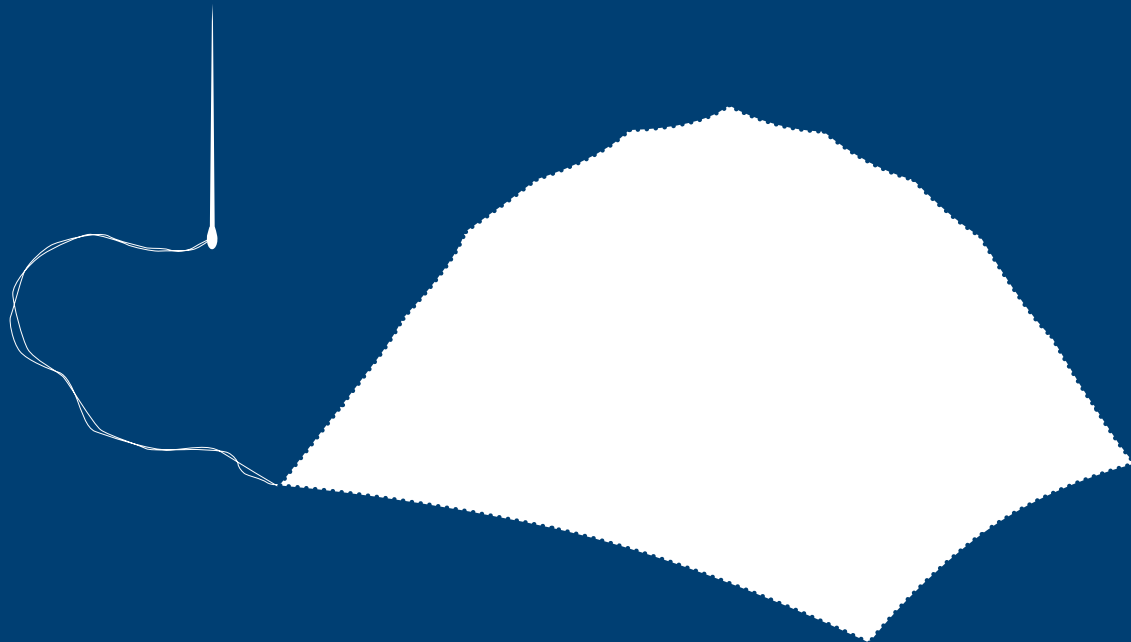


CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING SERIES: BOOK 3

# BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES



CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING SERIES: BOOK 3  
BEST PRACTICES APPROACHES

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## PREFACE

There are two e-booklets on cross-cultural church planting (CCCP or CP) which were released by HIM's Ministries Department ([ministries@byhim.org](mailto:ministries@byhim.org)) earlier. The first e-booklet introduced the four fields of kingdom growth<sup>1</sup> being used as a concept of cross-cultural church planting. The second e-booklet is a short guide on the preparation stage of church planting, touching on the topics like the formation of a church-planting team, the skills and knowledge preparation of the church planting team as well as the tent-making and entry strategy into the city or location of church planting. In other words, the second booklet dealt with how a church planting team would enter the first field – the empty field – in our cross-cultural church planting concept.

The second field – the seeded field – in our CCCP concept involves acculturated pioneering. It is a stage where the church planting team starts its pioneering work of reaching out and building up what would be the future church in the CP country. In this third e-booklet, we will attempt to present the best-practice church planting models existing in the church planting world today. Naturally, these are just guidelines and suggestions that a CP team can adopt in their cross-cultural work. According to the level of their creativity, the CP team can adopt even its own model. However, it is always wise to glean and learn from those who have been successful before.

There are various approaches of CCCP which will be presented in this booklet. Each approach has its pros and cons. Each CP team would need to understand and consider the different options carefully, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide them as they embark on their church planting journey. We hope that these best practices will serve as a guide, or even a basis, for CP teams to choose their appropriate church planting approach. We also hope that current church planters already on field can consider these best practices as well, and if necessary, redirect or align their efforts to reap greater fruits from their work.

<sup>1</sup> The four fields presented in the first booklet are the Empty Field, Seeded Field, Field of New Life and Harvest Field.

## BEING MISSIONAL: THE HEART OF CHURCH PLANTING

It is important that before we start discussing about approaches or best practices, we should remind ourselves that church planters are not called to a method or an approach, or even a philosophy of doing local ministry; we are first and foremost called to people and to bring the gospel to people. So, before we venture into CCCP best practices, let us revisit the heart that any church planter must have before they even venture out to take on the task of church planting. Essentially, church planting is all about being missional.

### **God is a missionary God**

First and foremost, our God is a missionary God. As we examine the Bible from Genesis to Revelation carefully, we will begin to see that God obviously is on a mission! God is a missionary God, a “sending God” who is on a mission to reconcile His Creation who has fallen into sin back to Himself and to one another. The end goal is for his glory to be revealed through his people and to the ends of the world.

In the Old Testament, we saw how God sent **Abraham** (Gen 12:1-3) out from his country to the Promised Land. God formed from his descendants a special people, Israel, with whom He will have an intimate relationship and through whom He will bless all nations (Exo 19:3-6). God revealed His gracious nature to the Israelites (Exo 34:4-7) and ruled over them as their king; (Judges 8:23). However, they repeatedly rebelled, rejecting God as king and preferring to serve idols (1 Sam 10:19; Ezek 20:16).

In the New Testament, God the Father sent the Son, **Jesus Christ** into this earth more than 2,000 years ago to continue the mission of reconciliation. He was sent to proclaim the Good News!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus not only proclaimed but lived out the Good News through healing the blind, the sick and liberating the oppressed and demon-possessed, and he also went about establishing God's kingdom! When the poor, the blind, and the captives received the good news of God's kingdom, they joined the community of God's people. Once they were reconciled to God, they experienced reconciliation with each other as well. In Luke 5, Jesus called a few fishermen to form the core of his disciples, promising that they would now fish for people (Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-16). The community of Jesus' followers was taught by Jesus how to live under God's reign. They were to demonstrate love and justice as servants of God and of each other (Mark 10:43-44; Luke 11:42; John 13:34-35). Even during the earthly life of Jesus, his followers were empowered to join in his ministry, proclaiming the good news of God's reign and demonstrating that good news through works of healing and liberation (Luke 9:1-2; 10:1-17).

Like in the Old Testament, God's mission involved forming a people who would restore his kingdom on earth. Jesus' mission was not simply about getting individuals right with God. He was also in the business of forming a people to proclaim and live out the reality of God's kingdom.

Jesus was also sent by God to consummate the good news through his death and resurrection. He fulfilled the mission of Isaiah's suffering Servant of God, the one who would be "wounded and crushed for our sins," upon whom "the Lord laid . . . the guilt and sins of us all" (Isa 53:5-6). God's rightful reign over us was shattered by sin in Genesis. But the shattering of sin by the death and resurrection of Jesus enables us to be reconciled to God. Once reconciled, then we can live in full fellowship with him as citizens of his kingdom. By dying upon the cross for our sin and by rising from the dead in victory over sin, Jesus fully activated the good news. We can now be reconciled to God and live forever in unbroken fellowship with God. What a Good News indeed!

After his resurrection, Jesus **sent** his inner **core of disciples** into the world for the purpose of making more disciples.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

***Matthew 28:18-20***

These new followers of Jesus would not only believe in him, but would also obey all the commands Jesus gave to his first disciples. They were to make more disciples who would make more disciples so that all nations are filled with disciples of Jesus. As disciples or apprentices of Jesus, we are also sent to do that which he commanded to his first disciples, such as:

As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. ***Matthew 10:7-8***

Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ***John 13:34***

### **The church as a missional community**

Jesus' first disciples were to minister only among their fellow Jews while Jesus was on earth. After Jesus' resurrection, they, and subsequently **we, the later generations of disciples**, are sent out to all nations. Jesus explained this sending when he said: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

Thus, every Christian is "sent". All of us get to play a role in this mission of God to redeem all mankind back to Him. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The doctrine "Missio Dei" or the "sending of God" is causing many to redefine their understanding of the church. The end goal of the "missio Dei" or "sending of God" as the church or the people of God are sent to the ends of the world is the glorification of God.

As God is a missionary God, and He sent us to the world, hence the heart of CCCP must be a "missional" one. This word "missional" comes from the word "sent".

**[ The idea of being missional in essence means that the church has a mission because God has a mission. ]**

Like Jesus, we have been sent to proclaim the good news! We are to be His witness everywhere, to the ends of the earth. Jesus told his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to empower them to do what He had sent them to do.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.  
(Acts 1:8).

The good news that we have is for all the people groups in the world is “You can be reconciled to God right now through faith in Jesus. You can begin to experience true fellowship with the God by living under God’s reign because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross to take away the penalty of sin” (see 2 Cor 5:16-21).

Like Jesus, we do not just proclaim the good news; we also live out the good news in our daily lives. We must speak of God’s reconciliation and live as agents of reconciliation, as peacemakers in our combative world (Matt 5:9; 2 Cor 5:16-21). As we tell people that God loves them so much that he sent his Son to save them, we must also love them with a divinely-inspired love (John 3:16; Eph 5:1-2). We proclaim the new order of God’s kingdom and express that order by loving the unlovely, caring for the poor, and seeking justice for the oppressed (Matt 25:31-47; Luke 6:27; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17). We strive to live out the reality of God’s kingdom in everything we do. We announce that Jesus has come to make us whole and enact that announcement through works of healing. The words and the works of the kingdom go together, in the ministry of Jesus, in the ministry of His first disciples, and in the ministry he has sent us to do.

The church is thus a missional community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world, living as “sent” people who live everyday life with gospel intentionality. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church.



## **Missional church planters**

As God's mission is a global one, missional church planters are "sent" out to reach out cross-culturally to people groups of different cultures all over the world to proclaim the good news of the gospel. They enact the gospel through obeying Christ's teachings and live out their lives among the people groups (being incarnational) loving God, people, one another and the least among them (i.e. the poor and needy) in the places that God has placed them in. They disciple the believers to proclaim and live out the gospel as Christ followers in their own local cultural context, congregate the disciples as communities of God's people called churches and to raise up local church leaders/elders who are able to pastor the new church plants who would continuously reproduce missional disciples and churches and church planters. This is CCCP, carried out by Christians with true missional heart.

## CODE OF BEST PRACTICE IN CHURCH PLANTING

A code of best practice in church planting is a set of recommended guidelines to the best practices in the church planting world today. What makes a practice a “best practice” is the fact that when certain principles are put into application, such application brings about success as defined for that context of application. In other words, best practices in church planting are practices that have been shown to be successful in creating and contributing towards a healthy, indigenous church that multiplies itself, when the practices are adequately adapted to the culture and context in cross-cultural church planting. A best practice code is a series of guidelines for practitioners to follow in order to carry out the best practices.

Best practices are extracted from the field experiences of many “unsung heroes” who have ventured off to the church planting field; some have succeeded while others have made their fair share of mistakes. It has been observed by veteran church planters that if the code is violated, best practices are not applied and as a result, healthy, indigenous churches are rarely planted.

The goal or vision is to always plant healthy, Christ-centred indigenous churches. It is our hope that as we diligently work on applying this best practice code, taking into account the cultural context of the CP nation, we will be able to achieve our desired vision.

Table 1 shows a summary of the principles or best practices in cross-cultural church planting from three literature sources. The sources are namely the Nevius Method, Church Planting Movements and Best practices for Multiplication as suggested by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson.

- The nine principles in the **Nevius Method**<sup>2</sup> was developed from the existing ideas of his predecessors, Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson on the principle of indigeneity and the “three-self” of the church: self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=eleu> (Pg 6,7)

- The **Ten Commandments for Church Planting Movements**<sup>3</sup> are based on David Garrison's research as he surveyed the church planting movements across the globe.
- The best practices for church multiplication are obtained from the book **Global Church Planting** by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson.

In comparing the literature surveyed, we can observe that there are five similarities from the three sources on what they term as guidelines to best practices. This can be seen from the first five rows of Table 1, numbered 1-5. These "best practice" guidelines have been proven effective in different cross-cultural church planting contexts and can be considered as the **best practice code** in church planting. No matter which church planting approach is adopted, this code is worthy of serious consideration as church planters embark on cross-cultural church planting to plant healthy and indigenous churches that reproduce themselves. The rest of the practices, as seen in Table 2, are also important. Although we will not focus on them, interested church planters can explore them further from the references; we do encourage that certain amount of attention should still be given to them as we build up our healthy indigenous churches.

### **GUIDELINE 1: Maintain an ongoing focus on evangelism by living out and proclaiming the gospel in every context**

- Church planters should work to immerse themselves in the culture and the way of living of the locals, learning to evangelize naturally and sensitively in the local cultural context
- Church planters (and future local disciples) should build relationships in the community, be a good life testimony and proclaim Christ intentionally.
- Prioritize Receptive Persons or Groups (to locate the "men of peace"), and with them and through them, touch others with the gospel (Acts 16:15 -Lydia and her household, 18:8-Crispus and his household).

<sup>3</sup> A Church Planting Movement is a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.

- Understand that evangelism is both a decision and a process, and the way a person receives the gospel and becomes Christian may take more than a single “sinner’s prayer”.
- Evangelism must deal with the worldviews of the locals. Church planters should take time to understand and address the cultural misconceptions and rejections of the biblical worldview (e.g. of God, Jesus, creation, sin, and redemption) of the people group that they are reaching out to.
- Employ an evangelistic strategy that is locally reproducible and sustainable, and adapted to the learning styles and cultural norms of the locals.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING

Nevius Method	Church Planting Movement	Craig Ott and Gene Wilson: Best practices for Multiplication	“Best practice” code
Widespread itinerant personal evangelism by the missionary	Saturate your community with the gospel	Maintain an Ongoing Emphasis on Evangelism	1. Maintain an ongoing focus on <b>evangelism</b> by living out and proclaiming the gospel in every context
Systematic Bible study	Cling to God's Word	Maintain an Ongoing Emphasis on Discipleship	2. Maintain an ongoing focus on <b>discipleship</b> , teaching obedience to everything in the bible
Self-propagation	Train all believers to evangelize, disciple and plant churches Build reproduction into every believer and church	Maintain an Ongoing Emphasis on Discipleship Develop, Empower, and Release Local Workers, Recruiting from the Harvest Build Multiplication into Every level of Church Life and Ministry Choose Contextually Appropriate Church Structures for Multiplication	3. Work towards <b>self-propagation</b> : a) Develop, empower, and release local workers; recruit leaders from the harvest; b) Build multiplication (missional living) into every believer and level of church life and ministry; c) Choose contextually appropriate missional church structures
Self-government	Model, assist, watch, leave	Adopt an Apostolic Approach <sup>4</sup> to Church Planting	4. Model, assist, watch, leave which is the “phase-out” strategy for <b>self-government</b> (this is related to our four fields, where we seek for local leaders to take over in the third field)
Self-support	Eliminate all non-reproducible elements Fight against foreign dependency	Model Ministry that can be Reproduced by Local People Using Local Resources	5. Model ministry or church life that can be reproduced by the local people relying on local resources: <b>self-support</b>

<sup>4</sup> See full explanation under Apostolic Church Planting approach in the subsequent section.

**TABLE 2: OTHER RECOMMENDED PRACTICES****Nevius Method**

Co-operation and union with other bodies;

Strict church discipline;

Non-interference in lawsuits;

General helpfulness in economic life problems of the people.

**Church Planting Movement**

Immerse your community in prayer

Live the vision that you wish to fulfill

Discover what God is doing and join him

## **GUIDELINE 2: Maintain an ongoing focus on discipleship, teaching obedience to everything in the Bible**

- Do not just preach the gospel extensively or seek to convert people to Christianity; what is of paramount importance is the discipling of believers and teaching them to fully obey God's word.
- Short-term discipleship<sup>5</sup> for new believers and long-term discipleship<sup>6</sup> to mature the believers are both equally important.
- The ongoing focus of the church planting process should be transformational disciple-making – making disciples that make disciples.
- Walk with the Holy Spirit and in His empowerment. Discipleship is an undertaking that is to be guided and led by the Holy Spirit, who can remind and teach us from the Bible to practice authentic transformational discipleship.
- Disciple-makers should aim to engage in teach-obedience-to-Christ discipleship rather than transfer-biblical-knowledge discipleship. Discipleship objectives should also not only be behavioral and cognitive, but also affective (emotions, attitudes and values).
- Explore different ways to nurture, develop and equip disciples, especially since there are so many cultural factors that mold the learning styles of those you disciple in the local context.

<sup>5</sup> See HIM Ministries' Rapid Discipleship booklet for an easy-to-use resource for rapid short-term discipleship. Write to [ministries@byhim.org](mailto:ministries@byhim.org) for the resource or visit HIM's online library.

<sup>6</sup> Visit HIM's online library for resources for long-term discipleship.

### **GUIDELINE 3: Work towards self-propagation, where the local church is capable of propagating itself through lay evangelism and church planting**

#### a) Develop, empower, and release local workers; recruit leaders from the harvest

- Prioritize those who want to be a disciple and to disciple others; support and work more with them in their growth and maturity in Christ
- The church planter must believe that the first generation believers are capable of mentoring others. Do not be too eager to start a ministry or church group without them as the local apprentices who can lead the church in the not-too-distant future
- Equip and empower local leaders to care for the churches planted (the church planting team is like the scaffolding, and the emerging national leaders are the pillars around which the church is built)

#### b) Build multiplication (missional living) into every believer and level of church life and ministry

- Work for multiplication at every level (disciples, leaders, communities etc.) which must take place through missional living of everyone in the local church.
- Outreach in ways that new believers can easily imitate so that they will know how to evangelize. The first believers must be discipled in ways that they can imitate and in turn use to disciple others.
- Healthy disciples would reproduce healthy disciples, healthy leaders would reproduce healthy leaders, and healthy groups would reproduce health groups, leading to healthy church multiplication.
- It is recommended that local church propagation depend on bi-vocational ("tent-making"), lay, local church planters and on informal (modeling and mentoring) and non-formal (church-based training and workshops) training methods rather than formal institutional education.
- Biblical understanding, character building, and practical ministry skills should be emphasized.

c) Choose contextually appropriate missional church structures

- Do not impose foreign church structures (e.g. a beautiful church building with technological gadgets like projectors and sound system, and musical instruments like drums and guitars) and traditions on the locals. Indigenous or culturally appropriate church structures should be chosen and developed by the local believers themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God as well as the counsel of the church planting teams.
- Adopt the most appropriate church structure by this three-step process:
  - Define the nature and primary biblical purposes and functions of the church.
  - Study the culture to discover social forms and patterns that can serve the purposes of the church.
  - Implement existing, adapted, or new structures and forms to fulfill the biblical purposes.

**GUIDELINE 4: Model, assist, watch, leave, which is the “phase-out” strategy for self-government**

- Missional churches are self-governing churches. They are not dependent on foreign leadership for its entire church life.
- The CP team should always work towards “phasing out” from local church leadership by modeling, assisting, watching and then leaving the local leaders to lead the local church
- In CCCP, this may take several years, as CP teams need to go through a period of acculturation; nevertheless, from the onset of the CP work, CP teams should already factor this strategy into their efforts of outreach and discipleship



### **GUIDELINE 5: Model ministry or church life that can be reproduced by the local people relying on local resources: self-support**

- Explore tent-making or other self-supporting methods before considering foreign or external support for local church ministry
- The church planters should model ministry that are easily replicated by local believers using local resources readily available to them in their context, given their financial, educational and other limitations.
- Reproducible methods usually have the following qualities
  - Dependent on local resources - the typical church model is a resource-dependent model where venues, electronic and musical equipment etc. are high-cost items; most church plants in developing or under-developing countries do not have the luxury of being able to afford such things; as far as possible, keep within the means of the locals, even if it means employing a new church model
  - Dependent on the skills and abilities of local believers – e.g. if local believers are illiterate or functionally illiterate, oral methods of evangelism and discipleship will need to be employed; easily taught, caught and passed on by the local believers and leaders

## CHURCH PLANTING BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES

Over the years, the strategy of church planting has evolved, and research into the subject has unearthed some approaches that have increasingly seen more fruit and effectiveness than others. These approaches can be considered the “best practice” approaches in church planting. Broadly, these best practice approaches can be categorized under three types that correspond to the type of church planter, namely the pastoral church planter, the catalytic church planter and the apostolic church planter. Each type of church planter understands his role as a church planter differently and hence, utilizes his time and resources accordingly. Each is suitable for particular situations (usually due to local context and culture of CP country) and affects how much the church becomes a reproducing or missional church in the future. A comparison of the three types of church planters is shown in Table 3.

### **The Pastoral Church Planting Approach**

The pastoral church planter’s goal is to plant the church and pastor it until one of the local leaders takes over as the pastor of the church. When there are enough members in the church and a church pastor and leaders are raised up from the local believers to take over the pastoral church planter and the church planting team, then the church is considered planted successfully.

The pastoral church planting approach involves firstly, evangelizing to gather a congregation of new believers; secondly, once a core of believers has been gathered, which is most likely small at first, the pastoral church planter tends to focus on pastoral care – giving mode, focusing energy on preaching, teaching, counseling, and various other pastoral duties. The rest of the church-planting team would assume roles to assist the pastoral church planter, e.g. primarily to help in outreach, to shepherd and disciple the local believers, to help to lead praise and worship, teach in bible-study groups, running life groups etc.

This is the most familiar and common variety of church planter in most parts of the world. Most church planters, including missionaries, are not aware of other approaches of church planting. This model of ministry is thus adopted in many, if not most, denominations internationally.

TABLE 3: THREE TYPES OF CHURCH PLANTERS <sup>7</sup>

	<b>Pastoral church planter</b>	<b>Catalytic church planter</b>	<b>Apostolic church planter</b>
<b>Goal</b>	To plant the church and pastor it until one of the local leaders takes over as the pastor of the church	To plant a church that will become a catalyst for mothering many other churches, resulting in a movement	To multiply local churches that are not dependent on the church planter or outside resources
<b>Method</b>	The church planter serves as pastor; trains the local leaders, moves on after one of the local leaders rises up as the local pastor	The church planter plants a large, strong church and then remains as pastor or resource person to facilitate the planting of multiple daughter churches	The church planter serves as equipper rather than as a pastor, training and delegating ministry to nationals as quickly as possible; the church planter seeks to move on quickly, leaving ministry in the hands of local leaders
<b>Assumptions</b>	A local church is "planted" only when one of the local leaders becomes the local pastor	Under the right leadership, a strategically located church can multiply daughter churches	Local lay believers have the capacity to be equipped to provide their own pastoral leadership and multiply churches
<b>Application</b>	Suitable for areas of moderate church growth, and local believers who can be readily trained as church pastor and leaders	Suited for moderately responsive urban areas with potential for multiplication of daughter churches nationally	Suitable for most localities, especially areas with possible rapid church growth and in rural/suburban settings
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality of ministry by well-trained leaders</li> <li>• Long-term relationships in church and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates church reproduction</li> <li>• Networking among the new churches</li> <li>• Long-term relationships in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates church multiplication</li> <li>• Promotes lay ownership and ministry</li> <li>• Free from dependency on outside resources</li> </ul>
<b>Weakness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely leads to church multiplication</li> <li>• The church planter stays too long at one location</li> <li>• Failure to mobilize laity and dependency on church planters and even resources from mother church</li> <li>• Healthy church-planting movements can be hampered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church planter must be exceptionally gifted</li> <li>• Not all church plants will grow or become strong enough to mother many churches</li> <li>• Dependent on the gifts/resources of the church planters; reproduction may cease with the departure of the church planter</li> <li>• The church reproduces but seldom multiplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is initially slower</li> <li>• Local believers are not always willing or capable to lead</li> <li>• Lay leadership may be weak or poorly trained</li> <li>• Most church planters are not trained in this method</li> <li>• Church planter may need to change location often</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Table 5.1 in "Global Church Planting" by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson

**Strengths** Church planters usually have more ministry training and biblical knowledge than lay church members. Naturally, the members of the church plant would often expect the church planter (usually the leader of the church-planting team) to be their pastor and to bear the load of pastoral ministry. The advantages of having the church planters as the pastors of the new church plants is that pastoral care would be strong and effective, with local leaders being developed over an extended period, and teaching in the church would be likely more solid. There will also be longer term relationships between the church planters and the church as well as with the community.

**Weaknesses** If the planting of healthy, reproducing and indigenous church plants is the goal, then the pastoral church planting approach might not be the best as it rarely leads to the church plant reproducing or multiplying, and the church plant would be too reliant on the church planters and also resources from the mother church. The church planters would tend to stay in one location for too long instead of being released to plant more churches in other places.

**Challenges** Due to the cultural and language differences in cross-cultural church planting, there is a challenge of sharing the gospel and discipling the local believers to obey God's teaching in their cultural context. However, as the church planters understand the local culture and learn to speak the language, as well as show forth the relevance of the gospel through their genuine love for people and their good testimony, they are usually able to verbalize the gospel, disciple and congregate the locals with time.

The greater challenge however is finding the right local disciple(s) to take over from the pastoral church planter and the church planting team to pastor the church plant and to help it to reproduce. The reasons are as follows:

- **Reliance of local believers on the pastoral church planters:** As the pastoral church planters pastor the church plant, the local believers would be more and more reliant on them. The locals love the church planters' strong pastoral care and counseling; the local disciples are being

fed with solid teaching and are allowed to grow over an extended period while the main task of pastoring the church lies with the church planters and their team. Hence, the pastoral church planters would likely remain in this role as pastors longer than expected (even though the planters might communicate to the locals that their stay there would not be permanent and the local leaders are to be raised up to take over them). The longer the church planters stay, the more dependent the church plant would be on them. Sometimes, church planters remain faithful at the church planting location for many years, training the local leaders to replace him or her but yet the local leaders are still not ready to take over. Evangelism will likely still go on with new people added to the church and the church growing bigger. This would make the responsibility of pastoring the church even greater since there are more people to take care of. It would make it even more challenging for a local leader to be raised up to be a pastor to take over from the pastoral church planter. Sometimes, when the church planters have no choice but to leave, replacement teams from the mother church might need to be sent to carry on the work of training the local leaders to take over the church since the local leaders are not ready. However, the dependency of the church plant on the mother church and the replacement church planters continues on, making such dependency to become even more set in.

- **Local leaders do not feel adequate or ready to take over** The church plants that are planted and pastored by expatriates often are not indigenous to the locals. The transition from the pastoral church planter to the local leader who is taking over can be difficult because the church has become accustomed to the foreign leadership style of the church planter. This transition could be even harder if the church planter is much more educated or gifted than the local leaders. The pastoral church planter could have set a high ministry standard that is difficult to follow and the local pastor who is tasked to take over may feel inferior as they might not be able to minister as well as the church planter.

Nevertheless, if a pastoral church planter deliberately focuses on raising local leaders, and is always aware of discouraging over-reliance, the church plant can see growth and eventual raising of local leaders. However, the challenge of establishing a reproducing missional church would still remain.

**Suitable context** This approach can work under the following conditions: 1) moderate potential for church growth either because people are responsive to evangelism or through the transfers of those who are already believers (unchurched etc.); 2) local believers who can be trained successfully as pastor and leaders to replace the pastoral church planter and church planting team; and 3) there is a low barrier of acculturation and acclimatization to the host culture.

### **The Catalytic Church Planting approach**

The next type of church planter is the catalytic church planter, who plants a church and remains as pastor in that church or serves as a resource person in the region to become a catalyst<sup>8</sup> or facilitator for church reproduction. Usually, a lot of energy and resources are put in the establishing and strengthening phase of the initial church plant with the goal that it will be a launch base for numerous additional church plants in the region or country.

The catalytic church planter also serves as a pastor in the initial church plant like the pastoral church planter. However, the difference is that the catalytic church planter has the gifting, ability and strategy to realize the vision of church reproduction. The energy and resources of the catalytic church planter is on equipping, motivating, and releasing church planters for church multiplication while that of a pastoral church planter is on pastoral care and growth of the congregation. The catalytic church planter has a vision and is committed to launching an entire missional church movement out of the initial church plant through mobilizing church-planting teams.

**Strengths** The mother-daughter or hiving-off approach is among the most effective methods of rapid church reproduction. Multisite churches have become a way of church reproduction, especially in North America. However, such movements rarely develop apart from the catalytic leaders who have the vision as well as the

exceptional gift of motivating and mobilizing others for church reproduction. Usually, once the daughter churches planted by the church-planting teams are established, the energy shifts in the daughter churches to care-giving and maintenance rather than the equipping of more leaders to plant more churches.

**Weaknesses** In this approach, church planters must be exceptionally gifted in mobilizing and sustaining such a church-planting movement among the local believers. There is a danger of a church planter overestimating his or her ability to provide this kind of leadership, investing much time and energy in a single church plant while failing to actually reproduce churches. The church planting efforts of the initial church plant usually becomes very dependent on the ministry of the catalytic leader, which often ceases when the leader leaves. Lastly, although the initial church plant would reproduce various daughter churches (reproduction) under the gifted and visionary leadership of the catalytic church planter, it fails to truly multiply as the daughter churches do not plant their own daughter churches (multiplication).

**Suitable context** Catalytic church planters often work well in more urban areas, where the potential for planting daughter churches is great. Such an approach usually works better in national church planting contexts, or within geographical regions that share the same cultural and language traits. The planting church (or mother church) usually resource and funds the church planting endeavors, solving issues of survival and income of the daughter churches and their leaders. This would, of course, lead to unhealthy dependency or reliance in the long run.

### **The Apostolic Church Planting approach**

In this apostolic church planting approach, the church planters seek to follow the model of the apostle Paul, who did not become the pastor of any of the churches he planted. The goal is to multiply churches that are not dependent on the apostolic church planters or outside resources. It is radically different from the conventional pastoral church planting approach whereby the church planters plant the church and pastor it until the church plant is passed over to local leaders.



Paul evangelized extensively and when the people put their trust in Jesus, he empowered them. These lay persons carry on and expand the work after his departure (Acts 14:21-25). Thus, the apostolic church planters like Paul develop, empower and release local believers for ministry and mission from the start rather than have them serve as pastors or leaders in the new church plant before moving on. With this apostolic church planting approach, there is no problem of passing the baton of the pastor role from the church planters to the local leaders as the planters never become pastors. The church planters prepare the local believers for pastoral leadership by giving them adequate teaching and coaching. This is said to be the key to church multiplication and church planter phase-out.

Many cross-cultural church planting practitioners and writers have been advocating this apostolic church planting approach. As early as 1851, Henry Venn, one of the first advocates of the “three-self” (self –propagating, self-governing, self-supporting) definition of church autonomy, mentioned that “missionaries should be careful not to become pastors because it would divert them from their real task and give the native pastors inappropriate European models” (Williams 1990, 6). Another author Roland Allen's 1973 *Missionary methods: St Pauls' or Ours?* highlighted the itinerant nature of Paul's apostolic ministry and his bold empowering and entrusting of local believers to the Holy Spirit as a model for contemporary missionaries.

#### Contrasting pastor and apostolic church planters

Glenn Kendall, who was a missionary in Rwanda and part of a rapidly growing church-planting movement, illustrates the difference between the pastor and apostolic church planters.

He describes a missionary, Bob, who set out to plant a church and he succeeded, albeit slowly. As none of his people had training or experience, Bob did almost all of the preaching and teaching. His people generously affirmed his ministry. They were not ready to assume his role and he was not too eager to give up without strong local leaders to take over him. He has invested 15 years in the church and he did not want to release control too soon and risk a failure. After 15 years as a church planter in a large city, he had a small group of about sixty people in a borrowed building. Bob's

ministry dragged on, and according to him, he thinks that he might need to take another ten years before he had responsible leaders.

Another missionary Kendall describes, Jeff, facilitated the starting of churches. He motivated and trained people to do it. He was not upfront every Sunday. He encouraged new Christians and developed leaders from the beginning. He would not start church services unless he had locals to lead them. Jeff's ministry expanded as he drew out leaders to take over. He had worked only four years in the same city as Bob, but had already planted two churches and was working on a third church plant.

Who do you think is the pastoral church planter and who is the apostolic church planter? You should be able to guess that Bob is what we would call a pastoral church planter and Jeff is an apostolic church planter. Kendall advocates that missionaries aim to be facilitators of new churches instead of leaders of them. He attributes multiplication of churches to the philosophy of ministry and methods that can promote church multiplication, even among people groups which seem to be unresponsive.

Garrison also advocates that the missionary or cross-cultural church planters assume a facilitating role. He suggested that they should train local leaders on the job using a "MAWL" approach - "Model, Assist, Watch, and Leave". The apostolic church planter must model various aspects of pastoral ministry, but this is always with intention of equipping the locals instead of taking primary or long-term pastoral responsibility. However, the cross-cultural church planters will still need to learn the local language and culture in order to be effective in the church planting work.

George Patterson, was involved in a church-planting movement in Honduras using the apostolic church planting approach, and he planted about one hundred house churches in 20 years. He advocates training local leaders to plant churches.

Paul Gupta, who trained workers and launched a multiplying church-planting movement in India also utilized the apostolic church planting approach. He describes that missionary should never become the pastor of a new church plant among an

unreached people and that they should understand the need to identify gifts and equip them to do the ministry of the church from the beginning.

Pastoral church planters are usually gifted pastorally and thus tend to focus on nurturing or meeting the basic needs of the congregation, which seldom leads to extensive growth. Apostolic church planters on the other hand, will focus on equipping skills and developing Christ-like character in local believers to become local leaders so that the congregation can be nurtured through them, leading to healthy church growth and multiplication.

### Challenges

Church planters who love to preach and are gifted in preaching or are gifted in counseling might find it hard not to do them in the new church plants. However, they should focus on equipping the local believers to do them instead. From the beginning, the local believers must be trained to do all essential ministries. Even though the lay sermons by the locals will most probably not be as well done as church planters in the beginning, the long-term benefit would be the development of local leaders who will serve the church well after the church planter has departed.

Poor teaching or even false teaching could be a problem with rapidly growing movements where churches are led by young, untrained believers. Thus, the church planters should invest much time and effort to ensure that the local leaders are adequately taught and prepared in terms of biblical foundations and doctrines. Apostolic church planters, like Paul and his fellow workers, should give time and energy to equipping and teaching ministries after they leave the church plants in the hands of the local leaders to correct and teach the local believers. Or they should consider setting up clear equipping processes in order to ensure continuous learning in the local leaders when the church planters leave. It is through a process of years of discipleship and wise leadership that would cause the new church plant to have spiritual transformation, overcoming deeply rooted patterns of sin and societal evil.

Another challenge of this apostolic church planting approach is that not many church planters are familiar or trained in such an approach. Church planters might feel

that they should step up to do more “upfront” roles like serving as the pastor and preaching constantly since the church is growing and yet the local believers are not ready to lead.

This approach may be slower in the beginning but it would result in a more solid finish for the church plant. The local leaders are usually able to connect to the congregation or group of local believers simply by speaking the native language (definitely more fluent than the church planters) and having a similar cultural background. They would be in a better position to bridge the word of God to their culture after they are being equipped to understand the bible and draw out principles from it.

The process of developing leaders and churches may be even longer and more tedious in certain situations, e.g. in resistant areas to the gospel where local believers would not be suitable for leadership or are willing to bear responsibility, or where new believers are illiterate or nomadic or come from a radically non-Christian worldview. Naturally, the different host culture would be another challenge to this.

## THE DYNAMIC CHURCH PLANTING APPROACH

“Which of the three church planting approaches is the best?” Each of these approaches has its pros and cons and can be suitable to be used by God in different contexts to fulfill His mission. Hence, the best would be one that unites the pros of each of these approaches.

We would like to put forth to you that a hybrid model of these three “best practice” approaches in church planting called the Dynamic church planting approach is what we believe will best facilitate healthy, indigenous church multiplication, in the ministry settings of cross-cultural church planting. This approach aims to harness the strengths and deemphasize the weaknesses of each of the three original approaches. At different stages of the new church plant (as per the Four Fields of Kingdom Growth), the CPers should put on the hats of the distinct types of church planters as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: DYNAMIC CHURCH PLANTING APPROACH

Stages of new church plant (from Empty to Seeded Field)	Description from perspective of Dynamic CPers	Different hats to be worn by the Dynamic CPers
Seeding the empty field: Pioneering and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CPers are still "finding their way"</li> <li>- CPers not fully settled into culture, in language etc. (acculturation or acclimatization not complete)</li> <li>- Comfort level, "in control" level, or "secure" level of CPers low</li> <li>- Likely, CPer is looking for a balance between personal financial stability and building the church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put on the hat of a learner to gain insight for an effective and culturally appropriate outreach; learn the local language;</li> <li>- Put on the hat of <b>pastoral CPers</b>; develop love for the locals, prioritize the need to find the "men of peace", to initiate, build up and take care of a community of Christ-followers pastorally in the beginning;</li> </ul>
Tending the seeded field: Maturing and discipling the local new believers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CPers are relatively settled in and do not face any difficulties in being independent in the foreign country</li> <li>- Language, at least in common contexts, is not too much of a barrier</li> <li>- CPers are clear on what they need to do in terms of outreach, follow-up, shepherding or discipleship etc,</li> <li>- CPers are comfortable to lead, model, deploy, assist the locals in the groups/ communities</li> <li>- CPers able to strategize and plan ahead with the locals with certain level of confidence and stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to love and provide pastoral care and counsel primarily to the local new believers, discipling them into living out the gospel</li> <li>- Put on the hat of <b>apostolic CPers</b> as the new believers grow in Christ by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being intentional in training;</li> <li>• shifting emphasis from ministering to the locals to the locals ministering to other locals</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Avoid setting too high standards on local apprentices in the beginning</li> <li>- Put on the hat of <b>catalytic CPers</b> to catalyze new missional communities of Christ-followers through the locals</li> <li>- Advance ministry only to the extent that local believers are willing and prepared</li> <li>- Empower, assist local believers to minister to other locals</li> </ul>
Growing the field of new life: Developing and empowering local leaders	<p>CPers empower local believers as leaders that assume most major responsibilities and observe them, giving advice only when necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CPers equip the local leaders to become equipppers of others</li> <li>- CPers are in the final part of the "phase-out" strategy (Model, Assist, Watch, Leave)</li> <li>- CPers are preparing to leave the new church plant to the local leaders and watch from the background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CPers can have three options: 1) go back to home country ; 2) continue the missions work in the country or 3) continue to pioneer in a new locality.</li> </ul> <p>For Option 1: Move to home country or another ministry; serve as coach or adviser from a distance</p> <p>For Option 2: Continue the missions work in the country as an advisor instead of a pastor over the new church plant so as to coach the church plant to catalyze new missional communities and to train local CPers as <b>catalytic CPers</b> OR</p> <p>For Option 3: Move on to pioneer in a new locality as <b>apostolic CPers</b>, bringing along some of the local CPers from the first church plant.</p>



## CONCLUSION

All Christ-followers are called to be missional as they are “sent” on their God-given global mission to make disciples of all the unreached people groups of the world. God is still very much at work today on His mission to redeem His people all over the world back to Him through his church. In Luke 10:2 Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” There is still much work to be done in this mission that God has sent us to do.

The world's fastest growing church-planting movement - T4T (“Training for Trainers”) movement started by Ying Kai - is an excellent example what it means to be “sent” to participate in God's mission and for churches to become reproducing churches that reproduce churches that reproduce. It gives us faith that missions and cross-cultural church planting, and the resulting missional church plants, are more than possible today.

**[T4T – “Training for trainer” ([www.t4tonline.org](http://www.t4tonline.org)) is all about training and making disciples for Jesus. Its goal is to train believers who can train others in a very simple yet effective method of evangelism and discipleship.**

**The goal of the training is to establish reproducing churches and groups of disciples across relationship networks. The method could be utilized in all the five phases of the church planting process (entry, gospel presentation, discipleship, church formation and also leadership development and multiplication) to see healthy churches being planted and multiplied. ]**

The T4T process of church planting has been adapted by other Church planting movements to be applied effectively in a wide range of contexts – from Asia to Africa, from literate to illiterate people groups, from Animists to Western societies. Behind the heart of the T4T movement, is a missional spirit to reach the world for Jesus. Keeping close to the *Code of Best Practice in Church Planting* presented earlier (ongoing evangelism, discipleship, self-propagating, self-governing and self-support), the T4T

movement has resulted in more than 1.7 million baptisms and more than 150,000 new church plants since its inception in 2001.

The Dynamic Church Planting Approach, which is the hybrid model to harness the best of the three best practice (Pastoral, Catalytic and Apostolic) church planting approaches, can also be traced in the strategy of the T4T movement.

Let us focus our efforts on the global mission of God to reconcile the whole world back to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we apply the wisdom of our predecessors in cross-cultural church planting, we believe it is possible to equip every Christ-follower in our HIM family of churches to become Christ-centered disciples that take the step of faith to plant vibrant, biblical churches in their countries and all over the world.



## REFERENCES

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