

Discussion Questions for Church Planting Teams

I. Doctrinal Statements

1. Will we affirm a doctrinal statement that has already been created, or will we create our own?
2. Will we attempt to identify and clarify our positions on current issues that are being debated by many Christians today, or will we stick with a basic doctrinal statement that reflects basic Bible truths.
3. Will we attempt to clarify scripture by using terms like “Trinity”, “inerrant in the original writings”, “six twenty four hour days”, “plenary and verbal inspiration”, etc, or will we try to stick with scriptural wording when possible?
4. Will we group Biblical ordinances together, or will a significant number of points in our doctrinal statement address particular Biblical ordinances?

II. Concepts of the church

1. What concepts do we have regarding “church”?
2. Does our concept of church include “a building designated for worship”? Will some members feel like we have not “arrived” as a church until we have a “worship building”?
3. How do we define saint? Do we believe there is such a thing as carnal Christians? How do we view those who call themselves Christians but don’t measure up to our expectations for Christians?
4. Is a church dysfunctional if decade after decade, it is mostly children and grandchildren who become part of the church?
5. Will members be expected to testify of Jesus verbally if they are physically and spiritually able? Will the church have regular opportunities for sharing Jesus or will this be left up to the individual or family? The Moravians had some people who testified of Jesus and others who stayed home and worked 16 hour days to financially support the evangelists. Is this a good model?
6. How do we define unity and what are we looking for? What if someone disagrees with a decision the church has made? Will it always be considered disobedience and insubordination to authority or the body, or will there be room for disagreement as long as a person does not have a reactionary or divisive spirit?
7. What do we believe about accountability? Will members be expected to be transparent with their lives? Are some topics off limits? What about marital practices?
8. What relationship will there be between church authority and parental authority?
9. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey them that have the rule over you.” What do we understand this verse to mean and what would that look like in a congregation?
10. How will decisions be made? Executive order? Unanimity? General Consensus? Majority vote? What will happen to the thoughts and suggestions of the minority? Will the group seek to address the concerns of the minority as long as these concerns are not in opposition to the core values of the group?
11. Will the church have “membership”, will it focus on submission to the brotherhood, or both?
12. Does the church have a vision for patterning after the early church as much as possible, or is it fine for a church to adapt some practices to better fit the 21st century?

III. Core values

1. What is socially acceptable or unacceptable soon tells you what the core values of a group are. What are some things we want to be acceptable and what are some things we want to be unacceptable?
2. What habits and patterns and values do we want our families to grow up experiencing?
3. What do we hope to accomplish and what will we sacrifice in order accomplish these goals?
4. How will we intentionally accommodate singles and partial families in our social settings so that they feel like they belong?

IV. Positions on current issues

1. What do we believe about divorce and remarriage? Can a divorced and remarried person return to their first spouse? If a person has married a divorced person, is he/she free to separate from them and remarry? Will this matters be settled in advance, or will we wait till a situation presents itself, and the person in question ends up feeling like they are caught in the middle?
Can variation of thought be allowed in the group as long as everyone is willing to submit to the church’s position?
2. What do we believe about homosexuality? Is it necessary for a Christian to be free from the inclinations or is it ok if a Christian does not nurture same gender thoughts and actions?
3. What do we believe about submission in marriage? What if a couple separates? Does the wife still need to submit to her husband? Will the church discipline a wife for getting a restraining order against her husband?

What should a wife do if her husband makes it difficult for her to veil her head? Go to church? Train her children? Etc.

V. Practices

1. Will standards be made according to a line in the sand? According to Biblical terminology? According to common practice? Will standards be based on identifying the unacceptable and affirming what is acceptable? Will we use a combination of these depending on the issue being addressed?

Examples of the four approaches:

- a. (Line in the sand) "Sleeves should be elbow length or longer". (OR) "Sleeves should cover the upper arm."
Challenges: Constantly defining standards can become too much of a focus. Members may view obedience to standards as making them right with God. Members who don't hold to the line or disagree with the line, may insist that they are still Christian.
 - b. (Biblical Terminology) "Christians women should dress modestly with shamefacedness and sobriety and focus on adorning the inner person."
Challenges: Huge amounts of time are spent discussing how to apply this. Requires leaders who have lots of time to address applications.
 - c. (Common practice) "Observe our people and make your sleeve length the length of ours."
Challenges: Newcomers don't always notice the things we wish they would notice. Some who attend the church may not be doing what we wish they would and then newcomers will copy them rather than the core members. It could be that some changes should be made to the common practice, but there is little room for discussing our practice.
 - d. (Identify what is acceptable & unacceptable) "Here are descriptions/pictures of acceptable length sleeves and here are some descriptions/pictures that show the direction we don't want to head as a fellowship."
Direct the group to conform to what is acceptable. If someone starts heading in the direction of what is not appreciated, you can address the direction a person is headed rather than pouncing on them for crossing a line in the sand.
Challenges: Leaders must have time and interest in talking with people about the direction of their hearts. They must maintain close relationships with those who are part of the church. They must be alert and addresses right away rather than wait till things get out of hand.
2. Will standards or guidelines be given regarding use of technology and internet?
 3. Does the group envision using drama to help convey truth or will the group stick with more primitive tools such as object lessons and storytelling?
 4. What kinds of songs do we want our children to grow up singing?
 5. Do we envision a youth group that includes a youth committee and youth sponsors, or will families take turns hosting and involving the youth in ministry and not have a formal youth group?
 6. Will practices such as the holy kiss, lifting holy hands, Christian hospitality, and foot washing be practiced spontaneously, ritually, or both?
 7. Will "the sermon" be the focal point of our meetings, or will Christian fellowship be the focal point in church gatherings?
 8. What does the group think about Social Security, and government healthcare? How do we envision the church handling small and large medical expenses that might be incurred in the future?

VI. Vision

1. Will the church spend considerable energy coaching Plain people who are looking for a different church experience, or will they put most of their time into reaching the lost and the unchurched?
2. Is the church open to multiple visions or will everyone who joins the church be expected to get behind a single vision?
3. Will this church attempt to build itself with average types of people, or will it look for people who are exceptionally gifted or "cutting edge"?
4. What size gatherings do we envision and at what point do we see ourselves budding new churches?
5. Will leaders of the church feel a need to micro-manage the church and always be in charge, or will they equip others in the church according to their giftings?
6. Will team members be expected to help busy moms and others with health difficulties, or will relatives and friends be expected to help needy people in the congregation?

The goal of this document is to help church planting teams see if they are compatible enough to work to together and to come to a consensus on issues before they become a divisive matter in the new church.

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