

Making New Disciples in New Places


SEE
#ALL
THE
PEOPLE
RESOURCES



#SEE ALL THE PEOPLE

“We cannot disciple people that we are not in relationship with. Discipleship begins with relationship.”

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This booklet is a companion piece to:

Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations

by Rev. Junius B. Dotson

Seven Seasons

Rooted in the Reign of God inaugurated by Jesus, laity and clergy are invited to live out their own discipleship of Jesus by, in turn, making new disciples of others. The laity—clergy partnership works through seven seasons in making new disciples in new places. These seasons help planters of new faith communities to #SeeAllThePeople and to systematically gather others. The seasons include:

- Discerning
- Visioning
- Gathering
- Discipling
- Worshiping
- Maturing
- Multiplying

In this booklet, we provide a depiction of each season, an explanation of the systems, and a brief description of the strategies involved in planting new faith communities. This serves as the foundation for new faith communities that heed the words of the Apostle Paul: “Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature” (Romans 12: 2 CEB).

The Seven Seasons of Planting

Please know that the seven seasons of planting are not sequential in a linear sense. Each season represents a vital phase in the creation of a new community of faith. There are, however, aspects of seasons that overlap and intertwine with one another. The ideal desired outcome is that a healthy new faith community multiplies to form other new faith communities that reach more people with the good news of the Reign of God and its leader, Jesus Christ.

Discerning

The season of *discerning* begins when a prospective planter (whether clergy or lay or a team representing both, or a potential partner congregation) senses God's calling to start a new community of faith. Such a divine calling is greater than a simple desire to start a new community of faith. This calling is affirmed by others who assess the necessary gifts for this ministry. Ongoing discernment could occur through training and assessment events, personal or corporate study, prayer, and conversations with experienced church planters or partnering congregations.

Thus, the work of discernment applies to individuals and their sense of calling and partnering congregations who have a heart for multiplying their ministry by giving birth to newer communities of faith. Let's take a further look at each, starting with the individual.

In the season of discerning, an individual—whether lay or clergy—seeks an answer to the question, “Is planting a new faith community for me?” That is, “Do I possess the gifts and abilities to lead myself and others in the creation of forming Christian fellowship?”

There are resources that help that self-assessment. Path1's website (Path1.org) includes a page called, “Could I Plant?” The page includes an explanatory video and online tools for taking an initial planter assessment and a spiritual gifts assessment. These assessment surveys help start the process of discernment. If initial results warrant more in-depth consideration, a potential planter should talk with judicatory leaders to seek help in going deeper.

Individual assessment for discerning a leadership role in planting new communities of faith cannot be solely an individual exercise. Other Christians need to help. As an individual goes deeper into discernment, he or she should seek conversation with a team of others who can challenge or confirm the calling to plant.

Partnering congregations that sense a calling to plant a newer faith community also need the help of others in their discernment. Seek out resources and tools that can help your church measure its

healthiness. Readiness 360 (<https://readiness360.org>) is an online tool that helps congregations understand the discernment process and what steps they can take to be ready to plant a new faith community.

Both individual and partnering congregational discernment involve call, confirmation, affirmation, and refinement. God gives us signs as to whether we are on the right track toward creating new places for new people. The larger Christian community also assesses our calling. Sometimes the larger community, which can be represented by an interview team, confirms the call or informs us that we need to work on certain skills first before responding to the call. At other times, the larger Christian community affirms our call and suggests ways in which it can be refined through ongoing training, coaching, mentoring, and study.

Questions to Consider

- Are you called to be a church planter?
- Are you called to be a partner church?
- Is there confirmation from God? From others?

How would you answer the above questions? What help can you procure to provide answers?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of discerning. What lessons can you learn about discernment from ...

- Matthew 3:13-17 (John baptizes Jesus)
- Luke 7:18-28 (John's disciples ask Jesus if he's "the one"; Jesus tells them to report what they see)
- Matthew 16:13-20 (Peter declares Jesus is Christ; Jesus tells Peter that he is going to build his church on this rock)
- I Samuel 1-3 (God answers Hannah's prayers for a child, Samuel; she dedicates his life to the Lord, and he begins to discern his calling as a prophet, through Eli's teaching and God's call on him by name)

Visioning

The soil in which God sows the seed of a new church is in the planter or planting church's heart. *Vision* offers a shared picture of a preferred future, inspired by God and often first articulated by leaders and then affirmed by God's people. A vision for starting a new faith community may arise from a need to reach a geographical area, cultural group, or specific community of people. Energized by this vision, leaders motivate others to develop strategic plans and begin to enlist teams of people to help that vision become a reality. Visioning happens early in the planting process, often during the season of discerning or just beyond.

The faith community planter or planting church prays to God for a clear vision. Prayer is essential for all the seasons of planting new faith communities. Praying for a vision involves dreaming a God-sized dream for what could be for the community of people you seek to gather. A God-sized dream goes beyond our mere human capacity and draws upon the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us.

It can start simply. A planting layperson or clergyperson asks, "What if I were to invite my neighbors who live on my street to come together and pray?" "What if we were to share a meal?" "What if we were to sing songs together?" We pray to God for a dream, a vision, of what it would look like for our neighbors to come together in community. Visioning is a key season to help a planting team #SeeAllThePeople.

As we begin to see the vision that God plants in our hearts, we begin to share that vision with others. We begin to form a team that responds to the vision with conviction and commitment.

Questions to Consider

- What is God's dream for you? For the people of your church? For your community?
- How will you begin to share that vision with others?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of visioning. What lessons can you learn about visioning from ...

- Luke 4:14-30 (Jesus declares his fulfillment of a prophet's vision)
- Matthew 9/Luke 10 (send laborers to the harvest)
- Acts 10 (Peter and Cornelius: Peter is open to God's leading and vision; converts an entire household because of a new definition of "clean/unclean")
- Nehemiah 1-2 (layperson following God's calling and vision to rebuild Jerusalem)

Gathering

Engaging people to help plant and nurture a new community of faith (including members from a partnering church, friends, family, and inquirers in the community) requires a great deal of invitation, networking, and relationship building. Creating a new place for new people is never solo work. The planting team's first and most important task is to connect people to Jesus, to the planter, to the vision, and to one another. The team looks for opportunities to tell others about the good news of God's order, and its leader, Jesus the Christ.

The team communicates its vision to bring transformation to its community and the world. The team gathers people into small groups, invites people to fellowship events, and begins to worship together in a way that serves as a preview for the worshiping experience it will offer when it is ready to launch weekly public worship. In this way, during the season of gathering, the planter or planting church builds up a critical mass of people.

As we live into the season of gathering, we explore how best to build relationships of love and understanding with the people with whom we want to form a community. We expand our launch team to include new people. We test the vision we have received from God with this expanding core of committed people. We begin to formulate questions together: "What difference could our new faith community make in our neighborhood? What is a need in our community that our team could begin to address? For what purpose would we start a new community of faith? Why would faith in Jesus, the leader, and entrance into God's order, the Reign, make a difference in people's lives?"

Questions to Consider

- How do we engage a critical mass of people?
- What are we doing to connect people to the planting team, vision, Christ, and the mission of the church?
- What difference does our congregation's presence make in the community?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of gathering. What lessons can you learn about gathering from ...

- Matthew 4:18-22 (Also Mark 1:16-20; John 1:35-51; Jesus calls the disciples)
- Acts 3 (Peter heals and preaches)
- Exodus 3-5 (God calls Moses and Moses brings along Aaron for the job of addressing Pharaoh)

Discipling

The season of discipling requires the planter to focus on leading, teaching, guiding, and growing the planting team, both in size and spiritual depth. No new community of faith needs to be encumbered with heavy systems and structures. However, simple organization needs to be in place to enable others to multiply themselves and mentor others in the faith. A Wesleyan model of church planting intentionally incorporates small groups for mentoring and multiplication. Spiritual growth and leadership development are the building blocks of a healthy faith community.

Curtis Brown, a former staff member and Paul Nixon, current Path 1 staff, have put together a workbook to train planters of new communities in how to find the first twelve committed people. Called *First Twelve*, the workbook (see https://s3.amazonaws.com/path1/Files/FirstTwelve_Participant-Workbook.pdf) is designed to guide the training. Here is a sample of what the authors have written:

The first twelve people to join you in starting a new ministry, new church, or new faith community will set the tone and shape for the future, set the pattern for replicating leadership, and begin a cascade of invitation. Finding those first twelve people who are invested and committed as leaders with you in helping start a new ministry is a key initial step in growing into something larger without your vision burning out or stalling out before a successful ministry launch.

“First Twelve” refers to gathering the first twelve committed people. It is key to any new community of faith in whatever shape that community takes. Before doing anything else, a first-twelve group focuses on its spirituality. Individuals seek to deepen their spiritual journey with God, and they seek to go deeper in their spiritual journey together, forming strong bonds that are firmly rooted in their experience with God. As articulated in the First Twelve workbook:

Your relationship with God is your greatest and most attractive asset for starting something new. Most people today are not looking for another social program or fun group. For the most

part, their lives are too busy to add anything else. However, many people are desperate for a deep relationship with God. A living and vital faith, lived out in public, will be the most fascinating part of your connections with new people.

As part of the season of discipling, we encourage first-twelve groups to go deep before they go wide. That is, we encourage them to spend time together, perhaps on a weekend retreat or a full week of spiritual formation, so that they can experience Christian community together, prayer, authentic sharing from the heart, and being vulnerable to one another while accepting and affirming one another. This kind of spiritual accountability was integral to the Methodist movement developed by Charles and John Wesley in the eighteenth century.

Questions to Consider

- How do we encourage people to grow and multiply themselves and their small groups?
- How do we bring together new core leaders so that we can create new faith communities that bring hope to our world?
- How will we make disciples who, in turn, make disciples?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of discipling. What lessons can you learn about discipling from ...

- Luke 6:12-16 (Jesus calls the twelve)
- John 3 (Jesus and Nicodemus; teaching about eternal life and new birth; life-long learning)
- Mark 9:14-50 (healing/prayer: little one with the spirit disciples could not cast out; teachable moments about greatness in kingdom of God; sanctification)
- Matthew 5-7; Luke 6 (Sermon on the Mount and Plain on principles for living)

Worshiping

We were created to be in relationship with God and one another. As human beings, we have worship embedded in our very nature. One of God's great commandments to Israel set the tone for how we express that deep-seated love and worship of God: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5 NRSV). How we begin a church's public expression of worship requires careful planning and timing (not too soon and not too late). Worship styles vary greatly among cultural contexts, nations, and age groups. Let the mission field guide your decision-making. Seek to meet their needs and interests. Spend time canvassing your mission area to learn about interests in music and art that can be applied to the practice of worship. Experiment to see what will work in your setting. Worship is central to the church's launch and to life itself!

Path1 encourages all emergent efforts at planting new faith communities to attend Launchpad training so that congregations are prepared to create new places for new people with a greater chance for success. The Launchpad training covers all seven of the seasons for planting new faith communities. The training will help a team of people (i.e. the first twelve) to make an action plan for launching the new ministry. Here is what the Path1 website says:

Path 1 staff have heard from church planters and conference leaders in mission frontier regions of our country, expressing a desire to take planter training to "new places for new people." To provide training reflective of planting experiences with more missional approaches, we offer a year-long process for planters and their teams called Launchpad. These events mark the beginning of the process. During training, planter leaders and their teams will sketch out ministry plans for the next nine months, considering both attractional and missional ministry elements. Subjects covered will include theology and call, affinity groups, vision-casting, best practices, community networking, bonding with the mission field, fund-raising, self and family care, and how to hold effective meetings one-on-one or with a group.

A key part of the Launchpad training includes preparing for worship. The training prepares a launch team on how to build a worship design team and all the elements that are appropriate for context, nation, and age group. What will be your style of music? Who will lead? The training also helps the launch team brand the worship experience they discern will speak best to their intended audience. For instance, in southern California, a church ended up offering three distinct styles of worship to the community. On Saturday evenings, they branded their worship as “Higher Ground” and offered a praise band-based music style. On early Sunday morning, they offered “Daybreak” that offered acoustic piano music. Later Sunday morning, they offered “Lively traditional” worship with a full and robed choir and hymns from the hymnal accompanied by an organ. Differing cultures and nations will find worship styles that speak to the hearts of the people they seek to reach.

As the planting team prepares to offer worship, they should consider inviting people to come to “taste and see” events. Once they discern the most appropriate worship to offer, they can begin to hold monthly (often called “preview”) worship services open to the public. The idea is to be fully prepared to offer a quality worship experience when the new faith community begins weekly public worship.

Questions to Consider

- What does worship mean to us?
- When and how do we start worshipping together as a new faith community?
- When (if ever) does worship become a public weekly experience?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of worshipping. What lessons can you learn about worshipping from ...

- John 4 (“worship in spirit and truth”; woman at the well)
- Acts 2 (both public and private worship)
- Acts 17 (Paul notices all the worship options and “unknown god” and uses that as an entry to preaching)

Maturing

As a congregation continues to develop and grow, it becomes viable, sustainable, and poised for multiplication. Growing people and developing healthy systems (leadership development, financial sustainability, structure, and discipleship) will help the church grow spiritually, multiply its mission and ministries, and prepare itself for inevitable leadership transitions. Building a fruitful and multiplying church requires recognizing and honoring each person's God-given gifts, especially those that complement the planter's gifts. Recognizing your dependence on God, maintaining a consistent corporate life of spiritual discipline, and faithfully exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit mean you will take big risks for Christ and experience personal and corporate growth and maturity.

All the ingredients for creating a healthy, viable faith community develop in the first two years of life. Experience tells us that having a coach to accompany the planter through this time makes a big difference. Planters who are coached through the critical first eighteen months of launching a new faith community tend to experience more success and less stress than those who don't. A coach—especially one who has planted a new faith community himself or herself — can raise the good, prompting questions that will keep the planter accountable and on course. The coach who has had church planting experience can help the planter avoid dead-ends and wrong turns. Path 1 lists on its website coaches who have been trained especially for the task of coming alongside those who create new places for new people.

George Howard serves as executive director of Global Coaching and Strategic Initiatives for Global Ministries, and he is a lay member from the West Ohio Annual Conference. George is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC), accredited by the International Coach Federation. Under his guidance, coaching ministries have been started outside the United States, starting with churches in Africa. George writes:

Coaching is about investing in leaders—increasing their capacity toward fulfilling their ministry and professional development goals. It is a strategy to connect with lay and clergy leaders and

accompany them with encouragement and support ... The Spirit is always moving to sweep the church into a new mission age. Global Ministries, Higher Education and Ministry, and Africa University are listening to the Spirit to discover how to connect the church in mission in very practical ways. We are striving not for top-down leadership, but for leadership that comes alongside, so that we all can live out the potential of a new life in Christ. My passion is to increase each person's capacity to be the one that God calls her or him to be—and as the executive director of Global Coaching, I am excited to work at [Africa University] and beyond to equip and empower men and women serving as pastors, agriculturalists, educators, health workers, and others to increase their capacity and follow their call.¹

Coaching and the ministry of “coming alongside” is reaching all areas of the church so that leaders, especially those who aspire to plant new communities of faith, are better equipped and supported. Coaching begins before the season of maturing. It should begin as soon as an individual has completed the season of discerning and has begun the season of visioning. It bears fruit during the season of maturing.

Questions to Consider

- What needs to happen to develop a discipleship system that helps people grow in faith and service?
- What systems do we need to put in place for sustainability?
- How are we developing leaders who “equip the saints” (see Ephesians 4:11-14) rather than doing ministry on their own?

(continued)

¹ George Howard, “Leadership Alongside: Global Coaching and Strategic Initiatives,” website of Global Ministries, visited 23 October 2017, www.umcmmission.org/fin George Howard, “Leadership Alongside: Global Coaching and Strategic Initiatives,” website of Global Ministries, visited 23 October 2017, <http://www.umcmmission.org/find-resources/new-world-outlook-magazine/2017>

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of maturing. What lessons can you learn about maturing from ...

- Acts 5:17-42 (Gamaliel urges Jerusalem Council to leave the believers alone and see what happens)
- Acts 6:1-7 (Stephen and others distribute food to widows, so the apostles can keep preaching the gospel)
- Acts 15:1-35 (Jerusalem Council offers guidelines for Gentile believers)
- Exodus 18 (Jethro observes Moses and advises him)
- Ephesians 4:13 (Our goal is becoming like Christ in all ways)

Multiplying

Healthy organisms reproduce and multiply and so do healthy churches! Healthy churches multiply disciples, leaders, ministries, and congregations. Reproduction begins from day one and manifests itself throughout the various aspects and stages of church life. With multiplication in the DNA of a new church, reproduction happens more naturally. The gospel of Christ mandates churches to be healthy, grow in ministry and mission, reach new people for Christ, and reproduce. Through multiplication, we build new bridges to the culture around us, introduce more people to Christ, and continue in ministry in fresh and vital ways. It is a way to see beyond the newly formed faith community and see the people not yet belonging to any community of faith. It is a way to #SeeAllThePeople.

Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, writing about church multiplication, compare the gestation periods of elephants and rabbits. The elephants, akin to very large or mega churches, take a long time to reproduce themselves, as much as two years. In contrast, rabbits reproduce at a monthly rate. New communities of faith should be thinking of how they will multiply from the first. If we aspire to a movement that multiplies faith communities rapidly, we need gestation periods like rabbits.²

The DNA of multiplication involves a culture of reproducing disciples who reproduce disciples. The culture needs to embed itself in every aspect of church life. Small groups should find ways and make plans—early on—for how to reproduce themselves. A new effort at forming a community of faith in Latin America used a simple devotional guide, *The Upper Room* devotional, as the basic content for small-group gatherings in the homes of people. They added music to the devotional and extended the use of prayer. The first group soon outgrew the home where it met, and they formed a second group, which begot a third group. When they had formed

² Ed Stetzer, and Daniel Im, *1,000 Churches: How Past Movements Did It—And How Your Church Can, Too* (New Churches and Lifeway Leadership, 2017), 19-20.

eight small groups, they began to join all the groups together into a larger celebratory gathering. The reproduction of small groups led to the formation of a new faith community.

Questions to Consider

- How do we reproduce to build God's reign in vision-replicating, resource-honoring ways?
- What can we do to ensure that multiplication remains in our church's DNA?
- Why do we need to multiply healthy ministry?

Scripture

Go to scripture to help in the season of multiplication. What lessons can you learn about maturing from ...

- John 6:1-14 (Jesus feeds five thousand)
- Matthew 25:14-30 (Parable of the Talents)
- Matthew 13; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8 (Parable of the Sower)
- Deuteronomy 6:1-3 (Faithfully observe the law and you will multiply)

This booklet was compiled by Douglas Ruffle, Director of Community Engagement and Church Planting Resources/Path1, at Discipleship Ministries, from resources produced by the entire staff of Path 1 (New Church Starts at Discipleship Ministries).



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