

PRACTICAL CHURCH-PLANTING POINTS OF ADVICE

When asked what advice I'd offer to someone who believed God was leading them to plant a local church, I responded with the following thoughts...

1. If you haven't already done so, violently nail the all-too-common *romantic* view of *ministry* to the cross (*3 Jn 1:9*). Genuine *Biblical ministry*, especially *pastoral ministry*, is often as unnerving as it is challenging. It can be as *bloody* and *brutal* as it is *honorable* and *essential*. It rarely garners the *praise of men* and more times than not, it's incomprehensibly demanding, yet utterly *thankless*. Indeed, *ministry*, unwisely taken up by the ill-advised who harbor false expectations, will ultimately trend spiritually catastrophic. The reality of *real-time ministry* will unmercifully *chew up and spit out* the bright-eyed-novice shocked, confused and often bitter against both man and God.
2. Pray-thru until you're absolutely sure God is calling you to pioneer a church and *pastoral ministry*, if not, when difficult and trying times come, as they surely will, the winds of testing will likely discourage, confuse, and cause questions. Have a sure word of direction to stand on (*Lk 6:48; Eph 5:17*).
3. Be given to *much* prayer and fasting. Make sure you are filled with the *Holy Ghost*. If you think you '*can*', you '*won't*'. You must know the fulfilling of your call is impossible apart from the grace, power, and anointing of *God's Spirit* (*1 Tim 3:6; Jam 4:6*).
4. If you are not completely free from the *fear of man*, it would be better never to begin (*Prov 29:25; Ezk 3:7-9*).
5. Preach the Word like a dying man to dying men, believing you will give an account for everything you *do* and *say*, because you will (*2 Tim 4:1-4; Heb 13:17*). Moreover, even though you are called to pastor, don't forget to model evangelism to the local church by preaching the gospel open-air. A man unwilling to preach to sinners is unfit to instruct the church (*2 Tim 4:5*).
6. Ask God for heavenly wisdom to '*feed the sheep*', but utterly '*starve the goats*'. Purge yourself of the popular mindsets that tend to honor the middle ground, seeking to placate in gray areas while rambling on and on about *balance* and *cautious wisdom*. Be utterly radical. Hate what God hates and love what He loves with all your heart. Let God's Word define everything '*black or white*', '*heaven or hell*', '*holiness or sin*', etc. Seek a spiritual atmosphere where everyone will be humbled at the altar or driven out the door (*2 Cor 11:2; 1 Pet 5:2*). Leave the satanic methods of *worldly-wise appeasements* and *seeker/sinner-friendly-church-growth-gimmicks* to the snake-bit scribes of modern Babylon.

7. Never compromise. Never. Not even in the slightest way or you and those under your oversight will pay dearly (*1 Cor 5:6*).

8. Above all you must be spiritually alive; all advancement in *ministry* is contingent on genuine spiritual vitality. As *Jesus* declared in *John 3:6*, ‘*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*’. Flesh can never, no matter what it may look like, produce anything of eternal value; *nothing*. The *church* is birthed out of *life* and not vice versa.

9. Make sure your marriage and home are completely in order; *Satan* will seek to exploit every weakness in your closest relationships; this admonition cannot be overemphasized (*1 Tim 3:4-5*).

10. Planting a church is not for the spiritually feeble; expect misery and pain because you will experience both (*1 Cor 9:4-13*). More than likely, every expectation you have regarding the *what*, the *who*, and the *how this will all unfold*, will come tumbling to the ground. Your motivation must be solely the call of God and a desire to please and glorify *Jesus*. You must honestly determine whether you want to be a *professional preacher* or to truly build a congregation. If your desire is to truly pastor then you must set your *face like flint* to endure the wilderness and dry years ahead. Cry out to God for faithful men who will be willing to submit to you. God’s order is to give a *vision* to you as the leader and then see that *vision* birthed through those that follow you as you follow Christ. These individuals must be willing to be impregnated with the *vision* God has given you and this should primarily be men. Women, of course, will have an integral part of what takes place, but to see the church truly built God’s way means you must have godly men lead out.

11. Remember, God has not called you to win a popularity contest, to be a glorified businessman, or merely a nice fellow, but a holy vessel to reveal His *Christ* and declare His Word. You will be utterly despised by many, cherished by few, and appreciated by hardly anyone. Don’t expect anything but to be a faithful servant (*2 Tim 3:12; 1 Jn 3:13*).

12. A *local church* is a spiritual entity consisting of truly redeemed and sanctified men who are consciously called together by God to both contain and manifest the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Hence, planting and building a *New Testament church* cannot be realized by carnal or worldly means, no matter how sincere. Never forget, the *principle of the cross* must ever be evident in our pilgrimage of following *Jesus* (*Matt 10:38*); this is especially true in planting a *local church*. To the natural mind, the *way of the cross* looks like certain defeat, when in fact, it is the only path to spiritual victory. As the Scriptures teach, ‘*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*’ (*Prov 14:12*). This being so, we can logically assume the opposite is just as applicable—‘*There is likewise a way that seems so wrong, that seems so utterly contrary to conventional wisdom, but the end thereof are the ways of life*’. In planting a *local church*, the temptation will be to succumb to *religious, anti-christ traditionalism* in an effort to escape the deep spirituality and lofty

sacrifice needed to truly follow *Jesus* in ministry. Nonetheless, there are no *spiritual-short-cuts* to truly building a valid *church*. Thus, avoid the humanistic reasoning that tends to employ popular marketing techniques—*advertising, image management, and personal-relation* tactics. Refuse the counsel of silly women who will tell you, ‘*don’t scare or alarm folks*’ and to ‘*always be upbeat and positive*’ because that’s what people want. Do such methods draw a crowd? Absolutely, but ultimately that’s what it will be, *a crowd*, not a genuine *church* by strict *New Testament* standards. Your path and plan are clear—*Jesus Christ* is the *Master Architect*, the *Scriptures* are your blueprint, your building material are blood-washed, born-again men who are sold-out to *Jesus*, and your rallying cry is the anointed preaching of the full *Gospel*. You don’t build a *local church* by mass advertising schemes. On the contrary, *New Testament churches* are build meticulously, one soul at a time. So, roll your spiritual sleeves up: *fast, pray, preach* the uncompromising *Gospel*, ‘*reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*’ so as to make true disciples. It certainly won’t happen overnight.

13. Concentrate on *quality*, not *quantity*. Remember, there is at least one thing worse than an empty church-building...an offended God. Spiritual growth is far more important than numerical growth. Everyone but *Jesus* is expendable, even you (*1 Cor 10:31*).

14. Adopt the Biblical definition of ‘*success*’, which is to ‘*simply do the will of God regardless of any visible results*’ (*Jn 6:38*).

15. Formulate, document, and establish, as much as possible, the *vision*, the *polity*, the *doctrine*, and the *orthopraxy* of the church from the very beginning (*who we are, what we believe, how we live, and the order thereof—the practical, day-to-day fleshing-out of the corporate testimony, the service times, prayer times, evangelism, etc.*). The *vision* is what God has revealed He will bring forth through faithful vessels before it’s manifested (*Ezk 40:4*). Granted, *seeing* what *God wants* is essential, but *birthing* what *God commands* is the primary ground where the battle will be either won or lost; *incarnation* is always the point of conflict. You must have a sound spiritual plan from the outset; avoid drastic fluctuations and alterations mid-stream.

16. The responsibility to *lead* is squarely on you. If, under intense pressure you are apt to shirk your moral obligation to rise up, be decisive, and march forward, then *pastoring*, and especially *church-planting*, is not for you. Your calling demands *faith to heal*, but just as needful and often far more rare, is an unwavering, calculated, and principled *courage to slay*. Never forget the inspired words of the *Prophet Jeremiah*, ‘*Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood*’ (*Jer 48:10-11*). Sound leadership is not so much proven by the decisions that publicly are favorable and well-received, but rather, the willingness to be decisive in choosing the unpopular. Unexpectedly taking the *narrow path* when the *broad way* is preferred by the multitude and confidently, under Christ, making the difficult and costly decisions that few understand. From this point on, you must know, ‘*If God has indeed called me,*

then He will faithfully equip me with strength, courage, and wisdom to overcome. He will guide me safely through every battle.' All in all, it must be *Jesus* who is your source of spiritual strength to lead.

17. Know who to let stay (*Judges 7:4-7; 1 Cor 5:11*).

18. You must adopt and cultivate the mindset of a *work-mule* while maintaining the vigilance of a seasoned *soldier* or you will do very little and accomplish nothing. Planting a *local church* demands, almost more than perhaps anything else, unceasing, consistent progressive hard work, both natural and spiritual. The enemy will not rest as he violently opposes you every forward step you take. This is what the *Apostle Paul* meant when he declared, '*I have fought with beasts at Ephesus*' (*1 Cor 15:32*). Thus, you must keep *plowing*, keep *digging*, keep *building*, keep *pushing forward* though the battle rages and the storm winds blow; you will be required to be equally adept at both *shovel* and *sword*. As you will see, if you don't do it, it probably won't get done. You and your family will be required to do almost everything while many will assume you do very little of anything. This will become your way of life, but don't allow yourself to grow *wearry in well-doing* (*Gal 6:9; 2 Th 3:13*). Cultivate a servant's heart, and whatever you do, do it as unto *Jesus* and not merely for men. Expect very little recognition; from the point you step into pastoral ministry you will be under-appreciated and taken for granted. Yet, keep a *right spirit* and seek the praise that comes from God alone (*Jn 12:43*). Of course, remember, at your very best you are merely an *unprofitable servant* (*Lk 17:10*).

19. Hope for the best, prepare for the worst. Establish Biblical goals and expectations while not limiting God. Don't allow yourself to determine success by numbers. Keep your eyes on *Jesus* and concentrate on obedience to Him. The *quality* of your service is far more important than the *quantity* of those who become a part. There will be an extended season of plowing that will thoroughly test your endurance and faithfulness. Be prepared for an intense warfare to center on you and your family. It will take time for the ministry to be established and authority given. Likewise, it will be by-and-by that you'll completely understand both your *giftings* and *weaknesses*. Learn to delegate to those who are strong where you are weak.

20. Know and concentrate on your field of labor. You cannot build a church if you're not where God has called you. *Ministry vagabonds* are never good pastors. True, sometimes simply *preaching to the flock*, like the realities of all genuine ministry, loses some of its luster and appeal making ministry anywhere else more enticing, but you must not lose your focus. Hunker down, resist the temptation to travel and preach out, though calculated seasons for revival and refreshment are vital.

21. Don't push doors open; don't get ahead of God, especially with finances (*buildings, musical equipment, church vans, etc.*). Only purchase what you need and avoid debt.

22. Establish a spiritual schedule and religiously keep it (service times, prayer times, evangelism, etc.).

23. Pray God kill you if you backslide (*Prov 9:10, 16:6*).

Of course, this list is merely my thoughts (and echoes of advice given to me by other godly men) and is not intended to be considered exhaustive.

—Pastor Britt Williams