

Church Planting Wisdom

By Various Church Planters From Across the Country

About This Pamphlet

This pamphlet is a collection of church planting wisdoms assembled from across the nation by Derek Brown in a blog series, entitled "Church Planting Wisdom." You can find the original posts at <http://www.desertfather.com/category/church-planting-wisdom/>. Derek's blog can be found at <http://www.desertfather.com> . The following wisdoms are printed in order of their publishing date on the website. There is no particular order for them, they were simply published in the order that they were received by Derek via email.

About Derek Brown

Derek is a church planter in training, and did this series solely as education for himself and he thought it may benefit others, so he published it on his blog. He will be planting Harmony Church in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Church Planting Wisdom

Tally Wilgis, Pastor of Focal Point Church in
Chesapeake, VA

<http://www.tallywilgis.com>

- **A Few Pointers About Planting:**
 - If you can do anything else, **do it**.
 - If you have a choice, **plant with a team**.
 - If you're not a natural leader, you will get eaten alive.
 - **Church plants are built off of the vision and leadership of the lead pastor.**
 - Do a few things and do them well.
 - **Get networked.**
- **Things He Would've Done Otherwise:**
 - Raised more money before going public.
 - **Make it harder to join the church:** this gets closer to ensuring commitment.
 - Build to a critical mass.
 - Pushed the envelope (**negotiate harder**) for the facility.
 - Gone without an office for a longer period of time.
 - **Obedied the instinct.**
- **The One Thing For Tally?** Preach for the lost, not for ones wanting depth.

Tadd Grandstaff, Pastor of Pine Ridge Church in Burlington, NC

<http://www.taddgrandstaff.com>

- **Spend as much time with Planters and Pastors prior to making your decision to plant and during your planting process.** Currently I have either met with by phone or in person with 87 different church planters and pastors. **You can always learn something from anyone** and I have learned everyone has some valuable wisdom to share. I have just called guys up anyone and everyone that I have heard of, read about or whatever, If they are within driving distance I ask them if I can meet with them some time, if they are not I ask if I can have a few minutes to talk with them by phone. **I ask them what they did right, what they did wrong, what would they have done differently, and for any wisdom they could pass along.** This alone has created so many resources and contacts for me and has allowed my network to grow like crazy.
- **Figure out who YOU are and what God is calling you to do.** Bottom line...I am not Andy, Ed, Bill, Erwin or Rick and I had to figure out that I am Tadd Grandstaff and **I can't plant their church.** I had to come to the conclusion of who I am and what are my strengths and what vision was God giving me for a church. Just because something works somewhere else doesn't mean I can apply it here. **I had to narrow my vision, figure out my community and plant the church that God has called me to plant.**
- **Figure out how to communicate vision.** This sounds simple, but it really isn't. I know so many guys who want to plant churches, but they don't know how to put it into words. If you can't communicate vision then people don't know what to follow or support. As soon as I figured out how to communicate what God was calling me to

do...I began to add staff, launch team members, and financial supporters. **Your vision has to paint a picture that people can see**, you have to be able to put it into words, and you have to be able to inspire people with it. If you can't do those things, then wait until you tell people about your vision. Until you can make it clear you will do more damage than good. **If you don't seem sure about what God has called you to do and are always changing things then people will have a hard time believing in you.**

Jonathan Herron, Pastor of Catalyst Church in Kent, OH

<http://www.jonathanherron.com>

1) **Preach a Big Jesus.** Before you even work on a vision statement, make sure you know the Jesus of the Bible. Mark Driscoll (www.marshillchurch.org) has the best advice: be all about the Jesus we find in Revelation 19 and get your Christology right. Men and women will worship that King! People will sacrifice for a God who is on the throne ruling and reigning. A white hot devotion to advancing His kingdom will lay the foundation for a healthy church plant.

2) **Be a Dreamer.** In Acts 2, Peter stands up and delivers the world's first sermon about Jesus. What does he quote? An obscure verse from a minor prophet named Joel. Peter talks about how this Kingdom of God movement will be led by dreamers and visionaries.

Think about it - as a church planter, you are essentially becoming a missionary. You will be learning a new culture, new language, etc.

Dream about what it would look like to have the resurrected Christ displayed in your context. Be faithful to the early church structure (Acts, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus). Don't copy another church. Honor the Creator by being creative. Dream big.

For example, when we started having our initial core group bible studies, we called them "Dream Parties!" We were envisioning together what God wanted to do in the greater Kent State University area.

3) **Be a Blogging Pastor.** I cannot emphasize enough how powerful a tool blogging is in 21st century ministry. I ended up joining the Executive Team at my previous ministry, NewSpring Church (www.NewSpring.cc), after being discovered through my blog! In my current ministry, we've seen new families and singles join the mission of Catalyst simply by coming across the blog. The postmodern culture doesn't assume that just because you have the title "pastor" that you are to be respected. Blogs break down assumptions and reveal

your heart. Imagine if blogs had been around during Paul's ministry - we probably would have had a lot of e-pistles!

Bob Franquiz, Pastor of Calvary Fellowship in Miami, FL

<http://www.bobfranquiz.com>

- **What mistake did you make in your first year of church planting, and how would you do it over?** Here's what I think my biggest mistake was: **I didn't seize the power of Momentum at first.** Starting a church can create serious momentum in your community (stats show that new churches are more likely to reach unchurched people than older churches) and I didn't harness that. Mostly because I had no idea what I was doing. I had never read a book on church planting. I was taught that all that 'stuff' was fleshly and that I should just teach the Bible and God's Spirit will bring everyone in. That's nice and all, but it's not the whole story. **Strategy is something that God uses too.**
- **Did you have to gather a core group? If so, how did you go about it?** I started a Bible study on Thursday nights and we had about 20 people at our peak. Then we started Sunday morning about 3 months later. It was a simple format, just worship and teaching. Not much vision casting (I had no idea what that was back then) or fundraising. **People just started showing up and we decided to take a step of faith and start Sunday services.**
- **Was there any particular Scripture that you kept turning to in order to keep you going?** There were a few. Hebrews 11:8; Matthew 8:13; Acts 18:9-10 (this one was huge b/c I did deal with fear when we were getting started. I was leaving my comfortable job at Calvary Fort Lauderdale and moving to a new city where I didn't know anyone).

Gary Lamb, Pastor of Ridge Stone Church in Canton, GA

<http://www.garylamb.org>

- **Find A Community That Fits You** - CP's should be the utmost authority on their community and they need to go to a community that fits who they naturally are. **Don't worry so much about the growth as you do as much as if the community fits you and you can love it.** I could have went 7 miles south and we would have shut down because it is a totally different community that doesn't fit me. Find a community that you and your team can live in and fit the demographics.
- **Don't Pastor Too Soon** - The biggest mistake I see planters make is they get about 50 people and instead of remaining innovative and creative in the getting the word out to NEW people the start to pastor those 50 people and those people get all their time and attention. You need to remain with the mind of a church planter forever I think but at least for the first 2 years. That first 50 can take all your time if you allow them and keep you from being effective at reaching others. **Be the vision caster, leader to leaders, and lead teacher.** Teach your people to care for each other so you can be freed up to lead.
- **Be YOURSELF** - EVERY planter that comes out wants to be the next Andy Stanley, Erwin McManus, or whoever the hot guy is. Learn from everyone but be yourself. Early on I thought I was Ed Young Jr. but I learned very quickly that I wasn't. **Love me or hate me, I am who I am and that is all my people expect me to be.** When I learned to be who God created me to be it was the most freeing thing to ever happen to me in ministry.

Kevin Cawley, Missiologist in Vancouver, BC

<http://cawley.typepad.com>

- Don't get overly infatuated with technique
- Make your one ambition a radical pursuit of God Himself.
- Stay close to the Scriptures.
- You can't lead where you're not going.
- Pick some giants of the past that can instruct you in matters of Godliness— those who will constantly hold before you a magnificent portrait of the glory of God. (ie, the Puritans, Spurgeon, Packer, and Piper)
- Have some outside accountability (coaching, oversight, critique, encouragement)
- Your team should be able to tell you the absolute truth: **good or bad.**
- Find some older, wiser men that will invest in you.

Travis Johnson, Pastor of Life Pointe Church in Homestead, FL

<http://www.travisjohnson.net>

- **All church planting is local.** As you learn and pickup insight from other church planters, decipher what applies in your context. Miami is entirely its own world as is the patch of earth where you may be going to plant.
- **Listen to critique...but not for too long.** As a planter, you do not have the time, resources, or credibility to dwell there or alter direction every time it rubs someone the wrong way. Run your hand around your back to check if your spine has been installed. If you do not have one, grow one ASAP. **Teach and live the vision.** The people that don't like it need to be re-educated or be told where the exit is located.
- **Be consumed with your plant.** Think, breathe, sleep new church. But, as you do, love your family, play with your kids, date your wife, and make some incredible memories. There is no soul on earth more valuable than them. **If you fail your family and reach your city, you have failed.**

Bruce Chant, Pastor of NORTSHORE Church in
Perth, Australia

<http://www.hismethod.com>

- **Confirm your call.** If you aren't sure that God's calling you to this, **don't do it.** Yes, it's hard work, but spiritually it is work at the "pointy end" of God's Kingdom and you will encounter difficulty, hardship, opposition. That stuff can either shape you and mold you into someone more fruitful or it will kill you. I would definitely recommend getting your call to plant confirm by more seasoned and wise men - via a network or denomination or the like - before you launch out.
- **Don't compromise your vision.** If you believe you have a vision for a church from God, hold on to it and **don't compromise it for short term gain.** What I mean is this, in the early days you will have some Christian folk come across your path who will want in, but they will want in on their terms or with their agenda. The issues might not be huge, but I can't tell you how important it is to ensure you are absolutely clear and upfront with everyone on where you stand. If it means a smaller core, or you wait longer before commencing a ministry or filling a position - **WAIT.** We all want things done yesterday, but unless they are fully on board with the vision it is a false economy.
- **Make your plans, but let God direct your steps.** One verse has been huge for me - [Proverbs 16:9](#) - *In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.* You need to make your plans and set out your strategies, but ultimately God will open doors or orchestrate things that we could never dream of. **You need to know God is in control but also that we is working ahead of you to bring about His purposes for His church - and when He does people's faith grows and it is incredible!**

Michael Foster, Pastor of Seven Hills Church in Cincinnati, OH

<http://michaelfoster.typepad.com>

- **Protect and strengthen your marriage/family.** The biggest area ignored in all church planting books, seminars/conferences and church planting networks/denominations is marriage/family. Let this all-important verse sink in, *"He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?"* (1 Timothy 3:4-5) Church planting will put your marriage/family through a white hot heat that you have never felt before. All the weakness and faults in your marriage/family will be amplified ten times over. This will be a good sanctifying, albeit painful, experience for your marriage/family if you don't let it destroy you. A few steps I'd take are 1) Make sure your wife has a friend outside the church that she can confide in about everything and I mean everything that she is going through 2) Date your wife and do what it takes to keep the sex life hot, steamy, and frequent. 3) Set a work schedule that includes hours of work and a day off so your family knows when they can spend time with you. Remember if you lose your marriage/family, you lose your pastorate. They are your first priority.
- **Surround yourself with wise counselors.** Take to heart the following two passages from Proverbs: *"For by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory"* (24:6) and *"Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment"* (18:1). You need to surround yourself with counselors. You need to seek out both "fathers" and "brothers." A father is an older counselor that has been through the fire and can pastor you with his wisdom. A brother is a person close to you in age and maturity who can relate to your struggle in the "now sense" and can challenge/encourage you in

the battle. You should seek counselors from within your network/denomination and without.

- **Don't sacrifice the long term for the short term (aka take your time).** It is true that the fields are ready for the harvest but that in no ways should be used as an excuse to rush things. Take time to understand your context, develop relational networks, and properly develop a leadership base. In regards to leadership, you will be tempted to be guilty of, "being hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Tim 5:22) but remember the easiest way to fire a person is to never hire them.

Drew Goodmanson, Pastor-Elder at Kaleo Church in San Diego, CA

<http://www.goodmanson.com>

- **Don't plant a church as a reaction.** Often, church planters decide to start a church in reaction to the churches they previously attended. I trust these church planters feel called to start a church but still the 'planting as a reaction' motive can influence them greatly in the beginning and shape their philosophy of ministry. If you are a new church, **what is your identity?** As I attend many church plants they usually can tell me what they are not. We don't have a CEO leadership mentality, we don't sing old-school hymns, we don't have traditional services, we don't...[fill in the blank]. **In the long run, you can't rally people to this anti-identity.** If you do, you will only gather a group around cynicism and will never move forward in a positive direction. In order to ever build a church, planters need to exercise this demon of planting as a reaction. This is a transition that our church has gone through, and I have seen several other local church plants go through the same process. Know your positive vision for your church and the world around you. This is something that I see as a common denominator for churches that are making a large impact on their community. Some of those who are extremely gifted in this area are Mark Driscoll at Mars Hill and Rick McKinley at Imago Dei Community . I pray that Kaleo would learn from these but also forge our identity as we consider the following: To make a Kingdom-impact on your local community and the world-at-large, you must move from Deconstruction to Kingdom Building. Driscoll and McKinley are just two of the pastors I know that do an amazing job at casting a vision and gathering people to join that vision. While I attended Mars Hill for about 5 years and I was always impressed by Driscoll's vision-casting often at the beginning of the service. It was a 'here is where we are going as a church' that got people passionate about what Mars Hill was doing. When I think

of Driscoll, it is the counter-culture message he preaches that contradicts a city that is one of the least church cities in the country. Driscoll has rallied a group around this great cause he champions. Where Driscoll spear-heads this vision at Mars Hill, McKinley does this through servant-leaders. There is a platform for the ministry leaders, other pastors, even author Donald Miller and others to cast the vision and gather groups around ministry, cultural ideas and kingdom-mindedness. Both have different methods but both work. **The common denominator is that instead of reacting against, they are building towards something.**

- **Don't plant a church by yourself.** We are strong believers in planting with more than one pastor/elder. For almost two years I wrote, *Sheep & Goats*, a weekly column on spirituality for the San Diego Reader. In this column, I visited many churches and interviewed pastors (of all faiths but Protestant churches were the most common). In this time, as well as our own observations, churches who have one 'senior pastor' tend to reflect this pastor's strengths and weaknesses. If the pastor is a strong teacher, the sermon may be very insightful, but the community could lack the caring hospitality they should exhibit as believers. We all have strengths and weaknesses and so I strongly encourage at least two people plant a church together with the goal of a plurality of elders to govern the church. This church government structure will solve a lot of problems a church planter will go through.

Matt Payne, Pastor of Church! at Bethany in Beaverton, OR

<http://bethanychurchplant.blogspot.com>

- **Build a Great Team.** Pray every day that God would send you people that complement your gift mix to be a part of your launch team. Even the Lone Ranger had a Tonto. Recruit them by casting the vision about what God is doing instead of making a hard sell. Let God call them as much as He has called you so when you tick them off they will be more likely to stay. A great team will allow ministry to be done even while you are at home with your family or on vacation. A great team will reproduce leaders and make disciples. Spend significant time with your team!! **Pray and plan and play with them.**
- **Know your Target.** Buy the demographic data and live in the area. Determine who you will best reach and develop basic plan to reach them. **Don't over-program!!** Spend significant time hanging around them. Join the groups they have joined. Love them, don't treat them as a project. Pray for them every single day!
- **Be Flexible/Adaptable.** Things will not go the way you think they will go. That's ok. God is up to something. He'll let you in on it when He's ready. Pray every day for the strength to handle whatever situations might come up.

Michael Lukaszewski, Pastor of Oak Leaf Church in Cartersville, GA

<http://www.youcanknowGod.com>

- **Read books about Jesus, faith and Christianity, not just about church planting.** In fact, most books about church planting will hurt you more than help you. Most people, including myself, don't really understand half of what they are talking about.
- **Look to growing churches and good churches for models, not churches that aren't growing.** Hang around with people who are doing it. Go to conferences and talk to people in the halls and the leaders of breakout sessions. **You'll learn more from conversations than from books.**
- **Play to your strengths.** We didn't have a worship leader on staff, which is what everybody said to get first. We hired bands and played to our other strengths and our other staff guys' strengths.
- **Don't act like a real church, except for Sunday morning.** I think one of the reasons we were able to launch large was because our Sunday morning service is very good. I work very, very, very hard on it. On the message, videos, music, creative stuff, etc.
- **Learn how to market and advertise.** It's not unspiritual to market a church.

Philip Nation, Pastor of Lake Ridge Church in Cumming, GA

<http://www.lakeridgechurch.net>

In March of 2005, Ed Stetzer, Travis Vaughn, and Philip Nation began the groundwork for planting Lake Ridge Church. Since then, they launched, celebrated their first anniversary, and commissioned Travis to plant a simple church in the same harvest field but among a different strain of wheat.

Not too long ago, a friend who trains church planters asked me, "What do these guys need to know that we are not telling them?" I said that he needed to tell them 3 things:

1. Church planting is hard.
2. Church planting is very hard.
3. Church planting is the hardest thing you will ever do.

Now having said that with my tongue planted firmly in my cheek, we all know that it really is true. As planters (Philip's first time and Ed's umpteenth time), you must recognize the emotional and spiritual battles to be faced and prepare yourself accordingly. Here are three ideas to help you along the journey.

First, know that there is only one way to prepare yourself for success and rejection: Enjoy your own salvation. In [Luke 10:20](#), Christ has sent out the 72 workers, told them to pray for more workers in the harvest field, and given heavenly wisdom for ministry. After they return with reports of the spiritual authority they enjoyed, he said *"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* If you leverage your feeling of self-worth and "am I a success?" mentality off of the exterior results, eventually, you will find yourself in the pit. **Instead, continue to keep your salvation as the centerpiece of joy in your life.** Remember that God called you to intimacy with him long before he called you to plant a church. And, that after your church

planting days are over, he will still be calling you to intimacy. This will anchor you in a joy that is infectious and makes evangelism, outreach, and missionary living much easier than you will expect.

Second, be determined to connect to a learning community of peers.

By the grace of God, I became involved with a group of planters shortly after we began the work to start Lake Ridge Church. There are 10 of us connected to the group and we have committed to doing a few things together. First and foremost is to retreat for 3 days together every six months. For each retreat, we commit to studying a book of the Bible and reading a spiritual formation book (last time it was Colossians and *The Great Omission* by Dallas Willard). We do a lot of preparation but very little planning. It is a time to laugh, cry, pray, and discuss God's revelation in his Word without preachiness and pretension. There are no scheduled sermons or prayer times. We simply meet and allow ministry to occur naturally to one another. It takes time and finances, but is worthwhile. We also stay in contact through CoachNet.org for purposes of prayer, accountability, and encouragement. Finally, some of us have committed to recording our "tribal story" in print. It is foolish to learn from our own journey and not pass the lessons along to others. This band of brothers has become indispensable to the journey and we are actively seeking others who would want to learn to do the same. Currently, each one in the group (including myself) is seeking to begin peer networks among like-minded missional leaders in our regions of ministry.

Thirdly, we team planted Lake Ridge Church for many reasons, but a specific one is accountability. The spiritual discipline of submission is relatively lost today and needs to be recaptured. The recent events in Ted Haggard's life is only a public illustration of what we all know to be an all too common experience in the church. We intentionally came in expressing permission to be questioned about core devotional, family, and ministry issues. [Ephesians 5:21](#) stands as an unwavering command for us to submit to one another in order to honor Christ. In a church plant environment, this is a necessary practice for the leaders so that good work will be done and sin might be averted. **After all, many planters have an Alpha Male – Big Dog – Uber Man personality that needs to be kept in check.**

The work of planting Lake Ridge Church has been fun, challenging,

exasperating and exhilarating. I hope that your journey will be fraught with the same dangers and filled with the same joy.

Jesus Christ, Pastor of the Church at Large

(no website available)

- **It's not your fault. (Matthew 13:3-9)** All too often in evangelism, we blame ourselves when someone doesn't accept the Gospel. **We have to remember that it's not up to us.** In the parable of the sower, we see that the ground that is sowed on is predetermined. The simple fact of the matter is this: **the sower sows.** As church planters, **we are called to plant seeds,** no matter what the ground may look like. Of course, we try to find fruitful ground, but sometimes, you just can't tell. **During the day we preach like an Arminian, but at the end of the day we sleep like a Calvinist.** The ground that the seed falls on is **ultimately up to God.**
- **Pray for Fruitfulness. (Matthew 13:3-9)** Also in the parable of the sower, we see that **there are many kinds of fruitful grounds.** Jesus says that what we ask, we receive (in the will of the Father), so the crux of the matter is this: **pray for fruitfulness.** Pray to produce a 100 crop, not 60 or 30.
- **The Thing About Wheat. (Matthew 13:24-30)** In the parable of the wheat and weeds, we find something interesting. We, the Church, are compared to wheat. So I looked up wheat, and behold: two things about wheat stand out.
 1. **It is the number one crop worldwide.** From it comes bread, cereal, bran, flour, cakes, cookies, and of course, beer. So what does that mean? **It's fruitful.** The Church is to be fruitful.
 2. The second? **It self-pollinates.** The church is to self-pollinate, that is, we are to multiply. Wheat is a concrete of example of what the Church should be. Wheat guarantees it's own survival, regardless of environment. The church should too.

What does this mean for the church? **We are to be fruitful and multiply.** Just as Adam and Eve were commanded, so are we.