



ЕРОСН

THE TIME HAS COME TO
LIVE AS A MISSIONARY

ЕРОСН



Copyright © 2008 by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the publisher. All inquiries should be addressed to: Permissions, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Pkwy., Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176; or e-mail to permissions@namb.net.

Scriptures marked NIV are taken from the New International Version of the Holy Bible. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used with permission.

Scripture marked HCSB is from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*. Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tenn. Used with permission.



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
<i>Epoch</i> Overview	4
<i>Epoch</i> Components	
Component One: Form a Team	8
Component Two: Identify a People or Place	10
Component Three: Find and Understand Receptive People	12
Component Four: Engage People	14
Component Five: Build Community	16
Component Six: Make Disciples	18
Component Seven: Gather for His Worship and Glory	20
Component Eight: Multiply	22





Introduction

Imagine a time when ordinary, everyday Christ followers were living out the Great Commission to make disciples (see Matt. 28:19-20). Imagine a time when ordinary people all across North America were meeting in their homes, workplaces, schools, parks, and coffee shops for prayer, accountability, worship, and doing life together. Imagine a time when ordinary believers, led by God, were at the forefront of a church planting movement that connected lost people to a relationship with Jesus Christ, formed faith communities based on relationships, and multiplied themselves to reach those furthest from God!

Can you imagine an Epoch? Impossible you say? God is the master of doing the impossible by using ordinary people to do extraordinary things! He has a way of taking the remarkably unremarkable and using them to change the world.

It was a young shepherd boy, David, tending his father's flock out on the green hills of the countryside who won the battle against a giant all the professional soldiers were afraid to fight. Can you imagine a time when a young ordinary shepherd boy—who couldn't even wear the armor of a soldier—would gallantly slay the giant Goliath with nothing more than a round stone and a slingshot, and later would become king of the Hebrews? God did, and an Epoch was born.

It was a small group of 11 men whom Jesus first assigned the task of making disciples of all nations—ordinary, uneducated, everyday people called to follow Christ. In the group were a handful of fishermen, a despised tax collector, and a reckless political zealot. Their most amazing quality was that Jesus chose them at all. Can you imagine a time when these unassuming men would rock their society and begin a movement that would reach the entire known world? God did, and an Epoch was born.

It was 1776 and the Methodist church had only 65 churches scattered throughout the American Colonies. It was considered a time when American religion had reached the lowest point our country had ever experienced. Can you imagine a time when faithful circuit riders and unpretentious, ordinary, everyday followers of Jesus Christ would be the catalysts, and by 1850, Methodist congregations would number 13,302 and account for more than one-third of all American church members? God did, and an Epoch was born.

It is the twenty-first century and lost people from every corner of the world are in North America, perhaps in *your* city or town. They need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ in the context of community and relationships. They are crying out for help in the midst of their depravity and despair. They are your family, your neighbors, your coworkers, and fellow citizens. Can *you* imagine a time when *you* would play a role in God's redemptive work in their lives? Can *you* imagine sharing your life and, in turn, sharing Jesus Christ and salvation with them? Can *you* imagine an Epoch today? God does!

All across North America, God is using ordinary people who walk in obedience to His will to reach out and touch the hearts of people in their communities.

Jason was a college student in a picturesque, quaint town in southwestern Ohio. While attending school, he discovered a faith community where he grew in his relationship with God and other Christ followers. After graduating with a business degree and getting married, Jason—obedient to God’s call to stay a part of the college town—purchased a home and began a new faith community in a low-income neighborhood, known by locals as “the ghetto.” Compelled by a passion to see God’s kingdom expanded and undeterred by community perception, Jason and his new wife found a receptive person in that community and an Epoch was born.

Glen, a production manager, and his wife, Diana, have a passion to see that every person hears the gospel in a receptive ambiance. This became overwhelmingly clear after visiting a cowboy church in Louisiana where God impressed upon them that they were to be a part of a cowboy church start in their Tennessee hometown. They shared their vision with others and formed a team that had a desire to reach the cowboy community. With a lot of obedience, a lot of prayer, and a little training, the team began Cross Roads Cowboy Church in a local horse barn. As they have grown, they have moved into bigger barns and an Epoch was born.

God uses ordinary people to do His extraordinary work. In doing so, He is glorified. All God asks of each of us is to walk in obedience to His will. Are you an ordinary person? God can use you!





***Epoch* Overview**

What is an *Epoch*?

An extended period of time ushered in by the brokenness and faithful praying of God's people, which results in the sending of everyday Christ followers into the harvest to make disciples and establish relationship-based faith communities that result in lost people coming to know Christ.

What is the heart of *Epoch*?

It is a process. Better yet, it is a lifestyle directed by the Holy Spirit and marked by a passion to make disciples and gather them together for His worship and glory. It is everyday Christ followers living as missionaries in their communities. *Epoch* is not a program.

Why *Epoch*?

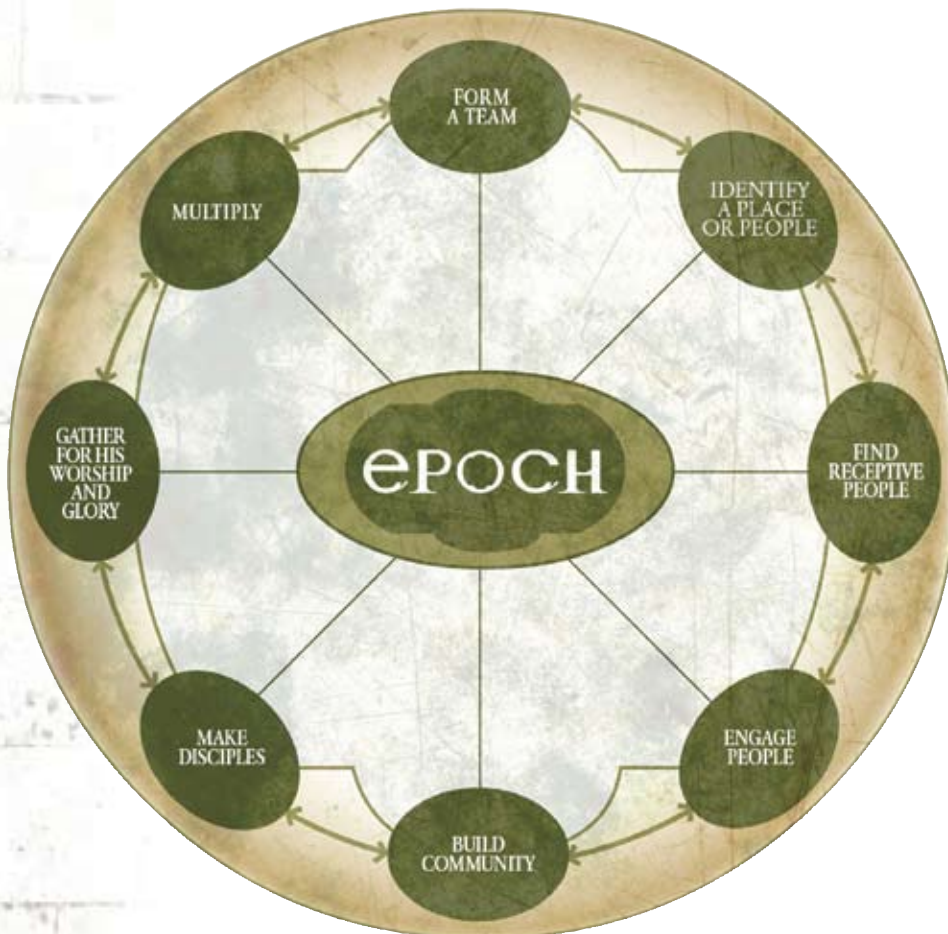
The cultural landscape of North America is changing in front of our eyes and current church models are finding it more difficult to engage today's culture. The simplicity of the *Epoch* process makes it possible for everyday Christ followers to develop relationships with unreached peoples leading to new disciples and faith communities.

How do believers live as missionaries?

Everyday Christ followers, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, venture into their existing relationships and/or their communities and live life as missionaries. These missionaries follow a process much like the following:

- **Form a Team**
Objective: Form a small team that shares a passion for making disciples and for ministering in the harvest.
- **Identify a People or Place**
Objective: Identify a particular group of people or a place that needs the gospel.
- **Find and Understand Receptive People**
Objective: Connect with individuals in your selected audience and begin to gain an understanding of their culture, beliefs, values, and their perceptions of Christians and Christianity.
- **Engage People**
Objective: Live a life among your audience that reflects the image of Christ while using the skills and approaches of a missionary to reach them with the gospel.

- **Build Community**
Objective: Create environments that connect people to do life together in authentic relationships.
- **Make Disciples**
Objective: Make disciples who multiply themselves.
- **Gather for His Worship and Glory**
Objective: Gather people and form faith communities for God's worship and glory.
- **Multiply**
Objective: Multiply disciples, leaders, teams, and faith communities for God's worship and glory.



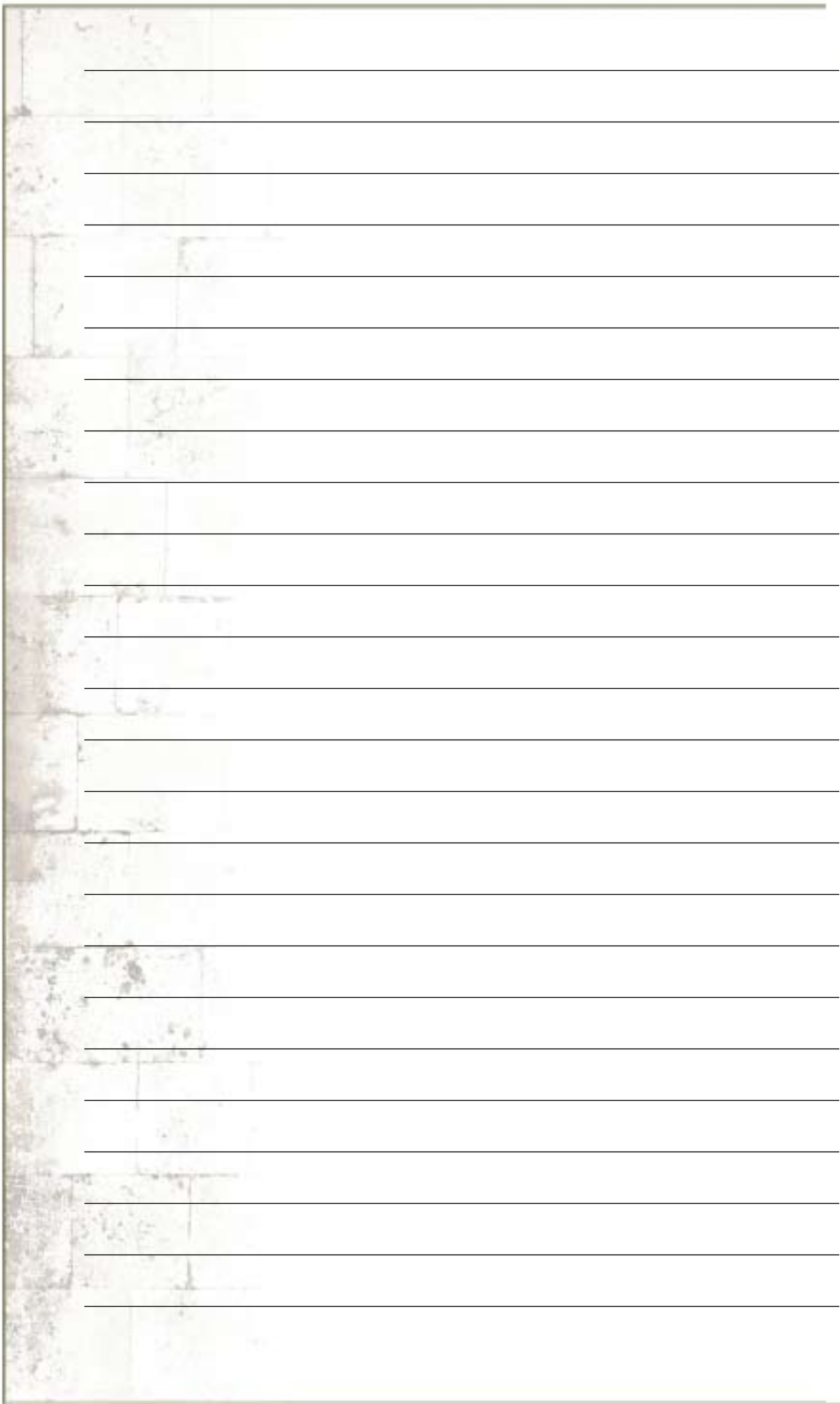


How can this be accomplished?

- By acknowledging the sovereignty of God through our prayers and becoming dependent upon Him and His Word to guide everyday Christ followers to make disciple-making disciples.
- By sending God's people into the harvest to make disciples through intentional missionary activities.
- By identifying, engaging, embracing, and nurturing personal relationships with specific people groups or places in an effort to understand their culture and who they are as individuals.
- By making disciples who multiply themselves and gathering them to form basic faith communities.

What might God do through *Epoch* if implemented by your church?

- Expand the influence of your church throughout your community.
- Strengthen established churches as they function as missional communities—enlisting, equipping, deploying, and reproducing teams of lay missionaries.
- Create an outward focus for your small groups.
- Identify unreached people groups and places and engage them in their context, in their language, with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Provide a process for new churches to be planted among identified peoples or places.





***Epoch* Components**

◇ Component One: Form a Team

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11, NIV).

Objective: Form a small team that shares a passion for making disciples and for ministering in the harvest.

Although *Epoch* can be implemented by an individual, it is strongly suggested that a small team be assembled to take the journey together and begin a bible study. The team may be comprised of family members, neighbors, coworkers, or members of an existing small group. A new team may also be assembled based upon passion and giftedness.

Team members should share a passion for making disciples and a willingness to invest their gifts and talents by living out the components of *Epoch*. Use Ephesians 4:11 as a foundation, and pray that the Spirit leads you to people with the gifts of leadership, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, and teaching on your team.

Here are important matters to keep in mind as you develop your team.

- Keep your team small.
- Team members grasp the importance of living like Jesus and will:
 - ❖ Be growing in Christian maturity.
 - ❖ Possess a passion for making disciples.
 - ❖ Possess a servant’s heart.
 - ❖ Value forming personal relationships with others.
 - ❖ Possess a genuine love for God and a willingness to express it in practical ways.
 - ❖ Be a team player.
- Team members have a clear understanding that their task is to make disciples and form basic faith communities, and not necessarily invite people to your church.
- Team members should commit to a lifestyle of making disciples.
- Team members meet weekly for prayer, celebration, and encouragement. They should be aware that this gathering will be open to others as they are being impacted by the gospel.
- Team members need to see the importance of sharing life together with a common focus.

Key Principles:

- A team diverse in gifts (see Eph. 4:11) and personality types is ideal. Team members should cooperate with one another and the leading of the Spirit.
- Many people are deaf to the gospel because of their image of the church. The purpose of your team is *to take the gospel to people* who are lost and make disciples, not necessarily invite people to your church.
- “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16, NIV). A vital part of your team should be a group of prayer warriors who faithfully intercede on your behalf.
- A team provides support, encouragement, and accountability.
- Your team gatherings should focus on fulfilling the mission of God.

Action Steps:

- Establish a weekly gathering which includes a meal, prayer, bible study, and maintaining focus upon your mission.
- As people begin to explore spiritual issues, invite them to join your gathering.
- Use *PLACE* or a similar process to help team members discover their giftedness and calling for ministry.
- Establish a prayer warrior network and communicate with them regularly.
- Partner your team members together for prayer, seeking the power and presence of God in your lives.
- Enlist the services of an individual or church staff member to guide your team in living out the principles of *Epoch*.

Resources:

- *Living Your Strengths* by Albert L. Winserman, Donald O. Clifton, & Curt Liesveld (Gallup Press, 2004)

For the following web-based resources, visit www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch

- *PLACE*
- *Discovery Tools*
- *Developing a Prayer Warrior Network*

*Form a small team
and start a weekly
Bible study.*

ePOCH



◇ Component Two: Identify a People or Place

“They saw that I [Paul] had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised” (Galatians 2:7, HCSB).

Objective: Identify a particular group of people or a place that needs the gospel.

Christ commands His followers to make disciples of all nations. This can be accomplished by intentionally sowing the gospel among selected peoples or places encountered while living life or through intentional cross-cultural ministry. Rather than sowing by randomly scattering seed over an area, as in planting or reseeding lawns, focus on sharing the good news strategically among certain people or in specific areas. It may be a large community, such as your neighborhood. It maybe a smaller group, such as people in your workplace, your tennis or golf partners, hunting buddies, scrapbooking clubs, and so forth. It may be a place like a multifamily housing facility or small community outside of town. In most cases, the people will be like you, but at times God will call teams to direct their attention toward a group of people with a worldview or culture much different than their own. In either case, there must be a sense of the Holy Spirit directing you to those people or that place.

Pray. Ask God to direct your team toward the people on whom He wants you to focus your energies. Prayerwalk your community and region. Ask God to give you His heart for the people that live there.

As a team, identify groups of people or places that need the gospel. Begin by considering those people closest to your team members—your neighbors, coworkers, recreation or hobby groups, or people you come across on a regular basis. Expand beyond those your team is closest to and see the people or places with whom your team has no interaction—groups that share something in common, like a profession, hobby, location, language, ethnicity, or lifestyle. Consider places such as small towns or multi-housing communities that may be under-reached with the gospel.

The people or places your team identifies will fit into one of three groups. Group one is made up of people most like your team. Group two should have some differences, but an encounter with them should not have significant communication barriers. The third group will be made up of people with whom your team has little in common. Issues like education, income, or lifestyles should be considered. Major barriers would be related to language and culture.

Is God calling your group to focus on people you know or who are like yourselves? Or is He calling you to cross cultural barriers and reach out to people with views and lifestyles unlike your own? People from all over the world live among us, sent by God to hear the good news of Jesus Christ (see Acts 16:26-27).

Once the Holy Spirit has steered your team to a particular group of people or place, commit your lives, talents, and treasures to the task.

Key Principles:

- The gospel is generally communicated best through established relationships.
- Identifying a specific group of people or a place allows your team members to focus their energy.
- God is at work in the lives of people and communities. Our assignment is to identify where He is at work and join Him.

Actions Steps:

- Spend time as a team praying over your community and surrounding area. Ask God to guide you to the specific group of people or place He wants you to establish a faith community.
- Identify individuals or groups with whom your team has regular contact.
- Learn to see those who have been invisible among you, conditioning yourselves to see as Jesus sees them. The disciples saw Zacchaeus as a despised tax collector. Jesus saw him as a person with potential. Look for the ignored, the forsaken, the rejected.
- Identify groups of people who share a common language or heritage who live in your community.
- Identify unreached places where people live in your community. These will include apartment communities, subdivisions, communities inside or outside of your city, small rural communities, or manufactured housing communities.
- Communicate with your prayer warriors as you seek God's direction. Have them prayerwalk with your team in potential locations or among identified people.
- Embrace the Spirit's leading to reach your identified audience.

Start with those people closest to you—your neighbors, coworkers, recreation or hobby groups, or people you come across on a regular basis.

EPOCH

Resources:

- *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* by Henry Blackaby (Lifeway Church Resources)

For the following web-based resources, visit www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch

- *A Prayer Walking Guide*
- *PEOPLES Search*
- *Using the U. S. Census to Gather Community Data* PowerPoint



◇ **Component Three: Find and Understand Receptive People**

“Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah—for which I am in prison—so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Colossians 4:2-6, HCSB).

Objective: Connect with individuals in your selected audience and begin to gain an understanding of their culture, beliefs, values, and perceptions of Christians and Christianity.

Finding and understanding receptive people in your identified audience who are open to the gospel requires patience and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is a spiritual exercise built upon a genuine love for God and people (see Matthew 22:37-39). It requires that your team prayerfully do the following:

- Seek to identify a person of peace (see Luke 10:6-7) who can partner with you in developing a network of relationships within your audience. This is an individual who is receptive to your presence and would be willing to help establish a gathering of people in their midst. Although the person may not be a believer, he or she should be receptive to Christ. The person of peace should be well connected with others, having a large network of family and/or friends among your audience. And finally, the person of peace needs to be well-known by others (for either good reasons or bad). The point is, he or she is known and knows many in your audience!
- Look for the ways in which God is already at work in the heart of the person of peace. It may be that he/she is exploring spiritual questions, going through stressful life situations, or has a friend or family member that has recently come to faith in Christ.
- Find connection points between your team and this person—common interests, values, or places to spend time.

As your team seeks to accomplish the preceding items, it is important that you seek to identify with your audience. Seek to understand their values, religious beliefs, and knowledge of Scripture. Check out their lives and behaviors. The best way to do this is for your team to establish a constant and continued presence among them while maintaining an intimate relationship with God.

Your objective is to build relationships and earn acceptance. This may require moving your family and living among the audience. If need be, find employment in the community or join local organizations. This will allow you to share life with them. Jesus is our example. Typically, people live busy lives and have established relationships that may seem to prevent them from fully investing in the lives of these people. (See Philippians 2.)

Your initial contact with your audience is not always an evangelistic encounter (unless God leads you in that direction). It is about identifying, earning acceptance, and developing relationships with your audience (instead of just interacting with them) without compromising God's call to holy living. This is why it is crucial that your team maintains the regular gathering and you communicate with your prayer partners and coach.

Key Principles:

- Understanding your audience is critical in the disciple making process. This includes understanding the beliefs that determine how they act and live, what is important to them and what is not, and the barriers to the gospel that exist in their lives.
- The biggest barrier to receiving the gospel and involvement in a local church is not the gospel itself, but rather: (1) the way people view Christians and the church; (2) ignorance of the basic truths of Scripture; and (3) the struggles or distractions of life.
- A person of peace (see Luke 10:6) will help you establish relationships among people or in a place where you have no relationships. This is an individual who is well-known, who knows a lot of people, and is willing to help you establish relationships and gain an understanding of your audience.

Action Steps:

- Continue prayerwalking your field, praying that the Holy Spirit will lead you to a person of peace and raise up laborers from the harvest.
- Connect with people and the community and begin to gather information about them. Become a student of your audience or place. Know what's going on in the community and why.
- Establish a visual presence and build relationships within the community. Shopping, dining, recreation, and other activities of life should occur among and with them.
- Take advantage of opportunities to minister to the needs of people. Practice hospitality, kindness, and generosity. Express love in practical ways.
- Connect with your target audience and form groups to explore spiritual issues using the skills and principles described in *Seeker Sensitive Small Groups* by Garry Poole.

Resources:

- *Finding Common Ground* by Tim Downs (Moody Publishers, 1999)
- *Seeker Small Groups* by Garry Poole (Zondervan, 2003)
- *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* by George G. Hunter III (Abingdon Press, 2000)
- *Think Like Jesus* by George Barna (Thomas Nelson, 2003)
- *Luke 10:2b Prayer Strategy* (www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch)

*Seek to understand
a person's values,
religious beliefs,
and knowledge of
Scripture. Identify
the challenges
they face.*

ePOCH



◇ Component Four: Engage People

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you’ (John 20:21, HCSB).

“Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, HCSB).

Objective: Live a life among your audience that reflects the image of Christ while using the skills and approaches of a missionary to reach them with the gospel.

When you hear the word “church,” what crosses your mind? A building? A place where you go or take your family to have your spiritual needs met? It is *where* you worship. It is *where* ministry occurs. Correct?

This concept of church may need to be adjusted. First, a church is a group of people and not a place. Second, it is God’s people, not just any people. Finally, a church is a group of people led by the Holy Spirit to live out God’s mission in the world. They, as imitators of Christ (see Eph. 5:1), are sent *into the world* (see Matt. 28:19) to make disciples.

When God determined to bring salvation into the world, He sent His son. He became flesh and dwelt among us. He understood and entered the culture of His day. He fit in appropriately. (He fit in so well that for the first 30 years of His life, He went unnoticed.) That, however, changed when Jesus began to clarify His mission of redemption.

If we are going to live out the mission of God, we will have to embody His presence and dwell among those who need Christ. North America is a mission field characterized by competing cultures, religious pluralism and ethnic diversity. Therefore, we need to engage people as Jesus did—on their turf in a way that they understand.

At the heart of engaging people is a desire to reflect the life of Christ—to be Christ-like (see Gal. 2:20). Therefore, our focus must be on imitating the life of Christ as recorded in the gospels. He practiced compassion—responding to the needs of others—living out the love of God here on earth. He operated with total dependence upon the Father (see John 15:5). The fruit of the Spirit must be evident in our lives. We must be in the world, but not of the world—holy, imitators of God.

Possibly the greatest challenge to engaging people with the gospel is knowing when to give a verbal witness. Learn the art of listening and asking appropriate questions. Seek to understand people before sharing. Present the gospel sensitively, contextually, as the Holy Spirit leads. We need to become people who continually sow the gospel, moving solely from an emphasis upon harvesting. Prepare the soil. Sow the seed. Nurture the seed, allowing God to work at His pace—attempting to harvest as the Spirit leads.

Key Principles:

- Reflecting the life of Christ is more important than being religious. We must be “imitators” of Christ and identify with our people group without compromising God’s call to holy living.
- Relationships are more important than programs. We must spend more time on building relationships with people who do not know Christ than on conducting programs.
- Sowing the gospel seed is just as important as harvesting (see 1 Cor. 3:6). Because people know little of the truths in Scripture we must learn the art of sowing the gospel.

Action Steps:

- Maintain a healthy relationship with your heavenly Father (see John 15:5). Form a prayer partnership with an individual to help you maintain your relationship.
- Study the gospels, seeking to identify the ways in which Christ engaged people. Repattern your life accordingly.
- Learn the difference between sowing and harvesting. Learn to sow the gospel with patience and to harvest at the appropriate time.
- Invest your life in the lives of those within your field. Show compassion. Meet needs. Perform random, selfless acts of kindness toward your identified audience.
- Invest time in building relationships with people who are not yet Christians, striving to understand them and their families.
- Sow the gospel by providing ample opportunities for people to read, hear, see, and experience Christ. Be sensitive and yet, be bold.

*Develop
relationships with
people who need
Christ in order to
make disciples.*

Resources:

- *Servanthood Evangelism Manual* (North American Mission Board, 2000)
- *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* by Steve Sjogren (Navpress Publishing Group, 2001)
- *Experiencing God in the Workplace* by Mike and Debi Rogers (Lifeway Church Resources, 1997)
- *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* by George G. Hunter III (Abingdon Press, 2000)
- *Glocalization* by Bob Roberts Jr. (Zondervan Publishing, 2007)

For the following web-based resources, visit www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch

- *A Prayer Walking Guide*
- *Lighthouse of Prayer*
- *21 Days with Jesus*



◇ **Component Five: Build Community**

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NIV).

Objective: Create environments that connect people to do life together in authentic relationships.

Lonely. Isolated. Disconnected. I am sure you have heard these words used to describe people living in North America. We long to belong, but where, with whom, and for what purpose?

As we seek to make disciples and establish relationship-based faith communities, we acknowledge our need to connect with people for the sake of the gospel. We also acknowledge the fact that we should connect people with people—build community—as part of our disciple-making process. We need to establish a sense of community among some very disconnected people so that they begin to understand the value of community and having personal relationships.

Most people hunger to belong to a group that seeks to accomplish something significant. People want meaning in their lives. Therefore, engage them in meaningful activity that impacts their community. Feed the hungry. Help the homeless. Serve the elderly. Contribute in meaningful ways. Not only will this establish community within your audience, this will give your ministry team excellent opportunities to build relationships with people who are not yet believers while meeting practical needs.

Depending on the make up of your audience, you may also need to provide opportunities for people to interact and enjoy life together. Game nights or dinner parties are great ways for them to start their journey together. It is critical to point out that many people are uncomfortable with the concept of sharing a meal or entertaining people in their homes. Neutral sites like restaurants, recreational facilities, coffee shops, and community events are safe places to begin. Move slowly, but move toward meeting in homes and sharing a meal together. As we examine the life of Jesus, we must acknowledge that He spent a great deal of time in homes, sharing meals with people! It is possible that this environment allows people to connect at a deeper level, a place where people can be open, honest, and transparent.

Your team will also want to explore meeting the felt needs of your audience as a means of gathering people together. Explore issues like money management, raising children, weight loss, or improving marriages. Teach classes on home improvement or auto repair. Give people opportunities to connect with one another and with your team in the area where they live.

Key Principles:

- People *long to belong* and live lives marked by significance.
- Community is created by doing ministry *with* people instead of *for* people.
- Practicing biblical hospitality helps build community.
- Building community takes time and a willingness to be vulnerable with others.

Action Steps:

- As you build relationships with people in your identified community, seek to identify ways to involve them in projects that meet practical needs in their community.
- Host or organize social events to help create community.
- Seek to engage your audience in meaningful activities or studies designed to meet felt needs such as managing money, losing weight, and so forth.
- Join established groups within your audience in an effort to build relationships with people who are not yet believers.

Resources:

- *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* by Joseph R. Myers (Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003)
- *Making Room for Life: Trading Chaotic Lifestyles for Connected Relationships* by Randy Frazee (Zondervan, 2004)

For the following web-based resources, visit www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch

- Parties with Purpose (www.namb.net/heartcall, click on Free Downloads, then click on HeartCall Notebook, see page 36.)
- Hunger Action Projects (www.namb.net/hunger)

*Connect
unchurched people
with followers of
Christ to help them
know Christ and
become like Him.*

ePOCH



◇ Component Six: Make Disciples

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, HCSB).

Objective: Make disciples who multiply themselves.

We must understand that our role in the mission of God is to introduce people to Christ and actively be a part of their journey to become like Christ. We are to make disciples who multiply themselves—disciple-making disciples.

Typically, disciple-making is a part of a program built around the transference of knowledge through a wide variety of studies. It usually began following a person’s conversion and took place in a classroom setting or small group. Used faithfully through the years, this process appears to have moved Christianity from a *life to be lived* to a *lesson to be learned*, and has had minimal impact upon the transformation of people’s habits and behaviors. Our evangelism operates under the premise that people have a basic understanding of the “truth” and if given enough additional information, they should make the decision to receive Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Disciple-making is a *process* developed and conducted within relationships. It assumes that people have limited, or no, understanding of Scripture. Beginning prior to conversion, it understands that each individual needs specialized attention because of their own unique worldview. Genuine disciples are made within the context of community. They are the result of conversations and lessons learned from sharing life with believers as the Holy Spirit works in the relationships. Therefore, in *Epoch* we propose a different disciple-making process: Connection, Conversation, Belief, Commitment, Transformation, and Reproduction. This process is built upon two basic principles: First, people may need to belong before they believe. Second, the principles of disciple-making are better caught than taught.

Disciple-Making Process

Connection: Connect people with you and your team, involving them in community and mission. Allow them to see and experience the love of Christ in your group (see John 13:34, 35).

Conversation: In the midst of life and with intentionality, present biblical truths and principles both verbally (asking good questions) and through the way you live your life. Avoid the temptation of providing answers to questions not even asked and being confrontational. Focus first on preparing the soil through praying for discernment and wisdom. Then sow gospel seeds.

Belief: Seek to identify points of agreement as you journey, understanding that this can be a slow process. As the Spirit of God leads, continually make a clear presentation of the gospel based upon understanding gained in previous

conversations. Your objective is for them to understand the good news and affirm that Jesus is the Savior.

Commitment: Once the Holy Spirit has brought someone to an understanding and acceptance of the truth, lead them to make a commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Transformation: Spiritual conversion begins when individuals accept Christ as Savior and Lord. However, the transformation of their habits and practices may occur over an extended period of time. They will need to replace old habits and practices with those found in Scripture. They will need to establish new habits and practices. Teach them how to pray, how to study God's Word, how to relate to the body of Christ, and how to live out the mission of God.

Reproduction: From the very beginning you must engage new believers in the process of making of disciples. Help them immediately connect with people, starting with those closest to them to begin the process again.

Key Principles:

- Followers of Christ are to be disciple-making disciples (see Matt. 28:19).
- Discipleship happens within the context of relationships.
- The mere transference of knowledge does not make effective disciples.
- Discipleship is to be conducted by *someone*, not something (a program).

Action Steps:

- Learn to creatively share how the story of the gospel connects to your own personal life story (see 1 Pet. 3:15).
- Pray for people by name, seeking opportunities to give a verbal witness to the gospel.
- Proclaim the gospel with appropriate boldness in what you say and how you live (see Eph. 5:1).
- Establish—with help from your church or coach—clear training objectives and a discipleship process for people after their conversion.
- Place an emphasis on teaching people to study Scripture and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Reinforce with your team and new believers that the objective is to see lives transformed by the presence and power of Jesus Christ. Teach them that all believers must be participating in the mission of God to reach all peoples with the gospel. Do this in your weekly team meetings. Be sure to invite new believers.

Resources:

- *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels, Mark Mittelberg (Zondervan, New Ed edition, 1996)
- *The Masters Plan for Making Disciples* by Win & Charles Arn (Baker, 1982)
- *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* by LeRoy Eims (Zondervan, 1978)
- *Transformation* by Bob Roberts (Zondervan, 2006)
- One Hour/One Day Witnessing Workshop (www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch)

*Introduce people
to Christ and help
them become like
Him so that they
can help others
know Christ.*

EPOCH



◇ **Component Seven: Gather for His Worship and Glory**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers” (Acts 2:42, HCSB).

Objective: Gather people and form faith communities for God’s worship and glory.

In Acts 2:42, we see that the early church devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. They sacrificed to meet the needs of others. They went to the Temple for hours of prayer and, no doubt, to witness. They went from house to house, sharing life and meals together. They had a sense there was an “us.” They were the church—the people of God—and they expressed their faith in the confines of community. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, we see that in their meetings all were encouraged to participate, to share in the gathering of the church.

As you gather together for God’s worship and glory, allow your expression of worship to reflect God’s shaping of your community. Gathering people together is not an afterthought regarding your commitment to taking the gospel to your specific people group or place. It is a desired outcome. The gathering component is one that sets this journey apart from other evangelism strategies. It is all about taking Christ to people, who for whatever reason have not, or will not, attend a traditional church. It’s about taking worship outside of the church building and integrating worship into your lifestyle.

Consider practices like these as you integrate worship into your community:


1. Pursue the presence of God: God desires to be in communion with His people. He hungers for a healthy relationship with us.
2. Love one another graciously: Jesus said that the world would know we are His disciples by the love we have for one another (see John 13:35).
3. Share life: Practice hospitality by sharing your home with others.
4. Give generously: Pool your resources together and meet the needs of others, especially the poor and marginalized.
5. Live out His mission: Our supreme calling is to live out the mission of God—we are to be a sent people who make disciples.
6. Make the Word of God central in all you do: Whether your group is gathering for intentional, inductive Bible study or to be obedient to a biblical principle discovered in an earlier meeting, God’s Word must be central in all that your group does (see Acts 5:42).

Key Principles:

- Worship is expressing love and sincere adoration to God in forms that are biblically and culturally appropriate.
- The gathering for God’s worship and glory will look different in every faith community. It does not have to be a duplicate of a “typical” Sunday morning service.
- Worship is a participatory action. Your gatherings should be an opportunity for everyone in your community to be actively involved (see 1 Cor. 14).

Action Steps:

- Gather people for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer on more than a weekly basis. Consider meeting in homes, in the workplace, in coffee shops, and other nontraditional locations.
- Respect the fact that people will be at different places in their spiritual journey. During your Bible study time, allow individuals to discover truths on their own and to express confusion and uncertainty. Learn together by assisting people to discover principles on their own—avoid the temptation to provide answers.
- Inspire your group members to overcome their instincts to “huddle and cuddle.” Keep the mission central and teach that fulfilling the mission is an act of worship.
- Worship God with your financial resources, but remember that it is important for the group to give input as to how it is invested into the lives of others. We would encourage you to begin by supporting worldwide mission causes through Cooperative Program giving.
- Discover ways to meet needs in the lives of people and in your community.



Gather people together for worship—not as an afterthought, but as the desired outcome.

ePOCH



Resources:

- *Creating Community: Five Keys to Building a Small Group Culture* by Andy Stanley and Bill Willits (Multnomah, 2004)
- *Making Small Groups Work* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend (Zondervan, 2003)
- *Community of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren and Rob Lewis (Regal, 2003)
- *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence (Revell Books, Reprint edition 1999)
- *The Connecting Church* by Randy Frazee (Zondervan, 2001)
- www.CPMissions.net



◇ **Component Eight: Multiply**

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2 HCSB).

Objective: Multiply disciples, leaders, teams, and faith communities for God’s worship and glory.

What is the greatest joy in life? Would you say, “Seeing someone come to Christ?” Great! But there is something equally as thrilling—seeing someone whom you led to Christ lead someone else to Christ! It’s called multiplication—disciples making disciples.

The goal of your team should be multiplication—the multiplication of disciples, leaders, and teams to start new faith communities.

As your gatherings grow in size and disciples are equipped, new teams will be sent out to reach unreached peoples and under-reached places. The *Epoch* components are repeated over and over again. New teams are enlisted. Unreached people groups and places need to be identified. Relationships must be built. Community is established. Disciples gather together for God’s worship and glory.

Multiplication is accomplished in relationships—one person investing his or her life in another (see 1 Thess. 2:1-12). The discipline of coaching facilitates the making of disciples. Coaching helps a person discern how the Holy Spirit is at work and how He is leading them. This discernment comes through asking and considering questions that have been crafted well.

The Goal of Coaching

The overall goal of coaching is to help individuals or small groups achieve God’s will for their lives as it relates to His mission. Here are some basic principles for effective coaching:

- Coaches help individuals and small groups discover God’s will as it relates to the fulfillment of God’s mission by providing a clear discovery process.
- Coaches do not tell people what to do; they help people discover and develop strategies on their own.
- Coaches aid in the implementation of the strategies through continual evaluation, revision, and celebration.
- Coaches ask good, open-ended questions to aid in the discovery, development, and implementation process.
- Coaches do not provide answers, but rather point individuals toward resources.

Key Principles:

- Multiplication of disciples, leaders, teams, and faith communities is a biblical mandate.
- Multiplication is driven by an awareness of lost people in your community and a passion to see them reached with the gospel.
- Multiplication starts in the beginning of your team's journey and is directed by God. It does not come when your group thinks it is ready or has reached a certain size, but is rather woven into your DNA by God.

Action Steps:

- Start with the end in mind—from the beginning, intentionally focus on the multiplication of disciple-making disciples and faith communities.
- See individuals from different people groups or with different worldviews as opportunities to start new communities to fulfill God's mission among them.
- Evaluate your process ruthlessly by clearly defining success. Celebrate the transformation of life and the establishment of new faith communities. Direct your attention upon the work of God in your midst.
- Equip and encourage new believers to make disciples and start new faith communities shortly after their conversion.
- Continually reproduce yourselves through the practice of coaching, helping new believers identify their spiritual gifts, people who need Christ, and ways to implement the components of *Epoch*.

Resources:

- *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert E. Coleman (Revell, 2nd Abridged edition, 1994)
- *Church Multiplication Guide* by George Patterson and Richard Scoggins (William Carey Library Pub, Revised edition 2003)
- *PLACE* (www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch)

*Start new groups
by helping new
believers reach
their friends.*

EPOCH



**Is God calling you to live as a
missionary in your community?**

Then maybe God is calling you
to implement *Epoch!*

Additional resources designed to aid you in
your journey, including an Implementation
Guide for the local church, can be found at

<http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch>

Church Planting Group
North American Mission Board
Phone: (770) 410-6223
E-mail: *DiscoverChurchPlanting@namb.net*



A large rectangular area on the left side of the page, containing a grid of horizontal lines for writing. The grid is composed of 20 horizontal lines, with a margin at the top and bottom. The background of this area is a light, textured surface, possibly representing a wall or a piece of paper with a subtle pattern.





A series of horizontal lines for writing, set against a background of a stone wall with faint architectural details.

IGNITING PASSION

IN EVERYDAY

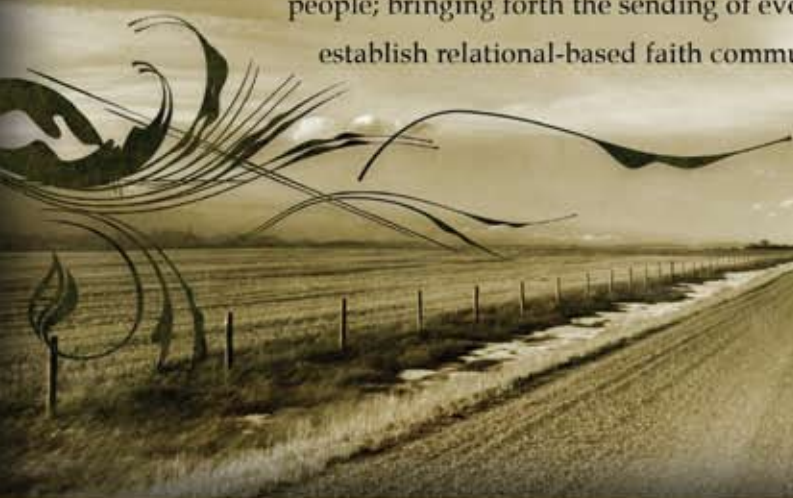
CHRIST FOLLOWERS

TO LIVE OUT

GOD'S MISSION.



Ep-och \ 'ep-ek, 1: An extended period of time ushered in by the brokenness and faithful praying of God's people; bringing forth the sending of everyday Christ followers into the harvest to make disciples and establish relational-based faith communities; resulting in the reduction in the number of lost people among all peoples in North America.



**NORTH AMERICAN
MISSION BOARD**

4200 North Point Pkwy. | Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176

A Southern Baptist Convention entity supported by the
Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®

For general information, call (770) 410-6000 or visit www.namb.net. To order materials,
call toll-free 1 866 407-NAMB (6262) or visit www.namb.net/catalog.