

Church Planting Movements – What are they?

Church Planting Movements is the title of book by David Garrison of the International Mission Board in which he sites a number of cases where there has been rapid and exponential growth of churches in a given region. After analyzing these cases, Garrison distills a number of common elements found in each. As a result, he defines a Church Planting Movement (CPM) as “. . . a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.”¹

Rapid – new churches start much quicker than traditionally.

Multiplicative – the number of churches grow at an exponential rate by multiplication, not addition.

Indigenous – they start from within the culture or population segment and don't depend on outside resources to multiply.

Churches planting Churches – ordinary church members, not professional clergy, accept responsibility for starting new churches.

Church Planting Movements – Ten Universal Elements

Garrison found ten components common to all of the Church Planting Movements he studied:

1. *Prayer* – there was an urgency, passion, and vitality to believers' prayers.
2. *Abundant gospel sowing* – believers use all possible means, including mass media, to get the message of Jesus to as many as possible, so the entire area is gospel saturated.
3. *Intentional church planting* – Christian leaders, realizing that church planting is the most effective means of discipleship, devise a strategy from the outset where starting new churches is the single-minded focus. Everything not contributing to this focus is discarded.
4. *Scriptural authority* – the Bible is translated in the heart language of the people and believers unhesitatingly see it -- not other books, aids, or teachers -- as the authority in their daily lives.
5. *Local leadership* – local leaders and not outside ministers or missionaries give direction to the movement and take responsibility for it.
6. *Lay leadership* – believers realize that if they are to reach their own culture for Christ then they personally need to take initiative and not wait for professional clergy to do it.
7. *Cell or house churches* – small, easily led and reproducible churches meeting in homes or storefronts predominate in a CPM.
8. *Churches planting churches* – Christians believe that reproduction is natural and they do not need outside resources to obey Christ's command to make disciples.
9. *Rapid reproduction* – believers have a sense of urgency to reach their lost neighbors and avoid everything non-essential to planting churches.
10. *Healthy churches* – each church carries out the following five purposes: worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry to others, and fellowship.

Church Planting Movements – How to Avoid Them!

Perhaps even more important than what believers do in Church Planting Movements is what they *do not* do. Garrison lists the following as obstacles, practices that will impede the startup of a CPM or eventually destroy a CPM in progress:

- Place non-biblical requirements (land, building, paid staff, legal documents, minimum number of believers, etc.) on new churches.
- Make new churches abandon their local language, culture, dress, music, art forms, and the like to conform to outside standards.
- Encourage new believers to start imitating the worldliness, immorality, and bad behavior of other so-called Christians in their community.
- Use models of churches (expensive buildings and labor-intensive programs) that require outside resources, staffing, and funding to maintain.
- Use lots of outside funding and keep new believers and churches dependent on it.
- Put extra-biblical requirements on leaders like theological school or extensive training programs before they can do ministry.
- Make sure everything happens in sequential order. Never consider, for example, that the discipleship process may actually start before conversion to Christ.
- Plant sterile churches. Do not expect reproduction to take place and somehow convey it is unusual for believers and churches to want to multiply.
- Make sure you have a pre-fabricated strategy for church planting in place in order to avoid flexibility and dependence of the Spirit's leading.

Why should we help foster Church Planting Movements? We should do all we can to see them occur because they represent God's original intention for His church and are our best hope for fulfilling Christ's Great Commission: to “make disciples of all nations” ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

¹ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost Word* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), p. 21.