



**A process and  
conversation guide  
for sending pastors,  
church planters, and  
teams**

# **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**



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*Had the church relied upon a single, incredibly gifted, magnetic individual to replace Jesus, the church would surely have collapsed.*

**-George Barna**

In their book *Together for the City*, Neil Powell and John James write these words:

- "We have a deep conviction that the more willing we are to find ways to collaborate, the more effective we'll be in reaching our city for Jesus. The more generous we are toward each other, the more God will bear fruit through us. The need is too great to allow our vision to be too small . . . As you step into your city to plant a new church, be convinced that collaborative and team-centered ministry is a Christ-honoring implication of the Gospel and a strategic way to reach our communities for Jesus."\*

If we, as church planters, desire to launch life-giving movements in cities across America our vision must not revolve around us. As pastors and leaders, we must lean hard into the admonition found in Ephesians 4:11-12:

- *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

These words, written by the Apostle Paul, reveal that our role is not to build self-centered kingdoms or empires. Our role is to build churches centered on equipping and empowering people. In our vision of the future, we must see ourselves working together with others. As leaders, *we are better together.*

\*Neil Powell & John James, *Together for the City* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2019) pg 7.

If you have ever talked with someone who is considering planting a church and have listened to their concerns, you would have likely heard many questions related to this topic:

- How do I build a team?

Questions revolving around team building are valid because only with a team can a church planter expect to make a credible impact in a growing city. Many people, when they consider the rapid growth of the early church imagine magnetic and solitary apostles running from city to city planting powerful churches. However, this picture is not a true reflection of life and ministry in the first century. People, though different in their temperaments, expectations, and backgrounds, worked together.

In the last chapter of Romans, Paul writes about many of his ministry friends. He lists people who helped, encouraged, and supported him throughout his journeys:

- *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus (Romans 16:3).*
- *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me (Romans 16:7).*
- *Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them (Romans 16:15).*
- *Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother (Romans 16:23).*

In Romans 16, Paul makes note of over thirty-two different people who supported him at various stages of his life. This is evidence that his great ministry was largely a team effort. He was only able to accomplish all that he did because he did not work alone.

In his book *Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches*, Peyton Jones makes this conclusion:

- "Almost all the reasons planters quit can be traced back to the fact that the planter had an inadequate team to help share the load. As a solo operative, almost any planter would be doomed to failure with these pressures: work stress, family troubles, insufficient finances. . . Most of these things could have been prevented if they'd tapped into the Apostle Paul's pattern of team planting. At the outset, it's important to remember that no matter how strong or seasoned the leader, nobody can be expected to know everything, do everything, or wisely handle everything. Jesus knew this, and so He gave us team ministry so we could get our lives back, stop shouldering the weight of the world, and prevent burnout out in isolation. The sum of a team is greater than its parts, and it will accomplish more collectively than any individual member could. Moses led with seventy elders. David has his thirty-seven mighty men. Jesus traveled with His twelve. Paul created a network of thirty-two missionary partners. Yet we still ignore the emphasis in Scripture on team leadership. Jesus's giftedness equipped Him to be an army of one; yours does not. Only Jesus was capable of doing it all, yet even He chose not to do it alone!"\*

If we are convinced that God has called us to start and sustain a new life-giving church in a city, we must also be convinced that God will set up a series of strategic partnerships with key people to support us. If we believe God is sending us into a city alone and will leave us isolated, then we must admit that our view of God is quite small. As much as we desire to succeed in our mission of planting a church in our city, God wants us to succeed so much more. In fact, God loves your city so much that He has called you to it. In time, He will supply all of your personnel needs and send people to partner with you. As you lose some, you will gain others. He is able to not only meet your financial and facility needs. He is also able to meet your need for a team.

\*Peyton Jones, *Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2021) pgs 121-122.

If you are a **church planter** working to develop a team-building strategy that works best for you, consider the following points:

- Every church and church planter needs a **spiritual covering**.

As a church planter, your spiritual covering is likely your pastor or home church. It may also be comprised of prayer teams around the nation that have committed to intercede or pray for your city on your behalf. In the early phases of the planting process, stay connected to your spiritual covering and keep them informed of your progress.

- Every church and church planter needs a source of **operational support**.

Operational support may come in the form of a pastor, church, or district that has agreed to provide personnel support, need-specific funding, coaching, or equipment to help with church planting operations. If you are planting from within a network or as an extension of a larger church, you likely have already established a source for operational support. If you already have a source of operational support, it is now up to you to communicate your needs. Do not expect that your network, district, or ministry peers will read your mind and know exactly what you need throughout the church planting process. As Nelson Searcy writes in his classic book, *Launch*,

- "Prior to your launch, the churches that are offering you financial support will often loan you staff for specific projects or key events. If your partner relationship is strong, you may find that you have quite a bit of assistance available to you on an as-needed basis to help you get started. Discuss this option with your contacts at your partner churches. Their willingness to step in may surprise you."\*

Also, as you market the future launch of your church online, it can be beneficial to highlight your specific operational needs.

\*Nelson Searcy, *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2017) pg 113.

As people become aware of specific needs, blessings may be sent from unexpected sources.

- Trust that as God moves on your heart to plant a church, God will also initiate **seasons of transition** in the lives of potential launch team members.

As you prepare to move onsite or to begin a series of pre-launch events, God will begin to stir the hearts of key people in your city and relational network. He will begin to give people a greater awareness of Kingdom needs in your city (or make them aware of the need for church planting in general). God may also begin to make people uncomfortable in their current roles and prepare their hearts for transition.

As a word of warning, you should be cautious if people contact you because they are disgruntled at their current church. If they left the last church on a bad note, it's likely only a matter of time before they leave yours. The kind of people you should want on your team are those who sincerely feel God moving them in a new direction for the purpose of Kingdom advancement.

- In time, God will provide **strategic opportunities** for you to leverage your relational network and to share your vision with potential launch team members.

If the timing is right and if God is involved, you and them will feel a "Kingdom connection." After you have gained the necessary permissions, have the courage to ask these people if they want to be involved in the launch of the church. In conversations with potential launch team members, present a working copy of your strategic launch plan and clarify what your vision overall vision is for the church.

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As you prepare to plant a new church, take time to think through the reflection prompts on the next page.

**Am I convinced that God will supply my personnel and team needs? Am I working with God in this area and actively praying for direction?**

**Who will serve as my spiritual covering?**

**What sources can I look to for operational support?**

**What specific needs do I have that I can communicate to my relational network?**

**Am I taking advantage of strategic opportunities to recruit and build a launch team? How can I improve in this area?**