



MentorNet #63

BEST STARTING PLACES FOR NEW CHURCHES

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During this decade, certain ‘universal factors’, common traits and basic practices of church-planting movements have become widely known and are now being taught in most countries. Consequently, Church Planter mentors and teachers are increasingly being called upon to advise, train and coach those who want to launch a Church Planting Movement (CPM), quickly, where conventional churches cost too much or reproduce too slowly. However, such workers can quickly prove disappointed, when CPM methods do not seem to work for them, even angry with you for misleading them.

Almost always, disappointing church planting results can be traced back to the first steps: starting with an unresponsive segment of the local population. The table below identifies eight less fruitful starting places and suggests eight better ones.

LESS RESPONSIVE AND TYPICALLY BETTER PLACES IN WHICH TO START NEW CHURCHES

Less Responsive Places to Start	Typically Better Places to Start
<p>Christians who are willing to form a cell. Some imagine they will start cells with believers and multiply them. Such seldom happens, for believers seeking fellowship usually have little evangelistic urge or opportunity.</p>	<p>Non-Christians who will open their home. This is what Jesus instructed the 12 and the 72 to do. Most non-believers have many unbelieving friends and relatives who they will invite in.</p>
<p>Middle & upper class These people sense less need of help from God. Many who have material means and social status, when they count the cost of following Jesus, choose not to do so.</p>	<p>Poor, working folk The poor are often willing to let God help them, and will be pleased when Jesus answers their prayers. They are also less likely to suffer much loss for becoming followers of Jesus.</p>
<p>Satisfied & comfortable Rich or poor, many folk sense no need for more than what they currently enjoy. Some will waste your time discussing religion, spirituality and philosophy, fitting Jesus into their own beliefs.</p>	<p>Inquirers & seekers There are always folks whom God has been preparing to receive his Good News. Ask God to bring you and some of them together. Answer their questions and teach them the Good News.</p>
<p>Better evangelized fields Where the Good News is widely known, there are more spiritually blinded folk who have, anti-Christian feelings and philosophies. <i>Unconverted</i> Christians have also given the Good News a bad reputation.</p>	<p>Neglected fields The power of God often appears strongest where the need is greatest. Certainly, God desires that all ‘un-reached’ populations hear his Good News. In un-evangelised regions, one meets more hostility and more receptivity, at the same time.</p>

<p>Comfortable zones Where there are few needs, there is often little interest in finding God. Furthermore, most Christian workers often reside in more comfortable towns where they are needed less.</p>	<p>Disaster zones Where believers meet material and practical needs of populations at risk, treating all equally, showing no favouritism, many disaster victims respond to God’s mercy and to his messengers.</p>
<p>Resistant individuals Evangelism that seeks to persuade an individual to become a believer, usually fails to win others, so no church can start.</p>	<p>Receptive households Most church multiplication happens among whole households. Seek to contact receptive heads of households.</p>
<p>Westerners & the modern The Western nations have come through two hundred years of incessant propaganda touting naturalism, evolutionism, scientism and rationalism. Thus, their understanding is largely darkened to eternal realities.</p>	<p>Non-Westerners & the post-modern The Good News speaks about spiritual things: God, a risen Intercessor, power over evil, a loving community operating with spiritual gifts. These realities make better sense where the population has highly-spiritual beliefs and practices.</p>
<p>Socially marginal individuals Almost every new evangelistic effort and church plant will attract individuals whose character or personality repels others. Better not to build a new work around such folk.</p>	<p>Socially connected individuals The Good News normally flows easily within social networks, amongst friends, relatives and co-workers. It is normally amongst the socially connected that churches will start and reproduce.</p>
<p>The culturally distant It can take many years to learn the language, gestures and cultural cues and social etiquette that are required to communicate the Good News clearly and to train church planters. Keep learning while raising up locals who will do most of the work, as quickly as you can.</p>	<p>The culturally near Evangelism, church development and spiritual gifts remain highly dependent upon local communication systems and complex cultural traits that you may lack. You can communicate better with folk within your own culture or a similar one.</p>

Recommended Resources

P. O'Connor, *Reproducible Pastoral Training*, < www.WCLbooks.com >.

Free CP training software “*Come, Let Us Disciple the Nations*” from <www.Paul-Timothy.net/dn/>.

Free mentoring tools and materials for new leaders from <www.MentorAndMultiply.com>.

Train & Multiply® church planting and pastoral training course from <www.TrainAndMultiply.com>.

Order *Church Multiplication Guide* from a bookshop or at <www.WCLbooks.com>.

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