

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Reaching Friends and Family Members

Encouraging-and equipping-people to connect with non-churched friends and relatives is just the beginning of an effective evangelistic outreach in a church. But it is a very important beginning, and the right place to begin. Churches that successfully reach new people for Christ focus on training a minimum of 10% of their people each year in friendship evangelism.

It takes time to build the

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— Gary L. McIntosh

“evangelistic consciousness” of a congregation. This is particularly true when a church has seen little or no “conversion growth” in the past several years. While church leaders may desire to train many people quickly, the fact is in most churches people are often not ready to participate in a new evangelistic program.

As a result, begin slowly by focusing on around 10% of your adults. This is about the number who will be open to nurturing more meaningful relationships with their non-Christian friends and relatives. By starting with this receptive 10%, your evangelistic emphasis will get off to a good start. The next year, other adults will have heard about the good experiences from the first year's training, and be open to taking part.

In the second year, invite newcomers to join in the training. New members and new believers tend to have more unchurched contacts than do long-term members. Newcomers also have an initial excitement about the church and want to

spread the word in any way possible. By recruiting and training newer people, you will see the evangelistic outreach of your church grow quickly.

Once a church has annually trained 10% of its members for five years, it reaches a turning point when half of the congregation has completed the training. A new attitude and sensitivity toward newcomers becomes evident throughout the congregation. And as churches continue to train 10% per year, dramatic new life and enthusiasm take root as a growing majority of members become interested in reaching new people for Jesus. There are many good books and study guides for evangelism training that are available.

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

e-mail . . . cgnet@earthlink.net

write . . .

PO Box 892589
Temecula, CA 92589

There is much baggage about the E-word.

Why should your friends become Christians?

Ideas to Put into Practice

Here are some important things to consider as you plan your evangelism training.

First, realize that there is much “baggage” out there about the “e-word.” Somehow along the way, the word “evangelism” came to be associated with knocking on strangers' doors, passing out tracts on street corners, and generally participating in activities that induce sweaty palms, stomach butterflies, and too-tight collars. So, if you expect to have many people in your church sign up for “evangelism training,” realize there are many misconceptions.

Using the word “evangelism” is not a hill you need to climb. The very word is likely to inhibit your goal. In fact, as much as it may surprise you, the word “evangelism” is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

At the same time, the call to spread the Good News permeates Scripture. Christ made clear this priority: “go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation” (Mark 16:15). So, just because you don't find the word in Scripture doesn't mean we're not called to make disciples. In fact, to “make disciples” is the penultimate marching order from Christ to His followers. But the *word* “evangelism” is not *the* flag under which this process must fly.

Realize that the traditional methods that many of us have been trained for “doing evangelism” are not necessarily the only ways-or even the best ways-to participate in the process of making disciples. Friendship approaches are by far the most effective in making disciples; that is, new

believers and active members of a local church. Of those who make a commitment to Christ through friendships, 78% stay active and involved.

Here are four simple, yet profound, questions that your evangelism training should help church members to answer:

- a) How has being a Christian made a difference in my life?
- b) What does it mean to be a Christian (in words understandable to a non-Christian)?
- c) Why would I like my friend to be a Christian and member of my church?
- d) How does a person become a Christian (in words understandable to a non-Christian)?

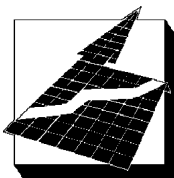
Take several weeks in your training for each question to discuss, research, share, role play, and reflect upon. When your people feel comfortable with their answers, they will be better equipped to share their faith in a natural, “friend to friend” manner.

So, don't wait. Get started training 10% of your people this fall.



Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D. is
President of the Church Growth Network
For information about training workshops
seminars, and church consultations
call 951-506-3086.

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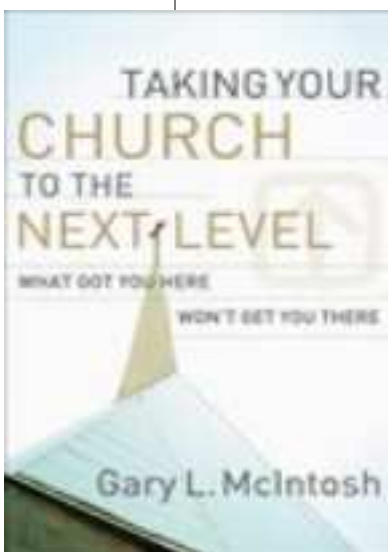
Taking Your Church to the Next Level

“There are three aspects of church ministry that challenge all leaders,” says Gary L. McIntosh in his new book ***Taking Your Church To The Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There***. “The first is that local churches experience a predictable life cycle of growth and decline. The second is a lack of recognition that larger churches are a different organism than a smaller church and need to be led a certain way. The third is perhaps the most important: what got your church *here* won't get it to where you want it to *be*.”

Churches go through natural cycles. For instance, smart church planters recognize that attendance generally increases from September - Easter then declines from Easter-August. But church patterns are also evident outside of the calendar. Churches reach predictable barriers when they reach a certain size, as well.

McIntosh, president of the Church Growth Network, has found what appears to be a correlation between church size and congregational development. He discusses church size and common growth/decline trends for five common church sizes: Relational Church (15-200 members), Managerial Church (200-400 members), Organizational Church (400-800 members), Centralized Church (800 - 1,500 members) and Decentralized Church (1,500+).

Take It To The Next Level explains the impact that age and size have on churches and outlines the improvements that must be made at each point of growth if a church is to remain fruitful and faithful to its mission over many years.



“You can't organize a church of 200 members the same way you organize a church of 2,000 members. In much the same way that a championship sports team needs to change its strategy in the off-season to better their chances of winning again next year, churches need to change if they are going to stay vibrant.”

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