

FIVE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH PLANTERS

By Jerry Field

INTRODUCTION:

Starting new churches where you live may be different in many ways from how we start churches where I live. It is true that the methods that work in your part of the world may not be the methods that will work in my world. Your culture and your traditions are different from the culture and traditions where I live. Some groups of people who need to be reached are very resistant. Others, however, are more receptive. This is true in both of our worlds. But please understand what I'm about to say. Wherever you go in the world to plant new churches, despite the many differences in cultures and receptivity levels among unreached people, there are certain fundamentals that remain constant. They do not change. And it is the unchanging fundamentals of church planting that I want to talk to you about.

The unchanging fundamentals that I am referring to are the basic, essential questions that must be asked and answered in every setting where a new church is needed. I refer to them as the *Five Essential Questions for Church Planters*.

QUESTION #1 WHO IS IT THAT NO ONE IS REACHING?

Who are those people that no one is reaching with the Gospel? Your church isn't reaching them and no other church is being effective at reaching them? For the Apostle Peter, it was Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). For the Apostle Paul, it was the Gentiles living in places like Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Italy and elsewhere. For the great missionary of the 18th century, William Carey, it was the people of India that no one was reaching.

But, who is it in your community that no one is reaching and gathering into a church? That is who a new church needs to be started for -- the ones no one else is reaching. You must clearly identify them.

QUESTION #2 WHO IS THE "PERSON OF PEACE?"

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 10, we are told that Jesus sent out 70 disciples to the cities and villages. He sent them out two-by-two and told them to find the "son of peace" or "man of peace"(Luke 10:6). This was the person who was receptive to their message and ministry. This household would become the focal point for their ministry. Jesus told them to stay at this house and not to move around.

When we have answered question #1, *Who is it that no one is reaching?*, then we must spend time among them to identify the person God has prepared to be our “Person of Peace.” This individual will be the key to reaching others like him. He is the “gateway” to the lives of many people who can be reached with the Gospel.

QUESTION #3 WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO REACH THEM?

What will you have to do to effectively reach them? What approaches and what adjustments will you need to make? In 1 Corinthians 9:22, the Apostle Paul says, *“To the weak I became weak, that I might reach the weak: I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”* If we are to reach them, we must come to understand their “culture.” We must learn to “speak their language” so they can hear the Gospel in the “language of their heart.” We must understand what they value and how they make decisions if we are to be successful at reaching these that no one else is reaching. This is what Paul did when he went to Athens (Acts 17). This is what we must do if they are to be reached.

QUESTION #4 WHERE CAN THIS MINISTRY TAKE PLACE?

It may be in someone’s home – perhaps the home of the Person of Peace. It might take place in a rented facility, or a school. How about a theatre, a community club house, or a livestock auction barn? It could even take place in an existing church building.

QUESTION #5 WHO CAN BECOME “PARTNERS” TO MEET THIS NEED?

Could your church or a group of churches become partners to make this happen? Could it be a project of an entire association of churches? What about your state convention of Baptists? Would your national organization of Baptists be a possible partner in starting this new church?

CONCLUSION:

The ultimate question you must consider is the following: **IS GOD CALLING YOU TO PLANT THIS NEW CHURCH OR SPONSOR THIS NEW CHURCH?** Is God calling you to reach these people that no one else is reaching? If so, then now is the time to obey His calling.