



CHURCH PLANTING

PRAYER

STRATEGY

A Guide for
Churches, Associations, State
Conventions and Church Planters



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC
NAMB



Church Planting Prayer Strategy

**Produced by the Church Planting Group of the North American Mission Board,
Dr. Richard Harris, Vice President**

**Written by Dr. Daniel R. Sanchez, Professor of Missions, Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary.**

Edited by Dr. Roberto Gama, Church Planting Group

© Copyright 2002 North American Mission Board, SBC

All rights reserved



INTRODUCTION

This manual provides valuable information that can help in the development of a Prayer Strategy for Church Planting. Its goal is to assist Sponsoring Churches, Associations, State Conventions and Church Planters to design and implement vibrant, fervent, and persistent prayer strategies that under gird church planting efforts in this country and throughout the world.¹

The plan is for this manual to be used in conjunction with other viable resources that have been developed to promote prayer. *A Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches*² challenges believers to reclaim the church as a house of prayer with a passion for the lost. *Taking Prayer to the Streets: Prayer Journeys Guidebook*³ shares information on how to become more faithful in prayer, how to participate on prayer walking and regional prayer journeys and how to develop an overall Great Commission prayer strategy. *Lighthouse of Prayer* is a cluster of two or more believers who are banded together to pray for, care about, and share the blessings of Christ with their neighbors.⁴ *PrayerLink : Prayer Coordinator's Guide 2002-2003*, outlines a three-part, Great Commission-centered prayer strategy that is easily adapted to Congregational, Associational, and Statewide contexts. It provides valuable resource information and contacts for the prayer mobilizer, and it seeks to encourage prayer leader/coordinators and prepare them to continue the work faithfully.⁵ The *North American Missions Prayer-Gram* is a quarterly publication produced by the Prayer Evangelism Unit of the North American Mission Board. It features specific areas of the United States and Canada. It provides a calendar which lists the names of persons, the places where they serve, and the ministries in which they are involved.⁶ Another excellent resource is the *Pray Timer: Real Time for Real Prayer* which consists of a Guidebook and software that can be used to help believers and unbelievers find real time for real prayer. It presents six 90-minute sessions about prayer.⁷ *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals*,⁸ written by evangelism professors Drs. Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, is an informative and inspiring resource to enable individuals, congregations, and mission agencies to pray for revival in an intelligent and passionate manner. Yet another



outstanding resource for the development of effective innovative prayer strategies is Dr. Ken Hemphill's *The Prayer of Jesus*.⁹ Focusing on the essential elements of prayer as taught by the Lord, this book can provide an excellent model for the church planters personal prayer ministry.

To be effective a church planting prayer strategy needs to be coordinated with the church planting process. The following is an outline of some of the principal steps that are usually taken in starting new congregations. Churches, Associations, State Conventions, and Church Planters will benefit from taking these steps into account in the development of their church planting prayer strategies. Additional concepts and resources for each of these groups will be discussed.

Purpose:

The purpose of *Prayer for Church Planting* is twofold: 1) To prepare the church planting field spiritually for the multiplication of churches; 2) To assist partners with prayer strategy suggestions and resources that will enhance prayer permeation throughout the process and development of church planting efforts. The resources will serve as a guide to our partners, sponsoring churches, groups in the process of becoming a church, and individual church planters as to how to pray at each milestone of development of a Church plant. Attempts will be made to be inclusive of the emphases present in both the Church Planting Group and the Evangelization incorporating a wide variety of resources

Objectives:

1. To call the people of God to humble themselves before Him to experience spiritual renewal.
2. To inform about the need of prayer to begin new churches that will start new churches.
3. To encourage prayer for the Church Planting process.
4. To challenge people to pray for the unchurched that they may come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior across North America.
5. To lead people to pray for leaders of new Churches.



OUTLINE

Introduction

Chapter 1 – The Need For Spiritual Revival In North America

Chapter 2 – The Sponsoring Church’s Church Planting Prayer Strategy

Chapter 3 – The Association’s Church Planting Prayer Strategy

Chapter 4 – The State Convention’s Church Planting Prayer Strategy

Chapter 5 – The Church Planter’s Prayer Strategy

End Notes



Chapter 1

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL IN NORTH AMERICA

America is in desperate need of a spiritual revival. The events of September 11 shook our nation to its core. On the days following this tragedy the thoughts of the majority of Americans turned to spiritual matters. This was evident in the political, social, financial, recreational, and religious life of this nation. The nation's political leaders gathered at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. to hear Rev. Billy Graham and other religious leaders. Together they sang: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Many sports events were canceled. The country's most popular television entertainers turned to serious topics in place of their usual comedy and levity. Dan Rather broke down on David Letterman's program as he quoted from America The Beautiful: "Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tear" and bemoaned the fact that this would not be so any longer. In many ways, America will never be the same again. Many people gave generously to assist the families of those who had died as a result of the terrorist attacks. Many unchurched people went to church on subsequent Sundays. As time has marched on, however, many have gone back to a lifestyle which virtually ignores God and focuses on a self-centered pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and recognition. As George Barna points out:

Only one-third of the adult population of America is truly Christian, even though almost two-thirds claim they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that's important in their lives. Most Americans believe in some type of God; that Jesus is the Son of God; that Satan does not exist, but is a symbol of evil; that all people pray to the same God; and that they do not have a personal responsibility for evangelism. Most Americans, including committed Christians, are Biblically illiterate. Most churches are small; less than 100 people. Most church growth is by transfer, not conversion. The dominant faith in America is not Christianity; it is



syncretism, a customized blend of different faiths, resulting in a personalized religion.¹⁰

America needs to experience long lasting spiritual revival, that starts with prayer, that leads people to a genuine experience of salvation in Jesus Christ, and that disciples people in the context of warm, caring, Bible believing, and evangelistically committed churches.

Revival and Church Planting

A careful historical analysis reveals that the spiritual awakenings that emphasized the starting of new congregations were the ones that made the most profound and most enduring impact upon the life of this nation. In their inspiring book, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals*, evangelism professors Drs. Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid make this point when they describe John Wesley's ministry:

Wesley's success is astounding. Although only five feet three inches tall and 128 pounds, he was a spiritual giant. After his death in 1791, there were 79,000 Methodists in England and 119,000 around the world. Within 110 years, there were nearly 90,000 churches with members, teachers, scholars, and adherents numbering more than 40 million!¹¹

In their analysis of the First Great Awakening, McDow and Reid also point out the church growth that accompanied this revival. They state:

Baptists in the South were especially aided by the First Great Awakening. From 1775 to 1792, Baptist churches in the South grew from 28 to 441, more than 1,500 percent! This remarkable growth can be attributed in large part to the Great Awakening. Baptists in New England were generally suspicious of the Great Awakening. Still, Baptist churches there grew from 21 to 286, an increase of over 1,000 percent.¹²



The Second Great Awakening also resulted in the growth of existing congregations and the starting of many new ones. McDow and Reid explain:

Great revival always leads to significant evangelism and church growth. From 1800 to 1830 Presbyterians grew fourfold, from about 40,000 to 173,329. Baptists grew from 872 churches and 64,975 members in 1790 to 7,299 churches and 517,523 members in 1836. The Methodist Church, after rapid gains in the latter eighteenth century, actually lost some 11,000 members from 1793-95. But phenomenal growth in the Second Great Awakening resulted in 1,323,361 members by 1850.¹³

The growth in new congregations connected with these spiritual awakenings makes a powerful statement of the significant role that churches play in discipling new converts, assisting them to mature in the faith, and enabling them to become involved in ministry.

This connection between spiritual revival and the starting of new congregations is clearly evident in the church planting movements that are occurring throughout the world today. In his book entitled, *Church Planting Movements*, David Garrison describes what the Holy Spirit is doing in a country in Latin America where Christians for decades have suffered persecution, imprisonment, and torture. He explains:

By 1989, the northern union had a membership of roughly 5,800. That same year, they began to experience an awakening as membership climbed from 5.3 percent and 6.9 percent the following year. By the end of the 1990s, the northern union's membership had grown from 5,800 to more than 14,000. Over the same period, the number of churches increased from 100 to 1,340. Currently, more than 38,000 regular participants in the churches are awaiting baptism. Similar developments were also unfolding in



the southern union. In 1989, they had 129 churches with a membership of just under 7,000. With 533 baptisms recorded that year, they were showing signs of vitality. By 1998, their membership had risen to nearly 16,000 with annual baptisms of almost 2,000. The number of churches increased during that same period from 129 to 1,918, a remarkable 1,387 percent growth rate for the decade.¹⁴

Garrison then goes on to describe the revival taking place in the Yanyin region of China:

In his initial survey, the strategy coordinator found three local house churches made up of about 85 Han Chinese Christians... Over the next four years, by God's grace, the strategy coordinator helped the gospel take fresh foot among this people group and sweep rapidly across the Yanyin region... Aware of the enormous cultural and linguistic barriers that separated him from the people of Yanyin, the missionary began by mobilizing Chinese Christian co-laborers from across Asia. Then, partnering these Chinese church planters with a small team of local believers, the group planted six new churches in 1994. The following year 17 more were begun. The next year 50 more were started. By 1997, just three years after starting, the number of churches had risen to 195 and had spread throughout the region, taking root in each of the five people groups... The next year in his absence, the movement nearly tripled as the total number of churches grew to 550 and more than 55,000 believers.¹⁵

Garrison goes on to describe the spiritual revival that is sweeping many other parts of the world:

Other Church Planting Movements are surfacing every few months: 30,000 believers in a Southeast Asian country, 100,000 believers swelling 800 new churches in eastern India; 20,000



coming to Christ over a four-year period in one Chinese province; church starts doubling in six months in one Western European country; 383 churches starting in a single state in Brazil. Missionaries are sharing reports with each other – and telling one another the means by which God is doing marvelous works. God is doing something remarkable.¹⁶

Revival and Prayer

Nothing short of a spiritual revival can save North America and prayer has to be the starting point. All spiritual awakenings have had one common characteristic: *prayer*. This should not surprise us because God made it clear early on in the life of Israel: *“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place”* (2 Chronicles 7:14,15).

Jonathan Edwards understood this when he pled for “explicit agreement and visible union of the people of God in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom on earth.”¹⁷ McDow and Reid explain:

Any outpouring of the Spirit has its origin in the heart of God himself. But, while conceived in the Father’s love for His people, it is birthed in the burden of believers who experience an overwhelming sense of urgency in prayer. As the familiar saying of Matthew Henry goes: “When God desires to do a fresh work, He sets His people to praying.” A faithful few given to desperate, concerted prayer can provide the spark for a mighty revival.¹⁸



Garrison echoes this when he states:

Prayer has been fundamental to every Church Planting Movement we have observed. Prayer typically provides the first pillar in a strategy coordinator's master plan for reaching his or her people group. However, it is a *vitality* of prayer in the missionary's personal life that leads to its imitation in the life of the new church and its leaders. By revealing from the beginning the source of his power in prayer, the missionary effectively gives away the greatest resource he brings into the assignment. This sharing of the power source is critical to the transfer of vision and the momentum from the missionary to the new local Christian leadership.¹⁹

Those, like Garrison, who are studying the astounding church planting movements that are spreading like wildfire in strategic parts of the world have concluded that prayer is an absolutely essential element in these manifestations of the Spirit of God.

A prayer for revival that makes a lasting impact on the life of our nation is a prayer for the renewal of our existing churches and the establishment of thousands of new congregations that are geographically near and culturally relevant to the millions of unchurched of persons in our nation. For Churches, Associations, State Convention, and Church Planters who want to see our nation won to Christ and disciplined in Bible believing, Great Commission committed, reproducing churches, the starting point is "extraordinary prayer for revival."²⁰



CHAPTER 2

THE SPONSORING CHURCH'S PRAYER STRATEGY

All of us have been deeply touched and impressed by the revival that has been going on in South Korea for several decades. In 1900 there were no Christian churches in South Korea. Today, all one needs to do is visit the city of Seoul and see some of the world's largest Christian churches. At night it is an inspiring sight to see neon crosses on the steeples of churches all over the city. This has not occurred by happenstance. Prayer has played a key role in the Korean churches. Most of them are open early every morning for prayer meetings. They have prayer meetings often. Many of them have prayer rooms just as many American churches have Sunday School rooms. It is a common occurrence to walk on the hallways and see the shoes of those who are in the prayer rooms prevailing in prayer. It is no wonder that the Lord has blessed our Korean brethren in such a mighty way.

Prayer must be at the heart of every church planting effort. The early church was a praying church. Actually, the church was born in a prayer meeting. The last words of the resurrected Savior to his disciples were: "I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The disciples followed the instructions of Jesus and "when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place ... and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4). Having been filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to function as a church proclaiming the Word, baptizing and discipling the believers, worshiping God and devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 2:40-47). In addition to praying in worship, the early church prayed as it encountered persecution, as it sensed the need for guidance, and as it initiated every activity related to the work of the kingdom. The Jerusalem church was a praying church (Acts 4:23-31; 6:1-6; 12:5-18).



One of the most inspiring examples of a praying church is found in Acts chapter 13. This church was established by Christian refugees who had fled the persecution in Jerusalem which started with the death of Stephen. It is interesting to note that it took Acts 8:1 to implement Acts 1:8. When these refugees arrived in Antioch, they did what was very natural to them. They began to speak “to the Jews alone” (Acts 11:19). But it didn’t take long before they expanded their vision and ministry and they “began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). It is not surprising to know that “the Lord’s hand was with them and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). When the Jerusalem church heard about this, they sent Barnabas to minister to them. He, in turn, went to Tarsus and brought Saul with him. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). “So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them, they sent off” (13:3).

It is very evident from reading these brief passages that the Antioch church was a praying church. As they prayed, they became increasingly aware of the Lord’s will and became his instruments for the spreading of the gospel and the starting of churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe. Like the Antioch church, modern day churches need to have an on-going, fervent prayer ministry which under girds all of their evangelistic and church planting efforts

Preparation through Prayer

The North American Mission Board’s *Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches* has excellent instruction and resources to assist churches to initiate and sustain an effective prayer ministry. It deals with such topics as: 1) Hearing the call of God to pray; 2) Responding to the call to pray with a prayer strategy; 3) Steps to Great Commission praying; and 4) Organizational options for Prayer Coordinators. It then lists numerous prayer resources from the North American Mission Board, the International Mission Board, Lifeway Christian Resources, and Woman’s Missionary Union/New Hope Press. These resources and others can



be utilized to establish a fervent, inspiring, and effective prayer ministry in this church that under girds every activity in which it is involved. A praying church will undoubtedly become a loving church, a ministering church, and a church that is earnestly committed to fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord. As the church gets ready to give birth to daughter congregations, it will need to prepare spiritually, emotionally, sociologically, and strategically.

Spiritual Preparation

Giving birth to a new congregation requires spiritual maturity. Someone has said: “As children we needed to be fed, as adolescents we fed ourselves, but as adults we feed ourselves and feed others.” A spiritually mature church is one that acknowledges that it has a privilege and a responsibility to start other congregations. This means that the church is not ego-centric but Christo-centric. Looking beyond its own needs and preferences, the spiritually mature church seeks to find the Lord’s will for its life and ministry just as the Antioch Church did. Not allowing its own needs and concerns as a church made up of refugees, the Antioch Church spent time fasting, praying, and seeking the Lord’s will. Once the Lord’s will was revealed, the Antioch Church did not hesitate to “place hands on them and send them away.” This church could quite justifiably said: “But Lord, we need Barnabas and Saul. They are our main leaders. How can we function with out them? Aside from this, Saul is a good tentmaker and gives good tithes to our church. It is really going to strain our budget if he leaves. In addition to this, we are still a new church. We don’t even own a building. Why can’t we wait until we are well established to send some of our best leaders and to allocate our resources to them?” The Antioch Church was so spiritually minded that it simply trusted the Lord to provide and it joyfully sent out this daring church planting team that in a short period of time started churches in all of the provinces of Asia Minor and even into Europe (as a result of the Macedonian call). It is indeed interesting to point our that we, here in America, got the gospel by way of Europe. What if Paul, his co-workers, and others had not been obedient to the call? Where would we be today in terms of our knowledge of the gospel?



As Baptists we have it in our genetic code (DNA) to emulate the example of the Antioch church. Morgan Edwards calls attention to the life and ministry of the Sandy-Creek Church (the first southern Separate Baptist Church established in 1755) as an example of the powerful way in which that Lord utilized a congregation to initiate a mighty church planting movement that continues to this day. Morgan observes:

Sandy-creek church is the mother of all the Separate-baptists. From this Zion went forth the word, and great was the company of them who published it: it, in 17 years, has spread branches westward as far as the great river Mississippi, southward as far as Georgia; eastward to the sea and Chesopeek Bay; and northward to the waters of the Potomack; it in 17 years is become the mother, grandmother, and great grandmother to 42 churches; from which sprang 125 ministers.²¹

Our churches need a prayer strategy that will awaken every member to the marvelous privilege and crucial responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord to make disciples of all people groups. This can best happen as we reach people with the Gospel and disciple them in warm, loving, devoted New Testament churches.

Sociological Preparation

The “*ta ethne*,” all nations (more accurately translated as “all people groups,” mandate of the Great Commission makes it imperative that we reach all of the groups (social, cultural, racial, geographical, generational) with the gospel and disciple them in the context of God-honoring, Bible-believing churches. In order to reach them we need to pray for wisdom and guidance. And, most importantly we need to have a heart full of compassion for them. All of us agree that we must pray for the groups that we need to reach. At the same time, we must pray intelligently. In other words, the more we know about the groups that



we are trying to reach, the more effective we will be in designing outreach and church planting strategies.

The starting point is an analysis of our own congregation. What is the predominant socioeconomic group in our church? Are we in the lower, middle, or upper level of the economic scale. What is the educational level of our church? What are the principal occupations (vocations) of the members of our church? What is the principal language spoken by the members of our church? What are the age levels of the largest groups in our church? What preferences do the members of our church have with regards to music, worship, training, leadership, fellowship, preaching, teaching, and decision-making styles? What is the average distance traveled by the members of our church? What type of housing do the majority of the members of our church live in? What is the make up of the majority of the families in our church (complete, single, separated, blended)? These and other related bits of information can help us to develop a profile of the membership of our church.

Having developed a profile of the membership of our church, we need to develop a similar one in connection with the community or communities that we are trying to reach and disciple. Information about the target group such as population trends, educational levels, income levels, occupations, type of dwelling, family composition, predominant language spoken, and ethnic background, can help us to know the best way to reach a group and start churches among them. This will enable us to know what the gaps are (e.g., generational, linguistic, economic, occupational, geographic, social) and what we need to do to reach them. Obviously a group that lives in close proximity to the church and is very similar socio-economically and generationally, can generally be reached by the existing church with its current outreach programs. The challenge comes when there are wide gaps that require different approaches. Often Associations, State Conventions, and the North American Mission Board have these demographic and psychographic (lifestyles) resources that can help a potential sponsoring church gain valuable knowledge about the groups it is trying to reach and to devise relevant strategies.



In order to pray intelligently and to respond wisely to church planting opportunities, the Prayer Coordinator and the Chairperson of the Missions Development Council (of Missions Committee) need to work together to gather the appropriate information, develop a prayer strategy, and design a contextualized approach to plant churches among the people groups that surround the church and beyond. *A Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches* and the booklet *Great Commission Prayer Ministry* can be excellent resources in designing prayer strategies.

Strategic Preparation

As the church prays for guidance regarding the target group (or groups) it needs to reach, it needs to pray for the leadership of the Lord regarding the church starting model it is going to employ and the corresponding style of sponsorship it is going to employ.²²

Parenting Model

Will the sponsoring church utilize a parenting model? In this model the sponsoring church makes available to the daughter congregation some of the resources needed to get it started and established. These resources may include finances, facilities, personnel, and guidance. The personnel provided may be by way of a core group that is willing to leave the church and join the church starting team in order to plant the new congregation. If this is the case, the sponsoring church needs to spend much time in prayer to receive guidance from the Lord regarding the families and individuals that will form the core group.

Satellite Model

Some churches choose to utilize a satellite model for sponsoring new congregations. This model has some of the features of the parenting model in that the church provides many of the resources to start the new congregations. It has



the potential of reaching many different cultural/ethnic as well as socioeconomic groups that are different from the membership of the sponsoring church. One of the main drawbacks, however, can become evident when some of the congregations are ready to become autonomous self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches, yet, the sponsoring church is not willing allow them to do so. The church will need to pray for guidance from the Lord to know when to encourage these new congregations to become constituted churches that, in turn, start other congregations, thus, giving sponsoring church the privilege of becoming a grandmother.

Partnering Model

There are churches that would like very much to start daughter congregations, yet, they realize that they do not have sufficient resources (financial, personnel) to do this. These churches can establish partnerships with other similar churches (2 or 3) in order to start new congregations. Often it is useful to form a council from these churches that coordinates the activities, obtains the resources, and works with the church planter in the starting of a new congregation. Often, churches that have worked on a partnership gain the experience and the confidence necessary to start a new church on their own.

Another form of partnership is one in which an Anglo church and an Ethnic church become partners in starting a new ethnic congregation. This brings together many of the resources that are needed such as finances, personnel, facilities as well as the expertise and personnel that the Ethnic church might provide in starting the ethnic congregation. Again, this needs to become a matter of prayer so that the Lord will be allowed to guide these efforts.

Multi-Congregational Model

As the title suggests, the multi-congregational model is one in which one church is made up of several congregations. Often in this model there is a central congregation (generally English-speaking) that teams up with pastoral leadership



representing each ethnic group and works up agreements so that several congregations can use the same building and work together to reach all of the groups in the community. At times in this model the children and youth of the ethnic congregations will join together along with the children and youth of the English-speaking congregation and participate in such activities as Sunday School classes, joint worship service, and fellowship. For a model like this to work, much prayer is needed on the part of all of the congregations involved. It may be advisable to form a joint prayer committee representing all of the congregations to continually lift before the throne of grace all of the needs and challenges that they will face as they strive to present a unified witness in the community.

Other Models

As people become aware of the needs and characteristics of a target people group, they can be led of the Lord to develop contextualized and innovative church planting models that enable them to make an impact in the community that God has laid on their hearts.²³

Prayer Journeys and Church Planting

The Bible says that when Jesus saw the multitudes “he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). The picture that is painted here is one of a flock of sheep that is left without shepherd. In Middle Eastern cultures at the time of Jesus, shepherds lived in isolation and could face death due to natural causes or at the hands of thieves. When this was the case, the sheep were left at the mercy of the wolves and other predators that would kill some of the sheep and wound others leaving them to wonder aimlessly and fearfully. This was the picture that Jesus saw of the multitude that had been led astray by leaders who did not really know God and had been left to their own resources to try to survive. It is important to note that when Jesus saw the multitude he was moved to compassion. Some church members believe that compassion will somehow come to them in a bundle



from heaven and then they will be truly compassionate. Actually, we too, when we truly see the multitudes as they really are will be moved to compassion.

The *Taking Prayer to the Streets Prayer Journeys Guidebook*²⁴ has excellent materials and resources to help churches conduct prayer walks in key neighborhoods. It deals with such important topics as: 1) Becoming more faithful in prayer; 2) Becoming like Jesus in prayer; 3) Becoming like Christ in intercession; 4) Learning about prayer journeys; 5) Prayer journey field teams and support teams; 6) Responding to divine encounters; 7) How to begin a Great Commission prayer strategy for the church; 8) Prayer journeys field experience, and 9) Prayer resources. When it comes to utilizing these resources, these are among the finest materials available anywhere in the world. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Churches will undoubtedly be blessed by using them.

One church sends postcards to key communities alerting people that prayer walkers are going to be praying in that area the following week. They are asked to call the church office if they have prayer requests or to be on the lookout for the prayerwalkers to share their requests with them.²⁵ Another church sent prayerwalkers out into every neighborhood in their community preparation for Vacation Bible School. Their enrollment went up from 66 to 253. In another church, a group of concerned Christian moms would meet in a van on the High School parking lot every Friday to pray for the students, the teachers, and the administrators. At times the administrators sent out urgent prayer requests to the moms in the van. Another church sends prayerwalkers every Wednesday evening to the same block of homes to get acquainted with the people and their needs. These are then prayed for in the prayer meeting.

Prayer journeys can be used very effectively in church planting efforts. All of the preparation and training mentioned in the guidebook cited above can provide excellent training and resources for these prayer journeys. There are some things, however, that can be done in addition to those mentioned above to enlist volunteers for church planting teams and select places where churches need to be started.



I participated in a church planting prayer journey in a community in the city of Los Angeles. We went to this community on a Sunday morning right at the time for Sunday School and worship service. The plan was to give us an idea what it would be like if there were an Evangelical church in that community. As we walk, observed, and prayed, we saw groups of unsupervised children playing in the streets. We saw groups of young people just hanging out in street corners. We saw many elderly people sitting in the front porches of their homes just passing the time of day with nothing meaningful to do. We heard what sounded like violent arguments coming out of some of the homes. The houses in the community were somewhat small and relatively old. We did not see any playgrounds for the children and young people. Most of the cars we saw were not new. There were very few recreational vehicles in the driveways except for a few old boats and campers. We did not see any church buildings of any kind.

If we had had an opportunity, we would have returned on a weekday to visit the schools and interview the administrators and some of the teachers about the needs in that community. We would have talked with some of the business owners about their impressions of the needs and lifestyles in of the people in the community. We would have asked them about the best methods they have found to communicate with people in the community (personally and through the media). We would have looked for potential sites where we might be able to start a church. We would have also done a brief sample of some of the people in the community asking them such questions as: 1) What are some of the greatest needs of the people in this community; 2) Why do many of the people in this community not attend church?; 3) If you were looking for a church, what would you want to find in it?; 4) If we developed programs and activities to meet some of the needs in this community, would you be willing to participate?; 5) We have a prayer group in our church, do you have a need that you would like for us to pray for?

Following this type of church planting prayer journey, we would, undoubtedly come up with a very specific list of prayer requests. We would also want to spend time with our prayer journey team praying and debriefing to see



what impressions we received from the Lord. If we felt the Lord leading us to start a church, what would be some of the methods that might be appropriate to reach the people in this community. What type of leadership (culturally, linguistically, generationally, educationally) would it take to reach them.

These are some of the things that can be done in a church planting prayer journey. The impressions received while walking, observing, praying, conversing, reflecting, and listening to the Lord can be very valuable in determining if a new church needs to be started in that community. If so, this type of prayer journey can help us to gain valuable insights regarding the most appropriate approaches that need to be employed.

Light-Houses and Church Planting

In *Make Your Home a Light-House*, Alvin J. Vander Griend share some inspiring and innovative ideas on how believers can ban together to pray for their neighbors. They ask the Lord “to shine the light of his grace and blessing into their neighbors’ lives – into their homes, families, workplaces, and communities.”²⁶ Griend suggests three ways in which Light-Houses of Prayer can fit your church:

1. **“Where members live.** Members of a church can form *Light-Houses* right where they live or work; they can begin to pray for and reach out to the people right around them. Praying caring, and sharing the good news is easiest and most natural when we do it with the people who are near us. Using this pattern, members of a local church cover blocks, streets, and workplaces.”²⁷
2. **“A target area.** A church may choose to focus its *Light-House* efforts on a target area such as immediately surrounding the church, new housing development, and apartment complex, a dormitory, or a prison. In this situation a *Light-House* may meet someplace within the target area, or it may meet in an entirely different location. Distance is not the problem when God is doing the work.”²⁸



3. “**Existing small groups.** Many churches have existing small groups for Bible study, fellowship, caring, and prayer. These groups can develop powerful evangelistic prayer ministries if they are willing to focus outward and to invest adequate amounts of time and energy in intercessory prayer.”²⁹

The focus on meeting in the homes (*Light-Houses*) and praying for the lost people in a specific neighborhood goes hand in hand with a very essential task in church planting; that of establishing relationships with people in the community, praying for them and involving them in Bible studies as the beginning point in the development of a fellowship that will evolve to become a congregation. Whether the house church approach is used as an intentional strategy or the home cell groups are seen as the nucleus for the development of congregations, the small group is the starting point.

There are several things that can be done so that the *Light-House* strategy can become useful in starting new churches. First, there needs to be a clear vision for starting a new church in that community. Second, people from the neighborhood need to participate in Bible studies that lead to their conversion and discipleship. Third, there needs to be a strategy that brings the people from the various home Bible studies together for worship and fellowship. Fourth, the element of reproducibility needs to be incorporated into the process. One way to do it is for every home cell group to have an apprentice as well as a leader. The plan is for the apprentice to branch out at an agreed upon time to go out and start a new *Light-House* utilizing an apprentice who will, in turn, start another *Light-House* at the appropriate time. Fifth, there needs to be the commitment to try to find a person of peace in a community that does not have any believers or the willingness of a family to move into that target neighborhood with the purpose of establishing a *Light-House* that can serve as the beginning of a new church. The *Light-House* strategy can play a key role in the starting of new congregations in an untold number of communities that do not have a gospel preaching church in them.



These are excellent ways to get believers to pray for and minister to the people in their neighborhood with a view to leading them to Christ and starting a new congregation where they live. An additional resource such as *Praying Your Friends To Christ*³⁰ can help those who meet in small groups to pray in a very biblical and focused way for their friends who are lost. This manual establishes a biblical foundation for praying for the lost, describes the condition of the lost, gives instruction on how to prepare to pray for the lost, and detailed information on the most effective way to pray for them.

Prayer Council and Church Planting

Under the direction of the Prayer Coordinator, the church's Prayer Council can involve the church as they pray for a Church Planting spiritual revival and awakening that will result in a church multiplication movement that will impact our nation for Christ. The Prayer Council can under gird every step of the church planting process outlined in the introduction of this Guide.

North American Missions Prayer-Gram and Church Planting

One of the best resources for the Prayer Council and for other prayer groups (Church, Association, State Convention, Church Planters) is the *North American Missions Prayer-Gram* published quarterly by the Prayer Evangelism unit of the North American Mission Board.³¹ In addition to inspiring articles focusing on the various regions of America and Canada, the *Prayer-Gram* features a North American Mission Board missionary for every day of the month and describing the ministry setting and the evangelistic and church planting activities that are being carried out there. For example, the April 29, 2002 slot in the calendar focus on David Dean, executive director of the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. It states: "Pray for the ministries to victims of the September 11 disaster and for churches in crisis. Pray for funding and locations for the volunteer's Mission Resource Center. Pray for the staff and other who are ill." The May 3, 2000 calendar asks for prayer for Barry Bonner who serves in



Canada. The request reads: “ Barry is a church planter/catalyst for the Ontario regions. PRAISE – The new year started well with a new plant expected to branch to three others. Also new Christians are eager for the mission field. Pray for sensitivity in hearing God’s will in mission assignments.” These types of prayer requests can help prayer warriors to focus intelligently and fervently on specific people and places where evangelistic and church planting ministries are going on.

Pray Timer and Church Planting

The *Pray Timer: Real Time for Real Prayer* is one of the most innovative resources available to prayer groups in Churches, Associations, State Conventions, and Church Planters. The Pray Timer “helps believers and unbelievers find real time for real prayer.” It presents six 90-minute sessions about prayer that can be used as an outreach Bible study. The first and second sessions introduce unbelievers (and remind believers) that the source and motivation for prayer flows from our personal relationship with Jesus. Session three presents a biblical study of spiritual warfare and effective prayer. Session four describes ways to lead the church to become a house of prayer. Session five helps each believer to become a prayer warrior. Session six presents biblical motivations for prayer. In the last two sessions, instructions are provided on the use of the Pray Timer software which includes: 1) Customizable calendar options for prayer requests with daily, weekly and monthly calendar views; 2) Downloadable files to pray for specific national and international requests; 3) A schedule of Bible verses to read through the Bible in a year; and 4) A library page at www.prayertimer.org to download updated prayer lists. This excellent resource can easily be customized to focus on prayer needs related to the establishment and development of new congregations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Prayer is an absolutely essential element in church starting. Without it, all the plans and methods are like the dry bones in the prophet’s vision. The resources mentioned above can help a church to establish a fervent, focused, and



powerful prayer ministry that will bring revival to the church, impact the community, and result in the establishment of an untold number of new congregations.



CHAPTER 3

THE ASSOCIATION'S CHURCH PLANTING PRAYER STRATEGY

The *Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches* has an excellent section on the role the Association can play in promoting prayer. This can start with the selection of an Associational Prayer Coordinator and a Prayer Council. These can work together to make sure that every church has a Prayer Coordinator and Prayer Council. After these have been selected, the Association can plan training sessions for them and opportunities for them to be involved in prayer activities in the local churches and in the Association. As the Guide points out, Associations can: “1) Encourage every church to have a praying and prayed-for pastor; 2) Encourage every church to have a prayer house; 3) Encourage praying churches to pray together in their neighborhoods; 4) Create a Prayer Coordinator Network; 5) and Cover the area with various media and promotions.”³² There are additional things that the Association can do to make people aware of the need to start new churches and to develop a prayer strategy to under gird these efforts.

Associational Church Planting Survey

There are some Associations where the population has doubled, yet, the number of churches has remained virtually the same. Some of these Associations have been lulled by the fact that there are some large churches in their territory, yet, when the total number of members is tabulated, the percentage of Baptists has actually declined. The ideas discussed in the previous section have relevance for Associations. It is vitally important to have first hand knowledge of population characteristics and trends in the specific communities of a city. The Association, however, can play a vital role of helping the leadership of the churches to have a feel for the *complete picture*.

Demographic and Psychographic Analysis



The Association can do demographic and psychographic analyses. What was the population in our Association twenty years ago, ten years ago, and now? Have there been any socioeconomic shifts? Have new groups come into the area of our Association? If so, how many are they? How many churches do we have among them? The Association can pin point the areas and communities that have the most pressing need for churches.

Church to Population Ratio

The Association can help the leadership of the churches understand the challenge by doing a comparative analysis of the church to population ratio. How many churches per population did we have twenty years ago and ten years ago in comparison to now? Are we declining, static, or growing?

Percentage of the Population

The Association can also do a study of the percentage of the population that were in Southern Baptist Churches twenty years ago, the years ago, and now. Do we have a smaller, similar, or larger percentage of the population now? If we are not growing, what do we need to do to reach more people and start more churches?

Associational Church Planting Prayer Journey

In the previous section the Prayer Journey for a local congregation has been discussed in detail. Most of the suggestions discussed there can also apply to an Associational setting. The Association, however, can take the idea of a Prayer Journey a step further by involving Pastors, Prayer Coordinators, and Missions Development Council Chairpersons in visiting key areas of the city that are in desperate need of churches.



Prayer Walking in the Community

The prayer journey in the community can involve several important elements. First and foremost is hearing from the Lord what his will is for that community. Second is gaining impressions and insights as to the type of church that is needed in that community. The observations mentioned in the previous section (e.g., type and age of housing, type and age of vehicles, recreational vehicles, recreational areas, service agencies, church buildings) also apply to the Associational Prayer Journey.

Interview of Key Community Leaders

Interviews with leaders such as school administrators, directors of service agencies, law enforcement personnel, owners of local businesses, and pastors of churches can give the participants vital information on the community. Questions such as the following can be utilized: 1) How long have you been in this community?; 2) What are some of the greatest needs in this community?; 3) What are some things you have learned from working in this community (about relating to the people, about communicating with them, about organizing activities with them?; 4) What advice would you give us as we explore the possibility of starting a church in this community?³³

Prayer and Debriefing

After the Prayer Journey and the Interview of Community leaders has taken place, it can be very useful to spent time debriefing. What impressions did the members of the Prayer Journey team receive? Is the Lord leading them to start a church there? If so, what type of church would be needed? Which one of the existing churches would feel led of the Lord to start a church there? Are any additional partners needed?

Video Taping the Prayer Journey



It may be a good idea to video tape the entire prayer journey and the interview of community leaders. This will help the team to make presentations in their respective churches and in Associational meetings as we will discuss in more detail later.

Associational *Light-House* Strategy

A number of years ago media campaigns were conducted in two Associations in upstate New York: the Frontier Association (Buffalo) and the Rochester Association. Coordinating with *At Home With The Bible*, thirty-second spot announcements were shown on TV. The scene was a family studying the Bible and conversing harmoniously. The viewers were asked, “Would you like to have this type of harmony in your home? You can by studying Bible together. For a free Home Bible Study course, call this toll free number.” In Buffalo around 1,000 persons responded and in Rochester 700 did so. In each Association, three churches were started by clustering the Bible study groups.

Whether media is utilized or not, the idea of clustering *Light-Houses* for the purpose of starting churches can be a very effective strategy. These *Light-Houses* can begin as prayer groups concerned about their communities. They can then add Bible studies to their agenda. They can then go from there to the development of congregations (either the cell group house church approach or the establishing of a central congregation that continues to use cell groups for prayer, outreach, and discipleship). The Association is in the best position to design and coordinate this type of strategy to start churches in key communities throughout the area.

Associational Church Planting Prayer Retreat

Reporting on the Church Planting Survey

One of the activities of the Associational Church Planting Retreat could be that of reporting the results of the church planting survey. This could include population trends and characteristics, new groups in the community, church to



population ratios and percentage of the population that is Southern Baptist. A very important activity would be that of pinpointing where new churches are needed and allowing the participants to pray specifically for these communities.

Reporting on the Church Planting Prayer Journey

A vital activity would be reporting on the findings of the Prayer Journey through key communities. Sharing the impressions received while praying and walking, the information gathered from key community leaders, and the conclusions arrived at during the debriefing session can help the retreat participants to capture a vision of what the Lord wants to accomplish in that community.

Spending Time in Prayer

In some “prayer retreats” people talk a great deal about prayer, but dedicate little time to it. Being informed about the needs is important so that people can pray intelligently. Spending time in prayer, however, is absolutely essential to know the Lord’s will, to receive his anointing, and to dedicate ourselves to the task that he wants us to accomplish. The various Guide Books have different formats that can be utilized for this. The important thing is that participants in the retreat spend sufficient time before the Lord. This will then lead to making divinely inspired decisions.

Establishing Church Planting Goals

Giving participants the opportunity to pray about church starting goals and sharing these with the group can actually be the beginning a spiritual revival that can sweep across the Association. We are closer to the heart of Christ when we obey his Great Commission. This type of revival, as was true of the Great Awakenings, can make a lasting impact upon the territory of an Association and North America for the Glory of God.



CHAPTER 4

THE STATE CONVENTION'S CHURCH PLANTING PRAYER STRATEGY

Randy Sprinkle and Nancy in many ways were the ideal couple to start Baptist work in Lesotho, Africa. Their previous missionary experience, their wonderful relationship to the Lord and to each other, their solid theological training, and their willingness to go anywhere the Lord wanted them to go, were excellent qualifications for this new assignment. As they responded to this call, the Lord in his wisdom led Randy and Nancy to establish a prayer partnership with the Missouri Baptist Convention. Little did they know that the prayer of their new partners would be the only thing that would get them through the challenges that they were to encounter.

When they got to Lesotho, the only lodging that they could find for them and their two boys was a hotel room right next to a Disco which blared loud music from 10:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. every single night. Their loss of sleep was compounded by the denial of their permanent visa request, the denial of their request to register the Baptist Mission as a legal entity in the country, their repeated inability to purchase a lot to build a house due to their unwillingness to pay bribes, the flaring up of Nancy's Lupus, their facing opposition and ridicule in the villages where they wanted to start churches, the worsening of Randy's back and neck problems which stemmed from an airplane wreck, the attempt on the part of unscrupulous religious leaders to take over the work that the Sprinkles had started but were neglecting due to their illness, and the discouragement on the part of their oldest boy who said: "I know the Lord sent us here, but, maybe he just forgot about us." As the Missouri prayer partners lifted them up in prayer, even when at times communication was very difficult, Randy and Nancy were able to overcome every single obstacle and plant new congregations in that difficult and trying environment. Randy's book, *Until The Stars Appear*,³⁴ as well as the continuing growth of new congregations in Lesotho



stand as a testimony of what God can accomplish through dedicated people who are upheld before the throne of grace with fervent, persevering prayer.

At times people view the State Convention as an organization that can do an outstanding job of designing programs, developing materials, organizing activities, and providing financial resources. But what if in addition to this, or perhaps, before doing these things, the State Convention functioned as a mobilizer of prayer efforts to under gird every single activity in which individuals and churches in its territory are involved?

State Convention Church Planting Prayer Coordinator

The *Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches* and the *Prayer Link: Prayer Coordinator's Guide* describe the role of the Prayer Coordinator in churches and Associations. A State Convention Prayer Coordinator can have a similar role but on a broader and more widely coordinated scale. Some of the duties of the State Convention Prayer Coordinator are to:

1. Pray and lead others to pray
2. Work closely with the Associational Prayer Coordinators to develop a Church Planting Prayer Strategy
3. Plan and implement statewide prayer activities and events
4. Build a statewide Church Planting Prayer Council
5. Plan an annual prayer retreat for Prayer Coordinators and Missions Development Council chairpersons to pray for church planting efforts in the state.
6. Build a State Convention library of resources (books, videos, magazines, prayer guides, etc.) that help Prayer Coordinators promote prayer for church planting.
7. Stay current on state, national, and international prayer needs, especially as they relate to church planting efforts in the Associations, the State Convention and around the world.³⁵



State Convention Church Planting Prayer Retreat

A number of years ago Drs. Daniel Sanchez, Virgil Gerber, and Irland Azeveido participated in a prayer and church growth retreat at a camp near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. After some sessions reviewing church growth principles, the leaders presented demographic data and church growth statistics giving each pastor data pertaining to his community and church. The pastors were then asked to go off to themselves, review the data, spent time in prayer asking for the Lord's guidance, and to return to the group and share their goals for church growth and church planting for the next five years. As they got off to themselves, a number of pastors were weeping and bearing their soul before the Lord. When they gathered as a group, they begin to share the vision that the Lord had given them for the next five years. One pastor stood before the group and wept as he confessed: "Throughout this retreat I have sat back thinking that what was being shared was for others and not for me because I pastor a church with over 2,000 members and I am doing quite well. But in this retreat, as I have analyzed the statistics and prayed, the Lord has convicted me. 'You have 2,000 members, but, what are these among so many.' I want to repent before the Lord and I will commit myself to doubling our membership and starting 5 churches in the next five years." Others shared similar experiences and proportionately similar goals. The meeting went on much longer than anticipated and there was weeping, repentance, reconciliation, commitment to reach the goals, and covenant to pray for one another. Two and a half years later Dr. Sanchez and the team went back to see how the pastors were doing. To our amazement, they found out that *in half the time most of them had already attained the five-year goals they had set for themselves.* Could the Lord do something like this in our State Conventions today?

A Church Planting Prayer Retreat that brings together pastors, Associational Directors of Missions, Prayer Coordinators, Missions Development Council chairpersons, and Woman's Missionary Union leaders can be very productive in focusing on church planting needs, praying about these needs, and



strategizing to start new churches where they are needed. The synergy of this type of meeting can be very productive. Churches and Associations have valuable information about their local areas. The State Convention personnel, on the other hand, can present information pertaining to the broader vision. Putting these together can present a more complete picture and can lead to goal ownership at every level of planning. At times State Convention goals are viewed as the result of top-down planning and strategizing. Conversely, church and Associational planning can become provincial. When the State Convention church planting goals reflect the goals that have been developed in joint planning with the churches and Associations, these goals represent the concern and commitment of persons at every level. Praying as these goals are set and for their attainment will result in much more passion and commitment.

State Convention Week of Prayer Church Planting Promotion

The Weeks of Prayer for State Missions sponsored by the Woman's Missionary Union have marshaled untold blessings and resources for State Convention mission projects. Generally, the more specific that the goals are and the more information that is given, the more informed the prayer will be and the more generous the contributions. A coordinated effort involving church, Associational, and State Convention leadership which gives specific details of the target areas where new churches are being projected for the next five and ten years will result in more focused prayer and more passionate participation. This can be accompanied by reports and testimonies of what the Lord is doing in the new congregations that are being started.

The State Convention has a unique vantage point from which to inform, involve, and support people in prayer support and participation in church planting. The more it catches the vision and mobilizes prayer support and participation, the more effective it will be in promoting a spirit of revival and covering its territory with new congregations to reach the unchurched groups in its territory.



CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH PLANTER'S PRAYER STRATEGY

Several years ago a student came to my office and asked me to pray for him as he sought the Lord's will regarding the starting of a new congregation. He told me not to tell anyone that he was going to fast and pray until he had a clear direction from the Lord. As the days went by I could visibly observe that he was losing weight. One day he came and with a big smile told me that he now had a great sense of peace about starting the church. A year later he invited me to the first anniversary of the new congregation. I was absolutely amazed at the number of people that were there, the quality of leaders he had trained, and the bold vision the pastor and the church had regarding their future ministry. It all started when this student sought the face of God and emerged with a clear vision of what He wanted him to do. Prayer is at the very heart of the church planting task.

THE CHURCH PLANTER'S PRAYER LIFE

In his profound, yet easy to understand book, *The Prayer Of Jesus*, Dr. Ken Hemphill not only describes the principal concepts found in our Lord's model prayer, but also provides a guide so that this prayer can serve as a pattern for on-going communication with God. Due to the fact that I have been a church planter on the mission field and in this country and have taught seminary courses on this subject for eighteen years, I have felt the desire to explore the implications of this prayer for church planting. Obviously all of the observations made by Dr. Hemphill apply to all Christians. There is a sense, however, in which our *The Prayer Of Jesus* has special significance for church planters. In this section we will explore the *personal* as well as the *missiological* implications of our Lord's prayer.



Personal Implications

The lead person in a church planting team is of crucial importance in a church planting effort. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that this person have the spiritual resources to provide the example and the leadership that are needed for this task.

Our

One of the most inspiring events in the book of Acts was the moment when the Holy Spirit instructed the Church of Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them (13:2). It was in the context of this loving, praying, and worshiping community of believers that the first Christian missionaries were called and commissioned. Like Barnabas and Saul, effective church planters are not lone rangers who focus strictly on their individual relationship with God and on the work that they will do in isolation. The term “our” stresses the marvelous privilege that church planters have of being allowed to join Jesus in addressing God as Father and to connect with the community of faith as well as believers around the world. Often in the initial stages of church planting a congregation that meets for worship and Bible study has not emerged yet. Church planters, however, cannot put their spiritual lives on hold. They must form a group of fellow believers in which there is mutual spiritual growth, encouragement and accountability. The very first word in the *Prayer Of Jesus* helps us to remember our communal relationship with the Father, with Him, and with one another.

Father

The church planter needs to have a deep and abiding relationship with the heavenly Father. This experience begins with an experience of salvation in Jesus Christ and a clear sense of calling to Christian ministry in general and to church starting in particular. The church planting task is so demanding that a person without an intimate relationship with God will surely fail. This relationship will make it possible for the church planter serve among unchurched people, model



what the Christian life is, lead people to a personal experience with Christ and disciple them in a loving, growing congregation.

Who art in heaven

One of the most valuable resources that a church planter has is a deep and abiding trust in the sovereignty of God. Going to plant churches in areas where the forces of evil are evident in every aspect of a society is a daunting task. In some areas the forces of ungodly political governments and social institutions are arrayed against any effort to share the gospel and congregate believers. How can a church planter face these seemingly insurmountable forces? The only way to do it is to know beyond a shadow of doubt that God is on His throne (Isaiah 6) and He has dominion over all of His creation. It is inspiring also to focus the assurance Jesus gives us in the “*alls*” of the Great Commission. The one who has *all power in heaven and on earth*, sends us to make disciples of *all people groups*, teaching them to obey *all things that He has commanded us*, and reminding us that He will be with us *all of the time* (Matt. 28: 18-20). When we as church planters pray to “*our Father who is in heaven*” we remind ourselves that He who sends us is more than able to provide everything that we need to fulfill His commission.

A graduate of Southern Baptist Seminary and his wife went to start a church in one of the most repressive countries on the face of the earth. The only reason they were given a six-month visa was that they were going to work among international business persons. At the end of the six months they were told that they could cross the border into a neighboring country to apply for a visa extension but that it was highly unlikely that it would be renewed. When they left they were deeply worried as they prayed for God to intervene. To their amazement, the extension was granted for an additional six months but with the caveat that this was the last extension they would ever receive. As they left for the second time they, they gained a new spiritual insight. They prayed: “Lord, you are sovereign. If you want us back in this country you will work things out. The ball is on your court.” A peace that passes understanding came over them and they were not surprised when their visa was extended. This has happened



now more than ten times and they have established a strong reproducing church in that country. The *Prayer Of Jesus* reminds church planters of the sovereignty of God.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

Church planters, like all other Christians, are sinners saved by grace. The very fact that they have been forgiven by God enables them to be not only proclaimers but also models of His amazing grace. Like all other Christians, however, church planters continue to be human and at times offend God with their thoughts and their actions. *The Prayer Of Jesus* reminds church planters that the grace that was available to them at the point of their salvation continues to be available as they acknowledge their sins, repent, and ask for God's forgiveness. Church planters must claim the promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

From time to time, church planters that are seeking appointment with a mission board are asked to revisit issues that they encountered as they were growing up. Some of these issues related to the various forms of abusive and hurtful relationships. While it is clear that Christian counseling is absolutely necessary in some of these cases, it is also clear that in many instances forgiveness is the starting point. The task of the church planters is too heavy for them to also carry the weight of unresolved and unforgiven sins of the past. *The Prayer Of Jesus* reminds church planters that they must forgive even as they have been forgiven. A church planter who has been forgiven and who forgives has a powerful message and is a powerful model of God's forgiveness.

When my wife and I were serving as missionaries in Central America, a young man came to visit me in my office. He said: "Father, a friend asked me to talk with you because I am in desperate need of help. My mother died giving birth to me. The first words I remember my father saying to me were 'You killed



your mother, I hate you.’ I grew up with a horrible sense of guilt for killing my mother whom I had never seen. As soon as I was able to I ran away from home. I have committed every imaginable sin, do you think that God could ever forgive me?” I said to him: “Pedro, the Bible says that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” He answered: “but you don’t know how many sins I have committed.” I said: “I don’t, but Jesus does and if you confess them to him he will forgive you.” As Pedro prayed, he sobbed and his body shook as he was asking God for forgiveness. When he got up from his knees, there was a radiant smile on his face which was still bathed in tears. He exclaimed: “I don’t know what happened, but I feel like a new person.” Pedro Gomez went on to be one of the outstanding national youth leaders and a church planter in a poverty stricken neighborhood. Church planters have the marvelous privilege of seeing the awesome grace of God demonstrated in dramatic ways in the lives of those who experience God’s forgiveness.

Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil

It may appear to be unnecessary to stress this part of our Lord’s prayer as we are addressing church planters. They are already saved by grace and demonstrate the depth of their commitment by being willing to go to areas where there are large numbers of unchurched people and put up with all of the stress and strain and the loneliness that accompanies this task. This is true, however, it is also true that church planting is an endeavor that involves spiritual warfare. The church planter par excellence reminds us that: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). The church planter needs to be equipped with the very best training and the very best resources possible. But these are like the dry bones in the prophet’s vision without the abiding presence of the Spirit of God in every single step in the church planting process.

I was personally acquainted with a winsome, talented, outstanding young man who, along with his wife, went to a large city in America to plant a church.



Initially everything was looking very bright as the new congregation grew rapidly. Gradually things began to decline, his wife left him, and he was struggling just to keep things going. He had gotten caught up in the immorality of the city and had contracted a contagious disease. Even though he repented and sought to rebuild his life, the disease led him to a premature death. Satan did not attack the winsomeness of his personality nor the creativity of his methodology but his spiritual integrity. That made everything else crumble. Church planters must constantly pray: *“lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”*

Missiological Implications

There is a sense in which all of these marvelous dimensions of our Lord’s prayer apply to the lives of church planters. At the same time, however, there are significant ways in which this model prayer can provide instruction as well as inspiration for the church planting task.

Hallowed be Thy name

The name of God is precious to the committed church planter. There is in the very depths of the heart of church planters the commitment to honor God’s name in their devotional life, their daily activities, their family relationships, and their ministry responsibilities. The prayer that the name of God be revered and honored has personal as well as global implications. Throughout Scripture we find evidence that it is God’s will and purpose that His name be known and revered in all of the earth. “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent” (Zeph. 3:9). We also find in Scripture the principle that we are blessed by the Lord for a purpose. “God be merciful, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let all the people praise thee, Oh God, let all the people praise thee” (Psalm 67:1-3). As church planters pray “hollowed be Thy name,” they need to think of the personal as well as the missiological implications of this



prayer. Who are the persons and which are the communities in which the name of the Lord is not honored. They need the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and Christian congregations in which they can grow spiritually.

Thy Kingdom come

The prayer for the kingdom of God to come has personal implications. When church planters pray for God's kingdom to come, they are recognizing God's universal rule and His sovereignty over all the earth. "The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). When church planters pray "Thy kingdom come," they are also submitting themselves under the authority of God to rule their lives. In other words, they are pledging to be loyal subjects of the King of Kings.

There also a missiological implication to this prayer. There is a sense in which "Thy kingdom come" is a missionary prayer. It is a "petition for God to reign, to manifest His kingly sovereignty and power, and to put to flight every enemy of righteousness and of His divine rule that God alone may be King over all the world."³⁶

For church planters it is a sobering thought to know that the return of Christ is related to the missionary task. Jesus stated: "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto me; and then shall the end come," (Mat. 24:14). As George Ladd points out, this provides the message, the mission, and the motive.³⁷ The message is victory over death, over Satan, and over sin. The mission is to preach in all the world for a witness to all nations. The motive is cooperating with God toward the consummation of the task ("then shall the end come"). This reveals the church planting task from a divine perspective. Church planters are God's instruments for the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose for the return of Christ. "Thy kingdom come," therefore, is a prayer of submission to the sovereignty of God as well as a prayer of commitment to be instruments in His hands for the fulfillment of His purpose. Can the church planter be involved in something more significant than this?



Thy will be done

There is a sense in which church planters have already prayed this prayer. They did this when they received Christ as their personal savior and when they responded to His call to Christian ministry and more specifically to church planting. This, of course, is not the end of it. Church planters need to continually pray for God's will to be done in every aspect of their lives. But there is also the need to seek the Lord's will and to be willing to follow it in every step of the church planting process. Let us remember that Jesus spent time in prayer preceding the greatest decisions in his life and ministry (e.g., choosing his disciples Luke 6:12).

Give us this day our daily bread

This prayer also has personal as well as missiological implications for church planters. Often their very first steps in the church planting process have to do with securing lodging and financial support for themselves and their families. At times "Give us this day our daily bread" can literally mean provide for the very next meal that we are going to eat.

Having grown up as a preacher's kid, I had an opportunity to find out first hand what this means. My father had been called to pastor a new and struggling congregation. This meant that the resources that were provided by the congregation were very limited in the light of our large family. One morning as we were getting ready to eat before going to school, my father asked me to pray. As an eight year old, I looked at the plate in front of me and all we had was a cookie and a glass of water. So I said to my Dad: "When I see food on the table, I will thank the Lord for it." This must have hurt my Dad very deeply, but, he looked at me and calmly said: "Son, the Bible teaches to give thanks for every thing and I expect you to do it." Between sobs I managed to pray, but, just as I said "amen" there was a lady at the door whom we had never seen before with a bag full of groceries. That taught me a lesson about the Lord's provision that I will never forget as long as I live.



The missiological implications of this prayer for church planters is that the Lord who has called them will provide all that it takes to accomplish the task.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen

Dr. Hemphill asserts: “When you pray and act upon the assurance that these are absolute truths, you will have full confidence that your prayer has been heard and will be rewarded.”³⁸ As church planters pray, they need to make sure that it is the *kingdom of God* that they are working for and not their own; that it is the *power of God* that they are depending on and not their own strength; and it is all being done for the *glory of God* and not their own glorification. It is only then that they will experience the full measure of the blessings of God in their ministry.

We agree with the Prince of Church Planters, the Apostle Paul that Jesus “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask, or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...” (Eph. 3:20).

THE CHURCH PLANTER’S PRAYER STRATEGY

The Church Planter’s personal prayer life needs to include a Church Planting Prayer Strategy. The Church Planter will do well to utilize the strategy outlined for the Church Prayer Council as they under gird every step of the church planting process with prayer. The church planter will need to mobilize the Council as well as other prayer warriors to pray during the various stages of the church planting effort.

- 1. Prayer in the spiritual preparation stage in the field where the Church will be initiated**
 - a. Prayer for spiritual revival
 - b. Prayer for the community: Light Up The Nation; Macedonian



Project; Acts 1:8 strategy; CPAT

- c. Prayer for the unchurched people groups
- d. Prayer for the formation of the intercessory team: Taking Prayer to the Streets, Prayer Timer, Light Houses of Prayer, Praying your Friends to Christ, Prayer-Gram, Prayer Triplets
- e. Prayer while using Probe, Prep and Laser
- f. Prayer for the Sponsoring Church or Churches
- g. Prayer for the formation of a good mentor for the Church Planter, Mentor's Training.
- h. Prayer for all necessary resources to plant a Church

2. Prayer at the conceptualization stage

- a. Prayer for a clear vision for the new Church
- b. Prayer for a leader for the new Church, Discovery Tools, Assessment Interview; Basic Training, CPN
- c. Prayer for people who are going to constitute the core group, Prayer Timer, Praying your friend to Christ, Light Houses of Prayer
- d. Prayer for determining the Focus Group, Acts 1:8 Strategy.
- e. Prayer for the formulation of the Mission Statement, Basic Training

3. Prayer at the cultivation stage

- a. Prayer to develop a Core Group
- b. Prayer for the use of media such as: "Mi Familia su Familia" "New Beginnings"
- c. Prayer for appropriate methods in personal, mass, ministry based evangelism efforts.
- d. Prayer for developing the ministries that go along with Bible study, and ESL and other ministries.
- e. Prayer for reaching out those living in the multihousing



communities.

- f. Prayer for small Bible study groups, cell groups.

4. Prayer at the going public stage

- a. Prayer for the meeting place, in houses, storefront, temples.
- b. Prayer for an appropriate name for the new Church
- c. Prayer to start the small Bible study groups
- d. Prayer that people may feel welcome and in family
- e. Prayer for the beginning of pre-public worship
- f. Prayer for the preparation and initiation of public worship

5. Prayer at the organization stage

- a. Prayer for the appropriate moment to constitute as a Church
- b. Prayer for definition of the incorporation process
- c. Prayer for a piece of property for the Church

6. Prayer at the reproduction stage

- a. Prayer for spiritual sensitivity to consider God's love as motivation to reach other to initiate other Churches —MCN
- b. Prayer for missionary projects for the new Church—Prayer- Gram
- c. Prayer for God to prepare all the means to initiate other Churches.

THE CHURCH PLANTER'S PRAYER TEAM

Church planters need prayer partners who can contribute in a significant way to the effectiveness of their work. Jesus encouraged his followers to pray together when He said: "If two of you agree on earth about anything they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 18:19). Prayer partners can play a key role when they join the church planter in seeking God's will and asking for His power and guidance in a church starting effort.



Enlisting Individual Prayer Partners

A crucial question that prospective church planters ask is, where can I find effective prayer partners? Many people promise to pray for others, but only a few comparatively speaking have a dedicated prayer ministry. Robert Logan has excellent suggestions for those seeking to find effective prayer partners. He suggests: “Make a list of any people who:

- (1) have said they will pray for you
- (2) call and ask for prayer requests
- (3) ask if you have had answers to their prayers
- (4) are people of prayer
- (5) have received ministry from you where you felt a 'chemistry,' that is, you liked them and they liked you."

This makes a lot of sense. People who have said they will pray you already have an interest in you and in your ministry. They are already being led by the Lord to under gird your ministry with prayer. People who not only have promised to pray for you, but who ask for specific prayer requests, take prayer seriously. They are genuinely interested in praying for specific requests that relate to your ministry. The fact that they call and ask if you have had answers to their prayers demonstrates that they expect their prayers to be answered. This means that they pray “in faith, not wavering” (James 1:6). This is the type of person God hears because they have truly trusted in Him as they have made their petitions known to him. Enlisting people whom you know to be people of prayer is also very important because they are in the habit of praying fervently and they will not forget to pray for the requests you share with them. It is also helpful, as Logan suggests, to enlist people to whom you have ministered. Some of these may be your spiritual children and they feel such a strong bond with you that they consider it their privilege to uphold you and your ministry in fervent prayer. People whom you know to have a prayer ministry and who have a strong bond of love and fellowship with you make excellent prayer partners. Their prayers are fervent and persevering.



In addition to this, you may enlist intercessors after you have trained them how to pray. Some church planters conduct prayer seminars. In the process of doing this, they get to know people who are gifted in the area of prayer but have never developed the gift. After you have taught them to be more specific and more devoted in prayer, they will naturally feel a strong desire to uphold you and your ministry in prayer. Preparing to conduct prayer seminars can help you as a church planter to be more informed regarding that which the Bible teaches about prayer. It can help you to be more committed to prayer. As you teach others, you will establish a common bond of knowledge and fellowship that can be mutually beneficial as you establish a prayer ministry.

Enlisting Groups As Prayer Partners

In addition to enlisting individuals as prayer partners, church planters can enlist groups to support their ministry with prayer.

Churches

Some churches have very effective prayer ministries. They have people who have committed their lives to prayer warriors. These churches generally have a prayer room, a prayer bulletin board, a prayer line, and a significant number of people who pray on a regular basis for the requests that are presented to them. Enlisting prayer teams in the churches can help the church planter to mobilize large numbers of people to pray for the specific needs related to the church planting task. The various stages of church planting mentioned above can serve as a guide for this type of a prayer effort.

Organizations

Enlisting organizations that have on-going prayer ministries can also be a great method that church planters can employ to mobilize large numbers of prayer warriors. As we mentioned in Chapter 4, Randy and Nancy Sprinkle enlisted the Woman's Missionary Union of the Missouri Baptist Convention to



pray for them as they started Baptist work in Lesotho, Africa. Despite the fact that there were innumerable obstacles, this missionary couple was able to establish churches that have continued to grow and multiply. They attribute this accomplishment to the fervent and focused of this group of prayer partners.

In addition to the state organizations and the national organization of the Woman's Missionary Union, there are other agencies that have well organized and on-going prayer ministries. The **North American Missions Prayer-Gram** receives prayer requests daily for church starting efforts in North America. It publishes information about the church planters and mentions specific needs related to their efforts. This is a marvelous way to mobilize thousands of prayer warriors. For daily North American missions prayer requests, people can call toll free 1 800 554-PRAY. They can also visit www.prayertime.org. A similar publication is available from the International Mission Board. **GLOBAL PRAYER GRAM** publishes prayer requests related to church planting efforts abroad. For international prayer requests, people can call 1 800 395-7729. To subscribe to this prayer bulletin, people can call 1 800 866-3621 or send an e-mail to resource.center@imb.org.

Guiding Prayer Partners

Once the intercessors have been found it is important to help them to understand their role. It is also very important to share prayer requests with them on a regular basis. These requests need to be specific so that both the intercessors and the church planter can know when prayers have been answered. Asking God to "bless a community" or to bless efforts to "reach a target group" is too vague. Specific prayers, on the other hand, will give the intercessors the opportunity to rejoice when God answers their prayers. It is very helpful also to share information about prayer (e.g., books, articles) with intercessors so that they will continue to grow in their ministry. Encouraging the intercessors to pray for one another as well as for the church planter can also contribute toward their spiritual growth.



Informing Prayer Partners

List personal prayer requests

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List ministry prayer requests

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Design strategy to communicate with prayer partners

1. Set dates
2. Share prayer requests
3. Share answered prayers
4. Determine Communication Method
 - a. E-mail



- b. Ordinary Mail
- c. Phone
- d. News Letter
- e. Prayer Gram
- f. Personal Letter
- g. Other

A prayer foundation is absolutely essential for church planting. The church planter needs to have a disciplined prayer life. The ministry of an intercessory prayer team is also vital to the success of a church planting effort. Throughout the epistles of Paul we find examples of the prayers that he prayed for his co-workers as well as of his requests for prayer. Paul knew that the spiritual battle inherent in church planting could not be won without the continued fervent prayer of the faithful. The church planter should have the same commitment to prayer.



ENDNOTES

1. This Prayer Guide had general information that can be used by all of the groups, yet it has specially designed activities for each group so that their prayer strategies will be contextualized.
2. C. Thomas Wright, *A Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2000).
3. *Taking Prayer to the Streets: A Prayer Journeys Guidebook* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board).
4. Alvin J. Vander Griend, *Make Your Home a Light-House* (Grand Rapids, MI: Houses of Prayer Everywhere, 1999).
5. *Prayer Link* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board).
6. *North American Mission Board Prayer-Gram* (Atlanta, GA: North American Mission Board).
7. C. Thomas Wright, *Pray Timer: real Time for Real Prayer* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board).
8. Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville: Broadman Holman, 1997), 198.
9. Ken Hemphill, *The Prayer of Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman Holman Publishers, 2001).
10. George Barna, *Current Trends* (Barna Research Group, 1991), 41, 42.
11. Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville: Broadman Holman, 1997), 198.
12. *Ibid.*, 221-222.
13. McDow and Reid, 247.



14. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond: International Mission Board, 1999), 11-13.
15. Garrison, 16, 17.
16. Garrison, 32.
17. See J. Edwin Orr, *The Event of the Century* (Wheaton: International Awakening Press, 1989), 50.
18. McDow and Reid, 251.
19. Garrison, 33.
20. For additional help on praying for revival see Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville: Broadman Holman, 1997), 198.
21. Cited in Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 228.
22. For an extensive discussion of the various church planting models and appropriate criteria for selecting these, see Daniel R. Sanchez, Ebbie C. Smith, Curt Watke, *Starting Reproducing Congregations* (Atlanta: Church Starting Network, 2001, www.churchstarting.net), 75-102.
23. For a discussion of additional church planting models, see Sanchez, Smith, Watke, *Starting Reproducing Congregations*.
24. *Taking Prayer to the Streets: Prayer Journeys Guidebook* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board).
25. This and the following examples are found in Randy Sprinkle, *Follow Me: Lessons for Becoming a Prayer Walker* (Alabama: New Hope Publishers, 2001), 87-89.
26. Alvin J. Vander Griend, *Make Your Home a Light-House* (Grand Rapids: Houses of Prayer Everywhere, 1999), 3.
27. Griend, 25.
28. Ibid.



29 Ibid.

30 *Praying Your Friend to Christ* (Alpharetta: North American Mission Board, 1998).

31 *North American Missions Prayer-Gram* published quarterly by the Prayer Evangelism unit of the North American Mission Board.

32 See “Phoenix, Arizona,” in *Prayer Guide for Associations and Churches*, 29, 30.

33. These and other questions and suggestions are found in Sanchez, Smith, and Watke, *Starting Reproducing Congregations* and accompanying workbook.

34. Randy Sprinkle, *Until The Stars Appear* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1994).

35. This list is an adaptation of the one that appears in *Prayer Link* (Alpharetta: North American Mission Board), 14.

36. George Aldon Ladd, “The Gospel Of The Kingdom,” *Perspectives On The World Christian Movement*, Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992), 67.

37 Ibid., 71-82.

38. Ken Hemphill, *The Prayer of Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman Holman Publishers, 2001), 98.





















