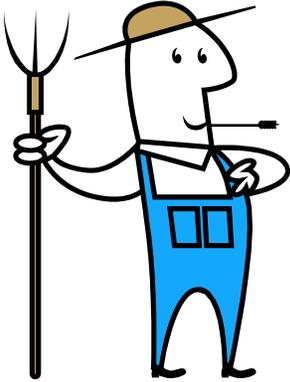


Church Planting Pointers



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1 The call

So you feel God is calling you to serve Him in ministry? There is the misconception that you are going to step out into "Full-Time" ministry. As a Christian, you are already in full-time ministry. It is not something that you do; rather it is something that should be a part of your daily walk with Jesus.

You may have a desire to exchange your job for a position of ministry, but you are, or should be full-time for Jesus. How would this be demonstrated in a practical way? The men that Jesus called were men who were already working. Jesus called them to something else for their lives.

I have reservations about the man who comes forward and let's me know that he is sensing a "call" from God to pastor, teach or evangelize on a "Full-Time" basis, who is not already serving actively as a volunteer within the Body of Christ. I go back to in my mind that those who Jesus called were already working. I have a much greater enthusiasm for a brother who has been serving in the church as a volunteer in a ministry area and now senses God calling him to be more fully involved.

If you want to pastor a start-up church and yet you have made no effort to serve within your current church, I think something is amiss.

Now let's examine the notion of "the call". How do you know if what you are experiencing is a calling from Jesus, a case of idealistic thoughts or a bad mushroom pizza that is bringing this speaking to your heart? Well ideas derived from bad pizza soon fade. Idealistic calls often based on your situation, i.e. a lousy week at work can quickly disappear with a good week at work.

I have met those who tell of visions of God calling them, words of knowledge given to them, prophecies and the like. Sadly I have many times found the same people several years later not serving the Lord or quitting when things were not comfortable. Worse yet I have also see some step into a position and then run it in the power of the flesh. We have watched the sad reality of works propped up and sustained by the flesh eventually they crumbled.

You will know it is the Lord calling you if the call does not go away. I cannot make it any simpler than that. If it is the Lord, it will just keep coming back, until you answer. So spend the time alone with the Lord, and see where you come out on the call speaking to your heart.

2 Preparations

So how do you get ready for what God is putting on your heart? In the case of planting a church, start by taking every opportunity to teach that you can get your hands on. You need to allow God the time to grow the gift of teaching in you. Practice is the only real way to gain the needed experience.

For those of you who are married, step one is to be convinced you and your wife both that this is indeed the direction that God is calling you to go. Guys, if your wife is not on board with stepping out to plant a work, you had better wait. Oh, sure you can badger her with talks of submission into serving the Lord in a church plant, but often the call to be a church planting pastor's wife is a very hard and lonely call. If your wife is not on board and willing to count the cost with you, this area of disagreement can later severely trouble the ministry God starts and worse yet, potentially your marriage.

What do you do if your wife is not on board with the decision? You wait and pray for God to change her heart. We were missionaries in Moscow, Russia. We were able to observe a number of missionary couples coming over to plant churches. We met the ones where the husband dragged the wife to Russia with guilt and submission demands. They often lasted only several months before they had to leave and return to the states. When they left their relationship was severely damaged and those to whom they went to serve deeply disappointed.

In one case the husband talked of seeing visions while on a short term mission to Russia about needing to return and pastor, his wife who was not on board from the beginning, was forced by him to come. They lasted a month.

We were also fortunate to observe several men, who sensed the call to Russia, but had wives who were not on board to go. Those men, trusting God that He had indeed called them to Russia, went home to pray with their wives and seek God together. God, who had called them, changed the heart of the wives, got them excited to go, and brought many of those couples over for years of service.

The preparation for planting a church is to be in agreement with your wife. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? We will cover Satan's strategies later. He will exploit a division in a marriage as far as he can take it to frustrate and ruin a work.

Seek God's leading for where He would have you to go. You may have no clue about where, only the conviction about what He wants you to do. Don't get alarmed about this; God is looking for those who want to be used for His Glory. He will direct your path. Seek Him about what He wants. He will make it clear.

3 Stepping out

It is one thing to say Lord if it is really You, bid me to come out to you on the water, Matthew 14:28, and another thing entirely to take the step. Fear is a favorite tool of the devil to keep you from accomplishing what God desires

to do through you. He has foreordained the good works that He has for your life, Eph 2:10.

Stepping out to go and plant a work begins with time in prayer with your wife. She will be greatly impacted by this calling. It is so important to have her in agreement, and on-board with that the Lord is doing in your life.

You need to pray about an area that God is putting on your heart. When we got started the calling and need came to us. We were already missionaries in Russia when I was asked to pastor a Calvary Chapel in Moscow. We had to pray about it. We had already learned that just because you see a need it does not necessarily mean you are the one called to fill that need.

We put this way, "Need does not constitute calling." There may be a need for a Bible teaching church where you are. It could be that the Lord is calling you to start up that work. Then again, it could be that God has revealed the need to you only for prayer to pray for His provision of a worker. You may be the ones that God has called to hold up the arms of the man He intends to use as the pastor. There is honor in helping God's servant in the battle too, just ask Aaron and Hur.

When we started the church in Pennsylvania, we had at the time been on staff at another Calvary Chapel in the south. Laurie and I had this prodding on our hearts to step out and see if God wanted to use us for another church plant as He did in Russia.

After time in prayer, we sensed two areas of the country that God was putting on our hearts, Kansas City, Kansas and the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. Having lived in the Philadelphia area for twenty plus years, I was more excited about a change. Philadelphia, while a decent area to live, is not as enjoyable as Austin, Texas, a favorite of mine, or the laid back attitude of Kansas. Laurie was from the Mid-West and she loved it and desired to go back to that area too.

We tested to see what God had for us by visiting both areas. God made both trips a blessing in many ways. When we checked out Kansas City, we realized that there were already good Bible teaching churches there. There was also a Calvary Chapel in an outer city area. We saw God was already

using men to present His word. Whether or not they were a Calvary Chapel was not the point. There were multiple sources of good Bible teaching there.

When we prayed about the Philadelphia area and then visited. We found aside from Calvary Philadelphia and possibly one other small Calvary, there was not much in the way of good Bible teaching in many major population areas. That is what spoke to our hearts the most. So we began to pray about going back to the Philly area.

Just as God asked the Israelites to cross the Jordan at the worst time, it overflowed its banks, so when we were leaving we had just received a raise from the church. At that time God had given us sweet fellowship with others in the church. But we strongly sensed God was telling us to go.

We gave our notice. Many in the church did not want us to go. Some made it hard on us asking what they would do without us. Warren Wiersbie has a great answer to this question in his book "On Being a servant of God" we gave his answer " you will do better" because God will raise up others for the work. God did indeed raise up others. The man, who replaced me as the assistant pastor, is now the senior pastor of the church. The work is growing and they are building.

Two days before we left, we learned we were pregnant with our second daughter. We did not have health insurance...oh, joy. We came back to my parent's house and for 5 months we lived with them. We had one car, I worked various jobs until I could get a good one...yeah, you get the picture, Laurie was stuck at a home that is not her own and not able to go anywhere.

Guys, be sure your wife is on board! There will be dues to pay as the work gets started. God worked it all out. He eventually provided a job that met our needs and allowed me to get started teaching a study.

I want to take a minute and address those men, and we have met a few, who's plan it is to have his wife work while he "prepares" for the message each week and pastor the newly planted church. The message is simple...GET A JOB!!!! Go out and work! You have to be kidding me that you are too busy with the Lord's work to be also holding down a job.

I would like to exhort those who are not able to get a salary sufficient enough from the church to meet the family's needs. The exhortation is this do not to send your wife to work first, but rather you go and GET A SECOND JOB!!! What? You think God cannot bless your shorter time to prep and get ready to teach His word? Boy, how on earth do the home group leaders do it? Or how do the faithful Sunday school teachers do it managing a job and teaching on Sunday?

Working while you can helps to keep you in touch with your congregation. They will respect a man who works a day job like them and pastor's the church. Don't for a second buy into those who whine at you and tell you they need a fulltime pastor.

They try to pressure you to move over to a church salary when there is not enough monies in the offering to support you. They hint if you only had enough faith you would go full-time and trust God. Yet Jesus said no one builds a tower who does not first sit down and count the costs...is that a lack of faith on Jesus' part?

God will bring the increase. The monies will be there, all in good time, to pay the obligations of the church and salaries too. When that time comes you will better appreciate the blessing of being able to work full-time for the church. Laurie and I have encountered women who's husband's feel "the call" quit working, and put all the burden on them for providing for the family.

It is wrong as we see it. The new congregation often is troubled by it, and the only one who does not seem to get it is "the pastor". Bad move fellas. God uses times of testing to see where your heart is. Years of struggling are many times the way he sifts out the shepherds from the hirelings. Step out! But be sure you are in agreement with your wife. Sense God's direction for you as a family. Seek His peace on which way to go, and then step up to the plate and see what He has for you.

4 Getting started

Ok, you stepped out. So now what? Well, find a place that you can use for starting a Bible study. We have used a living room in a home, apartments, dead churches on a week night that have nothing going on and an apartment

clubhouse. When the Bible study we started as a home group outgrew the space, we went to a clubhouse. After growing into that space, God began to put it on the hearts of the "regulars" that we should go for Sunday mornings.

When they asked for that, I sat them down and began to explain all that would be involved with holding Sunday morning services. I painted a realistic picture of the time needed to setup; cover the areas of ministry that would be needed from the beginning, and then the cleanup that we would have to do every Sunday. They all agreed they were willing to play a part in the work. So after praying for seven months on Sunday nights together about starting, we found a senior center we could rent and got started.

When we started the Bible study, we received permission from the next near-by Calvary Chapel (Philly) to put out a notice that we were a home group in our area. God brought a few to the study from that notice. We also advertised in a local college newspaper and a local newspaper in the area. God started bringing out a few here and there. One college student who saw the home group announcement at the Calvary Chapel is now, nine years later, my assistant pastor! He knows the work as well as I do and has had a heart for the work from the beginning when it was but a few.

You will need to have people committed to the work to help with Sunday school, nursery, ushering/setup and breakdown, and other helps as the church grows. We have found that God has ALWAYS raised up people for different areas of the ministry as we have needed them. We have not had to go looking or tapping someone on the shoulder to cover an area of ministry. This can be a challenge to wait on God and trust Him with providing the workers for the work.

We have seen church plants run into trouble, simply because they were so desperate to have a ministry area that they were not too choosy as to who they allowed to serve. This has turned out to be a real disaster for the pastor, the work and in one case, the sheep who were exposed to unfit volunteers in the ministry.

Long ago when we got started Pastor Joe Focht of Calvary Chapel Philadelphia exhorted me to beware creating the "Bonsai church". A bonsai church, like the bonsai tree, is a church in miniature. It is a trap to try to

provide all the ministries that a large church has when you have a small congregation. Do you really need a youth group? Should you really have a bookstore? Is it really time for a retreat? Be careful not to get sucked into the "need" to provide ministries for sheep that are not there yet.

We have truly found that when God reveals a need then the solution will rise up. We now have a special needs Sunday school class. I have to confess, that I was not thinking about such a ministry, but God put it on the hearts of several people in the church who are qualified to teach such a class. When my Sunday school coordinator asked my opinion about should we do it, I said absolutely! If God has raised up the workers for such a ministry, let's do it. God knows what is coming. Well, we now have families who can all come to church because we have a special needs class available to minister to all their family. Praise God! We had been a church for about seven years before we had this class. God created the ministry within the church in His time.

Be faithful from the beginning with what God does put in your hands. That includes the relationships you have with your landlord, if you have one, the monies God gives to the work, the volunteers who stand with you in the work and the sheep.

Be respectful of people's time. Don't waste their time with things that can be done more efficiently. Be a good steward of what you have and God will increase it. If you are not a faithful steward over what you have, don't plan on having any more given to you. If God cannot trust you with what He has given you already, why on earth would you expect Him to give you more?

You are going to be out in front of a work that God would like to do, it is important to set in place rules and conduct to guard you and the ministry that God is giving to you from reproach. Do not be alone with women in the church. It is not beyond reproach. That includes any woman who volunteers to be the church secretary, unless she is your wife. I have seen missionaries sent home because they were not careful to be beyond reproach with women. It damaged their marriage, wounded their kids and destroyed their role in the ministry.

Document all monies that the Lord will bring in for accountability's sake. Be sure to document where those monies were spent via receipts to show a faithful stewardship. The monies that the Lord brings in are His, take care to account for them properly. It proves that you are a faithful servant.

When you get started, you do not have to incorporate until you sense the Lord's hand on the Bible study. In the state of Pennsylvania, your incorporation can be retroactive for 15 months; at least that was the rule in 1997. What this means is you can get started, not worry about the incorporation at the outset, when by the way you will have no money, and as the Lord grows the work, say within 15 months of starting, get incorporated.

Incorporation as a 501(c) (3) allows you to acknowledge your members contributions as tax deductible. It also enables you to get out of sales tax for items purchased for church use. It is a good thing to get an incorporation lawyer to help you to incorporate.

Once you are incorporated, it is also important to have regular meetings with your "board", whoever they are for accountability sake (pray for God to provide the right people). Churches and non-profit organizations are notorious for not properly documenting the activities and directives of the corporation. You may never need to present any information to verify that you are truly a functioning non-profit corporation, but if that day would come, having good documentation will quickly resolve any questions.

Oddly enough, I was subpoenaed on a case involving fraud by a local para-church non-profit organization that bent a few rules to get the work of the Lord done. Some 294 counts of fraud were leveled against this organization. They, in the course of getting the Lord's work done, misused our tax id number, without our knowledge, to receive a bunch of stuff and then misappropriated the funds from the stuff. Nice eh? We were not the only ones that got dragged into this mess.

What was surprising is that at the end of the day the reason we were in court was because we kept good corporate records and could document for the court exactly what happened, what we did about it and even had all correspondence and notes about this "great visionary" and what he had done. The Bureau of Charitable Organizations in Pennsylvania when they realized

what we had for documentation wanted us in court as a witness to help them prove their case. We were exonerated from any wrong doing thanks to staying on top of the paper trail.

What happened to the guy? He was convicted on all counts and got 3 to 6 years in the state penitentiary, followed by 10 years parole. By the way his record keeping matched his faithfulness.

Ok, now about the term "the board", simply, get a group of men who have the vision for what God is calling you to do. If you have been sent out by another church, hopefully some from that fellowship will be on your board. The board assigns corporate officers who are designated by the board for the purpose of conducting the "business" of the corporation. It is a good thing, when you can afford it, to get insurance for the board and the corporate officers. If there is a "malpractice" or errors and omissions type of insurance for any lawsuit against the church, such insurance will cover the officers and board and limit the liability of any judgments to their role in the church. This is a means of drawing a line legally so that their PERSONAL assets cannot be attached in a church law suit.

I do not think as a faithful shepherd that you will ever have to worry about such a thing happening, but it is good to have. We did have threats of a law suit from the "great guy" who ran that corrupt non-profit. We had taken action to stop him from plowing with our heifer, but in the end he had bigger fish to fry with the state and we were left unharmed.

There are also insurance policies to cover those who "counsel" in the church. It can be a reasonable thing to do for those who help to minister to the sheep. Sometimes a sheep's post-therapeutic processing (this is a term we coined to describe a sheep who takes offense to a deserved rebuke after the meeting) can lead to grief for the church. We have never run into this one yet, and God willing, hope not to. But remember, if you are building your ministry on the Word and not on what people with itching ears want to hear, you are going to step on some toes. Do it in love.

So did we have all this in place from the beginning, ha, ha, ha, ha, of course not. As God grows the work, and the strength of the ministry, it is good to have an occasional talk with your insurance provider. Ask them, what does

the well dressed church of this size and financial base, wear for policies and liability coverage. You may be over-insured, or they could point out a few holes in your coverage. Pray about what they tell you, but remember to cover the ministry with what is reasonable. Now a day, you cannot do virtually anything as a church without at least liability insurance. That is the case for most landlords who would rent a space to your church.

5 Early on

So the work has begun. You are taking off and the landing gear, or at least most of it is off the ground. Now what? Get busy roping people into positions of ministry so you can go to the next level? Try to identify who should be your assistant pastor, after all there are 40 people coming and who is going to help you with that entire load of ministry?

I have watched men do themselves in, and satan or a buck private demon dispatched by him, has tired to catch me in this once in a while. What is it? The dreaded trap of impatience with the work God has begun. This man-killer trap can be compounded by the double whammy of the measuring yourself among others deception.

God is working! People are showing up and calling your once home group/Bible study home. They refer to it as church. I kept calling our church a Bible study well into 250 people attending our Sunday morning service. You had better realize now, that if you are going to measure the work God has called you to by what He is doing in another church or church planting effort, you will NEVER be satisfied, with Him or His sheep.

This is a very strong trap that will wear you down, rob your joy, deflate your sense of excitement as God is using you and leave you eyes on everything but Jesus. Dave Rosales of Calvary Chapel Ontario, now Chino Valley, taught one time at a pastor's conference that we were not to number the noses or the nickels. He rebuked the men at the conference who asked "So how many are coming to your church on a Sunday?" While I knew what he was teaching to be true in my heart, it has served as a great reminder over the years. In the beginning as the church was getting started, it can be very frustrating to hear about a major outpouring of God in another town as you eek along.

The truth is I think God allows even this to test your heart. Are you in it to be recognized as a "growing" happening fellowship? Are you waiting by the phone to be asked to speak at the next conference, because God is blessing your ministry? Are you gritting your teeth because so and so, who you think is a lousy teacher, is doing so much better than you are.

Say...who are you in this race for...your reputation, your prestige, or Jesus? Remember "Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you love to be greeted in the marketplace, Rabbi, Rabbi". If you are stepping out because you love Jesus and want to serve Him, the successes of others should be an encouragement to you.

When you see God blessing another ministry, rejoice with them. If God blessed them, and you are being faithful, you can bet God will also bless you.

Now the next question I must ask. What constitutes being blessed of God? Does that mean 1000's in attendance? Being recognized as an international speaker? Just what in the world should the requirement be? The church in America has become, I am afraid, deceived by the bigger is better and more effective mentality of our populace. There is this idea that a pastor of 1000 people is a better pastor than one of 100 people. Is that really true? Does increased size truly mean better and more effective ministry?

I would strongly encourage you to not get sucked into this trap. You be content with such things as you have. You allow the kingdom of heaven to grow like a seed in the ground. Jesus said first the sprout, then the blade, then the stalk, then the fruit in the ear. It takes time to get plants to grow. Sure you can water, pull weeds, fertilize, but the growth is not really in your hands.

Let God do with the ministry He has given you what He wants. I had the opportunity to talk to a man who had been a missionary for 43 years. Having recently retired I asked him, "Ok, what is the nugget you can share with a young man in the ministry like me?" His answer? Let the Lord do the work His way. Do not try to figure out what you think He should do, rather just pay attention and do what He tells you. He said "We tried many things but in

the end we found that if we just waited on God He always brought what He really wanted to pass."

Well ain't that easy to follow...unless of course you have a problem with patience. So let God do what He wants with your fellowship. Enjoy each stage of that growth, you cannot make your kids small again, and God willing, if your church is healthy, it will not be this small again either. This brings up a point. When the church is small, get together for picnics, Christmas eve in someone's house, cookouts, etc. Get the core people in your fellowship together to keep them united.

As God grows the church, it gets harder to get all the people who serve together. Our recent Sunday school teachers/assistants appreciation picnic had more people attending it than our whole church picnics did for about the first 4 years of the church! Church picnics now are a major undertaking, whereas in the beginning they were easy.

Enjoy the people God brings to you. Serve them and give them His word, you are preparing the foundation of your church. They can only be as well grounded as you are. Some will jump in and help out right away. Others will want to keep an eye on you to be sure you are not a nut. We had a couple come the second Sunday we got started. They were familiar with Calvary Chapel and were excited to help out. The next week, Dave the husband took over our tape ministry and 8 years later he still heads up our tape/cd/mp3 ministry. He has been with us from our 10 year old Sony boom box that not only recorded the messages, but "shazam" it also duplicated the tapes when church was over. Sort of an all in one unit, it was free.

As God brings His people to you, do not take advantage of them. That would make you a wolf. Do not manipulate them into doing things for the church, or worse, for you personally. To do so is a work of the flesh and what you sow you shall reap. You will get whatever they give you back as a work of the flesh. People in the fellowship may give you gifts; use wisdom as to what you will accept. They may do nice things for you, that is their business. Just be sure that it came from their heart and not from your own desires. If this is not safeguarded in your ministry you will have the appearance of a hireling.

6 Growing pains

People are not able to park in your parking lot. The children's ministry needs more room. What are you going to do? We have been through growing pains in different ministries. In those pains God has taught us many lessons.

Probably the most important lesson is that if God is bringing the problem, you can bet He will also bring the solution. When we started as a home Bible study, we were in a house that was modest in size. When there were only 4 of us and three kids, it was not a problem. Then God began to grow the work. Soon we were packed into the house and there were more kids upstairs...things were getting tight.

So we used the connections we had in the study and God opened up the clubhouse at our apartment complex. That gave us much more room for the adults and we used our apartment for the children's church. It worked. That held us until we moved to holding Sunday services. We moved to a senior center in West Chester for Sunday services. It covered the space need for about a year and a half.

One thing we have learned, from watching other church plants, is do not constantly move your location. It can become frustrating to those who are trying to attend your fellowship. One friend had moved his church plant some five times in a year and a quarter. It pretty much helped to kill the attendance and dry up the work. You are better off paying more for a location that is a little too big in the beginning and being able to grow into it, than getting a great deal on a small place and having to move within a year.

We finally outgrew the Senior Center, not in adult attendance, but in the children's ministry area needs. The rooms for the kids were getting too crowded. Parents were uncomfortable about leaving their kids in such tight rooms. It was time to look again. Once again we asked those who were attending if they had any ideas. Funny, their suggestions always seem to be 2 minutes from their house.

We ended up at a private school about 20-25 minutes away from where we had been meeting. In our area, that was still acceptable for a distance. Many of the people coming to the church were in between the two locations

and were willing to make the move. We lost 2 families in the move and at our size at the time, it was noticed.

God provided a location we could rent for some \$750 a month. We started renting there in September of 1998. We are in the same location as I write these notes, but are in the final approval process for buying land and building a building. The rent in the private school we are using is now \$5,800 a month! Gee what a change six years and some growth can do to your costs of rent. The church has grown to three services from one and has added many people to the "wear and tear" of the building. God in His mercy put us in a location that allowed us to grow substantially without having to move.

We are in the process of building because our rent will increase to \$6,000 a month in about four months. That is the same as a one million dollar loan at 6%! We only use the school from 6:30 AM on Sunday to 3:00 PM and on Wednesday from 5:30 PM to 10:00 PM. We are paying a premium for only a few hours a month. Growth has now led us to make decisions about building a facility to be good stewards of the funds God has provided to the church.

The key to growing pains for us as a fellowship has been this. God has always provided what we needed as we needed it. When we went from one service to two on Sunday mornings, God provided the Sunday school teachers needed to staff the second service before we started that service. It was the same for the ushers, greeters and all that we needed. We had almost all of the hands we needed to expand the work.

When we went to a third service it was the same story. God raised the people up that we needed. Every time we have hit on some growing pain, God would raise up the resources or people necessary. Remember the warning to avoid being a bonsai tree church. Your fellowship will take on a fully formed appearance over time.

We had a couple leave the church when it was early on because we had no youth group. It was sad to see them go, but we did not have someone to head it up. Several months after they left, God had a man in the church approach me and asked if he could start a youth group with his kids and those who would want to attend. God took care of it in His time.

It was tempting to say to the family who wanted the youth group and then left for one at another church..."you need a youth group? Well poof! Here is your youth group", and try to make it happen. Beware that temptation; you will be propping up a ministry area instead of letting God raise it up. Remember, if you build it with your own strength, then you will also be forced to maintain it in your own strength! God provided, we missed the boat with the one family, but that youth group leader faithfully directed the work for some 5 years before handing it over to another.

Growing pains are really opportunities for God to confirm the work He is doing in your life. As you hit those needs and pray about them, you can see what God's desire is for you and the work He has called you to oversee.

When we moved to the school our PA system was under-rated for the new room. We tried to use it for about a year, but it was lousy. In the old hall it worked fine, but in the new one, it was not cutting it. Chuck Smith has always stressed that you should invest in as good of sound equipment as you can afford. We violated this rule for a while. We saved a few bucks, but it made listening to the worship and teaching taxing on the audience.

Do yourself a favor, get a hold of a good sound guy at another Calvary Chapel and get help with what should work for you. We corrected the sound system problem with a reasonable solution for the size of our needs. It held us for about a year and a half. We had to add to the unit when the room began to fill out.

We made some additional improvements as the worship team's needs have increased. Finally, we went ahead and made a much bigger purchase of equipment in the last year to improve the sound we have now in the rented space, and to get equipment that could be the solution for the new sanctuary we are building. We thought it better to buy the equipment now before we become "building poor" for a season after we move in.

Use common sense on what you should purchase for the work. Don't pinch pennies so hard that you say no to equipment that truly can benefit the work or the workers. We have tried to spend monies on equipment, curriculum or video series that would really be a help now and bless the most people possible.

A good rule on thumb on purchases is "If you would not spend your own money on it, why would you spend God's?"

7 Trusting God

Trusting God, it is a statement that we toss out so casually, yet to really walk in trust of God is another matter. We have watched men who, while they felt that God had called them to plant churches, acted as if they had to "defend" their calling, the work and "their vision" for the work at all times.

From the outside looking in on such men, what really seemed to be happening is they were trying to defend and promote a calling they appeared to be convinced was for them, and hoped that God also had in mind for them.

I have listened to guys say how they had visions, or a word spoken to them or some big confirming event occur all the while there are insecure in what God has them doing or in their role as a pastor.

I love to consider the life of David. One thing I admire of his walk before his trouble with Bathsheba, was his confidence in the plan of God. Anointed king by Samuel as a young man, he had a confidence that if this was what God really was calling him to do, then by golly God would bring it to pass.

You may think that sounds too fatalistic. It is not. He had a confidence that if this is what God has for me, then I will let Him bring it to pass. I will not be the one to make this happen. David did his part to be a stand up guy. He had to withstand several temptations to taking things in his own hands to gain the kingdom, but he waited on God to make it happen.

I could not stress to you any more seriously what I feel is a potential major flaw in a man who is pastoring. That flaw is to be found building God's kingdom for Him, instead of allowing God to build up His kingdom through him.

One is a work of your strength, getting behind that cart that is carrying the ark, the glory of God, and pushing it to the people trying to make it happen. Such efforts make the work dependent upon you and your efforts and not dependent upon God and His power. You have robbed the people of the blessing of being dependent upon God and instead have placed their eyes on you! Further you have robbed God of the rightful place He is to hold in your ministry as the head of the work.

If God has called you to pastor a work, realize He is calling you to pastor HIS WORK, not your work for Him. The sheep are His. The monies are His. The volunteers are His. It is all His! If God wants your fellowship to grow He will bring the increase. He may have to remove some from your fellowship from time to time before He can really do what He wants with the work. Will you be ok with Him taking some away so He can multiply what is there as a foundation?

If the church is your church and not His, you are going to take it personally and have a problem with what God is doing. But, if you have come to realize it is His church, they are His people and He does indeed know what He needs to do in the life of that fellowship, then you can have a confidence and a peace about the work and your calling.

All young, older and senior pastors have questions in their minds about how effective they are being, did they get the text right this Sunday and make it rich for the people? These are normal questions and concerns that run through the mind. But if the foundation of your thinking is, that God is in control of the work then it is His, these are his problems, you can rest even in times of uncertainty. The church will not be built on your hitting the text out of the park every Sunday; it will be built in God's faithfulness to what He has started.

Whose work is it? Will you begin in the Spirit and then by your prodding and manipulation and administration make perfect the work in your own wisdom? If the church you are pastoring is God's work and you are the vessel He is using, you will have a greater trust of the people who are serving in the church. If it is your work that you are propping up, you will be very concerned about everything people are doing in "your church".

I have the private opinion the behind every micro-managing pastor is a lack of true trust in God. Choose people prayerfully and wisely that God raises up for ministries. Then trust that God will guide those He has called to areas within the church. Volunteers are responsible to you as the pastor, yes, but point them ultimately to being responsible to Jesus as servants in His church among His people.

Lead them to the Chief Shepherd and trust Him to guide them and correct them. Pray for them, check up on how they are doing, but allow God the room to work in them and use them in ways you may never have considered.

Your trust in God will show up in the finances. If He has started this work for His glory, He will bring what you need for monies to get done what He wants. That project of yours may be under-funded because it is your project and not God's for the fellowship. Sometimes we need to take the very simple hint and accept it. God is not providing for some ministry direction....hmm, what do you think?

Trust God with your gifts. He gave them to you. Grow into them. Allow Him to grow you in them, yield more fully to Him so you can increase in your faith to use them. Trusting God in your area of gifting is also a test. Will you take your natural abilities and polish them up, or allow God to work through you and in you and do with you what He knows is the best use of them?

Trust God to give you the key people you need when He is ready. Do not try to force people into places, let God call them. If no one shows up for duty in an area, then shut it down until someone does. Better to have no ministry in an area, than to have forced ministry in some area. Fruit cannot be manufactured or forced; it has to come from healthy growth.

8 Walking in wisdom

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without and those who are within. You are starting a work for Jesus. There will be a number of people you will be in contact with, to start the work, who do not know the Lord. Ask God for wisdom how to be His ambassador to these lost souls. Many times as a

work gets started unbelievers will be the ones God uses to lease you a location. How you respond to them is very important.

We have had times when those who we have leased from have tried to "stick it to us" in some way. When these things have happened we have done our best, the Holy Spirit cooperating by restraining our flesh, to make it an opportunity to reflect the heart of Jesus to them. If you get falsely accused of breaking something in a room that you know you are not in for church services, let them know you are pretty sure it is not your people who did it, but also pay and get the item repaired or replaced.

We have had a few items that have walked off from some of the teacher's classrooms at the school we are renting. We ask them to check and see if the item has been misplaced, and if it indeed cannot be located, we replace it. If it comes to our attention that somehow a room used by us was not properly put back or we caused grief to a teacher, we send a note and a lunch gift certificate.

In other words we return a soft answer and a blessing if appropriate. So what has been the result? Hundreds of complaints and teachers lining up for that free lunch? In the seven years we have been there, I think we have given a lunch out to three or so teachers. Those teachers whose rooms we accidentally left in disarray, had nothing bad to say to their colleagues, why? Because we worked to make it right with them and gave them a thank-you for allowing us to hold Sunday school in their room.

There are some very simple things a church can do as a renter that will go a long way towards opening up people's hearts to Jesus. Take care of their facility. Yes, you are paying rent, but even the pagans pay rent. What difference have you made between your fellowship and a pagan renter if your attitude is "Hey that is why we pay rent?" If you look for simple ways to be a good steward of their property, help with maintaining it, or volunteer to plant flowers or work on repair items.

It gives the saints in your fellowship the chance to come and improve the place you hold services. It also allows you to be a good testimony toward the neighborhood you are in. Use wisdom, but freely giving as Jesus has freely given to you can be a great witness to open the door to share His name.

Do yourself a favor, be a man and church of your word. There are so many today who will craft or bend the truth, you know...lie, in order to make themselves look good. What a horrible blot on your testimony to the unsaved who rent to you or are your neighbors when they hear that you lie and cannot be trusted to be a man of your word. Watch out for this one it can be a real trap from the enemy to take down what God is doing. Have the courage to stand for the truth in God's word and in your own personal conduct.

How do we walk in wisdom toward those who are within? As the work gets going, you will notice more people coming. With that will also come more opinions as to what the church "really needs" to get moving. Beware of those who come to you with a "plan" for the work to _____ (fill in the blank). It can be a blessing when God sends a person to give you guidance or sensitivity in an area of ministry in the church, but it can also be a real trial if you are constantly barraged by those who feel they need to help you get the work headed in the right direction.

If you are a person who lacks the strength to be able to say "No" to those who are pressing their ideas on you, you need to ask God to give it to you ASAP! You are there to please the Lord and take the work in the direction that He leads. If you are a man pleaser you will not to be able to be a God pleaser as well. God has raised you up for the work, do what you know He is telling you to do. It may not always be popular, but it is the safe direction to take.

Having stated the above, we do need to recognize that God may send to you great suggestions which will be a huge help to the work from members of the congregation. I am not telling you to automatically ignore any and all suggestions for the flock. What I am telling you is beware the trap of wanting to be liked, and therefore willing to implement suggestions that result in the fellowship you are a steward of going in directions that it has no business in pursuing.

Beware getting pulled away from the mission God has called you to for the sake of embarking on what seems like a great thing to do for the Lord. If Satan cannot stop you he will try to distract you.

Walk in wisdom with your staff in being accountable to them, and they to you. Make sure that you guard yourself and those who work with you from reproach. We have made it a rule not to leave opposite genders alone at all times for pastoral staff. If I am counseling with a woman after a service, I talk with her in the sanctuary in a corner of it so we are openly visible to all. Mike Somerfield, my associate pastor, has always stayed around the area to be sure that I am never left alone. I do the same for him when he is counseling a woman. We are not alone with any of our secretaries to also avoid the appearance of evil. There should never be a meeting between you and a female of your fellowship where it is just the two of you, whether a home, a restaurant, anywhere.

Some get all bent out of shape at such suggestions. They think it to be overkill. It is not. It is wisdom to protect your ministry from false accusations that while false, can still ruin a work's potential to serve the Lord and reach out.

9 Satan's devices

Let's face it. Satan hates what you are doing for the Lord. He hates the work, the workers and the potential impact it can have for Jesus and against him. You are on his radar and can bank on routine sorties against you, your family, the work, your staff and your congregation. These things will come. Do not live in fear of them; rather know that if you are invading satan's territory, you should expect to encounter his guards.

Satan wants to use discouragement to keep you from ever stepping out. He does not want you to even go beyond thinking about planting a work. That is as far as he would like the whole endeavor to go. In order to bring about that desire in you, he has to launch the usual attacks against your availability. He will get you to feel inferior for the job at hand. He will frighten you with what-ifs when you fail. He will mock your walk with God, sharpen your sensitivity to your own hypocrisy, everything and anything he can muster to get you to sit down and shut-up.

Many stop with that first round of attacks and never press on further. They satisfy themselves with the idea that it just was not God's will for them to do this thing. If you can keep the seed from ever getting planted you won't have to worry about handling its growth.

You have stepped out? Bravo! You have progressed farther than many just to take that step. Satan, since he has not been able to stop you will then move into trying to kill it while it is small. What he did to the Israelite children in Egypt, or though Herod attempting to kill Jesus as an infant, so he will seek to do to your new work. He would like to deal such a blow to the work that it kills the work.

Beware the attack that comes out of nowhere, is very serious and seems to be potentially "life ending" to the work. If Satan cannot stop it from being birthed then he seeks to kill it when it is small. Your home, your job or the people helping to plant are all open targets for deception and assault from Satan to kill the work. He will try to do it...so watch out.

Ok, you have birthed the work, it is started, the attacks thus far have not stopped the work and it is growing. You have weathered those storms and through them have come to a better practical knowledge of Jesus and His power in the midst of these trials. The next attempt that we have seen repeatedly at this point is to attack the work from within. Since Satan has not been able to beat you thus far, he will now seek to join you and ruin the work from within.

Staff bickering and gossiping is a big favorite to ruin the work from within. Laurie and I heard a statistic that 50% of all missionary outreaches fail, not because of the culture, the conditions or the language barriers, but they fail because of INTERNAL staff issues and infighting. We watched this happen first hand in a work that we joined in Russia about one month from its meltdown. We came in late, stayed out of the mess, but watched from the outside. I do not think we really understood just what was going on until the whole thing burst apart and many were hurt.

We knew and sensed things were not where they should be, but as details began to get all lined up in our minds, down the work went. All those who were involved had gone to Russia with the best of intentions to do a work for

the Lord. Personalities were turned against one another. The word's clear instruction for how to handle each other was ignored, and walking in the flesh became a trap that many fell into in their treatment of each other.

We have seen in the church we are serving in now occasional tests from satan to open a rift in the leadership and the volunteers. We do our best to be on the watch for such things and seek to wipe it out with much open communication and patient love to hear each other's opinion on the issues. We have had our attacks, but thus far God has been very faithful to bring them to nothing as we walk in obedience to Him. We have also watched Him remove those who seek to harm the work for their own personal reasons as we have leaned on Jesus for His protection.

Further attacks of satan include getting you so busy in "the ministry" that you start to ignore your home flock for the large church flock. You are after all doing the Lord's work and it can be so much more rewarding to serve them than your wife and kids at times. Satan takes this trap and pulls you in with statements like, "only pastor Chris can help me or understand"...oh really? Boy, are you getting sized up for a torpedo from the enemy to sink your home ship.

If he cannot frustrate you from starting or kill it when it is small or destroy it from within, then he changes tactics and sucks you into working too much by stroking your flesh. He gets you to actually agree that it is a good thing you are on the job for the Lord at that church. He gets you to buy into the great lie, that the work really NEEDS you. Your wisdom and years of ministry experience...why how can they continue without you? Brother...watch out...you are about to get slammed.

What the church needs is Jesus and His Spirit directing the work. God does not need you to cover the work. He can use anyone, He happens to have chosen you for the job, but if your head gets too big to get in the door of the church, He will have to replace you with another who is usable to Him.

Satan knows this and will exploit it to your destruction. He will keep you so busy that your kids and wife are put in the back seat of the ride God has called you to. Gentlemen, you are first pastors of your own homes and they are your first stewardship. Woe is the man who marries his ministry, or

turns the ministry God gave him into a mistress that demands more of his time and replaces his wife in importance. Woe is the man who had time for all others in the church, but did not have time for his sons or daughters in his own home. They will be forced to get that attention from someone else. It will not be pretty.

Too many ignored daughters found men who were glad to pay them attention in your place. The result is many times ungodly behavior under your roof. Many a son who felt his dad did not have time for him; found other ways to feel important and appreciated. The result (?) a prodigal who set out to see if the world could fill what home did not.

My kids range from age 11 to 15 months as I write this. I do not think that I stand against this device of satan. At this time this is the greatest potential attack that satan can use on me; I know it and am trying to guard against it. I am not at least ignorant of his devices, and I am in prayer that I would not get trapped in this deception.

Having come from a family where my dad was a work-a-holic who was rarely home I have seen what doors of trouble this has opened. My personal experience as a child I am praying will keep me from stepping into the same trap. This does mean I will have to disappoint some in the church at times and say "No" to events or demands that will encroach too much on the home front. So be it. Train up others to carry the ball with you, pass it to them, so the work can be spread out. Remember to guard the homes of your staff as well. This attack is very subtle and can move in faster than you can imagine.

Guard your first ministry, be diligent to see fruit in the home, it will greatly increase your ministry when the dividends of a godly home, healthy marriage and godly children come to maturity.

10 Counseling the sheep

It is bound to happen. Someone who has been attending your study needs to talk to you about something. Many times they will not even tell you what the issue is...just...they need to talk to you.

Satan can take such a request and mess with you head. He will have your mind going in a thousand directions trying to imagine what it is that this person needs to see you about. You begin to wonder what you have done to bring forth such a request? The person who wanted to speak to you seems to be such a well-adjusted Christian who loves the Lord, etc.

The first thing I can exhort you to do is to be sure that as much as lies in your make certain that your conduct and leading of the ministry is truly beyond reproach. If you will make it your goal to be faithful for Jesus, you will not need "fear" anyone who says "I need to talk to you about something".

I have found that nearly all of the requests to meet with me have been issues that have had nothing to do with our fellowship or me. When we or I have been the problem, usually it is simply a misunderstanding or miscommunication that is quickly resolved.

What has been the biggest shock is that the person I described before, who seemed so dialed-in is in fact, struggling with a major problem at home or in the heart. The reason they would not tell you what it was is they are very guarded about saying anything until they know they are alone with you.

We have seen a number of attacks and trials in the body. What a relief it has been to know that our staff truly seeks to do that which is right. There are occasional things to work through, but it is always a question of personality or why we have a certain policy verses ungodly behavior. I thank God for the people He has raised up to our fellowship and their consistent walk with Him.

Whatever the problem may be, it is most likely not one of your doing. If it is one of you own doing, be quick to get it reconciled and walk in humility.

Now, about that meeting with that saint, there is one simple admonishment I can give you and I have learned this the hard way when I was in Bible college.

The admonishment is this...never mind what YOU think about their problem, WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY? If you give your opinion, you may be wrong

or worse yet, deceived by their story into giving ungodly counsel. You stick to what God's Word says and don't you dare go beyond it.

Also, you speak what you sense the Holy Spirit is prompting you to speak and not a word more. Telling them what God's Word says may not make you very popular, they may even get indignant with you, but you are only the messenger. Point them back to the author if they have a problem with what He has said.

Pray for discernment. Pray for God to protect you from the folly that they have entered into. Do not go and check out that website for yourself to see if it is indeed ungodly. Do not think upon that woman with whom they have fallen into adultery. Guard your heart. There are some things you have no business talking to a woman about. Pray for God to raise up godly women in the church who can minister to her in her temptations. Use wisdom...see the book of proverbs.

Lastly, you ARE being a loving pastor to stop meeting with them if they will not employ the counsel you have given (which I mentioned should only be God's Word) to their problem. If they are unwilling to do the right thing in their life, then you are unwilling to meet with them again until they do. Don't let your time be wasted by those who have no desire to get right with God.

11 Going to the next level

Mark 4:26-29 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. KJV

Jesus talked about the Kingdom of heaven being like a seed a man planted in the ground. It will grow of its own if it is alive and in good soil. What is humbling is when you begin to see the full corn in the ear. What do I mean by that? Going to the next level is not about you becoming some international speaker or invited to certain events to speak, it is seeing ministry come out of the ministry God used you to start. It is truly exciting

to see those to whom you have invested take what you have taught them and set out for the Lord.

We have seen this happen in the last few years in our fellowship and I am so blessed to see God work. We have had ministry opportunities open up in the community where teams from our church are conducting Sunday services for students in several lockdown facilities.

We have had men who have left or are leaving to plant churches in the U.S. and in other countries. This is the fruit, the corn in the ear. It is a harvest of new seeds that can be planted in new locations. Yes it is hard to lose people to new endeavors, but it is also exciting to see God raise up new individuals in the body to take their places.

Going to the next level is to see fruit grow to maturity in your fellowship and then move on to be planted somewhere else. What a privilege that is indeed.

12 Missions

As a planter, you are a missionary. You may be in your own country, but you are still working among the lost to present Jesus to them. When you do get underway, get your people involved with missions. Pray for God to open up doors or ministry to them. We send people overseas and we do outreaches in our own local areas.

The people in your fellowship need opportunities to be stretched in sharing their faith. Is there a large crusade coming to town? Make sure they are solid towards the word, and get your people involved as volunteers. Go with them so they feel safe with you along. We have been involved in three harvest crusades here on the east coast. We have had people serve in the post 9/11 outreaches in New York City. Ask God to open your eyes to see opportunities to get them serving and reaching out.

Be a work that supports missions. You may not be able to go at first, but you can give to mission organizations and encourage them. We use our Wednesday night service to host missionaries and have them share with the congregation about what is going on in the world.

There are many good organizations to support. Make it a part of your church's life blood.

13 Preparing the head and heart

There are two aspects to teaching. One is to prepare your head with facts and information about the text you are teaching. The other is to seek God to prepare your heart for the text you are teaching.

To miss either of these items will leave you out of balance. To have head knowledge only will give your audience a lecture of Biblical information and facts. That can be helpful to increase their knowledge of God's Word and depth in appreciating what God has revealed in His word.

To prepare the heart only is to have messages that will apply the text and give a deeper sense of Jesus and His love, a very good thing, but will lack the necessary grounding in the Word that comes from studying to show your self approved.

I have found that God wants me to have a balance of the two, present His heart and His love to encourage people and draw them closer to Him. I have also found that God wants me to present His whole counsel of His word so that people can defend the deity of Christ from the scriptures, proclaim His love, but also warn of His judgment.

All book time and no prayer time leads to a prepared head. All prayer time and no book time leads to a prepared heart. Work to have a balance in your time with the text. Study it and ask God in prayer what does He have in that text for His people. You will find that God will speak to you all week long about what He has for His sheep in the word that week.

14 Books a many

To prepare your head will take getting a collection of good commentaries. The good news is there are many you can get for free on the Internet. I have some standard favorites that I will recommend to those who are

stepping out. When I was asked to pastor the church in Moscow, my pastor, Joe Focht of Calvary Chapel Philadelphia sent me a box of books that have served me well over the years. I have added to that collection many since then, but that box of essential books have remained at the heart of my study time. They include:

The Bible Knowledge Commentary by Walvoord and Zuck 2 volumes.
The Be Series by Warren Wiersbe 2 volumes
The New and Old Testament Expository Outlines by Warren Wiersbe 2 volumes
Jamison, Fausset and Brown Commentary on the Bible 3 volumes
The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, by Alfred Edersheim
Old Testament Bible History, by Alfred Edersheim
Word Meanings in the New Testament, by Ralph Earle
The Great Physician, by G. Campbell Morgan

Some additional suggestions include:

Any commentary by G. Campbell Morgan
Any Commentary by Chuck Smith
The Genesis Record, by Henry Morris
Things to Come, by J. Dwight Pentecost
Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, by Gleason L. Archer
J.C. Ryle's Expository Commentaries on the 4 Gospels.
John Walvoord's Commentaries on Daniel, Revelation and Matthew
Annals of the World, by James Ussher
International Bible Commentary, C.H. Irwin, 1 volume hard to find, but good.
Internet commentary on the whole Bible, by David Guzik -
www.calvarychapel.com/simivalley
PC Study Bible program for Computer, (get the McClintock and Strong, Encyclopedia module)

Always be on the lookout for good commentaries. If you see one, buy it, you will probably not run into it again for a while. Better to buy it and sell it again or give it away, then to kick yourself for not grabbing it when you could.

15 Wrapping up

I have two goals in ministry.

Goal 1 - Don't get picked off by the enemy

Goal 2 - Hear from Jesus "Well done good and faithful servant".

The things I share here are by no means complete. These pointers are given simply to help guide you where we may have stumbled. God will lead those who's hearts are open to Him. Let the Lord do what He wants with your fellowship. It is His work. Will you be bold enough to allow Him to call the shots, direction and scope of the work?

Remember always maintain your private devotional time with the Lord. Do not let your studies for Sunday and the mid-week take the place of sitting at His feet in the Word and in Prayer. He will use your quiet time to feed your teaching time. Watch how many times you will be in a text that your quiet time was the commentary for.

I applaud you for stepping out. You will make mistakes; don't be afraid for God often uses our failures as a tool to teach. I have found I far more remember my failures and the lessons they taught more than my so-called successes.

Remember 2 Chron 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. KJV

Pray without ceasing.