigenous principle. These will be listed in order as each has had a more or less prominent role in missions as it is popularly practiced. A brief analysis will be offered which may or may not correspond to Bateman’s.

1. *Keep missionaries around long after the work has been established.* Bateman feels that this prevents nationals from developing their own gifts and talents. This may be a good general principle for the itinerant missionary, but it assumes the missionary is taking a prominent role in the church, which may or may not be true, as he may be assisting national leadership for a time. In the mother-daughter church model, it would be acceptable for the missionary to stay in one location for a longer time.

2. *Support national churches with funding from abroad.* Bateman feels that this creates a dependent church and squelches the joy of national giving. He seems to be arguing against foreign funding in both the process and product of church-planting. The instructor argued, citing modern examples, that foreign funds may be used sparingly during the process of church-planting, without hampering the product of it. It is true that foreign funds should be used as sparingly as possible during the process of church-planting.

3. *Train national leaders in United States-style classrooms, with US professors, using US seminary curriculae*⁶³. Bateman thinks this de-contextualizes the nationals. As Bateman served in an African context, certainly advanced classrooms and curriculae would be out of place. In Uruguay, however, particularly in Montevideo, a couple of respected European-type universities exist. Classroom instruction, which even has a little US styling, would not seem to be out of place. The few Spanish theological books this author has perused seem deficient, though he does not doubt quality books do exist. How many of them have been translated? What’s the reason for this? Why does there seem to be fewer Latin theologians? Do they lack the knowledge, desire, or ability to write? Does translation of American works necessarily entail colonialism? These questions need to be explored before Bateman’s conclusion can be accepted. If mature believers welcome, perhaps even crave, doctrinally astute curriculum and teachers, is it wrong to supply such? Of course, the goal of transfer between US and SA brethren must be doctrinal more than cultural.

⁶² Keith Bateman, “A Ten-Point Plan for Producing Better Indigenous Churches,” *EMQ* (April 2006), 152-154.

⁶³ Also see the discussion in Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 84-85.

4. *Introduce a “stateside” methodology as the correct way to run a church “program.”* Bateman says, “This includes not only the standard Sunday worship package of opening hymn, prayer, special music and three-point sermon, but ‘canned’ evangelism and snappy youth programs long on entertainment, but short on changed lives.” Amen! Too often programs have superseded the *koinonia* (spiritual fellowship), or *allelon* (one-another) relationships so often described in the New Testament. American churches are at a fault, too, for segmenting the youth culture and replacing spiritual fellowship for “fun” activities. The family needs to be emphasized, along with a culturally appropriate expression of Sunday worship. In Uruguay, a Sunday-evening service may be the best way to promote *koinonia* and *allelon* relationships.

5. *Promote US technology as necessary for successful Christian ministry.* Bateman thinks American “studio” services distract the nationals and ultimately cripple the church. Uruguay is pretty developed electronically, so there may be limited⁶⁴ room for microphones, projectors, etc., in the services. A computer is pretty standard. The “main event” must always be the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Perhaps the nationals can be exposed to the uses of technology, and then vote on the pieces in which they’d like to invest.⁶⁵ They should be taught that technology is a disposable element in Christian ministry; certainly, it should never replace prayer and study.

6. *Send national church leaders to every conceivable world congress and other “frame-of-reference-expanding” conference.* Bateman thinks this promotes self-importance and makes nationals think that they are too big for mere local church involvement. This has not been a problem in Uruguay, though the fact that most nationals must be trained primarily in home-missions is understood. This author has observed some churches which have qualified pastors “bursting at the seams.” Probably the reasons for this are complex, but it seems true that nationals must be trained to think of neighboring cities as targets for missions. See above application about “Bible College” in Uruguay.

7. *Talk about strategizing and planning, but do not actually put it into action.* Bateman points out that goal-setting is only half of effective missions. An idea alone is not enough; there must be planning and action! This author will be accountable to his home church and mission board, which should help him stay active.

8. *Stress formal classroom instruction as superior to practical “on-the-job” training.* Bateman feels that an over-emphasis on classroom instruction makes nationals, like many trained people at home, “good for nothing.” His analysis seems harsh, while his point is understood that there must be a balance between classroom and “on-the-job” training.

⁶⁴ Some of the American missionaries there use these things, but hardly any of the national pastors seem to use these things, unless they’ve been supplied by the Americans. For this reason, use of electronics should be used carefully and sparingly.

⁶⁵ A projector can be used for worship songs, Powerpoint, and Christian movies; a computer is necessary at least for general book-keeping; depending on the size of the congregation, a microphone system may be necessary.

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