

The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches

George Patterson

Our Lord sends us to disciple every “nation” (people group) by training them to obey all His commands (Matt 28:18-20). This means that we disciple a “nation” only when it is permeated by obedient disciples who also disciple other unevangelized peoples. So we don’t fulfill the mandate by simply starting one church amidst a people. We, or those we send, must start the kind of church that grows and reproduces spontaneously as churches will, in daughter churches, granddaughter churches, great-granddaughter churches and so on. *Spontaneous* reproduction of churches means the Holy Spirit moves a church to reproduce daughter churches on its own, without outsiders pushing it (Acts 13:1-3).

I began training pastors in Honduras in a traditional theological institution and had the traditional problems for the traditional reasons. I assumed the bright young men I trained were dedicated because they came to our resident Bible school. Our plan was for them to return to their home towns as pastors. But the graduates found the gold lettering on their diplomas did not go well with the white-washed adobe walls back home. It enabled them, however, to earn more in the office of the Dole Banana Co.

My raspy supervisor had the gall to blame us teachers; he told us, “Close the school; start discipling the people.”

“No,” I argued, “that’s too hard.”

“Excuses! They’re poor, semi-literate, subsistence farmers but you teach as though they were educated, middle class Americans.”

I wrote my missionary buddies from language school, now spread all over Latin America, fishing for sympathy. They had the same problem!

“I’m a teacher without a classroom!” I complained.

“So,” my supervisor rasped, “teach by extension.”

“What’s that?”

He handed me a smelly old saddle, explaining, “You’re promoted. This is the Chair of Evangelism and Church Planting in your new extension Bible institute.”

After a few weeks of blisters on my south side I learned to communicate with the mission mule and announced, “Hey, I can do this TEE stuff. It’s great.”

My supervisor warned me, “Then your students had better raise up and pastor their own churches or we’ll close down this Theological Education by Extension, too.”



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ern Seminary in Portland, Oregon. He coaches and trains missionaries to multiply churches in many areas of the world. He worked for 21 years in northern Honduras through a program of Theological Education and Evangelism by Extension.

I took the pastoral studies to family men (Biblical “elder” types) in the poverty-ridden villages, mountains and cities. Unlike their single young sons, they had crops, jobs or family responsibilities that kept them from going off to our resident Bible school. They also lacked the education to absorb its intensive teaching. But these older men, with roots in their villages and barrios, could begin pastoring with the respect of their people easier than the single young men could. By God’s mercy I slowly learned to evangelize and disciple these *elders* in a way that enabled them to raise up and pastor their small village churches. As will be the case in many of today’s remaining unreached fields, we began to see growth not through any one church growing big or fast, but through the slow, steady reproduction of many small churches.

I could have avoided years of struggle searching for principles of church reproduction had I looked first in the operator’s manual. New Testament discipling principles, conscientiously applied, are enabling churches to reproduce in Honduras and many other fields. Field testing of programs based on these principles give consistently good results in Latin America and Asia, including hostile fields where evangelism is illegal.

We must distinguish between these general *principles* and culture-specific *applications*. Biblical principles themselves, if applied with culturally relevant methods, should enable churches to reproduce wherever there is plenty of “good soil.” Theologically speaking, good soil for the gospel seed to take root in and multiply is *bad people*, and lots of them (Rom 5:20-21; Matt 13:18:23; Eph 2:1-10).

The simplicity of the principles disappoints some educators. They expect something more sophisticated, at least new or expensive. Missionary or not, one can multiply disciples doing these four simple things:

1. Know and love the people you disciple.
2. Mobilize your disciples to edify immediately those they are discipling.
3. Teach and practice obedience to Jesus’ basic commands, in love, before and above all else.
4. Build loving, edifying accountability relationships between disciples and churches in order to reproduce churches.

1. Know And Love the People You Disciple.

We must know and love a people before we can disciple them. When Jesus told His disciples to “Look at the fields,” they were finding it hard to love the Samaritans around them; they could not see them receiving God’s grace.

Limit Your Area of Responsibility to One People or Community.

We must focus on one people group, the one God has given us. Paul knew his area of responsibility before God (2 Cor 10:12-16; Acts 16:6-10; Gal 2:8). He knew what kind of churches to plant and where. For a *movement of church reproduction* a church planting team needs a clear focus from God. My area was “the Spanish speaking people of the Aguan Valley and surrounding mountains.” It helps to be exact.

At home or abroad every discipler needs to ask: “For whom am I responsible?” If a missionary fails to do this, the geographic and ethnic limits of his ministry remain blurred. He will jump from opportunity to opportunity. I asked one of these wandering gold prospectors in Central America what his area of responsibility was. “Oh,” he said, “I am winning the country for Christ.” He goes from city to city preaching in prisons and army camps; he bombs villages with tracts from his Cessna. It’s fun and folks back home eagerly finance it. But he will never plant a reproductive church until he learns to hold the people of a community in his heart.

Choosing your people in a new field needs study and prayer. Confer with other missionaries, nationals and God Himself for guidance.

Knowing a people means touching the heart of individuals. Laughing with those who laugh. Weeping with those who weep. Playing marbles with 2-year old Chimbo and checkers with his grandpa (or whatever they play in the town square). It may help if you let him beat you. This applies to arguing religion, too. It’s dangerous always to be “right” when you’re the new kid on the block. Learn to appreciate the people and their ways, even the toothless old men. Listen and learn until you have discovered those things in their folk religion or culture that help communicate the gospel.



Once you know your area and people, discern which segment among them is most receptive to you and to Jesus Christ. To penetrate restricted, resistant fields, aim *first* at the working class or an oppressed minority. This contradicts some popular church growth theories. We are not dealing with second generation growth in Pasadena, California, however, but the *initial beachhead* where people get a curved blade in their ribs for witnessing. Jesus did not begin His public ministry among the influential middle class and natural leaders in the political nerve centers of Rome or Jerusalem, but with the working class upriver in Galilee where they spoke Hebrew with a backwoods accent—otherwise He would have been crucified prematurely.

Let the Church Be of the People.

Like most inexperienced church planters I started “preaching points” at first, instead of genuine New Testament churches. Someone went every week to a community where a group gathered to hear their pulpit oratory and sing (well, at least to sing). Converts were not baptized. Local leaders were not trained. The Lord’s Supper was neglected. No one knew for sure who were Christians. Obedient, sacrificial discipling gave way to entertaining (a tradition brought by American missionaries). Preaching points develop a personality of their own; they stubbornly refuse to evolve into obedient, giving, reproductive churches. They become sponges soaking up the time and efforts of outside workers and producing nothing—except where God’s sheer mercy overrides our routine.

Find what a church’s people can do and plan that, before planning its structure, forms and organization. I hope it takes you less time than it took me to learn that formal pulpit preaching is ineffective (often illegal) in many of today’s remaining unreached fields. You can preach the Word with power in many other ways, if you know your people. We used dramatic Bible reading, songs with music and lyrics composed by nationals, poems, symbols and story telling. They sang with more enthusiasm when they composed songs in the local style.

Let the new church’s self-identity be evident. Know exactly what you are aiming at

within the community: a well defined body of obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. Once I made the mistake of allowing more outside helpers to be present than members of the community during the first baptism and celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The church died at birth. There must be a majority from the community itself, especially at the first baptism or worship meetings, or the church is not born as a distinct entity within the community. Our converts felt that they had simply been added to some organization of the outsiders. I robbed them of the thrill of looking at each other and saying, “We are now the church here!” They must see the new church being born as a part of their community.

List What You Will Do to Reproduce Disciples Among a People.

Let’s assume you research well all the factors: race, culture, logistics, urban versus rural backgrounds, language similarities, education and economic levels, etc. You learn the language. Then you go in a crowded bus to your new field, with a team of church planters as similar to the local people as possible in every aspect. Some or all of them may be from another developing country. You are happy because they do not have to make that long cultural leap that delays church planting by years (the less responsive the people are to missionaries, the more crucial this cultural fit). Now you finally arrive, unpack your toothbrush, take a deep breath, pray, step out the door and find fifty thousand people living around you who think Jesus was John Wayne’s cousin. Now what?

What you do first often determines the direction of your work, for good or bad, for years to come. Will it lead to reproductive churches? The right steps will vary for each field but will always include teaching the converts first to obey Jesus’ basic commands (Matt 28:18-20). Take the shortest route possible to start a real church: a group of believers in Christ dedicated to obey His commands. In a pioneer field let it start small, perhaps with only three or four members. It will grow if you disciple the people as Jesus said.

Avoid institutions if possible at this beach-head stage (community development programs unrelated to church planting, schools,



clinics, etc.). It's best to let these come later. In Honduras we developed community development work but it grew out of the churches, not vice versa. We taught obedience to the great commandment of loving our neighbor in a practical way. A poverty program can aid church planting if the two are integrated by the Holy Spirit. But churches dependent on charitable institutions are almost always dominated by the foreign missionary and seldom reproduce.

To start a church that will multiply in the normal way in a *pioneer* field with no experienced pastors nor organized churches, take the following steps (change them where local circumstances require it):

1. Witness first to male heads of households. We often told them Bible stories they could pass on immediately, even before being saved, to their own family and friends. We went with them to show them how. But why *male* heads of families? We worked in a macho culture (right where the word *macho* came from, where men carried sharpened machetes and used them readily). Female leadership, right or wrong, limited the outreach of brand new works. Later, when a church was established with male pastor and elders, women could take a higher profile. Be sensitive to your community's norms, especially in the first impressions you give of the church.
2. Baptize all repentant believers without delay (entire families when possible). At first I acted as though a big buzzard were perched on my shoulder just waiting to pounce on our converts that fell away; I delayed baptism to make sure they were "safe." But I soon saw that the very reason many fell away was my distrust. That's the funny thing about God's grace; He wants us to let it slop over on the unworthy (Rom 5:20-21).
3. Provide a style of worship that new elders-in-training can lead and teach to others. Don't invite the *public* until local leaders can lead the services. Celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly as the center of worship, especially until local men are mature enough to preach in an edifying, humble way.

4. Organize a provisional board of elders as soon as mature men are converted. Show them how to win and pastor their own people right away. Remember, this is for pioneer fields with no experienced pastors nor well organized churches. We, like Paul, must use the best men God gives us as the churches multiply, or the new disciples have no leadership at all (Acts 14:23).
5. Enroll these new elders in pastoral training on the job. Don't remove them from their people for training. Meet with them every two or three weeks (more often if possible) until they are mobilized.
6. Provide a list of activities planned for the congregation, starting with the commands of Christ and His apostles. Let everyone know where he is going and what he needs to learn for each activity. Use this as a check list to monitor the progress of the elders you train, in both their studies and pastoral work, as they mobilize their own people in ministry.

2. Mobilize Your Disciples Immediately to Edify Those They Are Discipling.

To build up the church as a living, reproducing body, Paul instructs pastors and teachers to train the members of the church for the ministry, to edify the Body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12).

Build Edifying Relationships with the Leaders you Disciple.

Like most new missionaries, I took myself too seriously. I worried about what my disciples were up to. It took me years to learn to sit back with my coconut milk, laugh at my own goofs and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work in my students. How can we enable the leaders we train to edify each other and their people through personal, loving relationships?

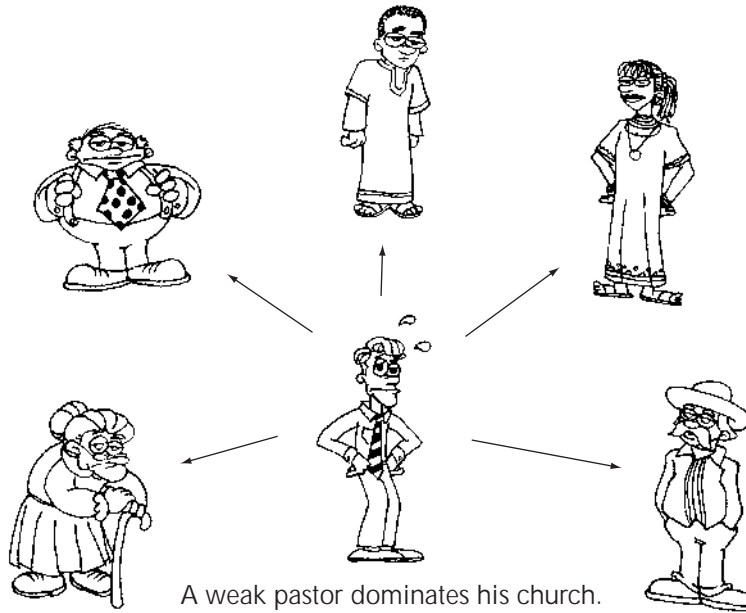
Paul left his pastoral disciple Timothy behind to work with the elders in newly planted churches with these instructions: "The things you have heard from me...these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). How dynamic and reproductive this loving "Paul-Timothy" relationship between teacher and student! If you have not yet tried to teach the way Jesus



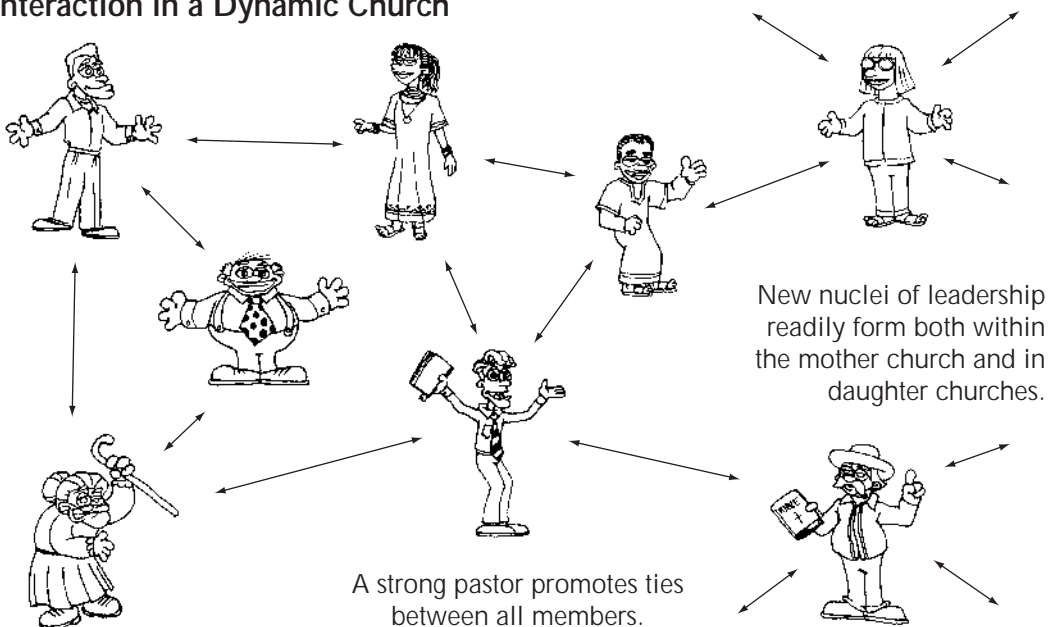
and His apostles did, you are in for a blessing. If it frightens you, start with just one or two potential leaders. Train them on the job; take responsibility for their effective ministry. Personal discipling does not mean “one-on-one” (Jesus taught twelve), nor is it just to deal with personal needs (Jesus spent most of His time personally discipling the top level leaders of the Church, the very apostles).

In Honduras I usually taught from one to three students, in a way they could imitate and pass on to others immediately. I helped each one have an effective ministry. I taught and modeled what he would pass on to his own people and his own pastoral trainees in the daughter or granddaughter churches. These taught other elders who taught still others as Paul instructed Timothy. The chain

A Passive, Pastor-centered Church



Interaction in a Dynamic Church



grew to over a hundred pastors in training, all elders of churches. As soon as a new church was born, the outside worker enrolled a local leader, normally an elder highly respected by his people, and began passing on to him the same doctrine and materials as he was receiving himself. This new “Timothy” taught the rest of the new elders in his young church. It kept multiplying as long as each discipler did *everything* in a way his students could imitate immediately. I stopped teaching and preaching in the professional way in which I was used to (they admired it, but could not imitate it). I stopped using electronic equipment including movies, and anything else that was not available to all our workers. That’s hard on a gadget-oriented westerner used to gadgets and conditioned to using the very latest technology for the glory of Christ.

Once we developed loving, Paul-Timothy discipling relationships we seldom had to discuss church planting. The Holy Spirit channeled the Word of God through these relationships to mobilize the Timothies and church reproduction took care of itself. At first I failed to trust the Holy Spirit and pushed the men myself. I dictated rules and prerequisites to keep the doctrine and the church pure and to make sure the men did their job. It stifled the work; one bitter failure followed another. I prayed, “Lord, I don’t want a big ministry of my own; just let me help the Hondurans have a good ministry.” God answered this prayer. I also learned through disappointments to let the people themselves decide on their own leaders, using 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

We learned not to plant the churches first then train the leaders for them; nor did we train the leaders first then tell them to raise up their churches. We married the two efforts in one ministry. My American culture pushed me at first to compartmentalize our organization, isolating its ministries. But I learned to let the Holy Spirit integrate diverse ministries and gifts in the united body (1 Cor 12:4-26).

I also began with education objectives that focused on educating the leader. But according to Ephesians 4:11-16, our education should seek only to edify the *church* in love. I

had to discipline myself to keep my student’s people in view as I taught, and not focus only on my student and the teaching content.

Before I learned to imitate the way Christ and His apostles disciplined, I was satisfied if my student answered test questions correctly and preached good sermons in the classroom. I neither saw nor cared what he did in his church with what he was learning. I slowly learned to see beyond my student to his ministry with his people. I responded to the needs of his church by listening at the beginning of each session to the reports of my students. Then I often set aside what I had prepared and taught rather what each student’s people needed at that time.

It was hard at first to let the developing churches’ needs and opportunities dictate the order of a functional curriculum. In time much of my discipling, like the teaching of the Epistles, became *problem solving*. Yes, if we start reproductive churches we will have problems. The apostles did, too. To avoid problems, don’t have children and don’t have churches.

Encourage Edifying Teaching Relationships Between Leaders and Their Disciples.

The pastor or leading elder sets the example for all the leaders. They in turn enable all the members of an infant congregation to minister to each other in love. A weak pastor dominates his congregation. He tries to do everything, or delegates it in a demanding way. He herds rather than leads (both Jesus and Peter prohibit herding in a demanding way: Matt 20:25-28; 1 Pet 5:1-4). Where do you suppose pastors on the mission field pick up the bad practice of herding others? It’s not all cultural; they learned it from us missionaries. I furnished the only model the new pastors had in our pioneer field. Because of my superior education and resources, I made the decisions for my less educated colleagues. At the same time, like most new missionaries, I felt insecure and overprotected the first churches. A strong missionary, like a strong pastor, does not fear to give authority and responsibility to others. He does not force gifted, willing workers into existing slots in his organization, but rather builds ministries around them.



3. Teach and Practice Obedience to Jesus' Commands in Love, Above and Before All Else.

Jesus, after affirming His deity and total authority on earth, commissioned His Church to make disciples who obey all His commands (Matt 28:18-20). So His commands take priority over all other institutional rules (even the hallowed *Church Constitution and Bylaws*). This obedience is always in love. If we obey God for any other reason, it becomes sheer legalism; God hates that.

Start Right Out With Loving Obedience to Jesus' Basic Commands.

To plant churches in a pioneer field, aim for each community to have a group of believers in Christ committed to obey His commands. This definition of a church might get a D minus where you studied theology; but *the more you add to it, the harder it will be for the churches you start to reproduce*. We asked our converts to memorize the following list of Christ's basic commands:

1. Repent and believe: Mark 1:15
2. Be baptized (and continue in the new life it initiates): Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:1-11
3. Love God and neighbor in a practical way: Matt 22:37-40
4. Celebrate the Lord's Supper: Luke 22:17-20
5. Pray: Matt 6:5-15
6. Give: Matt 6:19-21; Luke 6:38
7. Disciple others: Matt 28:18-20

Memorize them; you can neither be nor make obedient disciples unless they are basic to your Christian experience. They are the ABCs of both discipling and church planting.

Define Evangelism and Theological Education Objectives in Terms of Obedience.

Do not simply preach for "decisions;" make obedient disciples. Only disciples produce a church that multiplies itself spontaneously within a culture. Consider the two commands: "Repent and believe" and "Be baptized." In Western culture a man stands alone before his God and "decides" for Christ. But in other cultures sincere conversion needs interaction with family and friends. Faith, repentance and immediate baptism of the entire family or group—no invitation to make a decision—is

the norm (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12; 10:44-48; 16:13-15, 29-34; 18:8). Repentance goes deeper than a decision; it is a permanent change wrought by God's Spirit. We are born all over again. Few purely intellectual decisions in any culture lead to permanent, obedient discipleship.

We found that when we baptized repentant believers reasonably soon, without requiring a long doctrinal course first, the great majority then responded to our training in obedient discipleship. The detailed doctrine came later. Teaching heavy theology *before* one learns loving, childlike obedience is dangerous. It leaves a person assuming that Christianity is having Scripturally correct doctrine and he leaves it at that. He becomes a passive learner of the Word rather than an active disciple.

Orient Your Teaching to Loving Obedience.

We taught our pastors to orient all church activity to New Testament commands. As they taught the Word of God, they accustomed their people to discern three levels of authority for all that they did as a body of disciples:

1. NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS. These carry all the authority of heaven. They include the commands of Jesus which inspired the apostles in the Epistles. They apply only to baptized, more mature Christians who are already members of a church. We don't vote on them nor argue about doing them. They always take precedent over any human organization's rules.
2. APOSTOLIC PRACTICES (NOT COMMANDED). We cannot enforce these as laws because Christ alone has authority to make laws for His own Church, His Body. Nor can we prohibit their practice because they have apostolic precedent. Examples include: holding possessions in common, laying hands on converts, celebrating the Lord's Supper frequently in homes using one cup, baptizing the same day of conversion, Sunday worship.
3. HUMAN CUSTOMS. Practices not mentioned in the New Testament have only the authority of a group's voluntary agreement. If it involves discipline, the agreement is recognized in heaven (but only for that congregation; we do not judge another congregation by the customs of our own: Matt 18:15-20).



Nearly all church divisions and quarrels originate when a power hungry person seeking followers puts mere apostolic practices or human customs (levels 2 or 3 above) at the top level as law.

We developed a “Congregation Activities Register” listing features of health and the essential ministries of healthy churches. This list was based on the seven general commands of Christ (repent and believe, be baptized, love God and neighbor, celebrate the Lord’s Supper, pray, give, and disciple others) and other commands in the Epistles. On this menu of ministries we usually listed: evangelism, prayer, giving, pastoral care, teaching, loving neighbors, building character, counseling, worship, reproducing daughter churches, mission, and more. Under each activity in this chart we listed related studies. It became our pastoral training curriculum guide. We brought in all major areas of Bible, doctrine and church history, precisely where they best aided a church activity. Theological education paralleled church development. Each activity included reading in the relevant areas of Bible, doctrine, church history and pastoral work (all the essential elements of a traditional pastoral training curriculum) as well as questions to verify that the practical work was done. (An example of materials using this functional discipling curriculum is SEAN’s *Train and Multiply* program, Casilla 61, Viña DelMar, Chile.)

The sequence in which you select items on the training menu should be based primarily on what you hear. Everything depends on the readiness of the teacher to listen to what the present needs and growth struggles are.

4. Build Loving, Edifying Accountability Relationships Between Disciples and Churches in Order to Reproduce Churches.

Healthy daughter churches need loving, edifying discipling relationships within themselves and with the mother church (Acts 11:19-30; 14:21-28 and 15:1-2, 28-31). If your church, church planting or training organization is already formed, add this personal discipling to it; don’t insist on ruthless changes.

Help Each New Church to Reproduce.

Each church should send workers to reproduce daughter churches, as did the Antioch church (Acts 13:1-3). In Ephesians 4:1-12 God has promised to give “apostles” to every church (by apostles let’s assume that it means “sent ones” in a general sense). These “apostles” are the ones God places in every church that have itchy feet for carrying the church’s DNA to new areas. The longer you wait to mobilize a church for multiplication, the harder it is to reprogram its thinking. Teach your people the joy of sacrificing to separate from their strongest tithers and leaders, in the power of the Holy Spirit as in Antioch, to extend Christ’s kingdom. After prayer, perhaps fasting, hold a formal separation service with laying on of hands, as they did. Remember, it is not the individuals that reproduce, but *congregations* that pray and are moved by the Holy Spirit. Let each new church be a link in the chain. The individual extension worker is only an arm of his church.

Ask the new church leaders to chart their own plans. They must take the initiative (don’t push your plans on them; simply teach them what the Word says about their task and let them respond). For example, we asked our pastors to draw a large map, with arrows to the villages which they planned for their church to reach directly or through their daughter or granddaughter churches. Their church workers then signed their names by those towns or neighborhoods for which they would pray and plan.

Show Each New Believer How to Witness to Friends and Relatives.

The Holy Spirit flows readily through the bonds that exist between family members and close friends (Acts 10:24, 44). Keep new converts in a loving relationship with them (don’t pull them out of their circle to put them in a safe Christian environment, or those very bonds which aid the spread of the gospel become barriers).

We prepared simple gospel studies (mostly Bible stories) that even illiterates could use at once to share their new faith. We accompanied them to show them how to do it, modeling it all in a way they could immediately imitate.



Build Edifying Inter-church Discipling Relationships.

At first I applied church “body life” only to local congregations. Then I learned to build inter-church discipling relationships with accountability. Elders in one church sacrificially disciplined less experienced pastors in the daughter or granddaughter churches.

Sometimes travel was difficult for an older elder, and the main worker from the daughter church rode his horse to the mother church every two weeks or so. Where the churches were one or two days’ walk apart the teacher and student took turns slogging through the muddy trails.

Beware of the bad strategy of a mother church sending workers to several daughter churches at once, as though she were the only church with God’s reproductive power.

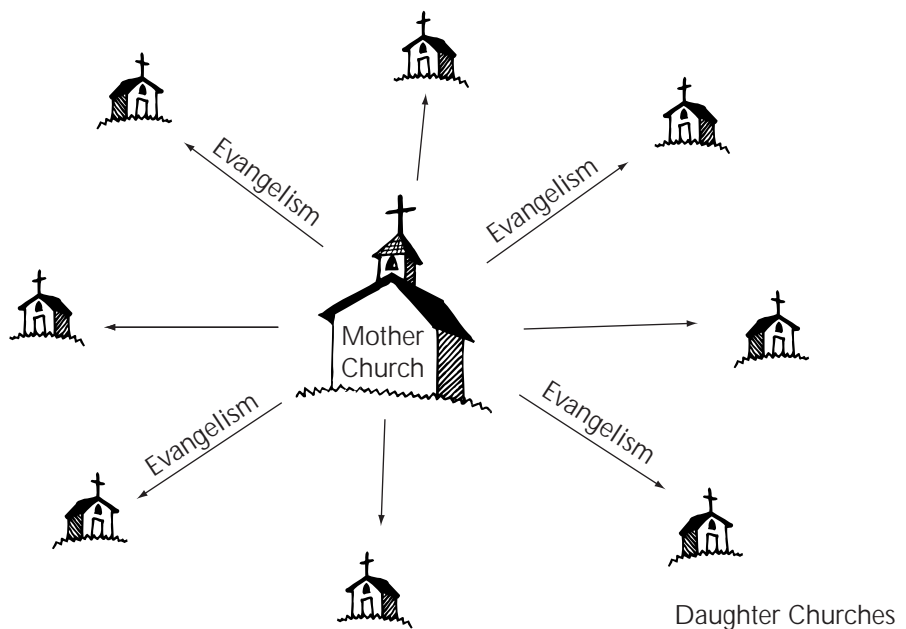
The “hub” strategy (shown below) wears out the workers and discourages the mother church. God’s power, inherent in all churches in which His Spirit dwells, enables a mother church to start a daughter church and train its new elders to help it develop *and* reproduce in granddaughter churches. Just disciple the disciplers and watch it happen!

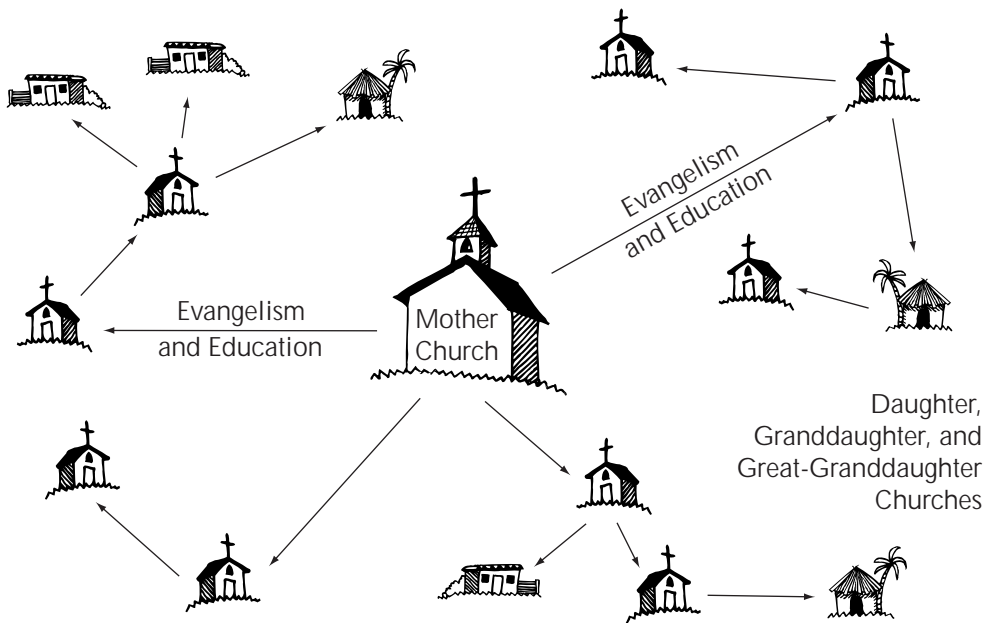
The chain was not a hierarchy to control; volunteer teachers with no organizational authority worked with volunteer students. It took sweat and guts to build these loving ties

between churches, helping men to know, love and train each other for immediate pastoral ministry. In the process men were shot, put to death by machete, weakened by disease and almost drowned. It was worth it.

The modern Western missionary’s most common sin is controlling the national churches. I had to learn to keep out of the way and let the Spirit’s power inherent in the churches produce the ministries by which the churches were edified and reproduced. I guided, encouraged, taught the Word and counseled, but I no longer pushed. Then we saw the chain reaction; one of the extension networks produced five generations and over twenty churches. (See final diagram.)

We met occasionally to reaffirm our plans and decide which church would reach certain villages or communities. We divided our entire area of responsibility into nine regions and planned the steps to start a daughter church that would reproduce in each region. The pastoral students of the Honduras Extension Bible Institute have for many years been starting an average of five new churches a year, each of which has from one to three new pastors in training. After turning the leadership of this program over to Hondurans, it has continued to reproduce in spite of other missionaries’ pressure to revert to traditional pastoral training methods.



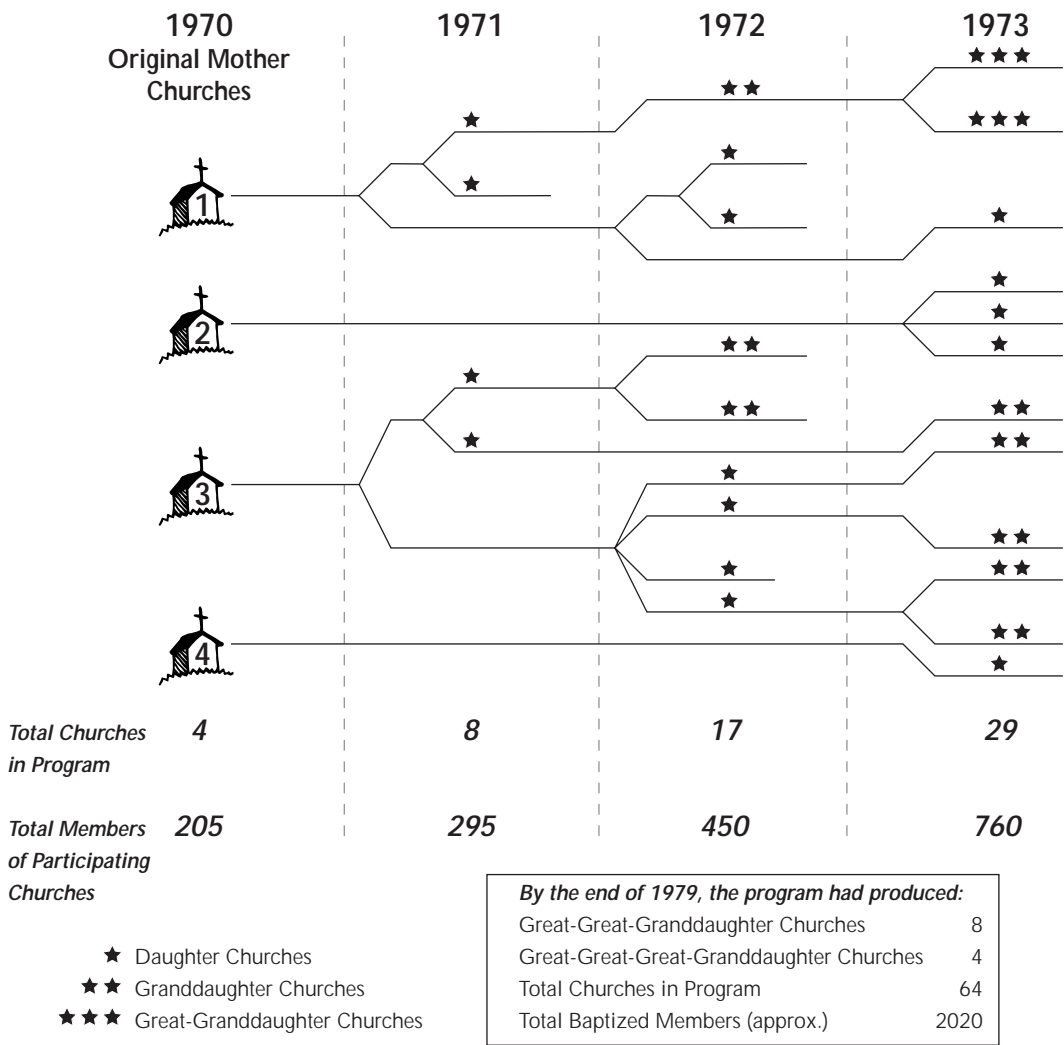


When a chain gets too long for good communication, simply reorganize the teaching relationships. Don't assume that doctrine will get watered down the longer the chain. Each Spirit-filled teacher in the chain has the same love for the Word and will rejuvenate the flow. I discovered that the strongest churches were usually one or two links removed from me, the foreign missionary. The key to maintaining the chains is loving communication in both directions. Accurate student reports from each daughter church are essential for his teacher to respond, applying the Word accurately to its life, needs and opportunities.

Pray for protection from traditions that hamper this spontaneous reproduction. We have mentioned teaching that neglects discipleship, and failure to mobilize newly repentant converts to obey beginning with baptism. Another almost universal impediment to reproduction is a missionary subsidy that stifles nationals' own giving and builds a dependent spirit. Don't rob poor believers of the blessing of sacrificial giving! God multiplies their mite by special celestial mathematics that will prosper them now and for eternity. Paying national pastors with outside funds nearly always stifles spontaneous reproduction and eventually leads to deep resentment when the source no longer equals the demand.

Pray for Reproduction Power

Each new church in a chain, like a grain of wheat, has the same potential to start the reproduction all over again. Christ's parables in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and John 15 compare the growth and reproduction of His churches to that of plants. Like all other living creatures God has created, the Church has her own seed in herself to reproduce after her own kind. Every time we eat, we eat the fruit of God's tremendous reproduction power given to plants and animals. Look around out of doors; it's everywhere—grass, trees, birds, bees, babies and flowers. All creation is shouting it! This is the way God works! Reproduction is His *style*. Pray for it! (God in His infinite wisdom acts a bit lazy when we don't ask Him to move; He limits His absolute power to our weak faith!) We ourselves don't make the church grow or reproduce, any more than pulling on a stalk of corn would make it grow. Paul plants, Apollos waters, God gives the growth. We sow, water, weed, fertilize and fence the crop, but rely on the Church's own God-given potential to reproduce. An obedient, Spirit-filled church *has* to reproduce at home or abroad. It's her very nature; she is the Body of the risen, life-giving Son of God.



Study Questions

1. What are the basic commands of Christ as Patterson summarizes them? Why is it important to make sure your disciples, and those they disciple, seek to obey all of them?
2. Traditional theological objectives focus on educating a student while Biblical education objectives aim to edify the church. Explain the difference between the way a typical theological professor teaches and the way a discipler of pastors works.
3. How is it possible for a church to become a great-grandmother church without any pastors who have been to a residential seminary? Why might it be more likely that there will be great-granddaughter churches if none of the pastors have been to a residential seminary?

