

***DEVELOPING YOUR CORE GROUP AND LAUNCH TEAM
AND “LAUNCHING” THE CHURCH PLANT***

At this point we are pulling together all that you have been learning and doing so far in the planting of a new church

**Circle Diagram with three concentric circles:
“Interested Contacts” in the outer circle
“Core Group” in the middle circle
“Launch Team” in the center**

**Triangle Diagram with “Bible” at the top point, “Planter” on the right bottom, and “Context” on the left bottom. In the middle:
“Philosophy of Ministry”
Vision
Values
Strategic Plan**

Key points to keep in mind during these stages

- (1) The difference between a THEOLOGY of ministry and a PHILOSOPHY of ministry.

- (2) You need time to do all this WELL so avoid the temptation and pressure to launch public worship services as long as possible – The biggest mistake in church planting is beginning regular public worship services too early!
 - Keep in mind that “Foundations are Forever”

 - the importance of this “prenatal” stage

- (3) The “Big Rocks” of what a planter should be doing; where he should be devoting his time and energy.
 - Prayer

 - Networking and Evangelism

 - Leadership

- Leadership Development

(4) When you begin regular public worship services then preaching is added as the fifth “Big Rock”. This includes worship planning and overseeing everything involved in a public worship service.

Definition of a Launch Team and a Launch Team Member

The launch team is *by invitation only* and is comprised of people who are completely on board with the planter and the vision of the church (including its theology AND philosophy of ministry) and willing to dedicate themselves to the successful launching of the church under the leadership of the planter. More specifically, they are committed to:

- (1) Praying regularly for the plant, planter, the community, and one another.
- (2) Giving sacrificially
- (3) Being trained in regular meetings by the planter
- (4) Using their gifts and talents in ministry
 - often this group becomes the “Advisory Team” for the plant or includes an “Advisory Team”
 - this often means they are identified and involved with a specific ministry team or ministry area
- (5) Reaching out to and inviting their Christian and non-Christian friends and associates.

Assessing and Working with Core Groups

1. The Pros and Cons
2. Identify their non-negotiables
3. Diagnostic Questions
4. While you want to include everyone in your plant, especially those who are a part of the original core group, and while you must listen and try to be responsive to their needs, insights, and desires, it is inevitable that some just will won't be happy with the way the plant is taking shape, the direction it is going, and with the planter himself. ***It may just be that some people will drop out of the core group or even be asked to leave. Often the key to a healthy church plant is not just those who are included but those who leave.***
5. The larger and more defined a core group is the more of a “candidating” situation it becomes and the more the plant must adapt to the group and be responsive to the needs, desires, and ideas.
6. Equipping and Mobilizing a Core Group and Launch Team to be outwardly focused and missionally engaged – building it into the “DNA” of the church.

Moving Towards and Launching Public Worship Services

- 1. Determine the best time of year and the best time of day**

- 2. Find the best facility and location – this includes finding the best balance of:**
 - Accessibility

 - Affordability

 - Adequacy

 - Attractiveness

- 3. Decide on your key “launch indicators” which might include:**
 - Have secured the best possible facilities for worship

 - key ministries, such as worship and children, have trained leadership, personnel and resources

 - there are 10-15 adults on the launch team, 50+ people in the core group, and 100+ interested contacts

 - there is a spirit of unity and excitement among the core membership

 - outreach, service, and evangelism are a regular part of our life and ministry together; people are coming to Christ and non-believers are being engaged with the gospel

 - advertising and signage are in place

 - have a plan for following up visitors

- 4. Do a series of “launches”**
 - have monthly “preview” services in the three months or so leading up to the first “public launch”

 - have two “trial” launches the two Sundays before public launch

5. Create community awareness

- core members spreading the word (provide materials to hand out)
- newspaper advertising: the more local the better starting at least 10 weeks ahead; place ads in the church section AND display ads elsewhere; write articles for the paper
- direct mailers (at least 3-4 weekly leading up to public worship)
- have signs and banners at your location and, as possible, around town

6. General considerations:

- Enjoy the day!!!
- Be sure to take a couple days off the week after public launch and a week vacation by at least the 6 month mark
- Remember it can be a roller coaster ride. Your first Sunday may be great but the second and third not so great.

7. Prepare for at least THREE LAUNCH PHASES

- Each of these phases involves accessing where you are really at, who and how many folks you really have, changing the leadership needs and personnel, and recalibrating your ministry structure as necessary to fit the realities of your new situations.
- The Core Group and Launch Team MUST understand that this is what will happen ahead of time and that personnel changes are not personal but strategic.

(1) Phase 1 – Breaking Gravity

(2) Phase II – Boosting into Orbit

(3) Phase III – Settling into Orbit (but with continuous minor adjustments)