

PART 3: BOOK REVIEWS

Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication

by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 449 pages. ISBN: 978-0801035807

Global Church Planting will make an excellent text for courses on church planting, and a solid stimulus to fresh thought for anyone already involved in church planting. The book lives up to its title, giving a solid overview of church planting principles and practices from around the world. Although workers in non-Western contexts might feel the discussion occasionally leans toward the influence of models popular in North America, the book manages to integrate well some of the best thinking on cross-cultural church planting among the unreached with practices relevant among Westerners as well.

The scope of the book is well described by its subtitle: 'Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication.' Actually, the book goes beyond 'best practices' to give a thorough overview of a great many topics, including some current practices that might not be considered 'best.' The authors do a good job, though, of presenting a variety of views and approaches well, yet summarizing with clear statements their own preferences and conclusions. A biblical foundation is solidly laid throughout the book, with only a few instances of lapsing into appeal to authority: stating an opinion, then citing another author, with no mention of biblical basis.

At many points, the authors stress principles that are useful for all church planters by way of reminder, such as 'If multiplication is the goal, then the watchword in virtually everything the church planter does is *reproducibility*' (p. 81).

The book features some very helpful charts, such as 'Three Types of Church Planters' (Pastoral church planter, Catalytic church planter and Apostolic church planter [p. 91]). Reflecting on the descriptions of these types can be a helpful exercise not only for those making plans for future ministry, but also for those evaluating current and existing practices—by oneself, one's teammates, or other groups. On page 114, we find 'Simple Prototypes for Initial Kingdom Community,' comparing and contrasting three models: 'House church,' 'Voluntary gathered congregations' and 'Cell-celebration church.'

Some very useful material is found in the 'Launching' chapter of the book, with substantial sections such as 'Evangelize Holistically by Addressing Felt and Real Needs,' 'Baptize and Teach Obedience to Jesus,' 'Disciple New Believers and Train Them to Do the Same,' and 'Discipleship and Multiplication.' Each section

presents a solid biblical foundation as well as insights gleaned from other writers, presenting a radically simple and practical approach for laying a strong foundation in discipleship. This is summed up on page 237 with a useful full-page sidebar entitled ‘Discipleship and the Apostolic Church-Planting Team Strategy.’

Included along with thirteen concrete steps for research in the initial phases of CP, the authors include a very helpful list of ‘Twenty Questions to Understand a Ministry Focus People’ (p. 206). Other important topics well-covered include tentmaking, partnership and short-terms, plus a sensitive handling of the issue of the new believer’s identity in Islamic and similar contexts.

The writers give an overview of developmental models of church planting from other writers, such as David Hesselgrave’s ‘Pauline Cycle,’ Robert Logan and others’ ‘Church-Planting Life Cycle,’ and Tom Steffen’s ‘Church Planter Phase-Out.’ They then comment: ‘The developmental model that we propose focuses on the goal of church reproduction and multiplication in the context of pioneer cross-cultural church planting.’ They affirm aspects of each of the other models, then conclude ‘But in contrast to them, we describe church planting in various cultural settings, with various forms of the church (such as house churches), and where resources are usually more limited. We also develop the model with the goal of a lay-driven church reproduction that is less dependent on vocational church planters or pastors’ (p. 156-157).

A section entitled ‘Avoiding Sequential Thinking’ opens with the statement, ‘David Garrison and other advocates of church multiplication have warned against an overly sequential approach to church planting.’ More precisely, Garrison described sequentialism as ‘the third deadly sin,’ and an obstacle likely to prevent a Church Planting Movement.¹ Ott and Wilson’s mildly worded caution against an *overly* sequential approach reflects their willingness to propose a somewhat sequential model while still cautioning against a too-sequential approach.

On one other point (mentioned twice) the authors approvingly cite, but quietly modify, David Garrison’s counsel. What Garrison described as ‘ten universal elements at work in every church planting movement,’ Ott and Wilson list as ‘Garrison’s Ten *Common* Elements of Church Planting Movements (pages 72, 171, italics added). The reader is left uncertain whether this constitutes an intentional moderating of Garrison’s absolute description or a Freudian slip in quotation.

1. *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*. Midlothian, VA: WIG-Take Resources, 2004. Pages 243-245

Global Church Planting is not a light read. Those looking for a basic introduction to church planting would want to look elsewhere. But for most Seedbed readers, this would be a good ‘refresher’ course in current ideas and church planting practices that God is using around the globe to establish his church.

Reviewed by L. D. Waterman

Waterman (pseudonym) pastored for ten years in the US before moving to work among Muslims in Southeast Asia, where he has served for the past eighteen years.. He serves as an Area Leader with Pioneers and, with this issue, has begun to assist SEEDBED as associate editor.

T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution

by Steve Smith and Ying Kai

India:WIGTake Resources, 2011 (also available in Kindle format)

In the year 2000, Ying Kai and his wife Grace were deeply burdened by the task before them and spent much time seeking the Lord’s guidance and direction. They were moving to a new country, notorious for its oppressive government, with the task of engaging 20 million people with the gospel. Just ten years later there were 1.7 million baptized believers and over 150,000 new churches. God did an amazing work in calling so many lost into the kingdom through a strategy known as Training for Trainers (T4T).

For those of us who have laboured for years among an Unreached People Group (UPG) and seen annual results (baptisms) measurable with just our fingers (and maybe our toes too if we’re lucky), it’s hard to even fathom what God has done through Ying and Grace. Other movements implementing T4T have also been birthed and continue to grow. While T4T has greatly aided some missionaries, others question its usefulness after trying its 6-10 lessons with little visible fruit. In this book, Steve Smith and Ying Kai break down T4T and demonstrate how it is the process of T4T that is crucial and not merely the 6-10 lessons. The authors reveal that T4T is a simple, life-on-life, biblical, obedience-based discipleship program.

In the opening chapters, Steve and Ying share how they were both driven to their knees in desperation because of the task before them: initiating a Church planting movement (CPM) among a UPG. As a result, their ministries were characterized by an unwavering focus on the end-vision of seeing millions engaged and not on what either man could do, liked to do, or was gifted at doing. By keeping their focus on the end vision, Ying and Steve were driven to Scripture and to prayer. The fact that the authors present a plethora of strategies and practices related to T4T, should not