

THEME: **DO'S AND DONT'S WHEN STARTING A CHURCH – By Allen Roth**

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SCRIPTURE: I Cor. 3:9-15

GOAL: Give listeners some practical ideas of things to do and to avoid in planting a church.

DATE/PLACE: 8/22/14 Church Planters' Forum and Retreat Orrstown, PA

### INTRODUCTION:

Paul was a wise, master builder in church planting. We can learn from his (and others') experiences to become wise in our own ministries of church planting.

### INSTRUCTION:

1. Impatience, discouragement, giving up too soon.
2. Neglect prayer and fasting; busy but dry and empty.
3. The "lone ranger" attitude; an inadequate core group or a team that is too large for you to manage.
4. Uncertainty about who is in charge and how to resolve team problems.
5. Unclear financial arrangement: full-time? Part-time? Spare time?
6. Too busy with good things to evangelize.
7. Neglect proper balance of evangelism/pastoral care/administration with an appropriate "mix" in the various stages of the development of the new church. *Do pie graph with E/P/A sections*
8. Knocking other churches and seeking dissatisfied church members.
9. Embarrassment about the church name and standards; uncertainty about beliefs.
10. Depending on impersonal means to win people. God usually uses people to win people. Specialize in making friendships, in serving.
11. Depending on one method to reach people. There is no "magic bullet".
12. Focus on ladies and children while neglecting men. "Follow the children home!"
13. Using people to meet our goal instead of loving them.
14. Being used by people in ways that are not for their ultimate good.
15. Choosing an inappropriate name (street location; "Laws" Menn. Church; Fundamental, independent, KJV only Church; etc.) What will it communicate to unchurched people? A study revealed that the denominational nametag meant very little to unchurched people; they were checking the "vibes".
16. An inadequate building (location, access, size, appearance, parking, etc.).
17. A reluctance to involve and delegate responsibility to local believers.  
FACTS people: Faithful, Available, Capable, Teachable, Spiritual.
18. Too many MBB's in proportion to local believers (Mennonite Background Believers; *draw diagram of inverse proportion nonMBBs/MBBs*).
18. Forget that churches may not measure up to our ideals. EX: Corinthians; Revelation churches; my vision to start "NT churches" with no traditions!

### **If I Were Starting A Church Again, I would...**

1. I would try to discern more clearly (and narrowly) the **primary geographical, ethnic focus** God has laid out for us (without excluding anyone). EX: recent immigrants, drug addicts, homeless, students, alcoholics, etc.— or -- more settled folks. EX: the need for a skeleton in order to have something to attach muscle, flesh, etc.
2. I would try to include **more prayer** in my personal life, in the team, and in the life of the church (with fasting).
3. At the outset of the church planting effort, I would settle on an **ideal proportion** of Mennonite background believers (MBB) in relation to non-Mennonite background believers (perhaps 25% / 75%). Then as MBBs explore coming to help in the work, I would refer them to our ideal. If their coming would exceed that proportion, I would ask them to wait, to witness in their home areas till we win more locals or to settle in a neighboring community where we could coach them as they start a sister church. I would not set that ideal at 50/50 since those with church experience carry a disproportionate influence due to their head start in Bible knowledge, personal growth in disciplines, and cultural similarity to the church planters.
4. I would promote conversion growth by persistently **asking people to go witnessing** with me (weekly), especially locals won to Christ. I would put priority on one-to-one witnessing and rely less on impersonal means (such as distributing literature). When we started our school, I neglected evangelism with the increase of administrative work involved. I should not have neglected it.
5. I would give more attention to **biological growth** (church growth through the birth of member children). I

would give more classes on God's love of children, child training, etc. Converts often come to our churches without the entire family and with worldly (negative) values about children. If not corrected, the numbers of those from Mennonite background can soon overtake the non-MBBs just through birth rate (and marriage/move in's)--unless we learn how "to win them faster than we can birth them."

6. I would be more careful with transfer growth by quickly **contacting the pastor of regular visitors** to our church to make sure they are not wolves in sheep's clothing. "Other people's wandering sheep may become your goats." I would neither encourage nor prohibit transfer growth. The fruit of evangelism tends to be more loyal to the local church than transfer growth. I would make more effort to build relationships with area pastors.
7. I would insist on organizing a **weekly outreach time** as a regular part of our church calendar at which all would be encouraged and urged to participate in some fashion. Why do we organize regular worship and prayer meetings, expecting faithful attendance, but not regular outreach?
8. I would encourage **small groups** from the very beginning as an integral part of the life of the church and perhaps hold off on starting regular Sunday worship services until having several small groups functioning.
9. I would organize prompt **visits to local visitors** of church activities and connections with the families of children contacted through VBS, clubs and camps.
10. I would try to **tweak our periodic special events** so that we would have at least one quarterly event planned with the unchurched in mind and encourage church people to bring their unchurched friends. EX: fourth of July; Labor Day; Christmas; Easter; men/boys' camping; couples' banquet, etc. Perhaps even require church people to bring (or at least to have invited an unchurched friend) in order to be able to attend.
11. I would start the **Servant-Leader Apprenticeship** earlier as a deliberate, planned approach to raise up more leaders, not only to pastor the new church but also to serve as missionaries and church planters.
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12. I would put more **emphasis on discipleship** and try to get locals involved in both receiving and giving discipleship as a way of life. EX: Bible study; *Abundant Life*; *Life of Christ*; *T4T A Discipleship ReRevolution* and many other similar materials. I would establish a sponsor relationship for incoming attendees/members and if there is allowance for baptism before membership, I would try to arrange a clearly understood plan to prepare for membership.
13. I would do everything possible to provide a **Spanish option** during Sunday School in order to nurture those who are learning English in an attempt to keep both generations in the church and nurtured.
14. I would **adjust my approach** a bit in teaching I Cor. 11 emphasizing headship rather than primarily from the perspective of being a veiling for prayer.
15. I would locate the **responsibility for a church plant** within the leadership team of the church rather than with the local missions committee. Perhaps set a maximum size (120); plan and pray toward a church plant early in the life of the church.
16. I would work more intentionally to more fully **understand my own culture** and the cultures of those I am serving.
17. I would work more intentionally to **befriend local men**.
18. If one allows for a distinction between baptism and church membership, I would be sure I had a clear plan to get from baptism to church membership and a time frame for it, and agree upon it with the candidate before baptism.
19. I would make sure the Youth Pastor agrees to being on the leadership team of the church.

#### **If I Were Starting A Church Again, Things I Would Do Again Are...**

1. Regular (weekly) visitation in the neighborhood. How we went about it...
2. Interactive, home Bible studies with interested people. (Observe, interpret, apply; Question/comment; Gospels)

3. An overseer who was affirming and gave flexibility to experiment.
4. We started meetings in our home, then had to move; save while renting with a goal to buy without borrowing.
5. Listened to the overseer's warning to not start a church council but wait and work toward formation of a plural, multi-cultural leadership team.
6. Gave leadership training early on using *Pastoral Theology* studies and Servant-Leader Apprenticeship.
7. We affiliated with a larger body of churches.
8. We moved to the community rather than commute.
9. No subsidy for the church; fulltime ministry without salary.
10. We started early with a monthly missions offering and with a building fund.
11. We involved our family as a team; regular family worship; home a center for ministry; homeschool; prayed for things for our children to do; weekly family night; requested they ask us for permission to date...
12. Recruited a team and had regular team meetings with parliamentary procedure and minutes.
13. We stuck it out.
14. A "Discovery Class" approach to preparing people for membership; discussion with questions and answers.
15. In the early stages, we limited our times away, especially over holidays. We stuck close home.
16. We established a charter church membership and affiliation as a congregation early in the process (11/86—4/89).
17. A clear connection between baptism and church membership.
18. Regular prayer and fasting; recruited prayer support.
19. Prayed for God to provide friends for our children; monitored their play.
20. Kept my fingers out of the church finances.
21. Accepted the church's offer to give toward our rent (1/4, 1/2, full, retirement)
22. We said "no" to many extra-curricular activities (funerals, weddings, reunions, etc.). When you say "yes" to one thing (with Mennos), you are also saying "no" to another thing (with non-Mennos) due to lack of time.
23. I focused on men; for counseling women: "Talk to my wife. If you cannot resolve the problem together, then I will assist..."
24. Consult husbands of converted women and parents of minors. (EX: Cythia and wedding ring.)
25. Give opportunities to non-members to participate, but limit regular participation to members, especially in leadership and teaching roles, as the church grew.
26. Affirmed our commitment to the group. "When are you leaving?" "We plan to stay here until God raises up faithful leaders to replace us."
27. Start with a small team—leaves more time and energy to reach out and befriend locals.
28. Include younger, inexperienced workers as apprentices.
29. The church school has been good for our church (I did not start it until we had qualified people to run and teach in it). However, it did also bring in more people from Mennonite background, has not brought in more local non-Mennonite background people although it might have if we would have focused on befriending and winning their families to Christ and building them up); it consumed a lot of my time and energy—I should have delegated more and retained regular outreach activities.
30. I encouraged my wife to follow through on Titus 2—training the women, which she did in Sunday School classes and with monthly meetings with the wives of leaders on the pastoral team as well as informal interaction with women.
31. I would request regular affirmation of commitment to the church covenant (goals) and review applications we had agreed upon.
32. Remember: the more rules, the more enforcement needed.
33. Make a list of "hot button" topics (jewelry, modesty, gender distinction in clothing, gender roles, non-resistance, marriage and divorce, finances [tithing], sexuality) and give teaching on one each quarter. Remember: the only thing necessary for a doctrine or application to disappear is...be silent.
34. Establish a building fund early, teach tithing, first Sunday of the month as missions Sunday, an annual missions focus event, a fifth Sunday Compassion Fund offering.
35. Establish two deacons rather than just one and a leadership team with apprentices cycling through.
36. Pray and work earlier, harder and intentionally toward a church plant.
37. Focus on unchurched; include others as they come, rather than focusing on churched and incorporating unchurched as they come.

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Church Planters' Institute each May

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