

Insights to help you . . .

November 2008

The Baton in your hand ~

"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 28:19-20 [NIV]

Christianity is always just one generation away from extinction. So it is for your church and mine. It has always been this way. Jesus' mission has always depended on one generation of leaders handing the mission to the next. Where they have done so effectively, their churches and ministries have continued to thrive. Now the mission is in your grasp.

Just what is this mission that has been handed to us? In order to faithfully run the race and pass on the mission, we must be clear about what it is. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus told us what He would be doing on the planet in the time between His ascension into heaven and His return to earth: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Jesus is building His church, and He does so through leaders. See Matt. 28:19-20 (to the left). The disciples immediately went to work, and the book of Acts records how they carried out their assignment. In each city the apostolic teams repeated the same pattern. Imagine a circle:

1 – Evangelize: They preached the message and gathered the converts into local churches.

2 – Establish: They grounded new believers in the essentials of the faith.

3 – Equip: They appointed and equipped godly leaders to guide and teach the church.

4 – Expand: Churches sent others to preach the message and start new churches elsewhere...repeating the entire process all over again and again and again...

The apostolic strategy of reaching the world through multiplication was an ingenious one. It was a strategy of multiplying not just converts but local churches as well. In local churches, new believers were established in the faith and equipped to serve and lead. These churches sent out leaders to start new churches. Local churches were the leadership incubators that propelled the explosive expansion of the church from a single church in Jerusalem to thousands of churches, penetrating the known world in just a couple of hundred years.

Each generation after those earliest Christian leaders has been faced with the same challenge and opportunity. Our privilege as leaders is to reach the world through establishing healthy, vibrant churches. It is no secret that one of the biggest needs in the church today—all around the world—is well-equipped leadership. Most churches are lacking good leadership and have no intentional strategy for developing leaders. Even many pastors feel ill-equipped, sensing that their training has not given them the competencies they need to be effective in their role. Pastors would do themselves and their churches a huge favor by making leadership development a priority.

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