

## **Article Highlights**

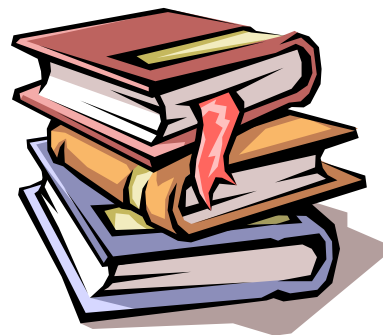
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*Our definition of a church planting movement includes the idea that our ministry should impact the culture in exciting ways.*

*How can we expect this to happen if our training methods systematically separate training from life and ministry in the culture?*

## *Resource Team for Latin America*



## **Does our Training Support Movement?**

In this first issue of *Resources* we would like to investigate the challenge of training local leaders who can participate in and carry forward a church planting movement. It seems clear that without an adequate means of producing a steady stream of capable leadership, not even an incipient movement will be able to continue.

The focus here is not so much on the content of the training, but on the methods we use. Are there methods of training that are more conducive to promoting church planting movements than others? Are there methods that tend to impede the development of movements? Are there

biblical principles we should take into account? How can training methods be contextualized to the needs of different situations?

It is our belief that there are indeed biblical principles to guide us, and that some of the methods we commonly use are, in fact, counter-productive to advancing church planting movements. It is possible to be promoting movements on the one hand while impeding them on the other.

The purpose of this issue is to raise questions, offer suggestions, and stimulate dialogue about how we can align the training of leaders with our mission statement.

## **An Unbiblical Dichotomy that Works Against Us**

The main topic of discussion will be a typical training tendency that we believe impedes church planting movements. It is based on an unbiblical dichotomy—the habitual separation between church planting and training (see articles on pages 2-5), or more generally between action and learning.

On the one hand our church planting ministry systems are designed with the assumption that we are already prepared

for developing church planting movements—that ongoing learning does not need to be built into our church planting methods.

On the other hand, our training systems assume that leaders can be adequately trained in relative isolation from the actual ministry of church planting. First you are trained, then you get involved in significant ministry. There is a dichotomy between training/learning and ministry.

## The “Send them to Seminary” Model

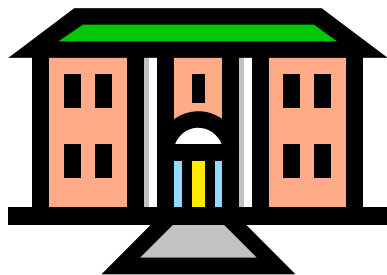
A training model that typically separates between church planting and training is the formal seminary model. It is not our intention to discredit the use of seminaries in any and every situation. In fact, we envision a role for seminary training in the development of church planting movements.

As a steady diet, however—as the main method we rely on—it tends to work against church planting movements. The constant use of the method actually teaches something. It teaches that what you really need to know to facilitate a church planting movement can be learned in relative isolation from ministry. It teaches that ministry experience and personal character growth are either irrelevant to church planting or not as important as the acquisition of information—whether theoretical or practical—that can be gained in the classroom setting. It also teaches that once you graduate you are “prepared.” You have the necessary tools to get the job done. Now

you just have to “apply” what you have learned—as if this were a mere detail.

As it turns out, however, what we should really be teaching is the relation of ideas to practice and individual growth. This is more important than the mere transmission of ideas or skills. It is the crucial issue if we want to see movement.

The problem is that when people graduate, they find they are expected to know what to do but really have very little idea. They feel frustrated, afraid, and tend to resort to the method of training they “learned” at seminary—the transmission of information about theory or practice—in the hope that this will somehow produce a movement. The reality is otherwise. This transmission-of-information/skills method can easily produce a congregation that has little experience with the ideas of the Word of God transforming life and culture. The separation of ideas and ministry that is “taught” in a seminary setting thus tends to be propagated in the church.




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*The seminary model of training “teaches” that the way to move people is to give them the right information. Those trained in this way tend to rely on the method they were indirectly taught.*

## The Theological Education by Extension Model

There are many variations of Theological Education by Extension (TEE), and there were a number of motivations for its inception. What most versions of this “home grown” variety of training have in common is that training is not done in a seminary but in the context of a local church.

One would think that this juxtaposition of training and ministry context might address the unbiblical dichotomy mentioned above (see page 1). For the most part, however, it resulted in the importation of the seminary into the church, but with a lowering of the academic standards in the process. It ended up being a way of bringing the seminary—in a modified way—to people who otherwise would not be able to attend. The name itself implies this “extension” of the seminary to a wider audience.

Most versions I have seen have a seminary-like classroom as the centerpiece of the training program. As in seminary, the transmission of important information is the

main thing. In many cases trainees are given ministry assignments so they can get the practical experience they need. In most cases, however, the trainers spend very little time with the trainees in ministry—watching them minister, encouraging for specific advances, correcting errors, or relating the content of the classroom experience to ministry.

In many cases, the practical training becomes—for all practical purposes—a way of helping the leadership accomplish all its ministry tasks. If the trainee can teach a Sunday School class, that’s one less thing the current leadership has to do. Very often the assumption is that throwing the trainee into practical ministry will somehow train him. It’s very easy to start “using” the trainees to help us get the job done instead of taking the time to invest in them. In addition, most versions I have seen include very little in the way of helping trainees develop a godly character. We seem to assume the Holy Spirit will do this directly, and not through us.

## Reaching the Goal by Investing in Others

God is perfectly capable of accomplishing his kingdom purposes and goals without us. In fact it would be a much more efficient process if he used the angels or just did it himself. However, although efficiency has a place in his plan, it is not the overriding factor. Rather, he has decided to accomplish his goals through us by investing in us.

This investment involves Christ coming to dwell within us by his Spirit. He thus shares with us his loving presence, his enabling power and his enlightening wisdom. It is in this way that God accomplishes his kingdom plans: not by ignoring us, nor by utilizing us, but by investing in us. He has our best interest at heart. He pours himself into us. As a result we increasingly reflect his glory.

Just as the Holy Spirit has been poured out into us as God's way of investing in us, so we are to invest in others. In John 7:37ff Jesus says that whoever trusts in Christ, "drinking of him," will experience the Holy Spirit flowing out of him or her in the form

of "rivers of living water." Notice the disproportionate amounts. One sip of Christ is multiplied into streams. These streams consist of "living water." Jesus said these words at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles during which they celebrated God's goodness to them in the desert, thus recalling the waters that God provided miraculously for their life. These waters that once provided physical life for the desert travelers now provide spiritual life as we drink of him. Furthermore, they are multiplied and flow out from us to be a blessing to others. In this way we invest in others, thus imitating God's investment in us.

Paul says that this is the way pastors are to accomplish their goals—by investing in others (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Making disciples, the primary command in the Great Commission, should also be viewed as an investment in other people (See next article).



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*Efficiency is not the only means of reaching the goal. We accomplish our mission by investing in others.*

## Making Disciples: Investment in Others

The Great Commission command to "make disciples" is much broader than some people make it out to be. It includes both entrance into the kingdom as well as growth within it. Furthermore, it appears that the process is never complete. It includes teaching people to obey. This is much more than just transmitting information or skills. It involves investing the whole self in others. Learning to line up our actions with what we say we believe in all the different situations of life is a much more lengthy process than absorbing information or developing skills. In addition, making disciples involves learning to obey *everything* Christ has commanded. Becoming a disciple is a life-long process.

Thus, making disciples is not narrowly defined as evangelizing and getting people started with the basics of the Christian life. It is more than mastering the three steps to

interpret the Bible or memorizing a method of evangelization. Rather, it is a way of life in which we are continually investing our lives in those the Lord has put around us. For some people this may mean a full time ministry designed to invest in others. For other people, or at different stages of one's life, it may mean investing in one's children or spouse or friends and colleagues.

In any case, the streams of life that flow out from us when we look to Jesus (John 3:37ff, see previous article) should continually flow out and be a blessing to others so they follow Christ and, becoming like him, invest in still others. Just as the method of training people by transmitting information tends to propagate itself, so the investment in others tends to propagate itself. The difference is that the latter produces people who are excited about how the Bible can transform their lives and culture because they have been trained to make the connections among ideas, ministry and life. This investment in others is how the Great Commission is fulfilled.

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*The best way to develop a multiplication model is by taking the time to invest in others. In the long run you get a movement.*

Y	M	A
1	25	1
2	50	2
3	75	4
4	100	8
5	125	16
6	150	32
7	175	64
8	200	128
9	225	256
10	250	512
11	275	1,024
12	300	2,048
13	325	4,096
14	350	8,192
15	375	16,384

Y=Years

M= Multiplication

A=Addition

*Two Models:  
Multiplication  
vs. Addition*

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*Jesus ministered to groups and large crowds, but personal investment played a central role in his development of leadership.*

## Multiplication vs. Addition

As we attempt to facilitate God-glorifying church planting movements, our primary objective is not so much attracting large crowds, but investing in individuals in such a way that they follow Christ and invest in still others.

The familiar table at the left can be criticized from several angles, but it is still helpful to see how investing in others represents a principle of multiplication rather than of addition.

In the first column, suppose a missionary evangelizes 25 people a year and that these all attend church. In the other column, suppose a missionary invests his life in just one person during a year. Then after the second year this person has invested in another. After the third year these two have invested in two more, making four. At the end of fifteen years, the addition method results in 375 converts, while the multiplication method results in over 16,000. This is the result of the principle of reaching the goal by investing in others.

Again, there are a number of assumptions being made here that may or may not be true. The point is, however, that if we make converts who are unable or unwilling to invest in others in such a way they also invest in still others, we have an addition model. The best way to develop a multiplication model is by taking the time to invest in people. In the long run you get a movement.

This, of course, does not rule out the importance of ministry to large groups. Jesus gathered large groups and even multitudes and ministered to them on many occasions. However, it is equally clear the central role that personal investment played in the ministry of Jesus.

Gathering resources, attracting crowds, creating ministry systems, erecting buildings and administrating resources all have an important role in our work. However, none of these can be more important than investing in people. Losing this focus will be an obstacle to church planting movements.

## Investment and the Development of Leadership

This multiplication principle of investing in others is especially true when it comes to the development of leadership. It is clear that, although Jesus ministered to large crowds, his development of leadership focused on personal investment.

If training does not include this personal investment, the leaders we produce will have learned an addition model from us. Investing in others is more than just transmitting information. It means taking the time to get involved enough in their lives that we can help them see the connection between Scripture and the daily challenges and problems of their life and culture. When people are excited about the application of Scripture to their lives and culture—when

they see transformation taking place—they communicate this excitement to others. When they try to influence or help people simply by transmitting information, or simply by teaching practical skills, the excitement—if it was ever there—eventually fades away. Under these conditions, addition is the most that can be expected. Movement is unlikely.

We train not only through the content we transmit, but also through the *form* of our ministry. Training without personal investment is likely to produce leaders who have an addition—as opposed to a multiplication—mentality. The way we train can either facilitate or impede a church planting movement.

## Covenantal Training

“Covenantal training” is a term I use to describe a more biblical model of training than we have often used on the mission field and also in the USA. It explains more specifically the way we should invest in others. I get the term from Deuteronomy 6:6-9 where the training of children of the covenant involves these three elements:

1. The communication of God’s words
2. The application of these words to all of life with obedience as the result
3. This is to be done in the context of loving God more than anything or anyone

The covenantal model of training says you can’t know or understand unless you do what God wants you to do. That is, true knowledge is not just intellectual but requires obedience. Furthermore, you can’t really obey unless you love. Obedience without love is just activism or hypocrisy. However, you can’t love unless you know what God says. Without God’s words, we don’t even know what it means to love. Furthermore, our love is misdirected unless it is done according to the truth.

On the other hand, the more you know, the more you love; and the more you love, the

more you obey; and the more you obey, the more you know. A momentum of growth is produced as the three elements feed into one another.

Since each element requires the other, there is no way we can get this process going by ourselves. It requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit who connects our “knowing,” “doing,” and “being” in such a way that momentum is produced. The solution is not a “balance” among these. This would result only in the mean between the extremes. Rather, what we need is a Spirit-produced connection that results in the momentum of growth.

The goal in covenantal training is to facilitate the connection of these three elements in the trainee. It is not enough to do all three without connecting them (see sidebar). Since this connection requires the Holy Spirit, facilitating it is a spiritual exercise in which we must point people to Christ. Once they begin to see the connection, a spiritual momentum and excitement—a spiral movement of growth—is produced that can spill over into others. This momentum, then, becomes an important “motor” for multiplication and for church planting movements.

## Priority Systems and Idolatry

Different personalities, organizations and cultures tend to give priority either to knowing, doing or being. The United States, for example, has typically prioritized doing (goal orientation, efficiency), while Latin America values being (enjoyment of life and relationships). The people we train will be affected by this cultural priority as well as by their own personality preferences. So will we be affected by our culture and personality.

While it is perfectly legitimate to lead out with one of these, it is wrong to depend on one’s strength in any of these areas rather than on Christ. This is idolatry, although it may be unconscious—lurking in the flesh of

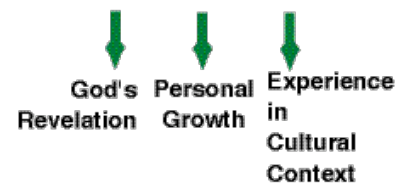
the individual, or in the “collective flesh,” of the culture. For example, we in the US tend to depend on our ability to organize and get things done rather than on Christ. People in Latin America tend to rely on their ability to network with people.

The point is that getting people to move around the spiral of growth mentioned previously is a spiritual activity. People don’t naturally want to move—to connect their knowing, doing and being—because we are all comfortable depending on our strengths. Training must take these legitimate priority systems—and their possible distortion—into account. Otherwise we may train people in our own image.

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*It isn’t enough to have three parallel training tracks: academics, practical experience and personal growth. These three must be related to and inform each other.*

### Parallel Track Model



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*We must understand the personal and cultural priorities of our trainees—and of ourselves.*

*Otherwise we may end up training people in our own image.*

## A Common Objection

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*This takes time—more time than our efficiency mentality is inclined to want to give. But in the long run we multiply our efforts and so promote a movement.*

The most common objection to this proposal is that it takes too much time. Most church planters and pastors are already too busy as it is. To add training responsibilities is seen as too much. What we are proposing, however, is not so much adding training time to what we currently do. Rather, we could look at the activities involved in our current ministries and find ways to do them with and through trainees.

For example, we could take trainees with us to observe how we do ministry, talk to them about how we struggle with the ways people respond to us or the challenges we face, and

show them how we look to Christ to work it through. We could relate these challenges to the class in Christology or Soteriology they are taking. We could give them opportunities to participate with us in ministry and give them feedback afterwards. We could observe them doing ministry and give them feedback. We could affirm their gifts and challenge them with regard to character development. We could eventually send them out to do some ministries on their own and debrief with them later. It's true that this will probably not seem as efficient or as effective as doing it ourselves. In the long run, however, we multiply our efforts.

## Possible Ideal Scenario

There is a presbytery of four churches in a city of five million people. Each of these churches has at least two pastors and an active session. Each church has one or two men they are training to be church planters or pastors. Classes are held in a central location for all trainees. The pastors divide up the curriculum among them according to their strengths. In this way the burden of teaching classes does not fall to any one person. However, they are all aware of what is being taught and make every effort to relate that content to the life and ministry of the trainees.

All the trainees are under care of presbytery. Every trainee has a primary mentor or discipler—probably one of the pastors but

possibly an elder. However, in the interest of having multiple disciplers, other pastors and elders also invest in the trainees, according to their strengths. Much of the training is done in the context of ministry, as described above. However, there is also a regular one-on-one time during which the trainer/discipler enjoys the company of the trainee, affirms giftedness, and challenges needed character growth. Even this, however, is related to the classes and usually arises out of observations during ministry.

Several other presbyteries in the country are using the same model of training. Each presbytery has one ordained man with a PhD degree in some specialty. These men teach the classes in their area of specialty not only for their own presbytery, but also travel on occasion to teach in other presbyteries.

The more advanced trainees are usually involved in the discipling of newer trainees. They may sometimes help with teaching a class, but are especially involved in the other areas of training.

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*This model works best when there is synergy and a spirit of collaboration.*

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*In the long run there is no reason to have to lower the academic standards. Good curriculum can be found or developed. In addition, if true knowledge comes from relating it to our experience and character, then this model offers a higher level of understanding than mere absorption of information.*

## The “Feel” of this Meta-model

The kind of training we are proposing is more of a meta-model than a specific way of doing ministry. That is, it proposes principles that can be carried out in many different ways. But there is a certain feel to it that should be present in any design. For example:

None of the trainers, pastors, church planters or anyone else involved in the process is seen as the hero. Any leader—including any “movement leader”—does not live his life or carry out his ministry in a way that makes him look like the hero. This is especially true to the extent that the church planting effort is seen as successful. Rather, Christ is seen as the hero. The leadership continually portrays him as such, not only in official teaching, but also in the way they do ministry, react to praise or criticism, and treat their families, church members and outsiders. This is not accomplished by the leaders putting themselves down through false humility, but by showing their love for Christ. After people hear a sermon or Bible study they don’t leave for home so much looking at themselves and their inadequacies (or supposed adequacies), but rejoicing in Christ their hero.

All aspects of training should create a sense of adventure and expectancy in that the training is actual involvement in the spiritual warfare and mission to which the Lord calls us. Prayer with the trainees should be an important part of the training. It should be kingdom-oriented rather than simply running down a list of needs. The academics, the personal growth as well as the ministry to others should all be focused on the exciting, critical and dangerous mission impossible we have been given.

The atmosphere is one of mutual support and dependence. The task is too big for any one person to pull it off. Multiple disciplers work as a team. The disciplers create a sense of the important contributions of the trainees, without falling into the trap of using them to get to the goal faster instead of investing in them. Supporting churches are involved and have an important role.

The trainer should provide a strong example, but should also be willing to take a back seat

sometimes, promote the trainee, not be concerned about losing "glory", and if possible make the trainee become even more effective than himself. The trainers show by their actions that they desire (reflected) glory for the trainees, according to the principle in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Trainers must be very secure in the Lord. Trainees need to have the same attitude as they begin to invest in others. If the trainer does not have this attitude, it is not likely that the trainee will either.

There is an atmosphere in which people who are good at academics are not seen as more important than those who are good at accomplishing ministry, or those who are good at relating to people (or the other way around). That is, there is no privileging of certain gifts. Different gifts are appreciated and felt as needed by all. Giftedness is openly affirmed and people are placed in ministry in such a way that they are able to use their gifts.

Foreigners and locals are seen as equally important in the kingdom, in the church and in the training process. While the church has more of a local flavor than a foreign feel, foreigners are seen as important because they help the church keep from becoming simply a mirror image of its surrounding culture. The good relationship between foreigners and locals is seen as invaluable for the soundness of training and the health of the church. Both foreigners and locals recognize the importance of their own cultural uniqueness and the fact of their own cultural blindness, which produces a sense of mutual dependence.

There is an openness in which people are willing to admit their weaknesses—the Lord often accomplishes his purposes through our weakness. There is a willingness to make things right—instead of covering them up—when we sin against someone. Consistently putting movement principles into practice is more important than reaching specific growth goals. Training in a program like this could easily go to people's heads. Trainees could begin to think that this training should put them "above" the crowd. We are not advocating the see-who-can-be-the-most-repentant syndrome. But trainees need to see that a leader should be someone who does not need to project an image of strength. Otherwise, even though we talk about grace we deny it in practice.

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*What we are proposing is not so much a specific model of training and church planting, but a “meta-model.” A meta-model is a model used to guide in the development of other models. We propose principles that can be carried out in many different ways depending on the needs of the context and the gifts of the people involved.*

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*This meta-model has a certain “feel” to it that reflects the principles proposed.*

## *Training for Church Planting Movements*

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*This article  
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and Rick Box.*

If you are interested in writing an article for a future issue of this publication, please let us know. We welcome dialogue, and we hope this may prove to be a good forum for sharing ideas.

## **The Integration of Church Planting & Training**

The integration of church planting and training will tend to facilitate church planting movements, whereas their separation will tend to impede them. This is what we are proposing. Integration includes an intentional investment in the people we are training, and a facilitation of the connections among their knowledge, behavior and character.

If church planting movements by definition impact positively the culture we are trying to reach, then our training methods must not even indirectly teach that the separation of training/learning from ministry-in-context is normal and good. We can't just tell them that when they graduate they will have to *apply* everything they've been "learning" while at

the same time we train them in ways that teach the legitimacy of separating knowledge from life and ministry in its cultural context.

If we expect church planters to develop models of church planting that impact the target culture, we must train them in the context of ministry and life.

We recognize that what we have presented here leaves out many issues. On the other hand, we didn't want to make it overly long. Let's dialogue about the issues. We welcome your feedback and input. Let us know your concerns, questions and comments.

### *About the Latin America Resource Team...*

The purpose of the Latin America Resource team is to promote operational effectiveness in MTW's facilitation of church planting movements in the region. This will be accomplished by providing support and resources for our ministry teams and interested national leadership in three areas:

1. Human Resource Development and Empowerment
2. Strategic Design and Implementation of Contextualized Ministries
3. Application of a Theology of Church Planting Movements

The Resource team will also help our ministry teams think through the alignment and integration of these three key areas. A key focus area at this point will be the development and implementation of strategic ways to train national leadership.

This team currently consists of Gary Waldecker and Dave Strumbeck, although we are constantly consulting with people who have indicated their willingness to give feedback.

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### *MTW's Definition*

*A Church Planting Movement is a Spirit-led work of God's grace producing the multiplication of healthy, indigenous churches with a shared vision, contributing to a Christ-centered fulfillment of the culture's highest good.*