

# 4 Step

## Enlisting Missional Churches

by Van Sanders and Eric Ramsey

*“For our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe”*  
(1 Thess. 1:5-7, NKJV).

A missional church consists of the people of God in faithful obedience to the Great Commission expanding the kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. This definition assumes that kingdom expansion will cross through many different cultures as church members seek to be obedient to God’s kingdom agenda locally, nationally, and internationally. Thus, missional churches are community expressions of Christ’s model of ministry. Members of missional churches are constantly moving out of their comfort zones inside the church into different cultures, languages, and worldviews of lost people in order to make disciples and establish new churches.

Missional churches understand that church multiplication is more likely to be caught than taught. Paul and the apostolic church planting teams he formed inspired new churches to multiply themselves more through their example of love and passion for Jesus Christ than through the teaching of techniques and methods. Paul says of the Thessalonians that they “became followers of us and of the Lord” when the Thessalonians saw “what kind of men we [Paul and his team] were among you for your sake.” By following Paul and the Lord, the Thessalonians in turn became “examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.”

The activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of a church is the key factor in being or becoming a missional church. The verses referenced above demonstrate the vital role of the Holy Spirit in church multiplication. They indicate that both Paul and the Thessalonians were dependent upon the Holy Spirit’s activity in their lives to become examples of the Lord worthy of emulation by others. The gospel was both presented and received with the power and joy of

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the Holy Spirit. Such experiences with the Holy Spirit supernaturally lead to rapid church multiplication; thus, new churches being started.

Christ's words to the disciples just prior to His ascension forcefully declare the necessity of the Holy Spirit's activity to be multiplying witnesses of the gospel: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NKJV). These words from Jesus, as well as His entire earthly ministry, demonstrate that the mission of God through the working of the Holy Spirit in believers has the establishment of God's kingdom as its ultimate goal.

Nowhere in the New Testament is it written that churches must reproduce themselves by starting new churches. Nowhere in the New Testament is it written that churches should invite other churches to join together in order to reproduce themselves. However, everywhere in the New Testament it is evident that the vibrant New Testament church multiplied itself and joined with other churches in order to establish new groups of believers and to make disciples!

Therefore, our biblical rationale for enlisting missional churches is founded upon the New Testament description of churches reproducing themselves out of devotion to Jesus Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit, empowering them to make disciples. Our theological rationale for the concept of a missional church is rooted in God's missionary nature as seen throughout the Bible, but especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

As Christians are transformed more into the likeness of Christ, it is inevitable that they will yearn to participate in the mission of God and give their lives as Christ gave His life that those who do not know Him may come to know Him. Churches that intentionally develop such transformed Christians will inevitably become missional churches multiplying themselves among all peoples.

## Enlisting Missional Churches

Enlisting missional churches is the engaging of pastors and their churches to cast the vision of being a missional church and to provide appropriate resources to facilitate being a missional church. North America is the third-largest mission field in the world. Over 75 percent of Southern Baptist churches are leveled off or dying. The lost population of North America is estimated to be over 200 million. The need for Southern Baptist churches to be renewed and multiplied by starting new churches among the lost population of North America cannot be overemphasized. There are so many missional churches needed to impact the growing lost population of North America that unless state partners design effective means for calling churches to enter the mission field through church planting, it is doubtful that Southern Baptists will penetrate the postmodern generations now emerging.

Many churches are not currently missional churches in practice. These churches can become missional churches when invited specifically to a greater faithfulness to God's design for normal church life as described in the New Testament. For this to occur, church leaders must learn three essential facts from someone they trust.

First, they must grasp the immense scope of lostness residing in the various population segments of the communities in which they minister. Secondly, pastors and churches have to come to the sobering

realization that the absence of intentional plans to evangelize and disciple non-Christians in their communities is blatant and sinful disobedience to God. Thirdly, church leaders must come to understand that the resources for starting new churches in their communities reside in a combination of the current membership and the future harvest.

The process of enlisting missional churches consists of three distinct stages of activities. The first stage concerns the initial preparation for enlisting churches. The second stage relates to the actual enlistment of the pastor and the church he leads. The third stage involves partnering with the enlisted church for the purpose of multiplication.

## Stage One — Preparation for Enlisting Missional Churches

Following are some key points to illustrate this first stage:

- Begin with prayer to know God's heart concerning the areas and people with whom you minister. God's timing in the life and transformation of a church must be followed when enlisting missional churches. Pray regularly for every pastor of every church in your area. Pray that each pastor will be open to God's leadership regarding his involvement as a missional church.
- Evaluate existing churches in your area. Before inviting churches to become more of what God wants them to be, it is helpful to first learn their strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify existing missional churches. Existing missional churches will help other churches understand how they too can be God-honoring, church-multiplying missional churches.
- Gather accurate research for church planting needs. A clear understanding of the non-Christian demographic in each community will assist in challenging many churches to adjust their present missional church practices.
- Prioritize church planting opportunities. In most communities, there will be a greater number of new churches needed than existing churches can engage simultaneously. Through God's guidance prioritize the areas and peoples to start new churches first.

## Stage Two — Enlisting the Church

***Lead the pastor to commit to the concept of being a missional church.***

This commitment will probably require several extended times of discussion with the pastor about issues such as the values of a missional church, the process of becoming a missional church, the barriers to being a missional church, and the benefits of being a missional church. A good beginning point is having the pastor work through the following survey to identify which of the four church types his church most resembles. You will find an assessment tool at the end of this chapter to use in determining a church's missional preparedness.

The aforementioned assessment tool will help you place a church in one of four categories:

1. The complacent church is content with its existing condition and that of its community. A complacent

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church sees no need for evangelizing non-Christians in its community or for starting new churches.

2. The informed church understands to some degree the lostness that exists in its community and around the world. This church also recognizes that church planting is an effective method of evangelizing unreached people groups and population segments. But due to a variety of reasons, this church is not personally involved in starting new churches.
3. The engaged church is a church that actively participates in starting new churches. An engaged church commits itself to church planting among a variety of peoples and contexts—locally, nationally, and internationally. Engaged churches place high priority on involving all their members in fulfilling the Great Commission through starting new churches.
4. The missional church understands that it is God’s instrument for furthering the kingdom of God among all people and cultures. This church realizes that the ultimate goal of all its ministries is making disciples who will reproduce themselves. Missional churches have intentional strategies for starting new churches and developing new leadership for those churches. The missional church clearly understands its purpose for existence from an Acts 1:8 perspective.

### ***Lead the church body to commit to the concept of being a missional church.***

Once the pastor has committed to the missional church concept, he will lead the entire church to an understanding of and commitment to being a missional church. Understanding the following issues will assist the pastor as he leads the church through the process of missional change:

1. What is the history of the church in regard to missions and church planting? What kind of mission education, training, and mission trips have been engaged?
2. What are the current missional opportunities? Has the church engaged in practical missions projects?
3. What is the reputation of the church in the community? Has it proactively utilized processes like PROBE in its area?
4. What is the culture and the organizational system of the church?
5. What are the spiritual gifts of church members?

## Stage Three — Partnering with the Enlisted Church for Church Multiplication

### ***Assist the church in developing a mission strategy.***

This strategy should address the “how, when, and where” of new ministries and churches being started. Some key milestones for the timeline include:

- Selecting the team.
- Defining the purpose of the team.

- Analyzing the existing ministries of the church.
- Identifying missional ministry opportunities.
- Educating members about God’s missional purposes.
- Mobilizing the church for missional ministries.
- Providing necessary training for members.
- Partnering with other churches.
- Starting new churches.
- Developing new leaders.

***Connect the church with resources, other churches, and field experts.***

Missional churches are more effective as they take advantage of others who have gone before them. Existing resources must be made known to missional churches at their point of need.

## Starting Points for Enlisting Missional Churches

- Stage 1: Preparation for Enlisting Missional Churches
- Stage 2: Enlisting the Church
- Stage 3: Partnering with the Enlisted Church for Church Multiplication

### **Additional Resources**

1. Visit [www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net](http://www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net) for a list of resources.
2. For consultation for “Enlisting Missional Churches” contact the Recruitment Team of the Church Planting Group of NAMB.

### **Books for Further Reading**

Macchia, Stephen A. *Becoming a Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Macchia, Stephen A. *Becoming a Healthy Church Workbook*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001.

McManus, Erwin Raphael. *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind*. Loveland, Colo.: Group, 2001.

## Assessment Tool for Churches

Check the statements that apply to your church or churches.

### Complacent

- Church has never been involved in a short-term missions project.
- Church rarely prays for needs outside its membership.
- Most of our ministries focus on the needs of our congregation.
- Church has a history of fighting and dissension.
- Church does not have a strategy for reaching non-Christians.
- Church actively demonstrates care and love for the pastor and staff.
- Most members do not understand the church's role to be salt and light in the world.
- Church has never looked at the demographics of our community and the impact of our church.
- Church does not give regularly to the Cooperative Program.

### Informed

- Church regularly prays for mission work and missionaries.
- Church has a good reputation in the community.
- Church has a weekly outreach visitation program.
- Church gives regularly to the Cooperative Program.
- Church actively trains members in evangelism.
- Pastor personally speaks of people he has seen come to faith in Christ as a result of his witness.
- Church has identified a group of people willing to pray for a new church.
- Our mission education and awareness have to do with international missions.
- Church members are learning to become followers of Christ.

### Engaged

- All of the items listed under "Informed" plus:
- Church has participated in starting new churches in our community.
- Church has partnered with our previous church plants in ministry projects.

- Church has an ongoing and active prayer ministry for the non-Christians of our community, county, state, country, and world.
- Community organizations come to us for sponsorship.
- Church collects special offerings for missions.
- Church practices reconciliation with one another.
- Church regularly sends people on short-term mission trips.
- Church has been praying for the opportunity to plant a church.
- Church has adopted missionaries and their families.

### **Missional**

- All of the above items listed under “Informed” and “Engaged” plus:
- Church members regularly participate in starting new churches locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Church has done demographic research in the population segments where we feel led to start a church.
- Church has developed an Acts 1:8 mission perspective.
- Church has adopted a people group to pray for and support.
- Church has already established a budgeted line item for starting new churches.
- Church has a functioning On Mission Team (committee).
- Church recognizes that it is a local expression of God’s kingdom.
- Church stays proactively connected with those whom it has adopted and/or commissioned as missionaries.
- Church involves other churches in planting new churches.

Based on this questionnaire I think that the category that best describes my church is:

- Complacent       Engaged
- Informed         Missional