



Building a Model Covenant Community through Church-Planting

Jesus models how a pastor can invest his life in twelve men and build a solid covenant community. Great church-builders follow this example by reflecting Christ's character as prophet, priest, and king. The prophet casts a vision from the pulpit that encourages church members to meet their deep spiritual needs through close relationships with Christ and one another. The priest provides pastoral care to the men with whom he has close prayer and accountability relationships. The king administers programs and coordinates activities that meet the needs of the sheep in the congregation.

The pastor fulfills all of his roles by helping believers under his care understand God's purpose for themselves and for the church. Such pursuit of a divinely-guided purpose or mission inspires men and women while helping the pastor integrate his three roles.

In successful churches, the pastor typically serves as a prophet during the Sunday sermon then serves as a priest to a dozen men who receive pastoral care during the week. In his prophetic role, the pastor may also follow the model of Luke 10:1 and inspire 72 men to go out into the community. Ideally, the lead teaching and preaching pastor should unite with 12+ elders and 72+ deacons who can assist with the functions of the king and priest so that administration demands do not overwhelm the lead pastor.

While serving as prophets, priests, and kings, pastors must remember the paramount importance of discipleship. T.M. Moore, the highly regarded theologian and author, reminds pastors that their first calling is to make disciples. See, e.g., www.BiblicalDisciple.com and www.BiblicalDisciples.com.

As the church-planter disciples elders and deacons, he can relate our Lord's character to them in a way that meets their emotional, spiritual, intellectual, professional, financial, physical, and social needs. In this way, the pastor bonds with the men at a deep level that encourages the men to fulfill their callings and live out their life purposes. See e.g., www.BiblicalPurpose.com. Men inspired to use their calling and gifts for God's glory can make great contributions in the upper room (church), family room, court room, classrooms, and other rooms where community members spend their daily lives. See, e.g., www.BiblicalReason.com.

Men trained to contribute to the community can have influential roles in building teams and creating value in the marketplace. The men can internalize Biblical life planning concepts described at www.Legacies.info. Applying Biblical economic teachings, these men can generate substantial profits that support the pastors through tithes and offerings.

Men committed to Biblical living can learn from the pastor how they can serve as elders or deacons in pastoring their family members or other men in their small groups. For example, a pastor might encourage twelve elders and/or deacons to follow Christ in leading prayer meetings and Scripture studies. Each of these dozen leaders might meet with five accountability and prayer partners in a weekly prayer group. The demands of leading a weekly fellowship gathering need not be great if each man rotates teaching and leadership responsibilities among the six men in the group and if the men have access to high quality discipleship materials prepared by churches with model discipleship programs.

If a man is too busy with his profession to oversee a weekly gathering of men, he can instead support his wife as she oversees a regular meeting of six women. In short, one pastor can lead and encourage twelve different prayer and Bible study groups – each with six people who develop a deep commitment to the pastor's church.

The example of one leader overseeing the discipleship of 72 people (12 x 6) is fully consistent with Scripture. See, for example, the models described in Luke 10 or in Titus 1, where elders were appointed in every town.

If a pastor encourages solid spiritual oversight involving seventy-two believers, it is reasonable to assume that each of these men (or women) would appreciate Biblical teachings about tithing income. If we assume that the average family earns \$60,000 per year, we can assume that the families of seventy two leaders can earn \$4,320,000 annually. They can give 10% of \$4,320,000 or \$432,000 per year. This money can easily pay the pastor's salary, fund administrators who assist with the pastor's role as king, underwrite the cost of the church building, and provide ample reserves for helping widows and orphans or organizing church fellowship activities (e.g., feasts).

The seventy-two families should be encouraged to have retirement plans (in order to reduce taxes going to the secular government, to provide for a surviving spouse, and for other reasons). If the average retirement plan is approximately \$200,000, then the families can have total retirement assets of maybe \$15,000,000. If just 5% of these funds are invested in 5% church mortgages, then the 72-family congregation can have \$750,000 for a down payment on a building. Various exemptions in tax, retirement, securities, and ERISA laws allow for such use of retirement money. If a small church puts down even a \$500,000 down payment, they should be able to acquire a building from a dying congregation without spending too much money on mortgage payments.

The type of financing has worked well for www.RedeemIndy.com, www.ContactGrace.org, and many other churches.

Reason and experience teach that a pastor can realize great success in building an economically-viable and influential church by simply following the model of Christ. Just as Jesus helped his Apostles reflect the qualities of prophet, priest, and king, a pastor can help his leaders use their gifts to fulfill a divinely-guided vision. As the pastor helps each family cultivate its God-given resources, profitable enterprises should develop. This can help the church establish a firm economic foundation.

Given proper pastoral care, each leader should increasingly have an inspiring sense of God's unique purpose for himself or herself as well as for the church community. As leaders follow a clear purpose, they can help the church develop and communicate great clarity about its identity and mission. Clarity about identity and mission invariably produces the unity encouraged by Apostle Paul when he wrote, "then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." (Philippians 2:2) Such church unity is a hallmark of model covenant communities seen throughout history. Such communities can be replicated to scale the success around the world and across the centuries.

Notes:

1. To read more thoughts about building church unity, please visit: www.BiblicalPeace.com.
2. To see ideas about supercharging the church-planting process through the use of information technology, please visit: www.covenant.net/articles/webreach08.htm
3. To see ideas about how a pastor can cast a prophetic vision for building a successful community, please visit: www.covenant.net/articles/models.htm
4. To see ideas about how a pastor can help each of his leaders know and fulfill a divinely-guided purpose, please visit: www.covenant.net/articles/main_mens.htm
5. To see a sample job description for a church-planting pastor, please visit www.covenant.net/articles/jobdescrip-pastor01.htm and <http://covenant.net/articles/Disciple-making.mht>. These job descriptions summarize functions of the prophet, priest, and king. As a church grows and hires new leaders, duties in the job description can be trifurcated into three discrete job descriptions, one for the prophet, one for the priest, and one for the king.
6. If a small group church within a mega church is not equipped to use tithes in a manner consistent with Scriptural teachings, the small group should work with Godly overseers in the mega church to discern how God wants the small group to participate in directing tithe money for Biblical uses. To see thoughts about the proper use of tithe money, please visit http://covenant.net/essays/Tithes_Spending.pdf.

Note: *Church planting ideas in the essay apply, in general, to planting and building small groups within a mega church. The primary difference may involve the economic role of the church and the use of the tithe money. See the endnotes below for more thoughts on this topic.*

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