Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland
Erico House, 93-99 Upper Richmond
London, SW15 2TG

office@vineyardchurchesuk.com
www.vineyardchurches.org.uk

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Design & Layout
SIXTEIGHTFEET
design@sixteightfeet.co.uk
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Introduction

Intentional means to be “determined and resolved to act” in a certain way. To plant and lead a growing church requires a high level of intentionality. Nothing is haphazard, nothing is assumed. We need to think, pray and act in a determined and resolved way to see healthy growth. This material seeks to clarify a number of essential areas of church leadership that we especially need to be intentional about.
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**Speaking as a Practitioner...**

Between 2005 and 2008 I was employed by Vineyard Churches UK to do some church growth coaching for pastors and planters. This role came about after several surveys of UK Vineyard Churches in 2001 and 2004 highlighted a number of churches which had remained under 60 people over a number of years and would benefit from some investment of time, encouragement and advice towards growing.

The national council of Vineyard Churches UK was aware of some informal coaching I had done already, so I was asked to provide short term coaching and see what happened. During the two and a half years I actually met with over fifty Vineyard pastors and planters and did some “hit and run” coaching with 32 churches that had not previously seen much by way of growth.

Of the 32 coached 17 have since reported growth. About 50% of these grew by at least a third and several doubled in size. Of the remaining churches about 12 reported that they are moving in the right direction and will see some results in the months and years ahead. A handful of churches have remained pretty well unchanged and several have since closed.

To date, Maggie and I have planted two Vineyards, helped to start two others and have proactively coached church planters, as well as doing the short term church growth coaching for the Vineyards in the UK. I am certainly no expert but the last few years have been an invaluable experience and I am excited to be able to share anything we’ve learned.

I’m really not numbers-for-the-sake-of-numbers focused. My passion is to see as many people as possible captivated by Jesus, transformed through relationship with Jesus and mobilized to serve Jesus. Church planting and growing Churches is about the Final Orders
of Jesus (Matt28v18-20). This is not optional for the Church of Jesus. It is what His church is supposed to do until He returns.

I don’t have all the answers by any means, but as I have talked with church planters/leaders four essential activities have emerged which will help anyone leading a small church or a church plant wanting to facilitate growth. These four activities are not the only activities essential for growing healthy churches but our experience has shown that these are certainly vital. Simply put, the churches that were coached and that consistently applied all four of these essential activities have seen more growth than those that did not.

Being a picture kind of person I found presenting it on a diagram helped me, so we’ll unpack it using a triangle diagram through the rest of this material, as well as look at some other things that help or hinder growing healthy churches. We’ll devote chapters to each of these four essential activities as we go.

The smaller triangle represents the church or church plant as it currently is in terms of numerical size and the potential growth is represented by the dotted lines as the four essential activities are applied.

**Health and Growth**

Although we’re talking about growth, in a way the content of this book is more about health than numbers. As an expression of the Body of Christ churches should do all they can to be healthy communities and so the question is, “what is healthy” for a Church?
What does a healthy church look like? What does a healthy church do?”

Obviously a healthy church is Biblical and worshipful, genuinely loving to others and characterised by the Presence of God. So throughout this material I am assuming that the Church you lead prays, teaches the Bible and is learning to love one another as a New Testament community is described. But it doesn’t end there. Being a Biblical community must also involve reaching outwards; being intentional about including and gathering others into the family too. So health must include growing, both in terms of the quality (maturity) of the members individually and corporately, but also in terms of the quantity (number) of members and new members becoming part of the church.

That’s not to say big churches are necessarily healthy and small ones are not. This is not so much about numerical size as it is about growth; some addition, whatever the size a particular church actually is. The growth may be seen coming in fits and starts, much like children grow at different rates and at different times in their lives. Any parent would be concerned if there were no signs of growth at all over a prolonged period of time. So as we talk about church growth we have in mind something that is healthy and growing as it should.

Having said all that, the fact is, numbers do matter. Numbers are found throughout the Bible. For example, it is recorded how many people went into the ark; how many fighting men were in each tribe; how many turned to the Lord at Pentecost and the subsequent numbers of people who became believers. Numbers matter because people matter to God. It’s not about gauging how successful or gifted various leaders are compared to others. It is about being obedient to the compassionate Final Orders of Jesus to “go and make disciples”, more and more, of every kind of person.

Numbers also matter because knowing them enables leaders to plan. Asking the question, “how many people?” precedes and focuses planning. It leads us to ask other questions such as; “How many small groups do we need now and how many might we need next year? How many small group leaders will need to be trained and released? How many seats should be put out? How many doughnuts will we need?” It all matters. I know this is nothing new but it’s worth saying.
I like things practical and straightforward and I hope you’ll find this material the same. I am a church planter and pastor first and foremost, and these are things we’ve learned on the job. Some things we’ve learned by doing them wrong, some by stumbling on the right things and by helping others learn too. Much of what we have learned has been learned from others and so it’s unlikely you’ll find anything very new or revolutionary here. What we have found is that these things, tried and tested by various churches make a difference and help the process of growing churches.
Church planting is the process of establishing a Kingdom beach-head on enemy territory and seeing a growing community of disciples being captivated and transformed by Jesus; growing up and being mobilised to make an impact on their friends, family, neighbourhoods, community and workplaces.
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Most of us will never scale mountains or pioneer uncharted lands; hopefully most of us will never face any life-threatening circumstances, but even so there is an adventure to be had today. Adventure awaits those who dare to strike out in dependent obedience. It’s an exciting, exhilarating Kingdom adventure. There are challenges certainly but what venture worth giving our lives to doesn’t have a few uphill moments?

When Jesus landed on enemy territory he had come to destroy the works of the evil (malicious and hurtful) one, (1 John 3v8). His message of the “Kingdom right here, right now” (as well as “yet to come” in its fullness) was nothing short of a declaration of war. Every person who turned to Him and believed; every healing; every deliverance from evil spirits, each was an advancement of the Kingdom of God. His sacrificial death and Spirit-empowered resurrection sealed the ultimate victory, the final outcome was never in doubt but what He did made it concrete reality. His Return will bring about the gathering of all things under Him as Lord. Until then, although the war is ultimately won, we as followers of Jesus have some battles to fight, and planting and growing churches is a major strategic weapon in that conflict.

Recently at Mercy Vineyard I watched as the people started to gather: at least 25% of whom did not know Jesus before coming to our church but are now learning to love and follow Him; others who had thought they did not belong now becoming a family worshipping Jesus together; people whose sins had been forgiven; a marriage saved; some people with God-given dreams and visions mobilised and growing into what God has called them to. This is why we do what we do.

That morning I noticed one young woman standing up during the ministry time and remembered chatting with her some months ago when she asked “Why did we talk so much about Jesus instead of God?” Now here she was with her hands lifted to receive as the Holy Spirit gently radiated over her. Without any doubt if we had not planted the church and if we had not been intentional about growing the Church she would not even have known
about Jesus, much less be receiving his life transforming touch like this. Multiply this story again and again and we have the essence of church planting and growth right there.

We’ve just launched a worship time especially for our children with coloured disco lights and upbeat music. During quieter moments in the adult service we could hear the children from the other room laughing and singing and shouting to Jesus, learning how to “drainpipe” (pray for each other) and then they eventually spilt out to tell parents about the Good Samaritan or whatever. These kids are going to grow up knowing and experiencing and worshipping the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, knowing the Bible, used to exercising the gifts of the Spirit and praying for others. How exciting! That’s why we plant and grow churches.

Each week we have around thirty parents coming to our mid-week parent and toddlers group where both mums, some dads and the children sing and dance to “Great Big God” songs and get a free CD to go home with. They are learning the Bible and beginning to show up on Sundays. The parents are making relationships with people from the church and most weeks now some one is being prayed for healing or for situations they are facing. Some are turning up to exploring Jesus kind of courses and Sunday mornings. We may even start a second morning group because there’s a growing waiting list. One mum explained to Maggie she was going to have to start coming to church because her son was asking her how to pray and she didn’t know! This is what church growth is about.

Of course, we know that our church in Southampton is only one church among many in the city. We’re not the “best” church by any means and as UK Vineyard National Director John Mumford would say “we’re just one vegetable in the stew!” But we do have a flavour and a style that is working for some people who would not go to another kind of church. That’s the whole point. Unity is not uniformity. Different churches attract different people. We gather some people and not others because of who we are and how we do things. Our multi-cultural, diverse socio-economic communities need an array of nets to catch them. Although some larger churches can cater for many diverse groups of people, many can't effectively do that. So this is what church planting and growth is all about. It’s not a numbers game or about an insecure leader’s ego. It’s about the Great Commission being fulfilled and the Final Orders Jesus gave His people being obeyed. It is a real weapon in
the Kingdom conflict. It is practical and do-able and, though hard at times, it is the most exhilarating ride in the entire park!

Who are you? Where are you? What kind of person has God put in your heart to reach towards or where is He calling you to go? My hope is that as you read on the Holy Spirit will plant the seeds of an adventure in your heart and stir church planting in those He is calling. I hope too that those of us currently leading churches and groups will take up the tools in this material and use them to see many, many more people coming to Christ and being gathered into churches that mobilise them to ministry in the power of the Spirit.

**A Kingdom Partnership**

One thing we can be sure of right off the bat is that growing a church is something God does. It is God’s sovereign work. It is just that He chooses to do this in partnership with people He calls. In Paul’s first letter to the Church at Corinth we see this partnership in action. He describes how he planted, Apollos followed and did his part, but God made it grow (1 Corinthians 3v6).

The Good News was planted and watered by the diverse gifts, words and works of Paul and Apollos, and but it was God who breathed life on their endeavours so it grew and multiplied. The Word of God spread, more and more people became believers, the gathering of disciples increased. Church growth is supernatural and natural, sovereign and human.

An illustration of this Kingdom partnership comes in Luke 5 when the frustrated, weary fishermen, after a fruitless night of fishing, took Jesus at his word, set sail once again in broad daylight when the fish were likely to be in deep water and soon found they were sinking with the enormity of the catch. They sailed expertly in man-made boats, hauled in the nets with their own hands but without the supernatural word from Jesus it would have been another wasted trip. This was a partnership with Jesus, netting Kingdom results.

So as we look at how to see churches grow, we need to see it as God’s work that we are invited to play our part in. We are partnering Jesus as He builds His Church. We work for and with Him.

**A Breathtaking View**

Butser Hill, near Petersfield in Hampshire, is designated by the local authority as “an area of outstanding natural beauty” and it’s easy to see why; there’s a horseshoe-shaped hill
curved around a deep valley running all the way to the tree-lined horizon. It’s hard to know what to look at first. It is one of the few places I know where you can experience almost complete silence and stillness.

This scene has a stunning quality that even surpasses the natural beauty of the place; the Presence of God overflows the whole thing! “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” says the Lord” (Jeremiah 23v23). The “space” between where I am standing and the horizon is full of God. He completely engulfs it all, from the valley to the skies and beyond the clouds. He fills the very air I am breathing. As Paul says in Acts 17v28 “In Him we live and move and have our being.” God is utterly present in His creation, though he remains for the most part unseen and on the edge of our awareness.

I’ve not been up here for several months and as I top the brow of the hill I am overawed by the sheer scale of the place once again. Somehow God is bigger here. Unfortunately I find it easy to shrink God in my thinking. Maybe He is safer that way or maybe I just get too closed in by the constant assault of what the world says is real. Gradually, as I am walking, I realise God is very much bigger than I have allowed myself to think. I can’t contain Him or control Him.

So, as we come to look at a topic like growing churches we must do so with this kind of God in our thinking: Sovereign, eternal, vast, breathtakingly beautiful and, most strikingly of all, right here with us: filling the space in which we live and breathe.

Think of your own situation; whether you are currently a pastor, a leader of a home group or a ministry coordinator, a church planter or one preparing to start out. Don’t think first about numbers or the enormity of the task ahead. The important question is “How big is God in your thinking?” Are you letting the world around you determine the dream God can place in your heart? I find I often need to confess to Him my own shrinking vision and ask for His heart of compassion to expand my expectations again.

Does God love the lost people in your city? Does He long to touch, bless, heal and enfold those same people into loving communities? Yes! You have yet to meet a lost person that God did not want to find. He wants them all. As leaders we should begin with a dream that includes a breathtaking view of a big God and His immense heart of compassion for the lost.
It is not only a renewed view of the vast beauty of God that keeps us going; it is also taking another look at His church.

**There’s no other plan**

It can sometimes seem that the thing to do today is to deconstruct the church. Now, I am all for extracting the essence of the true church from a human religious institution and bringing the message of Jesus into our culture in a relevant and accessible way, but from time to time I find I need to remind myself of how utterly Jesus loves His Church. This love is characterised by a consuming passion, unwavering faithfulness and astonishing self-sacrifice. As Paul writes to the Church in Ephesus, “Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her through the washing of water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless,” and he goes on to say “this is a profound mystery” (Ephesians 5v32).

Orthodox and unorthodox, Catholic and Protestant, contemporary and traditional, ancient and modern; we are a chosen people, beloved, redeemed and adored, the Bride of Christ in Revelation 21v2. The Church is the apple of His eye, the cherished focus of his attention.

Stealing a look at how Jesus loves His Church should do something in our hearts; rekindling love for Him and His people and softening us towards His presence. The only appropriate response to thinking biblically about His Bride is to worship the Bridegroom. It also encourages us to think about how we speak about the Church, even when we don’t agree with everything we see or how things are done. Of course, the Church needs challenging from time to time and things should be pointed out but this ought to be done with gentleness and respect towards the Beloved of Christ.

The Church is the Body of Christ in our locality. We are the hands, feet and mouth of Jesus in the towns and cities we live in. As the Father sent his Son so He sends us to seek and save the lost. The Church, He has no other plan and no other people. We must be convinced of this as we come to think about Church growth.

**Growing the Leaders**

It has certainly been our experience that before God grows the church He often
painstakingly grows the leader. If God has called you to serve Him in some way you can be pretty sure He's going to put you through “boot camp” somehow.

We can see this in the lives of the men and women in the Bible. Moses is a great example; 40 years an Egyptian Prince, 40 years tending sheep and goats in the desert, then the burning bush encounter with “I AM”. The character and determination Moses needed to lead the people of Israel from Egyptian captivity to the edges of Canaan was forged in those years beforehand.

So if you sense God’s call to plant and lead churches, never give up the dream even if realising it seems years away. See that whatever you are doing now is preparation for then. The more training and experience you can get before you go the better. Fill up your toolbox with everything you can get your hands on. Serve another leader’s vision; put your energy into someone else’s dream for awhile. God sees, just as He saw Moses in the desert with his father-in-law’s flocks. There will come the moment for you of turning aside to see a burning bush and God will speak to you.

There may be others of you to whom God has already spoken but you're still sitting on your rear! Moses too was a reluctant leader; in fact God had to threaten his very life before he obeyed. Are you trying to work it all out from your perspective? Have you “shrunk” God in your thinking? Have you grown dull to hearing the still small voice or have you just grown used to tending someone else’s goats?! May I urge you, step aside again and let God speak to you.

With all this in mind let us begin looking in depth at the four essential activities for healthy church growth.
By integrity of vision I mean something that flows out of our hearts, it is about the kind of people we are.
Vision is one of the essential activities for growing healthy churches. Without a vision it is virtually impossible to lead anywhere. I am writing this sitting in a coffee shop in Southampton. If the fire alarm went off right now the person who knew the quickest way out would be the leader! That “knowing-the-steps-on-the-way-somewhere” is having vision.

If you as pastor/leader/planter don’t know where you are trying to go, or what you are trying to build how will you be able to influence, persuade or lead others to work towards the same future? How will you know what to put time and energy and resources into? What will you spend money and resources on?

A critical part of the formation of a leader is the dream God gives to him or to her. Sometimes vision is hazy, but it comes more into focus over time. Vision evolves. It is the forming of the dream, crafting it into a clear picture of the future and then being able to communicate it in a compelling way that determines, to a large extent, how effectively we will lead.

I am not talking about a vision statement necessarily although that can be helpful. By integrity of vision I am meaning something far more fundamental than that, something that actually flows out of who we are. Vision is more about the kind of people we are as leaders. As the church develops and grows it takes on the characteristics of that vision too.

There is an overwhelming range of models, styles and resources available to churches today and whilst we should utilize all the good stuff we can, borrowing someone else’s vision or a model from another church and trying to transfer it wholesale rarely works; it just becomes a programme, a man-made project. Vision should have integrity about it, a bit like one of those awful sticks of rock. It’s a long tube of solid sugar with the name of a seaside resort
written through it from end to end. Wherever you break open the rock it has the same writing all the way through. A God-given vision that goes all the way through us as leaders will give a ring of integrity to what we call people to.

The early chapters of Nehemiah are a great example of someone being moved to act on something God puts in his heart and then leading people to see that fulfilled. Despite the enormity of the task and the opposition he faced, Nehemiah led the people to build the walls of Jerusalem. What got him started and what kept him going was the vision God had deposited in his heart.

**Our Story**

For me clarity of vision evolved over a long period of time. I grew up in family that was involved in starting new churches from the early days of the house church movement in the UK during the seventies. I remember as a boy thinking there were always different people joining us at our dinner table; people coming to be looked after; leaders talking through the next steps; small group meetings going on. I observed close hand the excitement and anguish of church leadership right there. “Doing church” has been a huge part of my whole life and a heritage for which I will always be grateful.

In 1984, when I was twenty years old and thought I knew everything, my life was ruined by the Vineyard. It was great! Maggie and I had met on an evangelism team on the south coast performing (one might loosely call it) evangelistic street drama, music and schools outreach. One member of the team had heard about this healing conference going on in the centre of London. Desperately hungry to see more of God’s Kingdom we drove off to Westminster Central Hall and pressed through the crowds to get in...

In the course of our lives we sometimes have these rare moments after which we are never the same. For me those two hours at one of the first large Vineyard Conferences in the UK were exactly that; a defining moment I’ve thankfully never recovered from. To this day that meeting at Westminster is still very vivid in my mind: the sense of anticipation in the hall; the great guitar the worship leader was playing; the simple love songs they sang to Jesus. It totally undid me. “Heart-melting, tear-inducing worship” someone described it and that’s exactly how it was.

John Wimber told and acted out the story of the feeding of the five thousand and I found my heart aching for more of Jesus. He just talked all about Jesus! Sounds obvious, but actually I
couldn’t remember the last time I’d heard so much about Jesus: how great He was; how kind He was and how amazing His words and works were. I was captivated by Jesus that night. Of all the things I am grateful to Wimber for, this is the dearest.

Then came the moment that sent me reeling back home a ruined man. When he said “Come, Holy Spirit” it sounded so innocent and un-hyped but our entire row rocked backwards on our heels as a wave of the Holy Spirit washed over us. Heaven seemed to break out in that place. Healings, deliverances, conversions, people shaking and flopping about. We heard later they needed worship and healing teams on the streets outside as people were being touched by the Spirit of God as they walked past the building.

I had previously been in many meetings over the years where there was a strong sense of God’s Presence, I’d heard many healing evangelists and seen a few people being healed but the simplicity of the invitation and the sense of expectation was striking. God was loose among us and it was scary and exciting and wonderful.

Something was deposited in my heart at that meeting. It was the dream of being part of a church like that. I don’t mean like a conference but rather a community of people that worship intimately and talk lots about Jesus and have God very, very present with them. I know now that God was shaping in us the dream of planting Vineyard Churches.

For the next five or so years we read everything we could, went to every conference we could and repeatedly listened to and cried through sets of tapes on church planting by Todd Hunter, Kenn Gulliksen, David Parker and Brent Rue, among others. All the time we prayed, “Oh God, we want to do that. Could this be what you’ve made us for?”

So when we heard that the first Vineyard churches were being planted in the London area we gave up our jobs, our flat and our friends and moved up in 1991 to join the Riverside Vineyard led by Rick and Lulu Williams. Vision can do that. It can drive you to make big decisions; take risks; leave behind anything that would stop you moving toward it, whatever the cost.

After five fantastic years at Riverside Vineyard we headed south to plant Portsmouth Vineyard. The Lord had shown us a distinct visual impression of His hand planting trees along the M27 motorway running along the south coast. We knew that for the next few
years at least we (along with others) would be involved in church planting in this area and now there are five or six Vineyards dotted along this coastal route.

At the end of 2005 we moved again, this time with a team of about a dozen people to the east side of Southampton where we planted Mercy Vineyard.

So what has God put in your heart?

You need to know and be able to articulate it in order to lead effectively and to grow. Early on as I started the coaching process I met with one church pastor who had been trying hard for the last three or four years to grow beyond about thirty people. I asked him “What is it you are trying to do in your city?”

He replied with genuine conviction “We want to grow a Vineyard Church.”

“Great!” I said “what’s that?” Momentarily confused, he just blinked at me in for a second or two. Then he grinned as something landed somewhere.

“Well, you know a church Vineyard-style!” and he emphasized “Vineyard” as though that might do it for me.

“OK. Great!” I said, “So what does a Vineyard-style church look like?” I pressed without mercy. I could tell he was puzzled by this line of questioning and was trying to work out how someone as daft as me could be attempting to coach church planters!

“Well...” and he resorted to waving his hands in the air as he searched for the word which eventually came in a blinding revelation, “Vineyardy!” he blurted out. “A Vineyardy Church. You know, like a Vineyard! What else can I say?” He was a little exasperated. This was getting painful and I could see right there why it was difficult for him to lead his group towards growth.

Now of course I knew what he meant (I think) but that’s not the point. To gather people and mobilize them with an urgent picture of “how-the-future-must-be” needs to be clear in the leader’s thinking and needs to be clearly and frequently communicated to anyone standing still long enough to listen. Just assuming that people know what we mean when we say “Vineyard”, or for that matter “church” is a wrong assumption and one that will undoubtedly hinder growth.
Do you have a sense of vision, a dream beginning to evolve? Can you describe it? Can you describe it with urgency? Can you almost describe how it will feel and smell and taste? It is not about being overtly excitable and loud necessarily. Passion can be seen in quiet insistence and determination and a clearly defined sense of purpose.

I heard Steve Nicholson, from the Evanston Vineyard in Chicago, training church planters and he asked them "If you prayed “Lord make us into a Church that _______” what would your “_______” be? This became one of the exercises we would do at church growth retreats, asking the pastors to write down maybe the two or three key things that would characterize the kind of Church they dreamed of. “Lord, make us a Church that _______” It might be something that would help you to have a go at.

Don’t try to work out how yet, just dream; what could we be with God’s help in three or five year’s time? See if it might resonate as something deposited in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

\* An abstract idea is not enough

The more you can write the dream out, hone it and describe it the better, because an abstract idea is not enough. This is important. Many people cannot visualize something as abstract as an idea or a vision of a Church. I’ve heard someone say only about 10% of people can picture something abstract like a dream of the future, so simply to say it in a raw, creative state is unlikely to connect or compel many others to want to be a part of it.

Have you ever seen one of those DIY make-over TV programmes where a home improvement expert describes how structural changes to a house will vastly improve it? Much of what they say I can’t quite see until they show a computer graphic picture of what the finished place will look like with this wall taken out and this window put in. This is a computerized “virtual blueprint” that you can visually walk through. You get a clearer sense of what it will be like when the work is finished.

They do the same thing on Channel 4’s “Time Team”. You’re watching the presenters staring at an empty field while the archeologists are enthusiastically pointing to where this Anglo-Saxon settlement was and what this broken piece of pottery means, but it takes on a whole new perspective when they overlay the field with a computer generated “virtual” castle or Roman villa and you can suddenly see what they mean.
As leaders we need to present a kind of virtual walkthrough of the future as it can and must be. A way of describing “this is the Church we dream of and these are our next steps towards it.” We must use words to create a picture for people. Craft a picture and an ideal future in people’s minds with the words you use.

Vision like this really only comes out of wrestling with God. Pray, daydream, pray, read the Bible, pray some more. Give yourself time and space to let this process happen. Write it over and over, craft it; work on it so you can communicate it. It helps to think of phrases and images with which to illustrate it.

Think through how you would communicate it to different types of people; students, young people, young families, professionals, the completely un-churched. How will you say this as a vision-casting sermon? How will you say this as a two minute introduction during a teaching or at the end of a meeting, or over a coffee with someone you’ve just met? How will you unpack this in a leaders’ meeting? How will this relate to people who are motivated by big impact visions? What about people who love seeing individuals impacted?

This sounds like a lot of hard, thoughtful work behind the scenes. That’s exactly what it is, but if you take a shortcut here you will pay for it later. If you don’t want to wrestle with this part you might as well not read on because intentional gathering and investing in leaders can only come out of a dream that propels you forward over all the hurdles and frustrations that are bound to be in your way.

So to sum up so far...leaders that plant and grow churches lead from a sense of vision, vision that has the ring of integrity about it. It’s essentially real and urgent to them and something that God has deposited in their hearts. When that vision is effectively and frequently communicated it moves others to want to join in and to play a part in seeing that vision fulfilled.

**Maintaining & Sustaining Momentum**

Vision generates momentum. Momentum is the corporate sense of moving forward experienced by a Church; a shared feeling of undercurrent, almost like a surfer riding a wave. As with a wave, momentum will ebb and flow so there will be seasons of change and growth and seasons of quiet stability.
A perceptive leader learns to move on when momentum is building. Important to our
discussion is the reality that there are things that a leader does that can either create
momentum or kill it dead in the water.

In terms of our four essentials for church growth, momentum is somehow a link between all
four. Vision brings momentum; being outward focused and gathering brings momentum;
following the dynamic lead of the Spirit brings momentum; as does the equipping and
mobilizing of people to serve and lead.

John and Debby Wright lead Trent Vineyard, a large and growing church in Nottingham,
UK. I have heard them talking about momentum in the life of a church and have based this
chapter on some of the things they said.

When a church community has a sense of momentum (forward movement) it may be that
the Lord is building something into the life of the church, like prayer or a new ministry.
It may be a season of deepening relationships or healing within the church, so it does not
necessarily equate directly to numerical growth. Seasons of growth may follow momentum
but the lack of numerical growth does not necessarily indicate a lack of momentum.
However a church that feels stuck in system, with no forward movement, will often struggle
to see much growth and needs re-booting with vision and an intentionally outward focus.

To change the analogy, think about a child’s spinning top that slows down unless it is
occasionally pumped again. In the same way momentum will naturally atrophy, it will
slow down and even stall, making it harder to get going again. A leader needs to be aware
of this natural atrophy and do some things that help build and sustain momentum.

**Here Are Some Things That Help Build And Sustain Momentum**

1. **Well Communicated Vision Builds Momentum**

We’ve already talked a lot about vision but the Wrights very helpfully point out how
important it is to celebrate as the vision is being gradually fulfilled, because that in itself
creates momentum. Its leaders need to be saying, “This is what we set out to do and this
is what has happened. Isn’t that wonderful? And now we’re going to do this even more, to
even more people!” This is communicating vision in a way that builds momentum.
Momentum is increased by seeing the vision being fulfilled. Celebrate it! Tell the stories that have happened as a result of vision; “Last year this person reached out to their lost friends and this happened and that happened and these people came to Christ. Let’s do that again this year and to more people!

At Trent Vineyard they do a yearly review. This is a celebration of their vision and how that vision was fulfilled over the previous year. For several months beforehand the various leaders and ministry coordinators have worked hard at getting stories from people across all the different areas of the life of the church. These will be personal stories that communicate and reinforce the church’s vision. These stories are included in the review of the previous year communicating “This is what we set out to do and these things have happened because of that vision”. In fact they recorded the talks and have printed out some of the stories to give out to newcomers.

Reviewing “The Journey So Far” is a very biblical way of celebrating as a community. Think of the Old Testament accounts of the people of Israel in the historical books or the Psalms. How often we read, in effect, “this is where the Lord has led us thus far and this gives us confidence for his help in the future, so let’s go.”

John Wright explained that most of the content of their vision casting is reviewing how the vision has been fulfilled so far, and how as a church they have positively impacted the lives of many people. Momentum is increased by seeing the vision being fulfilled.

2. Involvement Builds Momentum

The more people that can be involved in the life and ministry of the church the more that sense of momentum increases: more involvement, more momentum.

The ideal is to have the majority of people involved if at all possible. People can be involved through serving, praying, ministering and leading. As leaders we may need to keep creating even inventing areas for people to be involved in so that there are always opportunities for people to play a meaningful part in the life of the church.

This is particularly important for ministry that has an outward focus. Pointing people towards the lost helps to build momentum. People are energised by reaching out and serving
outside of the community of the church, especially task focused people and so finding ways to help people get involved in this way is vitally important for the sustaining of momentum.

We have always said in the Vineyard that “Everyone gets to play”. We are players, participants rather than spectators, and spreading the workload is a real key to momentum. Even in times of crisis or struggle momentum can be increased by letting people help.

This means that recruiting should be one of the constants. Recruiting people to serve and minister needs to be an essential function of leadership at every level.

3. Pacing helps sustain momentum

There are different seasons in the life of any church. There are times of pushing forward, of risking and of trying new things and also times of simply being who we are together. There are times of task and times of fun. There is a time for envisioning and a time for action.

The leader should set the pace, and a prayerful, wise leader gauges that pace for the stage and season in which the church is in. So we should set the pace to ensure we get to the end still in love with Jesus and still liking each other!

Starting something you don’t finish is a momentum killer. So going off at too fast a pace may result in spreading your resources and people too thinly and not seeing things through to the finish.

If you sense everyone is tired and lacking energy that may indicate the church needing a season of family and having some fun and easing off being so task focused. The longer we lead and the more experienced we get at leading the more attune we are to sensing the pace to go at and can plan ahead much better in order to build that diversity of pace into the calendar of the church.

So set the right pace and keep your heart attentive not only the Holy Spirit but also to the pace of the footsteps behind you as the church follows. We should ask ourselves “What is vital? What is core? What is right for us at this time with our resources?”

4. Rapid changes in direction can stall momentum

That sense of moving forward will stall if turns are too sharp, or too frequent or are made too rapidly.
For example, changes in venue or key leadership; launching a big new initiative or a switch from a seeker-sensitive style to a very renewal-focused style (or the other way around) creates a major shift in ethos, culture and activity. For changes like these, remember the church is more like a large tanker ship than a speedboat and will need time and distance in which to make a major turn.

**A Bridge Called “Planning”**

The gap between vision and seeing that vision fulfilled can only be bridged by planning and flexibly, prayerfully, outworking that plan. It is the bridge from the land of vision to the promised land of fulfilled vision and concrete reality. There is no other way to get across. We must get better at making a workable, practical plan of action, then actually doing the things necessary to accomplish that plan.

We are all wired a little differently. Some are more visionary and some are more activity-focused. Visionary people need to think through actual steps to accomplish something and activity-focused people need to think through why, what and when, in order to best use limited time, energy and resources. This is planning.

Particularly if you are more of a visionary, planning can be a challenge! Dreaming and crafting the vision of an urgent future is inspiring and energising, but planning can seem unspiritual and boring. However, finding a way to plan that works for you is worth doing, and now I find even the planning process energising because I can see the vision being made actual through the actions and activities of ourselves and our people.

When I first heard John Wimber talking about church planning I thought I’d picked up the wrong set of tapes! Where’s the Holy Spirit gone? This thoroughly pragmatic approach to leading was difficult to get my head round but I soon realised how important planning was and I ended up playing those tapes to death just like the ones on healing!

When song writer/worship leader Brian Doerksen talks about the art of song writing, he says some very similar things. The inspirational melody or theme or phrase that the Holy Spirit may give a song writer then has to be worked on and crafted into something sing-
able for a congregation to use. The first part is exciting and creative and inspired, the rest can be hard work but worth it, if it means a great song is the end result. The crafting part is like planning the action steps to see a vision fulfilled.

So, you may find planning fairly easy and can write reams of precise action steps to a clear timetable, or you may scribble on an A4 yellow pad a couple of times a year to put down what you need to do over next six months. Let me encourage you to keep working at it. Build into your calendar, time to think and pray and plan and commit to paper.

Again there are plenty of really helpful books on planning that you can use so I am not going to reinvent the wheel, but just to say that without planning even the most exhilarating vision of the future will remain there, in the future. In fact it becomes de-motivating and stops momentum in its tracks if the vision is cast but there are no clear steps taken towards it being fulfilled.

Having said that, remember, things don’t always go as planned! Once Mercy Vineyard put on a barn dance and hog roast. It was to be the social event of the year and we had planned it well, spent a good deal of money on it and really promoted it as a great event which to bring our friends to.

So the evening arrived. The barn dance was set in a country park activity centre, much like a big barn, reached via a winding narrow lane through the woods. Maggie and I arrived early to be there ready to help welcome people so we pulled into the car park by the centre only to find it already full. My stomach did a nasty somersault and I knew from that second we were in trouble.

To get back out of the full car park and find somewhere else to park required a careful twenty-three point turn in a narrow lane edged by deep muddy ditches and trees. This was delicate enough but was compounded by the fact that it was now pitch dark, there were no lights in the park at all and a steady stream of other cars were coming down the single track lane toward us, filled with people from our church and their guests looking forward to a great evening out.

What ensued was the stuff of nightmares. Thirty or more cars had to turn in a single lane avoiding ditches, trees, other cars and pedestrians stumbling around in the dark woods
trying to find the hall. We sent our children’s pastor down the lane with a mobile phone as his only source of light which he waved frantically to guide people in the right direction. There were people invited that night who have never been seen since!

At last we made it into the hall only to be confronted by a crowd stuck in the lobby because the hall was full of a large group of learning disability adults and their carers enjoying the attentions of our caller and the barn dance band! We had been double booked! The care coordinator was delighted that the evening’s entertainment had been provided by such a kind church group.

A range of thoughts and emotions coursed through me in the space of a few seconds. Confusion, embarrassment, rage, guilt… it was hard to know where to land. I kept thinking “what would Jesus do?” but it didn’t really help!

Although many of our church work in the care professions and are very inclusive and generous people (and after all we call ourselves Mercy Vineyard) we really struggled with this. Mainly because this was to be a gathering event for friends and family who did not come to church and certain expectations were taking an absolute beating at this point. Had we known this would happen it would have been different but as it was our guys had invited friends to a barn dance not to a chaotic ministry opportunity!

Thankfully the hog roast was in a different part of the facility so we ushered our crowd out (I felt too sick to eat), while we put out a line of chairs to divide the hall in half. The care coordinator was very happy to get her crew dancing one side and we eventually had a great time barn dancing on the other. It worked in the end but it was excruciating at the time.

The truth is however well we plan it doesn’t always work out just as we think and we do have to be ready to adapt and think quickly.

May I recommend a great book on vision and planning. It is by Andy Stanley from North Point Community Church, Atlanta, and called "Visioneering; God’s blueprint for developing and maintaining vision." The book is inspirational and practical and will be very helpful to anyone wanting to work on vision. See www.northpoint.org and buy the book online.
You’ve heard the old business adage “location, location, location...” well, to plant and grow a church, right up there with vision comes, “gathering, gathering, gathering!”
Gathering can never be haphazard. It must be intentional.

*Intentional* - [determined to act in a certain way; resolved]

As a church planter or leader we must be intentional about gathering people. We must remain resolved and even ruthlessly determined to act in a way that brings people together as a community with a purpose. Whether or not you see yourself as evangelistic doesn’t matter. It really is down to the church planter/leader to take responsibility for gathering. Furthermore, that resolve needs to filter through to everyone and everything you do as a church.

Specifically, being intentional about gathering is to do two things; become a community that invites and a community that includes.

**Intentional about inviting**

Jesus was great at inviting people! He invited people to follow Him and to participate in what He was doing. He welcomed people the religious leaders (and even his disciples at times) thought should be excluded. He even invited himself once, to tea with Zaccheus!

As churches we must determine to get really good at inviting people. Invite people to anything and everything from social events to Sundays and from compassion ministry to ministry trips. It seems to me that we can have it back-to-front and think we can only invite people to special guest services or outreach socials. Not so! In my view there are very few things the church does that are not appropriate for people to be invited to. Possibly trustees meetings, probably some leaders meetings too...!
This invitational ethos takes a while to take hold in a church. I still occasionally have people at our church come to me and say “can I invite my friend to this?” and the answer is always “yes, of course, why wouldn’t you?”

The best way to be intentional about inviting and growing an ethos of invitation within the church you lead is to plan great fun events through the year. Hog roasts, BBQs, walks and picnics, barn dances, parties...I know of one Vineyard church plant that put on one event like this every month! Serious party people! Perhaps more realistically at first is to put on four significant social events a year. And make them really good.

This requires spending money. The last thing you want to do is skimp on quality because this immediately has a negative effect on your people being willing to bring their friends. You want to make it as enjoyable as an event as you can and never ever do some kind of preach or a prayer or a song or a testimony, or put out church flyers at these things. When the church you lead have come to a couple of these and enjoy them and know there’s not going to be a “cringe factor” they are much more likely to invite their friends to the next one.

You will begin to establish a track record with your own people and as they get used to inviting their friends to party they are far more likely and able to invite them also to Sunday mornings or other events.

**Intentionally Inclusive**

This is all about blurring the edges. A church with a blurred edge does not judge or define too strongly who is “in” and who is “out”. A church with blurred edges does not put on socials as an outreach event but rather to have fun and be together as a family and simply invite anyone who would come to join in.

Being inclusive does not seem to come naturally to a church. We are supposed to be set apart, aren’t we? We are used to defining the boundaries, circling the wagons against outsiders, having a safe place for Christians barricaded from the harsh world outside. As I have talked with leaders and this would be true of the church I lead too, it really does require patience and effort and determination to keep communicating and leading the church towards being more inclusive. We talk about how Jesus was inclusive and
welcoming. We probably taught about being intentional at gathering for nearly two years before we started really seeing it happen, and even now have to remind ourselves what that looks like.

An intentionally inclusive church is not exclusive! This might seem obvious but it’s not easy to do! It is more than having a welcome team at the door. It is a welcome ethos permeating the entire church. As Andrew Smith at Belfast City Vineyard tells his church “everything matters” from the doughnuts to the worship leading, from the children’s ministry to the chairs being set out. It does all matter as it communicates value and welcome and a determined resolve to be a gathering community.

**Thinking about our words**

In the UK words like “Christianity” can carry a really negative perception that immediately switches most people off. The average person in the street has a culturally ingrained preconception about what the word means and what kind of people we are. Sadly they are often pretty accurate too. So we tend to talk about being people learning to live out the teachings of Jesus or about knowing God in a real and personal way. It’s using phrases to describe the activity rather than a word that denotes a religious system. Again it takes a while to get “christianese” out of the system but it forces us to communicate much better with people who are not used to going to church. We also avoid terms like “pagan” or “heathen” or even “unbelievers”.

Furthermore, we try to include people at any appropriate level of service. We have people serving on the welcome teams, catering team and even as helpers (not leaders or teachers) in the kids groups that would not yet label themselves a “Christian”. They would say they are finding out, on the journey or seeking.

We also have a number of unmarried couples who are fully members of a small group. Loved and accepted as they discover who Jesus is and how he calls them to live. Our view is that “we can’t clean what we haven’t caught yet” and so we try to draw people towards Jesus and get them captivated, then try co-working with the Holy Spirit to see people growing and begin making Kingdom choices.

So being careful and thoughtful about the words we use and blurring the edges, helps us
to create a welcoming and inclusive community to which we can invite others to. This a crucial part of being a gathering church.

To have an emphasis on gathering also means our role as leaders is not to be the primary care giver in the church. We are ministry multipliers rather than ministry primary givers. We are to envision, equip and encourage the church to care for one another. We must keep focused on gathering.

So, on most Sundays I intentionally seek out the newcomers to chat to for any length of time rather than people who I already know well. We encourage our small group leaders to do the same. Virtually every person that has visited our church has commented on how welcome they are made to feel and that does not happen by accident. It is all highly intentional.

In order to care for people, a church geared up for gathering must develop small groups which are the primary place for care and personal growth. As leaders we multiply ministry by training and releasing, nurturing and resourcing a growing number of small group leaders. In turn the small group leaders are to coordinate care in the life of the group rather than be the focus of caring themselves. The aim is to cultivate a “one another” environment. There are many “one another” verses in the New Testament that frame how members of a community can care, love, grow and minister to each other.

There will be people who are in need of more care than small groups can provide. Whilst these should included in groups as much as possible, the level of care needed may require professional counseling and more help than a pastor can give. I know this is a sensitive issue and some of you are gifted as counselor-pastors and you lean strongly towards the health and growth of individuals. If you are reading this shaking your head at the over-emphasis on gathering instead of nurturing care I do understand that. You will need to be aware that God’s call or gifting on you may mean you tend towards leading smaller churches. That’s wonderful and essential and valued of course, it’s just not the focus of this material.

**Tilting**

To be a growing church we will always need to tilt towards gathering. Our emphasis, where we put our time, energy and money, the activities we do and the words we say must lean towards gathering the outsider in.
This diagram of a see-saw might help to demonstrate what I mean.

Diagram (a), over the page, shows how the emphasis is tilted or weighted purposefully towards gathering, particularly on Sunday mornings, and less “weight” is given to nurturing care. Don’t be alarmed, work with me here...

The second diagram (b) shows how this is counter balanced by multiplying care ministry among lay leaders; small group leaders coordinating the “one another” mutual care of a group of people. We still tilt towards gathering but put resources into care too.

I found many of the churches that were struggling to grow beyond one or two small groups had focused far too soon on “nurturing” and even counseling the few people they did have. They very quickly took their eye off the ball of gathering. To focus time, energy and resources caring for the few you do have will slow momentum to a grinding halt.
To grow we must organize around gathering first and foremost. We must tilt. It may appear ruthless but without a growing community you will only be able to minister to a limited number of people. The extent to which you multiply caring and serving and ministering through others (rather than doing it yourself) the more people will be getting set free and healed and so on. Keep in mind the greater effect a larger group can have on broken people and the resources that will be available to serve the poor, etc. Multiplied ministry comes out of a growing community.

Maggie and I have determined to work both ends of the church. At one end we focus on newcomers and those around the edges. Our time is given on Sundays particularly to spotting and chatting with the newer people, friends others have invited and brought along.

At the other end we put resources into investing in our small group leaders and ministry coordinators. It is these people that multiply care and ministry among the majority of people already part of the church. We’ll talk about investing in leaders in a later chapter. As we grow we need to have more people doing the same as Maggie and me, focusing on new people at one end and leaders at the other, as well as people caring for the core of the church.

It is challenging to think like this. Jesus demonstrated a determined resolve to go to the harvest. In the parable of the lost sheep, for example, Jesus talks about leaving the ninety-nine to go and find the one lost sheep. We also read of his insistence to keep on preaching “to the other towns and villages because that is why I came”, reminding the disciples when they would have wanted him to stay in one place. Every instruction Jesus gave concerning the work of the disciples involved going, finding, gathering and ministering outwardly. We can’t escape this non-negotiable biblical mandate. To be a church is to be a people that strive hard to touch people outside our four walls and gather others.

If you are a naturally more nurturing leader then you may have a harder job releasing others to care directly for people in the church and want to do that yourself. The less you want to delegate pastoral care to others the harder it is for the church to grow numerically. This is the “Jethro principle” in action. In Exodus 18 Moses received some very wise advice from his father-in-law Jethro, effectively saying “you can’t care for all these people on
your own. What you are doing is not good!” Jethro advised Moses to delegate leadership appropriately so he could get on doing what he himself should be doing.

As pastors we are naturally compassionate people. We do care. We do feel God’s heart for broken people. We do believe that the Great Commission to make disciples is not just winning people but calling them to a life long process of transformation into Christ-likeness. I wholeheartedly agree with all this. However, the more reasonably healthy people (though they maybe walking wounded) we can gather around us the more effectively we will be able to care for and minister to more and more broken people we will surely come across.

Depending on where you feel you are on the nurturing-gathering spectrum you will find a leaning towards more or less “hands on” pastoral ministry rather than delegating. This is not right or wrong but it will have a bearing on the growth and scope for growth of the churches you lead.

How you do that effectively will be different depending on who you are, where you are and who you have helping you. If you lean towards nurturing care rather than mission you will outwork this differently. Be true to who God has made you but don’t let gathering, however you do it, go off your radar if you intend to be a healthy and growing church.
Chapter 4

Intentional Gathering [Part Two]

Gathering requires an honest look at who you are and who you have on your team and playing to those strengths.
Let me give you a scenario….Adam sees the need in his town for a Vineyard church. He has had some training and has led a group in his current church. He and his wife are sent out to plant a small group. They start the church. They invite their friends, their colleagues, their hair-dresser; some people see the web site, read a press release…and over the first three months they gather a dozen people.

Adam is working full time at a busy nine-to-five job and he and his wife have two young children, one of them pre-school...so now he is running a mid-week small group, trying to complete the charity commission forms; find some trustees and an overseer...

A few months later, Adam checks his old church planting training notes and thinks he should have two small groups by now to maintain a sense of momentum. He swallows hard and, yes, he’s going for the multiplication! The problem is all the potential leaders in the first group are “really busy people” and we mustn’t “burn them out” so he decides to lead both groups himself, just until...well, just for a while.

Now Adam wonders how the two groups could meet up with each other. He decides they need to gather together at least once a month, maybe fortnightly (some even go for weekly), on a Sunday evening, but people don’t come out much on Sunday evenings: babysitters, work the next day and so forth...so, why not try Sunday mornings? It’s when people tend to go to church anyway...it might just gather some people somehow...

So Adam gets the two groups together once a month on a Sunday morning in a local community centre. Between the 20 adults they have 5 toddlers and a couple of boisterous six year olds and a couple of the parents want more Christian input for their children. Although Adam staunchly fends off the kids flag waving during the worship time he has conceded to several people doing a Sunday school of sorts.

Jump ahead about a year...there are still two small groups, both led by Adam. They meet together most Sunday mornings with the same 20-25 people. Occasionally they will have a visitor or two but they don’t tend to stay. Adam is still working a day job full time, he is a husband, father, preacher, trustee, administrator, PA operator, chair monitor...and because there are several people in the church needing counseling he’s doing that too... “We are going for quality not quantity” is his mantra each morning in the bathroom mirror, although it
gets a bit uncomfortable at pastor’s conferences where it feels like everyone else in the room is struggling to cope with the enormous numerical growth they’re experiencing!

Adam has just heard that their most committed couple, have had a job offer elsewhere, and are about to move away. That’s the last straw. Adam and his wife are exhausted. Critically they are so focused on caring for the people they already have that they have run out of time and energy to gather new people. To be brutally honest Adam wonders why would they even want to gather more people anyway because he’ll only end up having to “sort them out”.

Resentment has kicked in. Faith has checked out. Momentum has gone. The downward spiral continues as it becomes far too dicey to risk in any way and so Holy Spirit ministry is assigned to “get some prayer if you want it” after the meeting.

Do you get the picture? A bit depressing isn’t it. How do I know this? I’ve spoken to more people in this exact scenario than I care to count. I have slightly exaggerated to make a point, but really only slightly. It seems to me that at about two years many church planters, like marathon runners, hit “The Wall”. Quite simply it is very hard to sustain this kind of living for much longer.

For the average bi-vocational church planter particularly those with young children, time and energy are in short supply! You have a limited capacity for something that actually requires a great deal of time, energy and resources.

Gathering and Capacity

Capacity (available time, energy and resources) will affect the rate of growth. It depends on the life stage of the planter/pastors and the resources available. Whilst there’s often not a great deal we can do about the capacity itself, what we can do is prioritize what we do have to do the things that facilitate growth.

Now some of you reading this may be thinking “it’s not just about numbers, surely it’s about quality, about individuals becoming healthy and whole...” I agree it is about quality and health. Healthy things grow. My conviction is that being intentional about gathering, being welcoming and loving, being outward-looking is healthy.

In terms of emphasis churches that are growing have put a great deal of energy and resources into making Sunday meetings a real gathering point. They work hard at avoiding
jargon; think about what it is like to be a newcomer to church; and their teaching leans towards being helpful to seekers. We want our people to be confident that when they bring someone they have invited that we will be welcoming but not space-invading and that what happens will be relevant and understandable.

Having said that, at our church we worship for about half an hour on most Sundays, and we invite the Holy Spirit to do whatever He wants. We always have a ministry time one way or another. Sometimes that is low key but not always. What we do is to communicate well during ministry times so that newcomers don’t feel too awkward and know they can sit and chat or grab a coffee while we minister to those who want prayer. On occasions when people cry or tremble, we explain that “people respond to God’s presence near us in different ways and that it is what is happening on the inside that matters.”

Although a few people have said what we do is “unusual”, on the whole they understand enough and are glad that we have considered them enough to explain what’s going on. One man, who is not yet a follower of Jesus, said to me after his first visit that he loved the way the whole church community was caring for each other (demonstrated by praying for each other) rather than a priest just doing everything.

**Gathering and Context**

Where the church is planted has a bearing on how fast and large it can grow. There are some communities more open to the gospel than others; there are some communities more resistant to the gospel than others. There are some communities that may be open to the gospel but not respond to the style of the Vineyard unless the leader is able to tweak the style appropriately.

Let me give an example...when Maggie and I moved to Portsmouth I found it quite a culture shock. Portsmouth is a self contained “island” city (you literally drive into the city over several bridges) with a strong naval heritage. Whilst there are some expensive areas near the seafront most of it is not wealthy. Several large sections of the city are extremely densely populated and one area particularly is numbered among the poorest communities in Europe.
In the eight years we lived there and led Portsmouth Vineyard we hardly gathered any real “native” Portsmouth people. The majority of the church we led was made up of people who had moved to the area with work or study or who lived outside the city and travelled in for church. It took me a while to realize this and adjust my expectations.

So it is important to know the kind of community the church is being planted in. Looking at the demographics is only one aspect of preparing for church planting but it is certainly useful. What other churches are there? What is working? What are the felt needs? Is it commuter-belt area; is there a large student community? Are there lots of young families? These are all questions worth asking.

I am not necessarily saying don’t go to plant among people different from you. What I am saying is that if you are in a community that is different, you will need to have expectations to match that and you may need to adapt what you do to attract a different kind of person. Will my personality and style and values connect with the people I am trying to gather? Can I adapt as a leader and can we adapt as a church to relate to this community?

Gathering when there’s only a few of you

Sometimes we hear the great stories from larger Vineyards and think “It is all very well for you with all the personnel and resources behind you. What about us with only a handful of people, how do we gather?”

When Maggie and I moved to Portsmouth we were the team! There were no people waiting with bated breath for the Vineyard to arrive and set up the flag. We had no team and no friends in the city other than a couple of Maggie’s family who were already in church.

At the time I had to commute to work (usually two hours both ways) and we had a toddler and a newborn baby. So eventually arriving home after a day at work and a long frustrating drive did not make for a particularly sociable Mike I can tell you, and so can Maggie! But we knew we had to keep meeting people anyway we could.

We would make a point of inviting home for a meal anybody who showed the least spark of interest in us or the church. If a person emailed or phoned having seen a leaflet, newspaper
ad or the web site about the church, we would invite them to our home for coffee or a meal. The likelihood of people coming to the church and staying was far greater when we did that rather than just sending them some details. It became a joke if I went into a petrol station to pay and when I got back to the car Maggie would ask, “Well, is anyone from in there coming to lunch?”

Gradually, one by one we added people. A couple moved from another Vineyard into the area; other people came to the city with a new job or to the university; these people had a high felt need for finding relationships, and getting them into our house to eat at our table made a huge difference.

We unsuccessfully tried various seminars and servant evangelism. None of that worked for us. We had to focus on what we did best, invite people to social events and then to small groups or monthly Sunday evenings in a pub function room for worship, teaching and ministry.

It took us three years to gather 35 people and I was still commuting. I was exhausted and pretty fed up. I resigned every week but it was never accepted!

Then I cornered Steve Nicholson, from the Evanston Vineyard in Chicago, during a conference. I told him our story and I thought he would reinforce the textbook need to wait until you had gathered seventy before launching Sunday mornings. Instead he asked me two vital questions for anyone considering the giant leap to Sunday mornings:

1. What are your strengths as a leader? Is it one-to-one gathering and multiplying small groups or are you stronger up front leading worship or teaching? For me it was definitely the latter.

2. Do you have a workforce willing to work hard for a year to get Sundays up and running? Among those 35 do you have a welcome team, some kid’s leaders, a musician, set up team, etc? I thought we did and when we next met together everyone signed up.

Steve said to me “If you do have a team willing to work really hard and if your gifting really is teaching, then launch Sunday mornings and you will double in a year.” I grinned like a Cheshire cat, more from disbelief than anything, but I knew I would keel over with
exhaustion if we didn’t do something pretty quickly, so we planned and prepared over the summer and launched every Sunday morning in the autumn.

We did work very hard; we did keep our focus on gathering; and Steve was right, we did double in a year.

Please do not take this as a recommendation to go to Sunday mornings too soon with a small group of people. We had about 35 adults, the majority of whom were very committed to working on teams. We also had a relatively small number of children and most of our people were young singles or couples without them. It was a high risk strategy because launching Sundays is not an ace you want to play too quickly, and once it’s out there it is very hard to back pedal.

A larger critical mass, before starting Sundays, increases the likelihood of continuing to grow. In Southampton, after almost two years, we went to every Sunday with about 40 adults and two years later were about 100 adults and 30 children.

Gathering then requires an honest look at who you are and who you have on your team, if anyone, and then play to those strengths. Even then there is really no substitute for getting people into your house with good food and conversation round your table.

**So what’s the ace up your sleeve?**

As a church planter/leader what are your strengths? What are you best at? Are you best at one-to-one chatting with people and drawing people into small groups, building relationship? Or are you strongest behind a microphone; teaching; communicating to a group of people? Or does your church have a great worship band or some good musicians?

One way to be intentional about gathering is to find out what you do best both as a leader and as a church and use that to gather people.

One of the church planter couples we coach are highly relational people. They would be the first to say that up-front Sunday morning stuff is not their strongest area (though they actually do a good job). What they love doing is chatting with individuals and multiplying small groups.

I visited their church once on a Sunday morning and sat on my seat ready at 10:30am, the advertised meeting start time, only to find everyone else slurping coffee, eating doughnuts and chatting happily until nearly 11am when they eventually started to worship.
This is a very relational church and it is gathering and growing! Having identified their strengths they work hard at playing to them in order to gather. For example, they are based in a highly commuter area so they hand out free newspapers with an invite included to commuters at the train station during a morning rush hour. They chat with individuals and have actually seen people come to the church because of it. Picnics, BBQs and other very relational events are high on the agenda for them and it is working.

Now I challenged them, just a little, over their lax starting time for any leader can have blind spots. In their view they were being relational and welcoming for newcomers by including new people in conversations over coffee. However, as a newcomer myself that morning I felt awkward and a bit lost as to what was meant to be happening and when. It helps new people to relax when there is a clear lead, a clear start and end time. It is easier to sit and observe something that is actually happening rather than waiting nervously for something to start. To tighten this up a little will involve a culture shift because the church has by now become used to wandering in any time between 10:30 and 11:00 but if they paint the picture well as to “why it will help them gather” then it will be a positive experience. Of course, for a while they will start worship at 10:40 with less than half their people present but if they stick at it people will get the idea eventually!

At Mercy Vineyard we see one of our main strengths as worship and teaching, so we try to use this to gather. As things developed we were able to go to full blown Sunday morning services after two years. We see new people being invited and brought along (believers who were not in church and people who are not yet believers) and they are staying because they like the worship, they find the teaching helpful and God touches them during the ministry time. Our people work hard on being welcoming. We have focused our gathering by concentrating on what we do best.

In one of the churches I visited the pastor was trying to do everything he could to gather. He was doing servant evangelism, compassion ministry, leafleting, Sunday mornings, home groups, all with about 20 people. When I visited their home I saw they had a beautiful conservatory with a big dining area. I could envisage the table laden with cheese and wine and grapes and pizza, lots of people gathered round it, laughing, chatting, and relaxing.
This would be a great tool for gathering, but was not being used because they were trying to spread themselves too thin doing stuff that was not gathering anyone.

So, think through you are, what your strengths are as a leader and as a church. Who has God made you? What has God given you? Do that! You don’t have to try to do everything, particularly when you are a church plant or smaller church. Find what two or three things you do best, and do these things really well.

**Two practical things regarding gathering**

1. **Are you invisible?**

   Do people in your locality know you exist as a church? Do you have a web site? I would recommend nothing too complicated. I have been surprised by some of the churches I have visited. To judge by the web site there should have been nothing short of a mega-church. Instead I have found a small group with someone who is good on the computer!

   Good flyers are fairly easy and relatively cheap to produce these days. These should give contact details and where and when you meet. Occasional newspaper advertisements can help. You can even learn how to do a press release and send it to the local paper when you put together some events.

   If you meet at a school or function room have a sandwich board or a couple of good banners made and put them in clear easy to see places.

2. **Are you inviting people at different levels?**

   My grandmother used to have an old game called “Bagatelle”. It was a sloping wooden board with lots of small holes and pins placed strategically around it. The idea was to flick ball-bearings onto the board and see which holes they stuck in. Some of the holes could take lots of ball bearings, some only one or two. You scored more points depending on how tricky the holes were.

   When we think about gathering we should think “bagatelle”! Are we just trying to go for one or two high pointers, such as the introducing Christianity courses, or Sunday mornings? Spread the net wider to provide different gathering points: barbeques and picnics; barn dances; pub quizzes and walks...these are easy gathering events if we have
any relationship with people at all. This might be a lower “score” in a game of bagatelle but it catches a wider group of people.

I know churches organize a variety of events such as women’s pamper evenings, men’s curry nights, parent skills training, marriage courses, debt counseling, or other kinds of events which involve listening or learning. You may have people in the church who can lead such events or you may have to temporarily “buy in” such skills.

As well as doing this you could have some entry points for people exploring spirituality in some way. This may not appeal to as many people, but it is still a vital point of gathering. How about gearing some Sundays towards a certain topic such as managing finances or dealing with anxiety?

Keep activities that gather constantly on the radar. Always be intentional, never haphazard, about gathering. Gathering is being inclusive and invitational.
The church is supernatural. Supernatural means “something attributed to an invisible agent”. God is mingling His presence and power with our best, usually, clumsy efforts!
When we were first married Maggie and I were part of a “House Church” in the south of England and the leaders asked us to lead the student/young peoples’ group. Having been to a Vineyard conference by this time we thought we knew what to do. We gathered about a dozen students in our living room; had some sandwiches; sang some Vineyard worship songs, talked about Jesus and prayed, “Come, Holy Spirit”.

For the first two weeks nothing much happened. The students were beginning to “get” worship but nothing much happened during the ministry time. We all stood around looking at each other for a while and then had some more sandwiches! But as we persisted and gently encouraged people to receive, gradually things started to happen.

After four or five weeks people were coming with a degree of expectation that God was going to meet us as we worshipped and waited on Him. The Holy Spirit was certainly coming and we were just learning how to engage with Him. We prayed, some trembled, a few cried, some laughed, some fell over. Soon we had twenty or thirty people coming as they invited their friends, and we were all getting excited about Jesus.

After eight weeks we had grown to over 40 young people crammed into our tiny living room. People’s lives were being changed. They were excited about Jesus and telling their friends. It was all about Jesus and giving time and space for the Holy Spirit to do what He wanted. We knew nothing about multiplying small groups, or other things that would have helped and we would have needed to put other things in place, I know that now, but all we knew was that God was with us. It was all so uncomplicated.
Is what we’re doing characterised by the Presence of God?

I love that passage in Exodus 33v16 when Moses prays in effect “We need your Presence demonstrably with us because this is what characterises us as your people.” He goes on to say “If you don’t come with us we’re not going anywhere!” We pray that at least twice a week and from time to time step back and ask ourselves if what we’re doing is characterised, not by slick presentation or clever strategy, but by God’s Presence evident with us.

When we look at the life and ministry of Jesus and the early church we would have to conclude that those people’s lives were certainly characterised by the Presence of God. So while the Bible leaves plenty of scope for many varied styles of church, one thing above all others should distinguish us and that is God with us.

The church should be supernatural. “Supernatural” means something not “bound by normal laws” and “something attributed to an invisible agent”. It is God mixing and mingling His Presence and power with our best, usually clumsy, efforts!

Are we trying to make it all too safe for people?

I do worry that we sometimes try to make church safe but run the risk of not making space for the Holy Spirit. It’s hard to find examples of conversions in the New Testament that are not linked to the activity of the Spirit seen in power encounters; healings; deliverance from demons; the operation of Spiritual Gifts; various phenomena like fire and wind and tongues; anointed preaching and heart-piercing conviction. And yet we try to soften the blow for people because we don’t want to make it uncomfortable for them.

Should the church be safe? I think in some ways it should. It should certainly be a welcoming place to come to, and bring friends to, and a well thought out, loving environment that helps people feel valued and accepted. Safe in the sense that what happens is biblical and communicated reasonably clearly, and an environment created in which new people are helped to process what happens, but not so safe that there is no expectation of the Spirit of God moving with compassion and power.

The truth is that as leaders we live on a tightrope. We lead with the continual tension between creating a welcoming place for seekers and being a people characterised by the manifest Presence of God. When we stand there sensing the presence of God beginning
to touch people on a Sunday morning and we know that there are some newcomers there for whom this kind of thing is completely new it certainly is a point of tension for us.

We want people to feel comfortable enough to come back so that we can build relationship with them. We want them to realise that we are credible witnesses and to stay long enough to get a glimpse of Jesus.

I suppose I had always assumed that one day I would feel comfortable doing risky things like creating space for ministry and the gifts. Now I’m not so sure I ever will. It does take a conscious decision to stay right at that point of risk. To stand in front of a group of people and invite the Holy Spirit and then wait to see what He does or how people respond to him.

On a number of occasions newcomers to our church have not returned a second week, saying it was the ministry time as the aspect that most put them off. That’s frustrating and I am resolved to improve our communication and do all we can to create a welcoming environment, but we also know that it is the Spirit of God that brings revelation and conviction and we dearly love to see the Lord touching people. We just have to become reconciled to the fact that it will always be a point of tension for us.

A number of the pastors I have coached have really struggled with this tension. Some had resolved it by leaning towards being highly seeker sensitive and not allowing for any kind of Holy Spirit ministry during a public gathering. What I found though, was that it went deeper than this, and ran the risk of becoming a mind-set and heart-set that subtly resisted the activity and prompting of the Spirit at any level of church life. There was sometimes a drawing back from any risk such as inviting the Holy Spirit to come or inviting people to respond to words of knowledge. There was little expectation of the prompting or leading or empowering of the Lord.

I think what happens is a downward spiral as faith drains away. It starts with a sense of disappointment as the church doesn’t grow, or when things don’t go as we expected. Confidence begins to ebb away to the point that any risk is too emotionally costly, or faith is so low that we can’t take that leap, even to pray for healing.
Recovery begins with dealing with disappointment and re-appointing the Holy Spirit to His rightful place in our hearts and minds as the administrator-leader-healer in the church. This is acknowledging honestly before God where we are at, and confessing that our well meaning desire to control the environment has hindered Him ministering to His people. There is something profound and important about the senior leaders of a church inviting the Spirit of God to come to his people. Amazingly, the Holy Spirit usually waits for an invitation!

As we continue to invite and make room for the Lord to come our hearts and the peoples’ hearts will soften and become more receptive.

**Towards depending on the Holy Spirit**

It is important that we teach the church about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. A biblical understanding of who He is, what He does and how we respond to His activity will stir expectancy and alleviate unnecessary anxiety. We should be asking at every point “What do the scriptures say?” (Romans 4v3).

1. Eagerly Waiting

In Luke 24v49 Jesus instructs his followers to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high. How much they understood what Jesus meant we are not told, but we see they did exactly what He said for a time until Pentecost. They waited though they didn't know exactly what for. Their waiting included some natural activities such as selecting a replacement for Judas and gathering together to pray, but more essentially their waiting was with a sense of eager expectation.

I looked up the word “wait” from that verse in Luke and it means “stay in expectancy”. It is waiting with an anticipation of receiving something promised. To wait on the Lord is to expect the Lord and His Kingdom to come.

We are to create space and time to wait expectantly for the Lord; honouring the Holy Spirit in our meetings; inviting, welcoming and waiting for His Presence to come. We can do this in many different ways: prayer, worship, ministry time, using the spiritual gifts, inviting the Holy Spirit upon his people during and after we teach.
Silence is not something we're very comfortable with in our culture but if we talk about it and help people to relax and not become religious or intense, this too is a great way to begin to wait on the Lord together. I find a couple of minutes can seem to last for hours!

2. Energetically Receive

In John 20v22 we read how Jesus breathed on the disciples and said “Receive the Holy Spirit”. Again, the meaning here is important. It seems to me that sometimes our understanding of the word “receive” is too passive. “Just receive” as in accept. The New Testament word “receive” means to “take”. Take it! We are to take hold of the resources of the Kingdom available to us through the activity of the Holy Spirit. This is more active than passively accepting.

The message of Jesus was that the availability of the Kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1v14). He declared the nearness and accessibility of God’s help and his healing and the multitudes were jostling to touch and receive it from Him. We might have seen such scenes and thought how improper they were as when the woman seized the hem of his robe. This is energetically receiving.

I’m not talking about hype or whipping anything up, but the opposite of hype is not passive acceptance. Jesus tells us to take hold of the Kingdom and to approach the Holy Spirit in a posture of expectancy.

A church characterised by the Presence of God will be a church that asks, invites and makes room for the Lord to come; a community that eagerly takes hold of the blessing provided for by the gift of His Presence with us. What else really distinguishes the people of God from all other groups of people?

So, to walk that tightrope of being welcoming to newcomers and honouring the Holy Spirit we need to communicate clearly, and be determined to live at that point of tension.

3. Clear Communication

This requires that we review the jargon we easily slip into and try to speak in a way that means something to people, some of whom will never have observed God in action before.
We should communicate that it is perfectly appropriate to watch and people should not feel obliged or pressured to participate during ministry times. Every single time any of us lead a ministry time during a Sunday morning, we will say exactly that. This really does help newcomers to feel not only less anxious but it also gives them permission to watch what is happening to others.

I try to make sure I, or one of our other leaders, chats with newcomers after a meeting and asks them among other things specifically “What did you think about the praying for each other time at the end there?” We try to explain a little of what happened hoping they were not too worried by it.

We had one man come to the church, though not a follower of Jesus at all because he thought it was right to support his wife and children who wanted to be there. He would sit nervously at the back of the hall and watch. The first time I spoke to him he said how much he loved the worship and the “electric atmosphere” he felt during the singing, but that he was unsure about the prayer time. When I explained to him that it was the Holy Spirit that he was experiencing during the worship, and that this was exactly what was going on during the ministry time too, he was much more open. The following week he not only came back but sat nearer the front, and during the ministry time he allowed someone to pray for him. The week after that I watched him putting his hands on someone and pray for them! We baptised him a few months ago. It was communicating well with him that proved to be the key, rather than avoiding doing ministry at all.

**Listening to the Holy Spirit**

Mostly it seems to me that the Lord gives us a great deal of scope for decisions and actions that are in line with His ways as we lead and pastor. We need to engage our brains and use our common sense. How scary is that! Like an airline pilot we make various adjustments and crucial decisions even though the flight plan is already filed and the destination clear. In other words, we draw on our experiences, training, our knowledge of His Word, common sense and the counsel of wise people.

The Lord has called and enabled us and He trusts us to lead his church as best we can. His desire and faithful intent is to bless us richly and to provide for us in many ways. And so
we are to lean on him, ask for wisdom, look for His hand in situations, depend upon and involve the Person of the Holy Spirit as we lead.

**The crucial attitude to cultivate is attentiveness to the Lord**

Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing (John 5v19). This is such a pivotal verse for us in the Vineyard. Out of his intimate devoted secret life with the Father, Jesus instinctively knew who to minister to, what to do on different occasions and what to say. We can grow that same attentive relationship with the Holy Spirit.

I have often worked on this material in a city centre coffee shop rather than hiding away in my study. A couple of weeks ago, whilst waiting in the queue, I was trying to avoid eye contact with a particularly delicious looking cinnamon swirl when I noticed a man in his late twenties just ahead of me. He already had his coffee and was heading for a chair. He opened his notebook computer and started working. There was nothing special about him, except that I just noticed him. I had been praying that morning that the Lord would help me be attentive to His prompting, so as I collected my coffee (yes, and the cinnamon swirl) I took it that the Holy Spirit might be highlighting this man to me. I had no idea what to do next and my heart was pounding.

I sat near him and after a few awkward moments when he noticed me staring at him, I asked what kind of work he was doing. The conversation ended up of course with him asking me the same question, so I told him about the church. It turns out that only that week his wife, who had been raised a Methodist, had said to him that they ought to find a church to go to. Jack (not his real name) described himself as agnostic but happy to support his wife. They had decided to look for a church with a contemporary style and where they could make friends with people their own age. We had a great chat and I gave him a business card with our website and details on.

Two weeks later I was back in the same coffee shop. I was making my way to a table (cinnamon swirl in hand) when I noticed someone waving me over; it was Jack and we talked animatedly about Jesus for about an hour. I didn’t even get to open my laptop. Jack noted down some verses from Matthew’s gospel we talked about and was going home to read it and promised that we would see them at Mercy Vineyard soon. As this material goes to print Jack and his wife have been coming regularly to Sunday mornings and are
forming friendships with lots of people at Mercy Vineyard. “I am intrigued and have lots of questions, but this is all beginning to make sense,” he said to me recently. They have signed up to do our “Introducing Jesus” course coming up in a few weeks. I have no doubt this was a Divine appointment and that I had some how managed to act on the Holy Spirit’s gentle prompting. I’m sure that often I miss moments like these but I am determined to keep learning.

We grow more attentive to the “Divine Whisper” by giving ourselves to a devotional life. Fasting, solitude and silence, among others, are all devotional activities that help us cultivate that attentive heart.

I used to think that fasting turned up the volume of my prayers for God, but now I have found it’s the other way round. Things like silence literally turn down the volume of my noisy world in order for me to grow to recognise His still small voice. Fasting does the same, although only eventually! Like a naughty toddler who has been told to “turn the Hi-fi down” and twists the dial the other way, my body screams all the louder at first.

Of course, growing a responsive and attentive relationship with the Holy Spirit is the right way to live for any follower of Jesus, but given our subject it is an essential activity for leaders who want to grow healthy churches. Furthermore, we must teach and model this for potential planters and leaders too.
Notes
The final essential activity for growing healthy churches is to invest in leadership. As we consistently communicate a compelling vision, purposefully keep gathering on the radar and continue to depend on the Spirit, we should at some point start to see growth in numbers. What will hinder sustaining that growth is failing to build the infrastructure to support it. This infrastructure is our leaders.
The final essential activity for growing healthy churches is to invest in leadership. As we consistently communicate a compelling vision, purposefully keep gathering on the radar and continue to depend on the Spirit, we should at some point start to see growth in numbers. What will hinder sustaining that growth is failing to build the infrastructure to support it. This infrastructure is our leaders.

Picture some scaffolding around a building under construction; the taller and more substantial the scaffolding grows the more the building can be worked on and expand. Leaders are scaffolding. If we want to grow numerically, and in terms of maturity, we need to be constantly investing in the people around us. Growing churches are led by growing leaders.

Several of the churches I spent coaching time with had seen a degree of growth saw the growth dwindle away again. What was being built was not supported by growing leaders. If you find you are at a barrier to growth doing some work on leadership development might be way forward.

This is not necessarily limited to small group leaders, although they do without doubt fulfill one of the key roles in the church and should be encouraged, equipped, envisioned, resourced in any way possible. Actually anyone who influences other people towards Jesus in your church is a leader in some way, whether or not they have a “badge” or a particular role. They may be coordinating a team or helping in a children’s group, or setting out the book desk...everything matters. They may simply pray for others on a Sunday morning. Investing in some way in those people as well as in worship leaders or small group leaders is important.
The leaders you currently have sustain the church you currently have. In order to grow the church your current leaders need to grow and you need to identify and grow more leaders.

Let’s start with ourselves as leaders

Perhaps most importantly we must invest in ourselves as leaders. As the church planter, pastor, or team leader you are a key to the growth of the church. You are the one presenting the vision; you are responsible for keeping gathering on the agenda; you are the one crying out for the Holy Spirit’s help and wisdom. You set the tone in your church; you develop other leaders. We could say, rather soberly, that the growth of the church is somewhat determined by your growth as a person and a leader.

If I feel insecure, if I back off confronting people or situations then it will affect the church growing up. If I baulk at risk, it affects the church. If I am nervous and resist important financial decisions it affects the church.

I always think Barnabas would have been such a great person to have in a church! He is described as a “good man” Acts 11v23-24. I like that. Not necessarily a charismatic go-getter or a dynamic leader, although I suspect he was, but a man of fine character. Don’t you think he might have been just a bit like Jesus? He is described not only as “good” but also “full of the Holy Spirit”. No wonder he encouraged people! He didn’t have to try to; it was just instinctive to him because that’s the kind of person he was.

I also love what Barnabas does as he encourages the people to “remain true to the Lord with all of their hearts”. That’s the kind of leader I want to be and such are leaders I want to grow around me. Above everything else we teach and model for our leaders, let it be devotion to Jesus more than anything else.

So the leaders you currently have support the church you currently have. What can you do to recruit more leaders and invest in those you already have, so that together you can support more growth?

Practical ways to invest in leaders

May I encourage you to make use of the enormous number of resources available these days in books and manuals and web sites devoted to leadership and how to train. I have
included in the appendix of this material a set of training notes produced by Michael Gatlin (Duluth) and Jay Pathak (Arvada Vineyard) who have kindly given permission for its inclusion. It’s called “IRTDNM” and I highly recommending reading and using it to its full potential.

Another useful thing to do is to visit a church where the staff invest in and train leaders a few steps further along in the training process from you. Watch what they do; ask lots of questions and with appropriate permission “steal” all their resources!

*Invest time and resources*

The intentional leader plans time to invest in developing leaders. It’s important enough to him/her to put it in the diary as a regular commitment, an activity as vital as anything else the leader does. Training takes planned time and effort and resources.

Your time and involvement in people is nothing less than “payback” for their effort and the time they volunteer. Of course we know Jesus is the reward but our appreciation of and investment in, people really does make a difference to them as they serve.

*Training Events*

Personally, we aim for a monthly or six weekly meeting specifically for small group leaders, plus regular events (perhaps once a term) for a wider range of leaders and potential leaders. These should be quality events. Thought and money should be invested in making these well worth coming to: worship, relevant training and Holy Spirit ministry, plus generous refreshments that communicate how much we value our leaders and what they do.

You might want periodically to ask your leaders “What can we do to help you do what you do?” “What training would you benefit from?” Then we can be sure we are providing training and resources that are actually needed and appreciated by our leaders.

Taking teams or individuals on ministry trips or to conferences is another great way to invest in people. As we were about to set up a new children’s ministry at Mercy Vineyard we sent our children’s pastors off to Belfast City Vineyard for a training weekend. We paid for their flights and expenses. They had such a great time and have come back full of good ideas, new resources and the real awareness that we believe in them enough to invest this time and money in what they are doing.
**Hands on/hands off**

I can’t remember where I first heard this but it has made a huge difference to the way we lead and train leaders. Being “hands on” at the point of values and “hands off” at the point of ministry, will free leaders to lead and free us from having to control everything that goes on.

1. **“Hands On” at the point of the values**

   Values are the foundations of the church you lead in terms of, not only what you do, but also how it is done. There are great resources available on the foundational values of the Vineyard which you can use if you are not familiar with them. Books like “The Way it was” by Carol Wimber, describes the way the Vineyard has grown up and developed. Similarly “The Quest for the Radical Middle” by Bill Jackson; “Doing Church” by Alexander Venter; all published by Vineyard International Publishing.

   Materials like these as well as training audio tapes/CD’s on church planting and church growth by John Wimber, and others, all strongly clarify and reinforce the Vineyard DNA, the values we hold dear.

   Our foundational values are intimacy with God through worship; mercy received from God and given to those around us; being accessible and outward-focused; being non-religious; equipping the saints and encouraging all our people to be involved. As John Wimber famously out it “Everyone gets to play.”

   As the leader or church planter one of our key functions is to embody the values. The reality is that the church will turn out very much like its senior leader, and we must clarify and model these values for our leaders to absorb too. These values are more caught than taught, we know that, but that’s not to say that they should not be continually reinforced. If we help grow the values in our leaders then we can be confident that as they go and serve and lead, that they will do this in a way that reflects those values.

   What I have found is that it takes longer than I expect for people to absorb our values and I never feel as if I am doing enough to see those values modeled. We just have to make sure talking about the values in different ways is always on the radar. Talking about some aspect of the values is an absolute must at any kind of leaders’ meeting.
2. “Hands Off” at the point of ministry

Maggie and I have two sons, now in their teens. We know that when they go off to their friend’s houses for the day, or to a sleepover, we can trust that they will be polite and respectful and generally good people to have around the place. We trust that they will reflect our Pearson family values! Similarly with our leaders as we give them space to lead, if we have modeled and taught the values that guide the way ministry or leadership is worked out, we can give them a huge amount of scope and freedom in which to operate without us looking over their shoulders. Freeing for us and empowering for them!

Our home group leaders pretty much do whatever they like as they lead their groups. We give them a great deal of freedom because we know that whatever they do they will hopefully reflect the family likeness. Now there is an element of risk, of course. And there have been occasions when things are not done quite as we would want, but giving freedom and communicating belief in our leaders is easily worth that risk.

So as a new home group leader sets off to start a group you will have given them some training and planned for ongoing training and evaluation time. You don’t have to critique everything but when you need to challenge people, be confident in doing so.

You want to have given enough scope for people to grow and to do so their way given the overall guidelines of the values.

So who have you got with you? Who do people look to? Who do you get on with? In whom can you see a measure of character and calling that you can work with? Decide to invest time and resources in growing those people and giving them the chance to grow into leadership at different levels.

You will make mistakes with people, we all do. Some people that you invest in will probably let you down or move away. Even dear friends may disappoint. Think about the motley crew Jesus had with him, and the rocky ride they gave Him at times!

Leading churches which are intending to grow does involve a high degree of risk. You risk when you give leadership away to others, when you start new groups, when you say “yes” to people initiating new areas of ministry. Just as we live with tension when it comes to being seeker-friendly and facilitating Holy Spirit ministry, so we also live with another tension.
We need to ensure that things are led in a way that reflects our family likeness alongside keeping our “hands off”. We need to resist controlling everything and allow individuals space to grow into the things they are called to do.

**Seven Tips on Developing Leaders**

I asked Andrew Smith, a friend of mine, to read this material and make any suggestions. Andrew and Harmony lead Belfast City Vineyard, Northern Ireland which has experienced fairly rapid growth over the last few years. From my observations Andrew and Harmony are both highly intentional in the way they lead and also excellent at developing the leaders around them. So when he came back with some suggestions for this chapter I asked him if we could include them here.

1. I would encourage people who are trying to raise up other leaders to reflect on how they were (or weren’t) trained and raised up themselves. Then do that, or do the opposite if it wasn’t so good!

2. You have to pray leaders in (Matthew 9v38) and pray for them as they develop.

3. Start with what you have, and be faithful. There’s no sense in moaning and wishing you had some one like Matt Redmond, raise up the worship leader you do have. The same goes for small group leaders or whatever. Be faithful with what you have, and you will get more.

4. Gain a vision for their life and ministry. You can’t just look for people to do things for you. You are looking for leaders. So you have to have a vision for what they could do, what God might be calling them to, and help them get there. Cast that vision for them often. God will use you in their life and they will do lots of ministry.

5. Over communicate on training, expectations, and values. You cannot say it enough! Keep communicating and clarifying. Rich Nathan said, “Be explicit about the obvious!” That’s helpful.

6. Take risks on them. Calculated risks, but you have to turn them loose sometime.

7. Have a clear idea of what a leader is and does, and develop a process to train and teach them how to do those things. When you know what a leader is supposed to do then you
will know what you need to teach them. Leaders don’t just show up trained and ready to go. That’s your job, and you need to do it.

*Finally*

Keep in mind the more you can develop the leaders around you, the more you can multiply ministry among more people both in and out of the church. Jesus is our model and we can see the work and effort he put into training a group of people who went on to have an enormous impact on the world.

Think of some names right now. Who do you have coming to your church? How could you invest some time building the values and releasing that person into more ministry/leadership opportunities? Could they be home group leaders, or be part of the band? Could they have a go at praying for people on a Sunday morning if someone showed them what to do? Is there a ministry trip coming up you could invite some people to? Do you have a great book sitting on your shelf you could give to someone and ask them for their feedback on? Is there a conference you could send someone on?

In order to create the scaffolding around the church and to see it grow, these are the kinds of things every leader needs intentionally to do over and over again.
Intentional Leadership - Essentials For Healthy Church Growth

IRTDMN Training Material

Michael Gatlin, senior pastor at Duluth Vineyard [www.duluthvineyard.org] and Jay Pathak Senior, pastor at Arvada Vineyard [www.arvadavineyard.org] have put together the following practical and helpful material on leadership development. They have kindly given permission for their material to be included in this manual. My thanks to them.
Chapter 1
Identifying Potential Leaders

Chapter 2
Recruiting Potential Leaders

Chapter 3
Training Potential Leaders

Chapter 4
Deploying New Leaders

Chapter 5
Monitoring New Leaders

Chapter 6
Nurturing New Leaders
Chapter 1
Identifying Potential Leaders
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

I. The Importance of Reproducing Ministry

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

A. One of the most important aspects of leadership is the ability to identify and recruit leaders and a work force to carry out the work of the ministry. This ability is the principle missing link in the non-growing, non-disciple making church today.

B. It’s a key to healthy growth: You can only grow (both in numbers and in spiritual maturity) as your leadership capacity expands.

C. It is easy to get bogged down in meeting needs directly. In the long run, the most effective way for us to meet the needs of our people is to equip more and more people for leadership and ministry.

D. We must make this our biggest priority!

II. We have examined the reasons that some of our ministry efforts were unsuccessful. The number one reason is the leader’s inability to:

- Identify,
- Recruit,
- Train,
- Deploy,
- Monitor, and
- Nurture people into the ministry of the church
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

What does a leader look like?

I. Servant Leadership
   A. The one ultimate understanding in the Vineyard: Leaders are Servants
   B. New Testament leadership is not about flashy public relations and platform personalities, but about humble service. The work of God is to be carried on by spiritual power, not personal magnetism, as Paul clearly pointed out in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Some leaders may serve by teaching the word and other by serving tables, but all leaders serve.
   C. The heart of spiritual leadership is service, not headship. Leaders are not headmasters or controllers but ministers.
      1. According to 1 Peter 5:3, leaders must be “eager to serve, not lording it over (their followers).” To serve Christ, the head, is to serve his church. Therefore, biblical leadership is always servant leadership. Leadership is under the headship of Christ and exists for the express purpose of serving the church, equipping God’s people for works of service and facilitating their ministry to the world.
      2. Christ’s teaching (after washing the disciples’ feet) is indisputably clear: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15).
      3. Paul taught, “Your attitude should be that same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-7)
   D. Some Characteristics of Servant Leadership
      1. Servant leaders never intrude themselves between an individual and God. They believe in the priesthood of all believers and hold to the one unique mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.
      2. Servant leaders must have a team spirit and use their influence to build a team. They seek to promote the whole, not just their part of the ministry.
      3. Servant leaders have a passionate desire to understand the hurts, desires, temptations, sins, joys, and real needs of their people.
      4. Servant leaders are God-centered and others-centered, not self-centered. They are to seek God’s pleasure and others’ best, not their own convenience.
      5. Servant leaders are models for the church. The New Testament repeatedly advises leaders to “set an example for the others in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). No gifts or abilities can make up for a lifestyle that betrays one’s call and profession. One’s character and role are blended inseparably in ministry.
      6. Servant leaders develop others to lead rather than do all the ministry themselves.
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

They guide people, not drive them. They lead from love.

7. Servant leaders lead out of relationship, not out of coercion.
8. Christian leaders serve better when they are convinced they are in the will of God, for then they know they will be equipped for their tasks by God’s power.

II. Basically, we are working for people who are F.A.S.T.
A. Faithful –
B. Available –
C. Servant Hearted –
D. Teachable –

III. Learn to look for the personal character qualities of a leader
A. Family
   1. How does this person treat his or her spouse or children? What a person will do with their family is usually what they do with the church.
   2. The family is the testing ground for the church.
   3. Leaders must have a proven track record.
   4. Does their family (spouse) actually want to bless their leadership and be involved in the ministry as well?
B. Speech patterns
   1. Speech is the microphone of the heart. Observe how they talk about others. That is the way they will talk about you or the church when you aren’t around.
   2. Look for loyalty and watch out for cynicism.
C. Appearance
   1. Appearance is not a register of social classifications but it can be an indication of how they think about themselves or how life is viewed.
   2. Self-acceptance is important. Remember that identity precedes ministry
D. Conduct with others
   1. Does the person work well with a team?
   2. Submission is one of the visible assurances of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5.18ff) as well as a register of the ability to work with others.
   3. One of the true tests of leadership is the leader’s ability to receive instruction, correction, and reproof.
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

4. How in touch are they with their own personal growth curve?

E. Money
   1. How a person manages his money tells you what is transpiring in their hearts.

F. Worship
   1. Can they show their devotion to God through worship?
   2. A leader needs to be receptive to the sometimes radical requirements of being a student of the kingdom of God.

G. Prayer
   1. Do they pray like they have a relationship with God or is it all just meaningless repetition (Matt.6:7)

H. Word of God
   1. Are the realities of Scripture there or just arguments and doctrines coming from them? Many times people are selected by the way they prayed or ministered in public but in their private lives they fail to be authentic disciples of Christ.
   2. The functional side of life is a better reflection of spiritual life than religious jargon or behavior.
   3. Leadership must be demonstrated through giftedness, service, personal worship, and the ability to articulate and exercise the scripture.

IV. Some Guidelines in Identifying Leaders
   A. Notice who is naturally leading; Who do people talk about? Who do people listen to?
   B. Listen to and observe what people like to do: Is this someone who notices what is not working and then wants to do something about it?
   C. Distinguish between genuinely interested people and opportunists
      1. Don’t be in a hurry! Time is on your side
      2. Watch what people do, not only what they say
   D. Be objective! Never allow yourself to be over or under-whelmed by a person’s giftedness, appearance, education, or background
   E. Build genuine relationship with them; get to know who they really are. Remember that this takes some time.
   F. Be familiar with the needs to be met and the job to be filled. What is the job description of the position you are wanting to fill? Ask yourself if this task is a good fit for the person you are getting to know?
   G. Give them a true picture of the job
      1. Write out guidelines, requirements and expectations
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

2. Relate realistic expectations of time commitment
3. Let them know the cost up front
4. Draw them to commitment

V. We are not looking for
   A. A particular set of gifts
   B. A certain type of personality
   C. A certain leadership style

VI. Disqualifications for leadership include:
   A. An unresolved identity crisis
      When people want to lead in order to heal some need or identity, or perform in order
      to be accepted, or gain respect through obtaining some position, they hurt rather than
      lead people to God.
   B. The ability to be criticized or corrected or taught
      Proverbs has a lot to say about the fool who does not enjoy correction (10:17;
      29:1).
   C. The inability to work in a team
      God uses individuals, but individualism disqualifies ministry in the body of Christ.
      Christian leaders have to learn to work with others. If they do not, and if they get
      people to follow them, it almost always leads to unnecessary division.
   D. A tendency to take offence
      Every leader will be treated unjustly by people in the congregation simply because a
      leader represents the authority of God to people. Our innate rebellion against God
      causes us to kick out at authority figures in irrational ways. Leaders who take offence
      and harbor a grudge every time it happens disqualify themselves.
   E. A preoccupation with position rather than service
      Some are preoccupied with the office rather than the function, with authority rather
      than responsibility. Those who feel this way are always complaining that they are not
      being recognized. If there is something to recognize, it will always be recognized.
      The moment you try to make people recognize you, you are disqualified.
   F. Pride
      Ironically pride and insecurity, or feelings of inferiority, are closely related problems,
      Pride can be recognized by the following: The feeling that some tasks or functions are
      below your dignity; When you enjoy honor and flattery too much; Or when you never
      seem to agree with the way others see you and your capabilities.
   G. Lack of time
Chapter 1 – Identifying Potential Leaders

There are many who have all the gifts, character and calling to be leaders, but the cares of this world absorb too much of their time. Their priorities are not properly adjusted. The greatest leader, with not time, is no leader at all.

H. Sex, money and power
These are the classic, age-old traps, almost equal to ‘the world, the flesh and the devil’.

I. The inability to change into a new role model
There are many excellent leaders who get stuck into a certain pattern of ministry, liturgy, style or language.
Chapter 2
Recruiting Potential Leaders
Chapter 2 – Recruiting Potential Leaders

I. Introduction:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 9:35-10:8)

A. The Call for workers:

1. There is a theological basis for recruiting. Jesus modeled ministry and the disciples “caught” His heart and were called to pray for help. Matt.9.35-11.1

2. Jesus commanded them to pray for workers and they were the answer to the prayer. They were called and commissioned (10.1) and sent out (10.5-8)

B. The call to these first disciples is the call to us. Workers are needed, and workers develop into leaders.

C. Jesus provides a useful model for how to begin when we look for leaders. He started with workers who had been called to follow Him.

D. It will often be messy! Difficult! It will call for relationship, counsel and respect. Jesus has provided us with the model and the power to pull it off.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)
Chapter 2 – Recruiting Potential Leaders

II. Keys to Identifying/Recruiting

A. **God is recruiting.** You were recruited! Throughout God’s word men and women were recruited. (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Prophets, Paul) Learn to discern what God is doing.

B. **Look who is drawn to you.** In ministry we look for what God is initiating.

   44 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.” (John 6:44)

C. **Pray** to open your eyes to what God is doing.

   12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. (Luke 6.12)

D. **Jesus called those he wanted ... to be with him.**

   13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. (Mark 3:13-14)

E. **In the context of relationship we discern what God is doing** in their lives and look to serve His purposes.

F. **Authority comes in the aftermath of ministry.** This is when they give us permission to lead and to speak into their lives.

G. Identifying people with talent, character, passion. People are drawn for different reasons.

H. **We look for F.A.S.T. people:** faithful, available, servants, and teachable

   10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve… (1 Timothy 3:10)

I. **We recruit everyone to work and serve.** People are healed as they minister; service is a very necessary component to healing.

   10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)

J. Volunteerism doesn’t work for leadership.

   1. This doesn’t work for leadership. Inevitably wrong people will volunteer; out of a personal need to lead, or immaturity, or impure motives, etc.

   2. Or no people volunteer, since the church tends to be trained spectators
Chapter 2 – Recruiting Potential Leaders

III. How to Recruit

A. Recruitment consists of...
   1. **Letting people know the vision**, goals, and plans. How compelling is your vision? How clear are your goals, plans.
   2. **Inviting them to participate in a clear job description.** How well have you thought through what you want them to do?
      a. Write out job description/guidelines and requirements
      b. Expectations- who to call when they can’t make it, time commitment
      c. Let them know the cost
      d. Draw them into commitment

B. Selection is best after prayer and the initiation of the Holy Spirit. Who is God giving you? Who is drawn to you?

C. Listen and observe what people like to do. Watch what people do and not just what they say. Good listeners…make good disciplers. Often leading is about 50% Listening, interpreting what we see and hear. Also try to listen to what the Holy Spirit would say.
   
   and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears. (Isaiah 11:3)

   1. Types of listening to be avoided.
      a. Judgmental listening – jumping to conclusions
      b. Selective listening – hearing only what you want to hear.
      c. Impatient listening – finishing other’s sentences
      d. Egocentric listening – thinking about what you’ll say
      e. Patronizing listening – Pretending to listen but off in your on world.
      f. Stubborn listening – listening but not open…. Your mind is already made up.

D. Look who is naturally leading/serving already. Who is known by others with a good reputation.
   
   3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. (Acts 6:3)

E. We want to be moving people toward the place God has for them rather than a career in permanent church labor!

F. Be objective! Don’t be over or under whelmed by a person’s giftedness, appearance, education or background. Don’t assume anything just by appearance.

G. Build genuine relationship with them.
Chapter 2 – Recruiting Potential Leaders

IV. Stages in Recruitment

A. Stage One – Getting to know them
   1. Tell me about yourself- background, spiritual history, other churches?
   2. How can I serve you?- Adjustments if moved, friends, are you getting good support, how is your family?
   3. What do you think God is doing in your life right now? What is your dream in God? What areas are challenging? What ministry do you feel called to?( don’t interrogate! Just be friendly)

B. Stage Two – Evaluate their previous training and maturity level: are they a potential worker? Leader? What skills and gifting do they currently possess?
   1. Recommend they get involved in a small group
   2. Give a gift assessment test
   3. Invite them to serve at a low risk level

C. Stage Three – Map a discipleship course with them
   1. Leadership is functional:
      This means that responsibility = authority = accountability
   2. Ask the right kinds of questions:
      a. What do you see yourselves doing in five years?
      b. If you could do anything for God without limits what would it be?
   3. Assume their dreams are an indicator of what God is calling them towards, at least until evidence develops to indicate otherwise.
   4. What kind of training do they need to function in this area and at this level?

D. Stage Four – Tie the knot
   1. Ask permission to engage in intentional training
   2. Ask them to be a part of your team.
   3. Get permission to speak into their lives.
   4. Emphasis on personal transformation

E. Stage Five – Develop ministry descriptions, titles and roles
   1. Used as a primary training vehicle
   2. Used to help evaluate the fruit of discipleship
   3. Used to develop further ministry possibilities (getting feed back)
IRTDMN
Beyond the Basics of Leadership

Chapter 3
Training Potential Leaders
Chapter 3 – Training Potential Leaders

I. A Brief Review

A. What is involved in recruitment?
   1. Recruitment consists of letting people know the vision we have, the goals we hope to reach and the plans we have developed to achieve them.
      a. The degree to which you can articulate that clearly, over and over again—who we are and where we are going—is the degree to which people can get on board.
      b. If you get the wrong people involved, you will not be able to train them.

B. What is different between the way Jesus recruited and the way the world recruits?

C. One of the differences is in the need for motivation. People ask all the time, “How do you motivate your people?” We don't...we only work with the already motivated. It's that simple!

D. Jesus only chose those that the Father chose first. Jesus just ratified the choice of the Father. He recognized who the Father was calling. It's important to understand that the Trinity is at work in the calling of people. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.” (John 15)

E. Jesus was quite radical in his recruitment
   1. Jesus drops by the Sea of Galilee—it all seems so casual and he suggests that these men stop what they’re doing—that is abandon their jobs, their families, their identities and follow him. And what did they do? They did it! They just walked away from their nets, their boats, everything, and they followed him. It seems so casual! But it's so powerful!
   2. Now, could He have done that with unmotivated people? Could he have done that with people who are slow to respond? No way! He may catch those slow to respond another generation out. But right now He took the quick and ready! That's both good and bad. Not everybody that can hear the invitation, and not everyone who is with you will stay with you. Always remember this.

F. What are we looking for in people?
   1. People start at different places—entry-level work—where they can prove themselves until they are ready for more, or not. Some people stay where they start—not everybody is called to be a leader—some have to be followers.
   2. What you're looking for is not only demonstrated ability in the area, but growth in
Chapter 3 – Training Potential Leaders

it, maturation in it. So we're talking about actions and attitudes.

G. Recruiting is all about the heart of the gospel

1. “I don't know about you, but here's what I've discovered; If you want to live, you've got to die.

2. This is not a very appetizing message to some people. But isn't this the heart of the gospel? Liquidate everything. Abdicate everything you ever wanted to be...everything you ever wanted to do...sell it all and follow Jesus! That's what I was told. That's the Christ that I committed to—the pearl of great price. Jesus is the pearl!

3. We are not recruiting people to a worldwide ministry, not to a big church, not to a specific job or title or position.

H. We are really recruiting to Jesus

1. The underlying idea is you recruit to Jesus. If you recruit to station, turf, title, anything else but Jesus, you're in big trouble!

2. 'Well, what will I be? Do I get a secretary?' 'No! You get to die! You get to serve the rest of your life—thankless, unnoticed, nobody really caring much for you. They won't call you, and they'll tell you that your breath smells if they do. If you're willing to do that then you're all right. That's what it is...that's what it's all about! It's selfless service to God. If He chooses to exalt you and lift you up, that's His business. And if He chooses to pull the plug, that's His business! It's not about you! It's about Him!

3. Sign me up; I can’t wait to follow Jesus and die!
Chapter 3 – Training Potential Leaders

II. Learning to define or redefine what it means to train
   A. In the Western world we often confuse information with equipping and training. We think of training as a class. This class is not training. This is informing.
   B. Training is when someone supervises and gives input to the work you are doing.
      1. How are you doing on identifying? How many possible leaders have you identified?
      2. How are you doing on recruiting? How many possible leaders have you recruited?
      3. How are you doing on training? How many possible leaders are you training?
      4. How many people are serving? How many people are taking care of the nursery? How many people are greeting? How many people are helping people find their way around the facility? How many people are involved in small groups? How many people are leading worship? How many people are doing bible studies? How many? HOW MANY?

III. The Jesus model of training
   A. Jesus provides a useful model for how to begin as we train leaders.
      1. He invited them to follow him. Invited them into relationship, demonstrated the ministry, modeled it in front of them, sent them out on short trips to do the ministry and finally just handed it to them.
      2. We have to be it. We have to do it. We have to do it in front of them. Then we release them at a given point doing it. Then we supervise them in the aftermath.
   B. The basic discipleship loop:
      1. Step One – You do the ministry.
         a. They must see the behavior in you first before you will see it in them. This is the most basic key to recruiting and training!
      2. Step Two – You do the ministry while your trainee observes.
         a. The apprentice should be asking “why do you do that this way.” If they don’t ask look for opportunities to just tell them why we do what we do.
         b. This is your opportunity to de-mystify what you are doing. Ministry should be basically simple and reproducible. Look for ways to communicate simply!
         c. This is simple show and tell. Exposure and experience should precede information (training comes before education). Formalizing ministry should follow after familiarization with ministry.
      3. Step Three – You do the ministry with your trainee.
         a. This is grabbing the knob and turning up the heat - “why don’t you pray” or “why don’t you lead discussion next week.”
Chapter 3 – Training Potential Leaders

b. Step two will usually take some cheerleading – You will commonly hear, “I can’t do that…gulp.”

c. This is the first place trust and relationship will be tested. You may need more of both before they are able to take risk.

d. Pray for God to equip them with what they need.

e. Afterward – discuss what happened, pray for them. Their faith will be stretched, and they will grow and mature even if they fail – be encouraging.

4. **Step Four** – They do the ministry while you’re not around, and then you get together and discuss it.

   a. Exact same process without safety net of leader there, more risk, more heat.

   b. Cheerlead, prepare and equip, set them up for success, pray for them to be filled with what they need.

   c. This is where you get to do more evaluation and confrontation. Think back to what you wished you would have known when you were where they are.

   d. Have them report back, discuss – Teach them to evaluate themselves “What could have been better”, pray for them.

5. **Step Five** – You release them to begin to train others.

   a. This is more heat; often they feel like they are not ready for this either. Did you feel ready for leadership?

   b. Coach them through this – help set this up, tell them what to do, how to do it.

IV. The essential element in training

A. Actually doing the ministry is key.

   1. There ought to be reserved occasions where you pull them aside and explain what you're doing; because without the proper explanation, they'll tend to fill in their own rationalization or understanding of why they're doing what their doing. From time to time you've got to expose the theological framework that you're working out of.

   2. Hands-on experience in doing the ministry is the most important element.

B. Transformation is the goal.

   1. Transformation cannot adequately occur without a proper input of information. You need both.

   2. Transformation means ultimately *formation*. We are inviting people into a process of formation where these ministry patterns a built into them.

C. The show and tell of ministry training.
Chapter 3 – Training Potential Leaders

1. We see both of these issues in the ministry of Jesus.
2. Jesus showed them the power of the Kingdom breaking in among them by the healings He performed.
3. When questioned, He provided information for them to learn as well. He talks about demonstration, which is the idea of show and tell. They hung out with Jesus and watched Him do the ministry the Father was showing Him to do. And their pattern of ministry was established.

V. The necessity of evaluation in training.
   A. Evaluation is a very good part of the process. Even God evaluates. Look at Revelation 2-3 as Jesus evaluates the seven churches.
   B. Learn to develop little systems for measuring: Where are we? Where do we want to go? How are we going to get there? Are we making any progress?
   C. Here’s an equation for growth:
      Maximum Care + Maximum Confrontation = Maximum Growth + Maximum Tribulation

VI. The basic stages of a training relationship
   A. Dependent
   B. Independent
   C. Pseudo-dependent
   D. Interdependent
I. Learning to deploy new leaders:

A. They must be clear about what they do.

1. To send someone out to minister is certainly a part of the training mission. Jesus participated in this. After intimacy, relationship with Christ came enablement and empowerment to do the ministry.

2. The disciples were selected by Jesus, shown how to minister, and then sent out…

   Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

   These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

   These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

   "Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for workers are worth their keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at that person's house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. (Matthew 10:1-15)

3. Look at how detailed the instructions are:

   a. He told them where to go
   b. What to preach
   c. What to do
   d. How to travel
   e. What to expect

4. This is the beginning of cutting the umbilical cord. They are on their own for a short period of time. They have to succeed or fail. Either is okay
Chapter 4 – Deploying New Leaders

B. They must be clear about where they end and others begin.
   1. Deployment has to do with administration and placement of people to carry out the specific task or goal.
   2. The new worker/leader must have a clear idea of their calling and gifts.
   3. Each new leader must receive a clear and complete description of expectations and responsibilities. Remember the job description.
   4. As you deploy others it is important to remember that you are not doing the ministry for them, but that as their coach, you are somewhat responsible for them.

C. They must be clear about success and failure.
   1. The new leader and the one deploying them must know what they can legitimately expect from one another so that unmet expectations don’t lead to resentment and bitterness.
   2. You must be committed to the success of those you delegate and deploy:
      a. This involves a commitment to pray for them.
      b. Be available to listen and give ministry for both personal and family counsel.
      c. Maintain consistent contact with them.
   3. Reporting relationships must be clearly defined. The new leader must know who is “over” them and accept a limited relationship with the Senior Pastor.
   4. Ongoing training, reading, listening, ministry trips, etc., need to be an understood aspect of service deployment.
   5. Continue to give feedback as you work with your leaders through the training phases.

D. They must be clear about timing and rhythms.
   1. Ministry, as in all of life, has its ebbs and flows. And we must help to develop realistic expectations. Not every weekly small group meeting is going to be better than the previous one.
   2. Look for and point out seasons of worship and praise verses

II. Here are some common fears to overcome for the “Deployer”

A. The Fear of Displacement
   1. As you deploy new leaders you will begin to feel more and more removed from the leadership you once functioned in.

B. The Fear of Perception

C. The Fear of Relational Loss
Chapter 4 – Deploying New Leaders

1. As you deploy new leaders you will begin to notice that some of the people you once led are now looking to other leaders to get their needs met.

D. The Fear of Potency Loss

1.
Chapter 5
Monitoring New Leaders
Chapter 5 – Monitoring New Leaders

I. What is Monitoring?
   A. Some definitions:
      1. To check the quality or content of …
      2. To keep track of systematically with a view to collecting information.
      3. To test or sample, especially on a regular or ongoing basis: *monitored the city's drinking water for impurities.*
      4. To keep close watch over; supervise: *monitor an examination.*
      5. One that admonishes, cautions, or reminds, especially with respect to matters of conduct.

   B. The monitoring part of the discipleship process:
      1. It is a time of assessing/measuring how the fulfillment of the job description is going.
      2. It is a rhythm of accountability that is designed to help give feedback on the specifics of the job that has been assigned.
      3. Monitoring is a key in clarifying expectations and is used to train the new leader for better fruitfulness.

II. How did Jesus Monitor?
   A. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. (Mark 6:30)

   B. 17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” 18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:17-20)
      1. Jesus gave authority and power to complete a task.
      2. He was invested in the success of that task.
      3. Monitoring helped to focus the disciples on the main objectives of *his* task.
      4. The disciples placed themselves in a posture of learning/monitoring so that they could grow and become more effective.
Chapter 5 – Monitoring New Leaders

III. Lessons from the One Minute Manager

A. One Minute Goals

1. Keep it simple, authentic, not empty flattery
2. How does a child learn to speak? If we waited for a child to be perfect before we get excited about his progress he wouldn’t grow so well or he would be stunted.
3. What are you going to yell at me for? Guaranteed to get lousy results. Ignore the good and don’t tell them specifically what you want from them. Or you don’t get agreement on the goals, you just tell them what the goals are. Can revisit the goals and negotiate them.
4. Write it down in 250 words or less so that you can state it in under a minute. Review frequently, night and day.

B. One Minute Praise

1. Catch them doing something right. Example: they are on time, working hard, specifically what you liked, how it made you feel, and leave them feeling elevated about themselves. You are terrific! You’re awesome! Boy you are good at that! But make sure that you are genuine! Make sure you really mean it.
2. People cannot maintain not have more than 3-4 main goals. Remember to make them S.M.A.R.T. goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound.
3. We want to monitor how they are doing based on the job description.
4. We want to monitor how they are doing spiritually and how motivated they are to keep going. On a scale from 1-10 where are you right now?

C. One Minute Reprimands

1. Attitudes and motivations are able to be reprimanded, this is not just for the learning phase.
2. Don’t reprimand someone new. Build up your praise bank accounts first.
3. Illustration of a Prime Minister and a King. One took all the reprimands and the other did all the praises. One that did all the reprimands found that they got results.
4. Example of getting the teenager to clean their room. A 4x4 space is cleared away surrounded by undisturbed chaos, claiming that they did what you told them to do.
5. Coaches closely monitor results so others can realize their vision and accomplish their goal. Todd Hunter
6. “Over the years I’ve become convinced that every detail is important, and success usually accompanies attention to the little details. John Wooden
Chapter 5 – Monitoring New Leaders

IV. The benefits of accountability

A. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
10 If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!

B. Accountability enhances productivity and effectiveness.

1. You don’t get what you expect; you get what you inspect.
2. The power comes as you have permission to inspect how well it is going with a
   view for greater fruitfulness.

C. Accountability increases resiliency.

   “If one falls down the other can pick him up.”

1. One role of a good monitoring time is that of an encourager. Example of “The
   Biggest Looser.” That weigh in time was invaluable as a reality check to what
   was really happening in their weight lost but also was a time where others would
   encourage and give different strategies.
2. We naturally resist accountability. Weaknesses and problems can’t be corrected
   until they are seen. We resort to a childish game of “if you didn’t see me do it, it
   didn’t happen.”
3. Accountability is an aid to self-awareness and we should learn to welcome it.

D. Accountability builds momentum.

1. As they hear what they are doing right and what the target is they will feel more
   empowered to do what you have agreed upon. Remember, it is pride that keeps us
   from letting others speak into our lives.

V. Some Keys to Monitoring

A. Define up front what monitoring will look like: when will you meet, what you will
   talk about, how it will practically function. Let them know exactly what to expect.

B. Don’t wait until you think that you can do it perfectly. You will learn to effectively
   monitor other along the way. Just get started!

C. Be clear with the job description. What exactly are they responsible for? Whom are
   they responsible to?. Go over this over and over and over again. Ask, “What do you
   hear me say?” Review their goals frequently — 250 word or less, and no more than 3-
   4 goals.
D. Here are some common fears of monitoring new leaders

1. Fear of confrontation.
   a. Many people have a real fear of speaking the truth to others.
   b. People may think all their ways are pure, but motives are weighed by the LORD. (Proverbs 16:2)
   c. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. (Proverbs 27:6)
   d. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you. (Proverbs 9:8)

2. Fear of rejection.
   a. God uses various tests to help us to mature.

3. Fear of doing it wrong.
   a. If love is your motive and building up is your goal, have confidence that God will be with you in the process.

E. Make sure you are praying for those that you are monitoring. Carry them in your heart. As you pray for them you are loving them and serving them.
Chapter 6 – Nurturing New Leaders

I. What does it mean to provide nurture?
A. Some definitions of nurture:
   1. To feed and protect: to support and encourage; to bring up train, educate.
   2. Nurturing has to do with genuine friendship, with giving value to and meeting personal needs through counsel and prayer.

II. Biblical examples of nurture:
A. God is our example of nurturing. He initiates nurture.
   1. (Isaiah 27:2-3)
      2 In that day—"Sing about a fruitful vineyard: 3 I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it.
   B. Look at the model of Jesus nurturing His disciples.
      1. (Luke 10:1-20)
      1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go….
      17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."
      2. Jesus made time for them.
      3. He rejoiced in what they accomplished.
      4. His giving of time was one way of saying, “Thank you.”
   C. Look at the example of Jesus nurturing Peter at the point of his greatest failure.
      1. John 21:13ff
      15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."
      16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."
      17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord,
Chapter 6 – Nurturing New Leaders

you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. \(^{18}\) Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." \(^{19}\) Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

2. His well spoken words and ministry brought Peter through his depression to the point of embracing his calling.

D. Other Biblical Examples:

1. Acts 9:26ff

\(^{26}\) When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. \(^{27}\) But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.

a. We see Barnabas defends and walks with Paul through his transformation and the growth process.

2. 1 Thessalonians 2.6b-8

\(^{6b}\) As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, \(^{7}\) but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. \(^{8}\) We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2.6b-8)

III. How to provide nurture:

A. To provide a nurturing environment, learn to identify these four qualities:

1. Strengths and weaknesses
   a. What causes them to flourish or what de-energizes them?

2. Triggers

3. Personality

4. Learning Style
   a. How do they assimilate new information and expectations?
      Analytical Al needs info? Jump in Jane? Watching Wally?

5. This is the difference between the games of chess and checkers. In checkers all pieces move just alike. Many leaders approach people in this way.
   a. In chess each piece has it’s own strengths. Bobby Fisher once said, “Winning in this game is all a matter of understanding how to capitalize on the strengths
Chapter 6 – Nurturing New Leaders

of each piece and timing their moves just right.”

b. Great leadership is not about control but about connection and release. People are best empowered when it is done according to their strengths. Mediocre leaders play checkers.

B. We need to understand where they are at.

1. Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds. (Proverbs 27:23)

2. The Hebrew word translated “condition” (paw-neem) is also translated as face, countenance, or heart

3. Nurture is all about learning to take the time to really understand where people are at, what they are going through, what they are feeling and what they really need.

C. We need to focus on God’s agenda.

1. Nurturing happens as I get behind what God is saying to each person and encourage him or her towards his agenda not mine.

2. Spiritual leaders don’t try and satisfy to goals and ambitions of those that you lead but those of the God they serve.

D. We need to direct them towards God.

1. Look at the way Jesus directed his disciples towards the Holy Spirit just before his arrest, trail and execution in John 14-16.

2. “I am going away, but I am going to send you the Comforter.”

3. Direct them to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. “God does want to interact with you. He loves your small group even more than you do. He will continue to lead you, encourage you and tell you exactly what to do!”

E. Remind them of the process we’ve all gone through:

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

1. A Dream
   We all began with a dream of what God wanted to do through us.

2. A Decision
   We all made a decision to follow that dream no matter what it might cost us.

3. Distractions
   We were all given opportunities to be distracted and walk away from the dream.

4. Discouragement
   We’ve all felt the discouragement of not seeing the dream come to fruition as we
Chapter 6 – Nurturing New Leaders

expected.

5. Death of
We all went through a time of giving up on the dream.

6. Deliverance
And we’ve all seen God accomplish the dream against all odds in his perfect timing.

F. Reflect that Jesus didn’t promise that this would be easy

1. (John 16:1, 33)
   1 "All this I have told you so that you will not fall away.
   33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

G. Direct them towards future rewards

1. Biblical examples:
   a. (Matthew 5:12)
   b. For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. (Matthew 16:27)
   c. (1 Corinthians 3.8,14;9.17)
   d. (Colossians 2.18;3.24)
   e. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)

2. Do you want to hear “Well done?” or “Why did you give up?”

IV. Some Practical Examples:

A. Practical ways to Nurture:
   1. Send a card saying Thank You!
   2. Call them up just to connect with no other specific agenda.
   3. Catch them doing something good and let them know about it.
   4. Invite them over just to hang out.
   5. Take them somewhere that they would enjoy or benefit from.
   6. Reach out with meaningful touches in the process of doing ministry.
   7. Picturing a meaningful future and communicate your commitment to it. “I believe in you and your dreams. I’ll be there.”
Chapter 6 – Nurturing New Leaders

8. Praying and hearing God for them.
9. Tuning into how they are wired and meet them there.
10. Giving a gift that has specific meaning and it doesn’t have to cost too much.

B. Ten Ways to Build up New Leaders
1. Accentuate the positive
2. Be liberal with praise
3. Compliment them frequently, sincerely and in public
4. Greet them using their names
5. Take note of their hobbies and special interests
6. Work on your own self image—you can’t encourage them if you don’t believe in yourself
7. Give credit where credit is due—don’t steal their thunder
8. Ask, “How can I help?”
9. Give appropriate challenges—people get bored when not challenged
10. Listen! Listen! Listen!

C. Ten Ways to Destroy New Leaders
1. Underestimate their potential
2. Remove their reward
3. Show a lack of confidence in them
4. Expect immediate results
5. Don’t support them
6. Magnify their mistakes
7. Ignore their successes
8. Underestimate the role they play
9. Treat the task as if it’s more important than they are
10. Talk! Talk! Talk!