



EPOCH

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Epoch

© 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.

Scripture marked NIV is taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION[®]. Copyright[©] 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

Scripture marked NASB is taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE[®], Copyright[©] 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible[®], Copyright[©] 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible[®], Holman CSB[®], and HCSB[®] are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version.



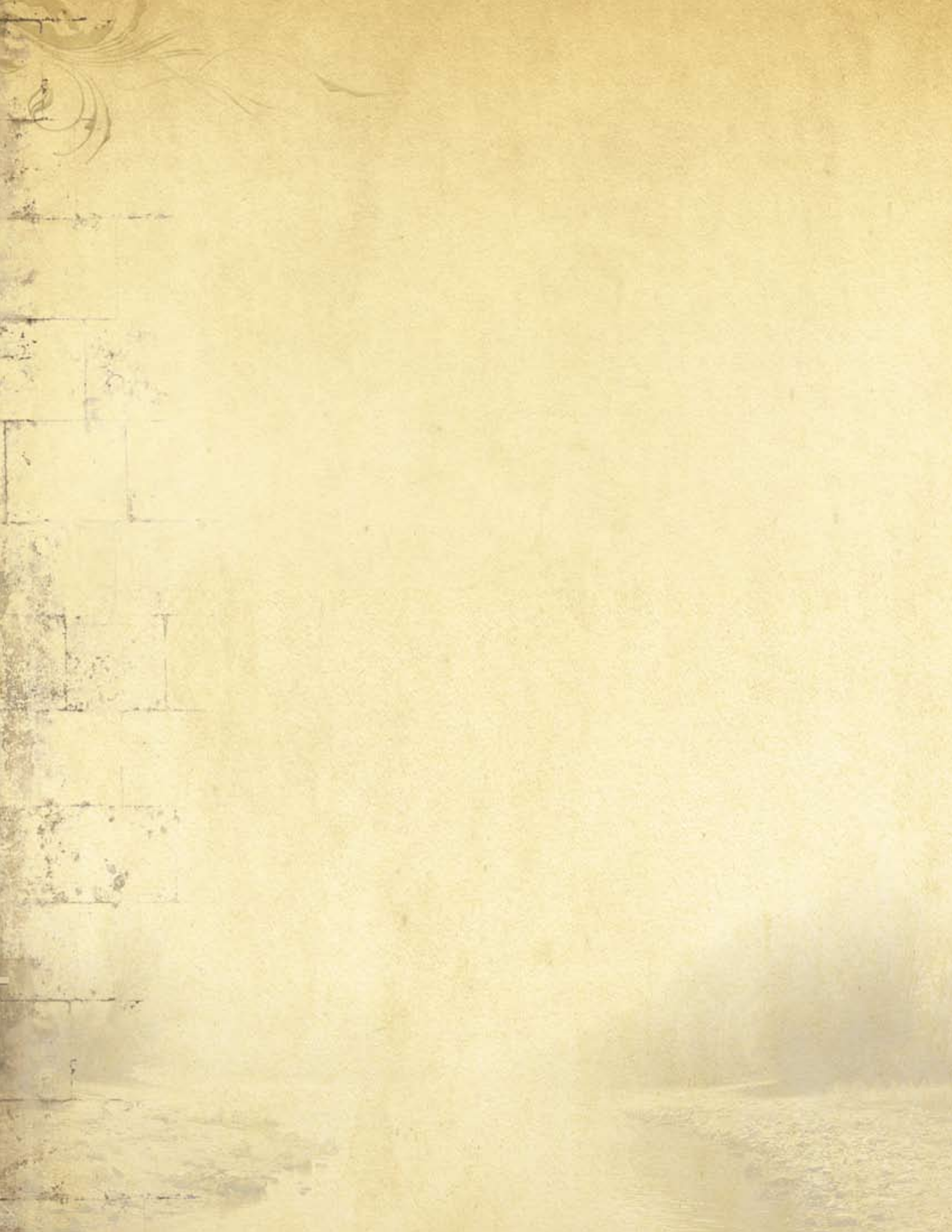
Table of Contents



Introduction	05
<i>Epoch</i> Overview	07
<i>Epoch</i> in the Mission and Ministry of Paul	10
The Importance of Prayer	12
Introducing <i>Epoch</i> in Your Church	13
Suggested Structures for Implementation	16
Introduction to Coaching	20
Coaching for <i>Epoch</i>	24
Coaching the <i>Epoch</i> Components	26
Appendix A <i>Foundational Articles for Epoch</i>	50
Appendix B <i>Sample Coaching Conversation</i>	60
Appendix C <i>Sample Coaching Agreement</i>	62
Appendix D <i>Recording the Coaching Session</i>	63

For additional resources please visit www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Epoch.





Introduction

Rapid church planting movements have occurred on various occasions in history. Many begin with a missionary or professional church planter and spread through the lives of everyday Christ followers. Some, however, begin when an everyday Christ follower, led by God, begins to make disciples and gather people for worship. In either case, by *nature*, these churches are winning the lost and reproducing themselves across entire regions. A church planting movement is born—a new epoch of spiritual awakening has been introduced.

It was a small group of 11 men whom Jesus first assigned the task of making disciples of all nations—ordinary, uneducated, everyday disciples called to follow Christ. To the Jews and Gentiles alike, these Christians were offensive not only because of what they believed, but because of how they behaved. They simply were incompatible with the prevailing Jewish and Roman cultures of their day. Yet, they turned the Roman world *upside down* as they lived out their mission to make disciples of all nations.

In 1776, Methodists had only 65 churches scattered throughout the American Colonies. During and immediately following the Revolutionary War, historians describe American religion as having reached the lowest point our country has ever experienced. Then in 1850, 13,302 Methodist congregations accounted for more than one-third of all American church members. This movement of God was facilitated by faithful circuit riders and ordinary, unassuming, everyday followers of Jesus Christ with a passion to live out His mission to make disciples.

Fast-forward to China. It's the early 1990s. Society is in turmoil. Urbanization is tearing apart the very fabric of family and community. Mao is dead. New ideas run rampant through society only to bring about events like Tiananmen Square. In 1991, Southern Baptists send a strategy coordinator into a region of about 7 million people. He finds three house churches having about 85 Christians. These followers of Christ were old and lacked vision. In 1998, just seven years later, the total number of churches has grown to 550 with more than 55,000 believers.

It's happening again (and not just among Southern Baptists) in North Africa, in another city in China, in Latin America, Central Asia, Western Europe, Canada, Ethiopia, and Vietnam. Whether it is in the first century or the twenty-first century, whether it is in China or in rural Kentucky, whether it is in a home or in the workplace, God has shown us time and time again that He will use ordinary, everyday followers of Jesus Christ to make disciples and to plant churches—to accomplish extraordinary things.

Each spiritual awakening recorded in history has been dependent upon the power of God being released through the lives of individuals transformed by the presence of Jesus Christ. The lost, those in need of salvation, all across North America are crying out in the midst of their depravity and despair for help. If we, the people of God, are going to see another epoch of spiritual awakening, we need not seek a new strategy or resource. We must spend time with our Creator. We must express our brokenness and sorrow over the spiritual condition of our nation. We must repent and turn from our wicked ways and acknowledge our helplessness. Then—only then—will God break into human history, restore His Church and heal His land.

Some people are convinced that this newest epoch will come as the church blesses and deploys everyday Christ followers into the harvest to make disciples and establish smaller, relational-based faith communities. These communities are focused upon the mission to make disciples—to reach their families, friends, and neighbors with the gospel. Believing that the creation of a safe place to experience community combined with a clear sense of mission will lead to the transformation of life, these radical followers of Jesus Christ are calling fellow believers to prayer and to live a life described by many as being *missional*.

A missional life is one marked by dependence on God and a commitment to being biblically faithful and culturally appropriate. It is a life focused on helping people belong, believe, and then become like Jesus Christ. Also, it is a life focused upon the making of authentic disciples committed to living out the mission of God to form one people, from all peoples, for His worship and glory.

Moving beyond the comfort of making disciples of people most like ourselves, God will call some small, gift-based teams to minister cross-culturally—to reach people unlike themselves.

Whether it is a team reaching people just like themselves in their community or teams focusing on cross-cultural missions, we are convinced that the key to reaching North America is God's deployment of everyday Christ followers into the harvest.

This implementation guide provides:

- ✦ The full *Epoch* strategy content
- ✦ Suggestions for implementing *Epoch* in your church
- ✦ Suggested structures for implementation
- ✦ A general introduction to coaching
- ✦ A guide to coaching the individual components of *Epoch*
- ✦ A guide for recording the coaching sessions

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 like missionaries in their community. *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**

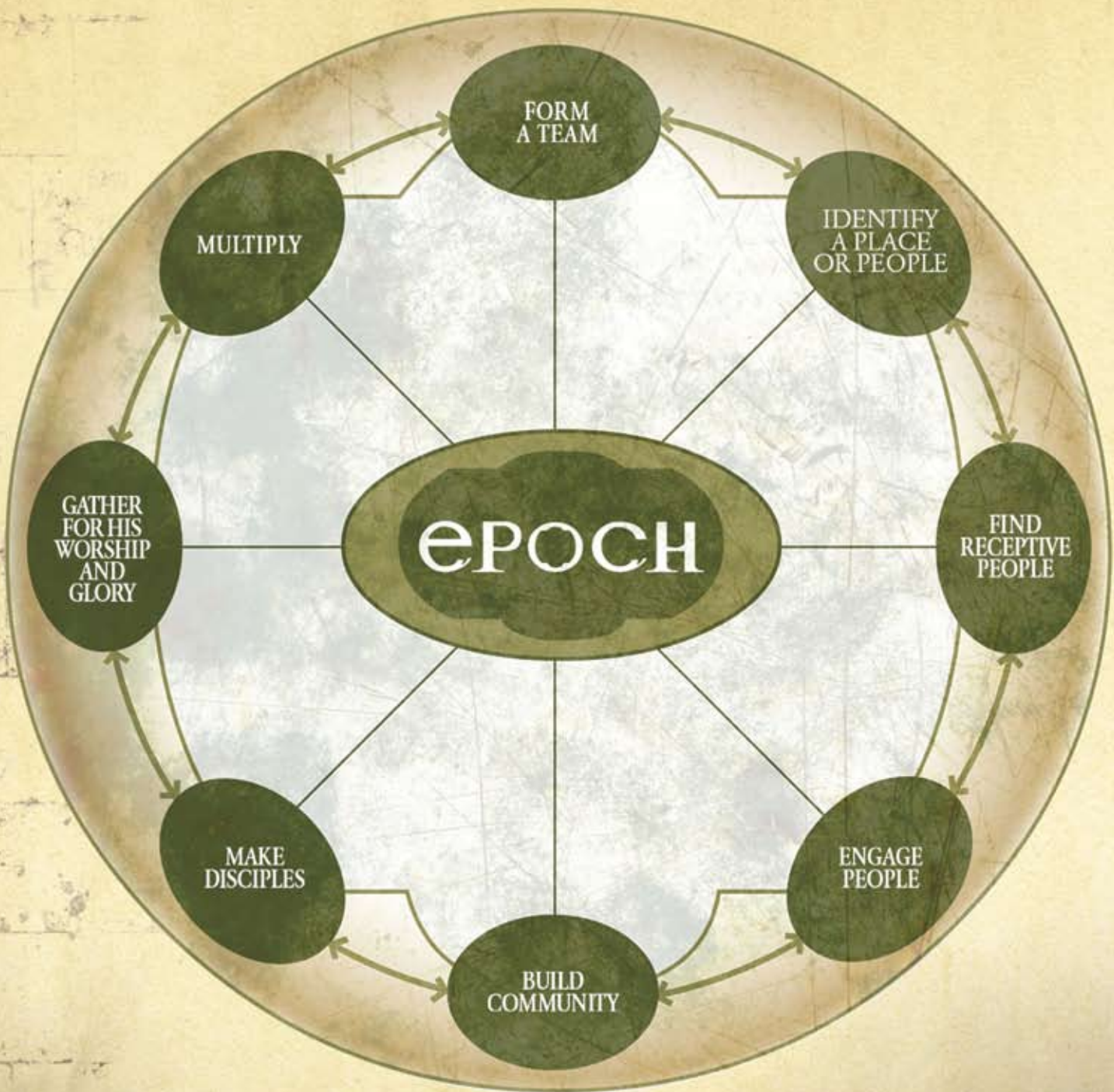
Objective: Make disciples who multiply themselves.

✦ **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 everyday Christ followers to live as 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 in the Mission and Ministry of Paul

“This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15, NIV).

The disciple Ananias may have wondered if he had understood God’s direction for him to proceed to the house of Judas in Damascus to retrieve a man from Tarsus named Saul (see Acts 9: 11). After all, Saul of Tarsus had made quite a name for himself as a noted scholar, Pharisee, defender of Judaism, and most notably as Christ followers’ public enemy number one. It was no secret that Paul was in route to Damascus for the very purpose of seeking and arresting all disciples of Christ who may exist and then returning them to Jerusalem as prisoners (see Acts 9:1-2). Little did Ananias know that God had totally transformed Saul (later named Paul) through his Damascus road encounter with Jesus the Christ in which his life, life’s journey and mission had totally been recalibrated (see Acts 9: 3-9). How surprised Ananias must have been as God revealed his plan and purpose for Saul to take the gospel to the Gentile world. Saul’s conversion and commission gave new meaning to his own life and his tried and tested missionary methods continue to set the pace for today’s Christ followers desiring to impact their world for Christ. Here are the basic components of Paul’s strategy.

Paul accomplished his mission in the context of team. On Paul’s first missionary journey he was accompanied by Barnabas and John Mark (see Acts 13-14), by Silas (see Acts 15:40-41) and Timothy (see Acts 16:3) on his second missionary journey, and during his third mission journey he met and served with Aquila and Priscilla and was later joined by Silas and Timothy (see Acts 18:1-18). Paul’s concept of team went beyond those people mentioned above. The book of Acts and Paul’s epistles record names of people who Paul strategically enlisted for some level of involvement in ministry. We can even trace this teamwork element of Paul’s ministry to his life and work prior to his Damascus road experience. Acts 9:7 mentions men traveling with Saul to Damascus to arrest Christ followers.

Paul focused on a strategic audience. There is no question that Paul took advantage of every opportunity to share Christ’s Good News with anybody anywhere. However, it is also clear that Paul considered God’s call and plan for his life and ministry as being a strategic conduit for reaching the Gentile world with the gospel (see Acts 13:47; Romans 1: 16; 10:12; 11:13; Galatians 2:7-8).

Paul found receptive people. Paul had a gift for finding people sovereignly prepared by God to be receptive to the Gospel. These “persons of peace” were believers and non-believers alike. Each person was well connected with others, having large networks of friends and /or relatives among Paul’s targeted audience. They were well known by others for either good reasons or bad. Take the Philippian jailer Paul and Silas encountered while imprisoned (see Acts 16:25-34). He was no doubt known and remembered by the hundreds or maybe thousands of people held captive, tortured or killed on his watch. Once saved, his life was transformed and his entire household confessed Christ as their Lord and Savior. Lydia, a successful and notable Philippian business woman, was led to Christ by Paul and Silas and then opened her home to them (see Acts 16:13-15). Lydia’s home and network became a strategic outpost for spreading the gospel throughout the region.

Paul engaged his audience. Paul’s love and passion for his Lord, education, status within Jewish circles, Roman citizenship and vocation as a tent maker provided effective platforms for sharing Christ with peoples of all walks of life. From his fellow tent makers (Acts 18:1), to noted scholars (see Acts 17:19), to key Jewish leaders (see Acts 13:42), kings (see Acts 25-26), people in need (see Acts 14), fellow prisoners (see Acts 16:25), jailors (see Acts 16, 28:16), and other political figures of the time, such as Festus (see Acts 25) and even a Caesar (see Acts 25:1-12). Paul intentionally capitalized on each and every God-given opportunity to preach, teach and/or share his Damascus road experience with all he encountered. He modeled how living among unbelievers of all walks of life led to meaningful and strategic relationships that resulted in many coming to faith in Jesus Christ (see Romans 9:19:23).

Paul created and immersed himself in community. Paul's most unique component to his missionary strategy was his intentionality in living among those people God called him to reach with the gospel. Paul lived among Corinthians for eighteen months teaching them the Word of God (see Acts 18:11). He stayed in Ephesus for more than two years (Acts 19: 10). This strategy was not limited to Corinth and Ephesus. Throughout his journeys, Paul lived among peoples of a different culture for extended periods of time. In each case we find community developing among those with whom Paul lived. Believers in Antioch joined together in providing help for those in Judea suffering persecution. Paul and Silas delivered this love gift (see Acts 11:29-30; 28:30).

Paul intentionally made disciples. Paul faithfully and persistently preached the news everywhere he went, seeing multitudes come to faith in Christ (see Acts 14:21). Upon addressing scholars of the Areopagus in Athens, Paul saw many of that group accept Jesus as Lord and Savior (see Acts 17:33). He gathered believers together into community to strengthen them in their faith and appoint elders in every church to oversee established faith communities (see Acts 14, 20:20, 21-23; 28:30-31; Titus 5; Acts 16:1-5).

Paul gathered people together for God's worship and glory. Paul saw people come to faith in Christ as a result of simply gathering people together. In Acts 16:40 we find Paul gathering with others at Lydia's house and find evidence of a similar strategy being used in Athens among Jason's household. In Ephesus he gathered people in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for daily discussions. Paul sent greetings to fellow believers and friends belonging to a church he helped to plant that met in Priscilla and Aquila's house along with greetings to the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus (see Romans 16; Acts 18:7-11).

Paul developed and multiplied leaders. Following Paul's conversion, he was mentored by Barnabas and other disciples. This experience no doubt had long lasting impact on his early ministry and one he continued throughout his life. With each missionary journey, Paul and his fellow missionary team members won various people to Christ whom they personally invested time in discipling and deploying for kingdom work. Examples of Paul's mentoring strategy are recorded throughout the book of Acts and Paul's epistles. Countless numbers of men and women illustrate the vast network Paul developed and deployed for the harvest. He was constantly multiplying disciples and leaders.

- ✦ During Paul's second missionary journey he and Silas were joined by Timothy.
- ✦ In Philippi, Paul formed a strategic relationship and partnership with Lydia, a dealer of purple (see Acts 16).
- ✦ In Thessalonica, Paul and Silas were hosted by Jason and his family (see Acts 17).
- ✦ In Corinth, Paul formed a partnership with fellow tent makers Aquila and Priscilla.
- ✦ While in Ephesus, Paul, Aquila and Priscilla met and began equipping Apollos (see Acts 18).
- ✦ Zenas (see Titus 3) was a lawyer who became a preacher of the gospel.
- ✦ Frastus (see Act 19:22; 2 Timothy 4; Romans 16) was a public treasurer of Corinth.
- ✦ Paul sent greetings to Epenetus (see Romans 16), a Christian in Rome designated as his beloved and the first fruits of Asia.
- ✦ Narcissus (see Romans 16) was most likely a secretary to the emperor.
- ✦ Claudius, Ampliatus (see Romans 16) was connected with Caesar's household.
- ✦ Paul challenged Timothy to repeat the process of multiplication (see 2 Timothy 2:1-2).

These and others are examples of how God led Paul to engage, mentor, equip and involve everyday people in kingdom work. Paul's investment in raising leaders from the harvest resulted in churches being planted. In ten years God used Paul and his colleagues in establishing churches in four provinces of the Roman Empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia.

Paul's entire experience of making disciples and extending the gospel was led by the Holy Spirit. Teams were formed. People were engaged. Communities of faith were formed as the Holy Spirit spoke, directed and empowered the work of this servant leader (see Acts 13:1-4).

The Importance of Prayer

Whether you decide to introduce *Epoch* among one or two people or church-wide it is important to point out that *Epoch* is not a program. It is a process built upon solid biblical and missiological principles and is *totally dependent upon the power and presence of Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants.*

On our own—apart from God—we cannot bear fruit (see John 15:5,8) and we will not have the strength or resources we need to fulfill the Great Commission. Activities, strategies and programs alone will not bring glory to God or advance our mission endeavors. Prayer is crucial in advancing the mission of the church. It shows that our strength and power comes from the Lord (see Romans 11:36). Prayer makes clear to all that the victory belongs to the Lord (see Proverbs 21:31). It brings the Father glory (see Psalm 50:15, John 14:13). It acknowledges our total dependence upon God to see lives transformed.

Prayer is no secret. Many believers pray every day. Many of our churches have weekly prayer meetings. Some even have 24-hour intercessory prayer ministries that function every day of the week. And yet we have not seen a recent movement of God like those recorded in the Book of Acts. Why?

In Acts 4:31 we can identify two principles to guide our prayers as we implement *Epoch*. First, when the church prays the power of God is received. *“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 4:31, NIV). In verses 29 and 30 we read the prayers of God’s people for power. They wanted the ability to speak with boldness. They sought healing, miraculous signs and wonders to proclaim the greatness of God, to bring Him glory. Second, we see that when the church prays the purpose of God is achieved. Acts 4:31 (NIV) concludes with this testimony, *“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”*

Prayer is not the mission of the church. Prayer *empowers* it. As a result of the prayers of the church, the gospel (see Romans 1:16) is proclaimed among the nations (see Matthew 24:14) with boldness. The proclamation of the gospel is the work of the missionary—of the church. If we fail to proclaim the gospel, the work of God is aborted.

As you seek to establish a foundation of prayer, we suggest that you focus in three areas. First, establish a network of prayer warriors who gather together (see Matthew 18:19) to support the work of your people in the harvest. Second, have them pray daily for laborers who will journey into the harvest to make disciples and form basic faith communities (see Luke 10:2b). Third, have them prayer walk your community on a regular basis to pray for lost people, for the identification of persons of peace and that your missionaries would proclaim the gospel with boldness. Resources have been posted at www.churchplantingvillage.net/Epoch to guide you in fulfilling these initiatives.

Introducing *Epoch* in Your Church

Although *Epoch* can be initiated by an individual apart from the local church we strongly believe that it will be most effective when conducted through the ministries of the local church. We also believe that *Epoch* is directed best in a coaching relationship between your *Epoch* teams and leaders with an understanding of the process.

As you explore ways to introduce and implement *Epoch*, consider to what extent you wish to begin your journey. As you implement *Epoch* you may want to consider limiting the number of initial teams formed, as many of the concepts in the process may be new to your people. This would also allow you, or those coaching the team(s), to get acquainted with the process and to discover firsthand the joy of living as a missionary in your community. Once you have experienced the process firsthand you could then recruit additional missionary teams.

A natural alternative would be to introduce *Epoch* church-wide and experience the process together. This would be possible because the process is built around a particular way of living, rather than a program. No matter which approach you choose, keep in mind that *Epoch* is a process that becomes natural and is developed over time.

An important consideration for the introduction of *Epoch* is the spiritual climate and preparation of the church. Appropriate time for prayer, Bible study, vision casting and discussion will be a valuable asset to the accomplishment of the process as the Holy Spirit leads.

Introducing *Epoch* Through a Church-wide Emphasis Upon Living as a Missionary

At the heart of *Epoch* is the sending of everyday Christ followers into their communities to live as missionaries. This requires a major lifestyle change for many church members—one however, that would be worthy of making the journey. Because the *Epoch* process reflects solid biblical and missiological principles, we suggest that you consider introducing the process by preaching a series of messages designed to reveal foundational principles for *Epoch* from God's Word.

Here are some suggested preaching topics:

1. The Mission of God is For Everyone
2. The Mission of God
3. The Person of Peace in God's Mission
4. Sowing in the Mission of God
5. Community in the Mission of God
6. Making Disciples in the Mission of God
7. Gathering for Worship in the Mission of God
8. Continuing the Mission of God

(For more information on these topics see Appendix A, page 50).

A way to enhance the impact of the preaching would be to include more than a sermon series. Small group discussions, gift discovery exercises, prayer walking, and community assessments could all be integrated into the emphasis.

Introducing *Epoch* Through a Community Assessment Exercise

The second component of *Epoch* directs a team to identify a particular group of people or place to focus their attention. One way to introduce (or begin to implement) the process, therefore, is to identify unreached groups of people and places by assessing your community. Identifying an audience who needs the gospel is God's invitation for your church to join Him in reaching them with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Identifying an audience is only the beginning of the process. An understanding of your audience is also needed to develop a contextualized disciple making process. *Epoch* will also help believers discover how God has gifted them for making disciples and forming relationship-based faith communities.

Phase One of *PEOPLES Search* has been developed to help conduct a community assessment. This resource is available online at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/PeopleSearch. After the community has been assessed and ministry opportunities identified, consider hosting a Calling out the Called weekend to enlist individuals to engage their community using the *Epoch* process.

Introducing *Epoch* Through a “Calling out the Called” Activity

Everyday Christ followers all across North America are seeking ways to find meaning and purpose in life. Choosing to live as missionaries in their communities can give them meaning and purpose at a level they may have never dreamed.

Calling out the Called (COTC) is a process which gives everyday Christ followers an opportunity to discover their giftedness and to respond to God's invitation to join Him on mission in their community. *COTC* can be done as a weekend event, beginning with a worship service on a Friday evening and concluding on Saturday with community prayer walking, seeking to identify where God is at work among unreached peoples and in under-reached places.

TransPlant is another version of *COTC*, but places its focus upon young adults who may be attending a local college or university. For more information on *COTC* and TransPlant, please visit www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Enlistment.

Introducing *Epoch* Through an Equipping and Certification Process

Although *Epoch* is written to guide everyday Christ followers who have little or no formal education through the process, a study course has been developed in partnership with Seminary Extension to provide individuals with basic foundational skills which will enhance their efforts to live as missionaries in their communities. An individual who chooses to participate and complete the assignments is certified as an *Epoch* church planter.

The certification process was created to provide training and assessment resources to enhance the effectiveness of Christ followers as they seek to live as missionaries in their communities. Included in the study course are modules which address issues such as understanding spiritual gifts, Bible study methods, assessing a community, building a ministry team, coaching, making disciples, sharing your faith, and maintaining doctrinal purity.

Introducing *Epoch* Through a Retreat

Epoch can be introduced and Christ followers can be recruited for its implementation through a weekend retreat. This event can serve as a “learning laboratory” through which the participants discover the components of the process and participate in interactive exercises to understand and apply them. The retreat can be conducted so that those involved can return to their neighborhoods, workplaces, or affinity groups better prepared to live out the *Epoch* journey.

Two distinct formats have been developed. The first, lasting four hours, leads participants to examine scriptures that help them see their community as a mission field and develop appropriate responses. The second format, which lasts 8-10 hours, has sessions built around the eight components of *Epoch*.

Introducing *Epoch* Through a Mission Trip

Since the emphasis of *Epoch* is “Living as a Missionary,” a great way to introduce and implement the process is during a short-term mission experience. Parts of each day can be used to introduce the components and then the actions can be practiced on the mission field. Participants can dialog and discuss application of these principles for their field back home. When the “missionaries” return, they can work together to accomplish the *Epoch* elements in their own backyards.

Introducing *Epoch* into Your Existing Small Group Ministry

Whether it is through your Sunday School classes, off-campus small group ministry, or mission groups, *Epoch* can provide your existing groups with a clear sense of purpose that focuses them on reaching those who are not yet believers within their context. By utilizing existing groups in your church, the first component of *Epoch*—form a team—is completed. All that remains is to introduce the principles to your participants and to equip your leaders to guide their teams in focusing on the concept of living as a missionary.

Not only will *Epoch* provide them with a process for reaching the unchurched, it gives your small group ministry a disciple-making process which supports the local church as well as reaches unreached peoples or under reached places with the gospel.

The Importance of Creating a Support Network

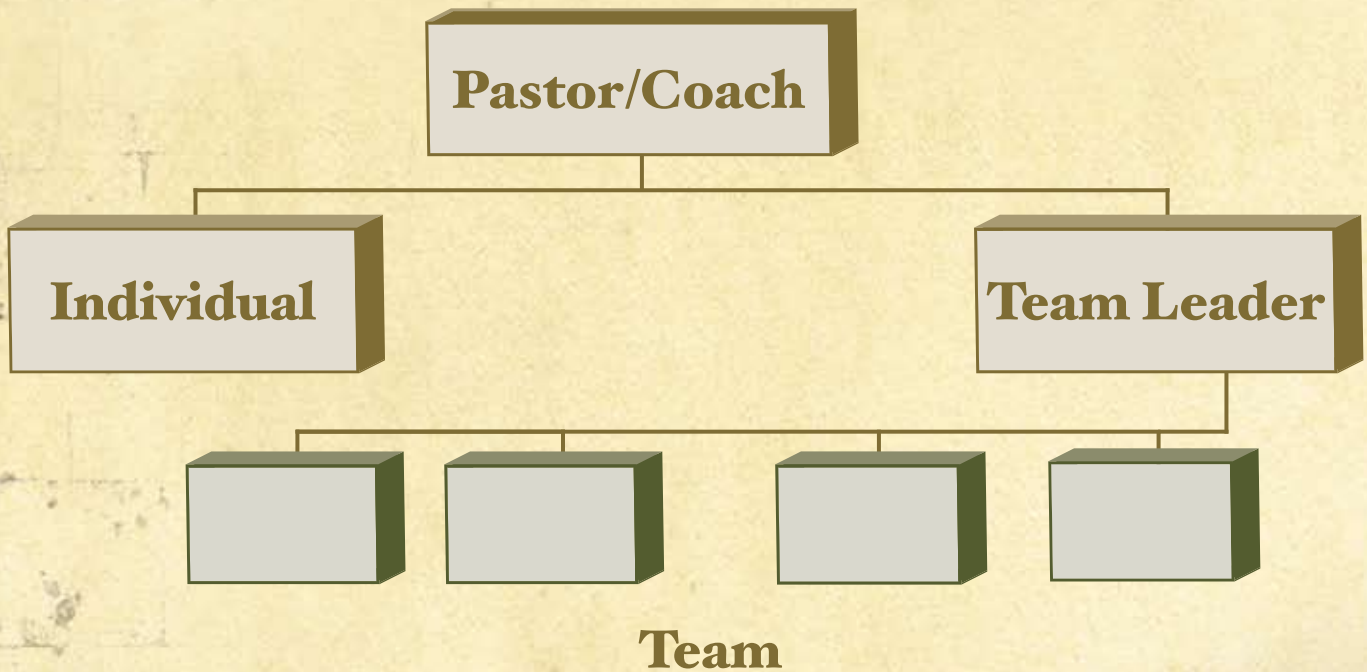
Regardless of how or to what extent you implement *Epoch*, it is important to provide participants with a support system. This will allow you to direct your team(s) as well as give them the encouragement and pastoral support they will need. Regularly scheduled gatherings of all participants will allow you an opportunity to reinforce the vision of your church and the principles of *Epoch*, and it gives you a platform to celebrate what God is doing through the process. However, this should not replace the support provided through a coaching relationship. Each group will be experiencing different opportunities and needs within their context. Coaching provides an opportunity to give them the guidance they need to deal with their unique situation while at the same time encouraging them to discern the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the process.

Suggested Structures for Implementation

Implementation of the *Epoch* strategy can take many forms through a local church. New structures can be developed or the strategy can be integrated into existing ministries and small groups. Regardless of the structure, coaching can be a valuable method for pastors and other church leaders to assist those who are in the process of implementing *Epoch*. It would be important to evaluate the best way or ways to structure the implementation and then clearly communicate that organization at every step. There is no reason to adopt just one approach. While one structure might work for one group in the church. A different design might be perfect for another group. Here are some suggested structures.

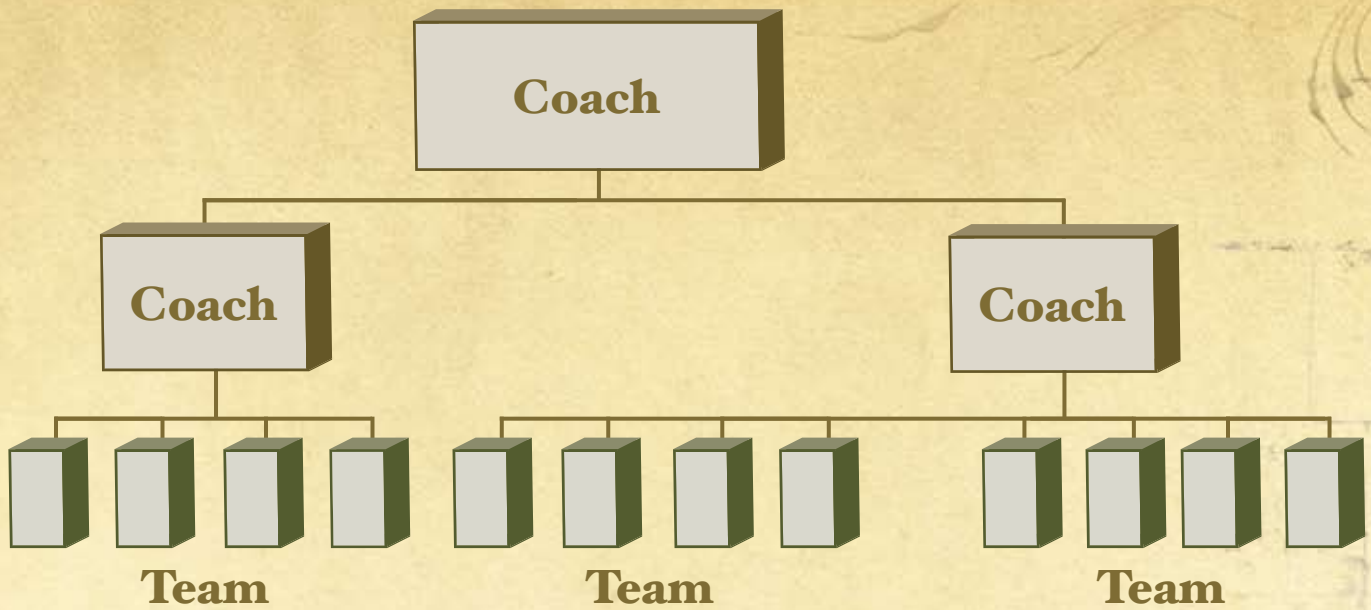
Pastor or Staff Member as Coach of an Individual or a Single Team

A pastor, staff member or church leader could work with an individual or a leader of a team to implement *Epoch* in their community. Thinking of a multiplication model, he may want to recruit a team made up of individuals who themselves will become coaches of future *Epoch* teams.



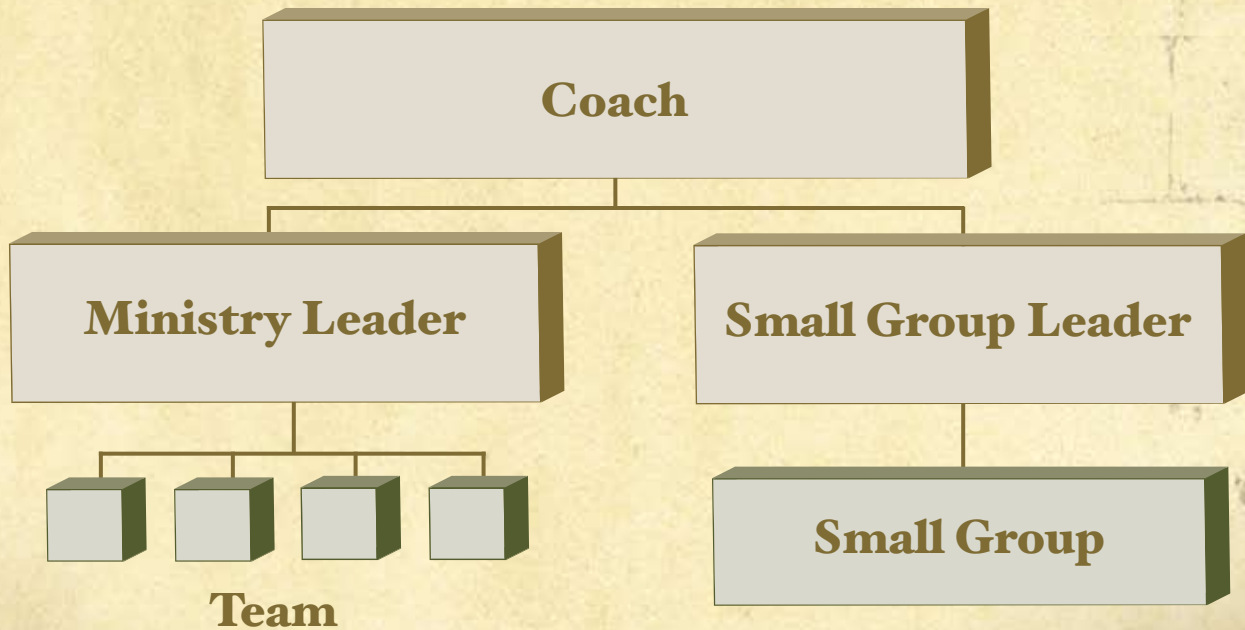
Pastor or Staff Member as Coach of Coaches

A pastor, staff member, or church leader could recruit and work with coaches who would help individuals and teams implement *Epoch* in their communities. He will want to select leaders of effective *Epoch* groups and coach them to be coaches of new *Epoch* groups.



Pastor or Staff Member as Coach of Existing Small Group/Ministry Leaders

A pastor, staff member or church leader could work within the current structure of the church to utilize small groups or ministries to implement *Epoch* in their community. He could coach these leaders during a regularly scheduled meeting each week.



Other Creative Structuring Opportunities

A church could take any or all of the above suggestions and develop a creative structure specifically suited to their situation. The implementation and the structure is flexible. It may be more organic than organizational. It may be built upon the simplicity of your current structure. Or it may necessitate an entirely new way of doing things.

Momentum Building Principles for *Epoch* Teams

In order for the *Epoch* strategy to be received well and work effectively through your church, attention should be paid to ideas and actions that will help build momentum for the teams and among the congregation. Here are a few suggestions to get you started. Try to “shine the light” on what God is doing while implementing. Come up with other ideas for sharing the process and its results with more and more people in your congregation.

1. Communicate about *Epoch* in church-wide publications.
2. Conduct commissioning events as new *Epoch* teams are sent out.
3. Gather *Epoch* teams monthly to pray, celebrate, and re-cast the vision.
4. Invite potential participants to your monthly *Epoch* gatherings.
5. Have *Epoch* team members share testimonies in worship services.
6. Revisit *Epoch* principles through sermons on a regular basis.
7. Conduct “Calling Out The Called” events on a regular basis to give potential new participants an opportunity to become involved in the process.

Contextualized Versions of *Epoch*

Epoch was developed to engage everyday Christ followers in church planting activities—to equip them to live as missionaries in their communities and around the world. The printed resources, made possible because of your giving to the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering[®], are built upon sound biblical and missiological principles and can be applied in most contexts. However, in some situations a contextualized version of *Epoch* would better facilitate the making of disciples and formation of faith communities. Therefore, we have developed various versions of *Epoch* which, as they are developed, will be posted on the Church Planting Group's Web site. Visit www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch.

Introduction to Coaching

Epoch is a natural disciple-making process. As it is implemented in your church, you will need leaders who can help *Epoch* teams discern what the Holy Spirit is doing in their ministries. Coaching is an excellent way to engage and empower people to understand and use *Epoch*. What follows is a general introduction to the basics of coaching. In this section, we list the guiding principles that will give a solid foundation for the practice of coaching. In the next section, we will give specific instructions for coaching *Epoch*.

What is coaching?

Coaching is a dynamic experience through which a coach helps an individual discover what he or she needs to do and helps him or her discover ways to do it. Coaching may seem like a modern method to help others achieve success in a specific area of their lives. Truth is, coaching has been around a long time. It was practiced perfectly by Jesus as he developed his disciples. He constantly used questions to aid them in focusing their efforts on activities that strengthened them personally and joined Him in kingdom initiatives. Jesus intentionally led His followers into opportunities where they could be tested and tried. He used these occasions to help them realize the potential He had placed in them. He made an investment in them that had lasting effect. He helped them grow stronger so that they would continue in the mission when he was gone.

Coaching draws out rather than puts in. It realizes that what God has given through His gifting to the individual and the gift of His Holy Spirit are powerful. Coaching works in harmony with God to help the person live out what God is putting in. It develops rather than imposes. It reflects rather than directs. Coaching is reactive, flexible, and enabling, not prescriptive or instructional. It assists an individual in discerning the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

Gary Collins, author of *Christian Coaching says*, “Coaching is the art and practice of guiding a person or group from where they are toward the greater competence and fulfillment that they desire.” (Gary Collins, *Christian Coaching* [Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 2001], 15.)

Coaching is a relationship. It is a process. It is powerful. It is built upon a series of intentional and carefully crafted conversations. It is a relationship between the coach and the one being coached. It is a process to help move the one being coached toward an agreed upon goal. It is powerful because it joins God in His desire to grow His child for greater kingdom impact.

Beyond anything else, coaching is simply the process of listening well and asking good questions. Through that process, the coach helps the individual come to understand where they are, where they want to go and how to get there.

What coaching is not...

It is not...

1. Mentoring
2. Supervising
3. Counseling
4. Advising
5. Training

Coaching is not telling people what to do. It is helping them discover through a coaching conversation how to achieve their own goals!

Why do we need coaching?

Coaching is biblical. It is effective. It is efficient.

Coaching was modeled by Jesus as he trained his followers. It was embraced by Paul. It was prescribed as a means to do ministry (see Ephesians 4).

Coaching produces significant results. Goals are established. Issues are addressed. Actions are taken. Results are real.

Coaching uses resources well. It can happen anywhere in the world. It's very low cost. It requires little preparation. It can be done in short windows of time.

Who needs to be coached?

Coaching is for everyone. Especially for those who want to grow. It is for the kingdom.

Coaching can work with anyone—regardless of age, regardless of education, regardless of experience.

Coaching works best for those who want to grow. It can help individuals grow personally, grow spiritually, and grow professionally.

Coaching is a kingdom activity. When individual believers grow they add to the cumulative body of Christ. They are better able to fulfill their part in God's design. The kingdom benefits.

Who can do the coaching?

You can.

Since coaching is about helping people find the answers for themselves, just about anyone can do it.

It requires sacrifice, not a lot of skill. Willingness, not knowledge. Common sense, not creativity.

It is not training, counseling, or supervision. The simple functions of a coach are easy to learn and even easier to improve through practice.

If you can follow through on a commitment, if you genuinely care for people, then you can be a coach.

What are the qualities of a good coach?

The qualities of a good coach include:

1. Listening skills
2. Communication skills
3. Rapport-building skills
4. Ability to motivate and inspire
5. Curiosity
6. Flexibility
7. Courage
8. Ability to help people dream dreams

What makes up a good coaching strategy?

Coaching is about questions—questions that guide, questions that assist, questions that motivate, questions that celebrate.



Goals need to be discovered. Questions asked in this stage of the strategy help guide the person to establish specific, personal goals.

Issues need to be addressed. Questions asked in this stage assist the person in dealing with issues that get in the way of advancing toward the goal.

Actions need to be taken. Questions asked here motivate the person to determine and do precise actions.

Results need to be realized. Questions asked in this phase lead the person to celebrate what has transpired.

What are some important principles for coaching?

1. Listening is more important than talking.
2. Understand what motivates the person.
3. Everyone is capable of achieving more.
4. A person's past is not necessarily an indication of their future.
5. Coaches do not provide the answers, just good questions.
6. Coaches exist to provide support and encouragement.
7. Keep what happens in coaching confidential.
8. Coaches don't criticize, they help others criticize themselves.
9. Coaches learn patience for the person's pace.
10. Some people won't be coached.

What is included in a coaching conversation?

Connection is included. Conversation is included. Conclusion is included.

Connection is included. The conversation begins. How are you doing? What's been going on? How can I pray for you?

Conversation is continued. What goal do you want to discuss? What issues do you have with that goal? What actions do you need to take (or have you taken)? What results do you want to have (or have you had)?

Conclusion is included. What is next? When will we meet again?

(For a sample coaching conversation on one of the *Epoch* components, see Appendix B, page 60.)

What does a coaching agreement include?

A coaching agreement for *Epoch* would answer the following questions:

1. Who is the agreement between?
2. When and how will they meet?
3. How will contacts between coaching sessions take place?
4. What are the mutual commitments and expectations?
5. How long will the agreement be in effect?

(For a sample coaching agreement see Appendix C, page 62.)

Resources for Coaching

Books

Christian Coaching, Gary R. Collins. NavPress, 2001.

Coaching 101, Robert Logan and Sherilyn Carlton. ChurchSmart, 2003.

Coaching 101 Handbook, Robert Logan and Gary Reinecke. ChurchSmart, 2003.

Coaching For Performance, John Whitmore. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999.

Co-Active Coaching, Laura Whitworth, Henry Kimsely-House and Phil Sandahl. Davies-Black Publishing, 1998.

The Coaching Revolution, David Logan and John Paul King. Adams Media, 2001.

Complete Book of Questions, Garry Poole. Zondervan, 2003.

The Heart of Coaching, Thomas Crane. FTA Press, 2002.

Leadership Coaching, Tony Stoltzfus. www.Coach22.com, 2005.

Web Sites

www.coachnet.org

A web based organization offering coaching, training and resources for Christian leaders. The “net” provides tools for the establishment and maintenance of coaching relationships. The annual fee for the basic membership is \$75.00.

www.garyrcollins.com

www.steveaddison.net

Appendix

Appendix A: Foundational Articles for *Epoch* p. 50

Appendix B: Sample Coaching Conversation – *Epoch* Component One p. 60

Appendix C: Sample Coaching Agreement p. 62

Appendix D: Recording the Coaching Session (Form) p. 63

Coaching for *Epoch*

Guide to Coaching the *Epoch* Components:

Coaching is the perfect way to encourage and engage others for involvement in *Epoch* through a local church. The coach may be a pastor, church staff member, small group leader, or other Christian leader who desires to help send Christ followers into the harvest to make disciples.

The coach should begin with a clear understanding of *Epoch*. It would be an advantage if the coach is currently, or had been in the past, engaged in an *Epoch* experience.

The frequency and regularity of the coaching sessions will be determined by the goals and progress of the person being coached. Some will find a weekly meeting appropriate. For some a twice-monthly or monthly meeting will be adequate. It is always a good practice to have frequent and casual check-up conversations or communications between the scheduled meetings.

The amount of time for each individual coaching session will vary. Many coaching models use a “one hour” format. There is no rigid standard. The amount of time required will be established by the needs and style of the coaching relationship. It might be best to experiment with shorter and longer times as the sessions get started.

The length of the *Epoch* coaching relationship will also be determined by the goals set and progress made. The participants should discuss the commitment to the coaching relationship and determine a proposed length for the relationship. For example, they would decide to meet for three consecutive months and then determine if additional sessions were needed.

Coaching can take place in a small group setting, but is best accomplished one-on-one. When a team is working on *Epoch* together, it would be appropriate that the coaching sessions involve multiple members of the team. (See diagrams on pages 16-17.)

As with any coaching situation, you begin where the person is and define the objectives clearly. In *Epoch* coaching it is appropriate to concentrate on the component or components that the person is involved in at that time. For purposes of this guide, we will discuss coaching the components in the order that they appear in the *Epoch* document. It is entirely possible that a team or individual will be processing several components at once and in a different order. Flexibility and adjustment are often keys to successful coaching.

As you carry on your coaching conversations, you may want to recommend one or more of the resources listed in the *Epoch* document that corresponds to the accomplishment of that component.

It is important for the coach to keep a detailed record of what transpired in the coaching session. These will assist the coach in review of the previous session and preparation for future sessions. The records should indicate the specific *Epoch* component or components which were the focus of the session. A list of the questions asked and answers given should be kept. The coach could make notes to indicate items to check up on and areas to prepare prior to the next session. A sample form for “record keeping” can be found at the end of this section. (See Appendix D, page 63.) Please feel free to use it, modify it, or come up with a record keeping method that meets your needs.

Desired Outcomes of *Epoch* Coaching

Coaching in *Epoch* should simply be a supportive foundation to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the process.

Coaching will be successful if individuals have been:

1. Helped in establishing specific, personal goals related to the *Epoch* process
2. Assisted in dealing with issues that get in the way of advancing toward the goals
3. Motivated to determine and do specific actions
4. Led to celebrate what has transpired
5. Based in the discernment of the Holy Spirit's leadership

In addition, effective coaching always produces more coaches. Those who have been coached should themselves become coaches. This should be a natural process, but may require a systematic approach to actually see it happen.

Coaching The *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. 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 a typical church building.
- ✦ Team members should commit to a lifestyle of making disciples.
- ✦ Team members must meet weekly for prayer, celebration, and encouragement. They should be aware that this gathering may become their future gathering for the community and should be open to others as they are being impacted by the gospel.
- ✦ Team members must 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 building.
- ✦ “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 must focus on fulfilling the mission of God.

Action Steps:

- ✦ Establish a weekly gathering for your team which includes a meal, prayer, 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

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 multi-family 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 neighborhoods, workplaces, 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.

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 Two Coaching Questions

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

With what individuals or groups does your team have regular contact?

Where is that contact? How close or frequent is it?

Have you identified people Jesus would have noticed?

The ignored? The forsaken? The rejected? Those different from yourself?

Has God clarified or helped you identify a people or place?

How is God at work there? In that place or among that people?

Have you identified a group in your community that shares a common language or heritage?

What places have you identified?

Apartment communities? Subdivisions? Rural areas? Urban areas?

Have you considered prayer walking among your selected people or place?

Would some of your prayer warriors join you in that?

Are there social, ethnic, or religious barriers to you reaching your target group? How will you address these issues?

What activities can you do that will celebrate the identifying of a people or place?

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)

Component Three Coaching Questions

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

Have you prayer walked your field?

Do you have any leads on finding a person of peace? If not, how can you find one?

What have you learned about your people or place?

What's happening in your community and why?

How have you and your team established a visual presence in the community?

Tell me about the conversations you are having with people.

What is God saying to you about these people?

Are you finding ways to minister to the needs of people? Why or why not?

What have you tried? What other things might work?

Hospitality? Kindness? Generosity? Service?

What is preventing you from being among the people or place you've chosen?

How can you remedy that? What things might help?

Have you identified any major spiritual issues among your group?

How can you use this information to increase their receptivity?

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 lead 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.

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 Four Coaching Questions

Objective: Live a life among your audience that reflects the image of Christ and uses the skills and approach of a missionary to make disciples and establish relationship-based faith communities.

Who is in your prayer and accountability group?

How often are you together? How would you describe the activity there?

What, if anything, is currently hindering your relationship with the Father? How can you work on that?

Who or what do you need to help you?

What have you been learning from the gospels about how Christ engaged people?

What will it take to re-pattern your life after his?

Have you learned the difference between sowing and harvesting?

What sowing activities have you been involved in?

Have you had a tendency to rush the harvest? How? Why?

What ways have you found to invest your life in the lives of those within your field?

Have some things prevented you? What?

What type of questions are you asking them?

What have you learned from these people about themselves?

How many non-Christian friends do you have?

Are you actively attempting to establish such friendships?

Where? With whom? How is it going?

What are you learning about those who don't know Christ?

How does that effect how you will build relationships with them?

Are you finding creative ways to allow Christ and the gospel to be seen naturally in you?

Has your Christianity been a casual, obvious part of your life?

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 must 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 sharing meals together 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)

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 must 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)

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.

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 Seven Coaching Questions

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

What are your meetings like?

Who comes? Where do they meet? What do you do? How often?

Is this type of gathering accomplishing your goals? Why? Why not?

How are people learning in your gatherings?

Is it personal? Principle oriented? An open, casual environment?

How are people encountering God?

What has He been saying to them? What has He been doing?

What challenges have presented themselves as you have attempted to gather?

How have you addressed them? What still needs to be worked out?

Does your community exist for the people or do the people exist for it?

Are you just huddling and cuddling? Do they have a common mission?

What is it? How are they achieving it together?

Is the study of God’s Word leading your group to “be like Jesus and do his work?”

What activities have you been involved in? What is the result?

What opportunities have you taken to celebrate what God is doing?

Are financial resources flowing from your group?

Are lives being transformed because of these gifts?

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, their *oikos*, and ways to implement the components of *Epoch*.

Resources:

- ✦ *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert E. Coleman (Revoll, 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)

Component Eight Coaching Questions

Objective: The multiplication of disciples, leaders, ministries, and churches.

Are there disciple-making disciples resulting from your group?

How? How many? Where are they now? Are they multiplying?

Are most of the leaders coming from the harvest?

Why is that?

Are new teams, to reach new groups of people, being started through your group?

How? Is someone from your group beginning the team?

If not, how can you make this happen in the future?

Who among your team could lead a new team?

Who have you led to Christ that has led someone to Christ?

How have you defined success? Does your process meet that definition?

Do you need to adjust your definition? If so, how will you do it?

Who will help you? How will you communicate it?

How is your team sowing the gospel among new people or in new places?

Where is God at work? In whom? How?

Have you celebrated the transformation of lives?

The start of new faith communities?

How has the coaching experience helped you?

Who are you coaching?

Who will you coach next?

Appendix A

Foundational Articles for *Epoch*

1. The Mission of God is for Everyone	51
2. The Mission of God	52
3. The Person of Peace in God's Mission	53
4. Sowing in the Mission of God	54
5. Community in the Mission of God	56
6. Making Disciples in the Mission of God	57
7. Gathering for Worship in the Mission of God	58
8. Continuing the Mission of God	59

The Mission of God is for Everyone

The issue may arise concerning who should or could form an *Epoch* team. The issue can be addressed, in part, based on the understanding of the Biblical distinctive entitled “Priesthood of the Believer.”

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9, KJV).

Based on 1 Peter 2:9 and supported by many other Biblical texts, this teaching encompasses several truths that most Baptists hold dear. Here are a few of them:

1. Each believer priest is responsible for his or her own actions. Individual believers can go directly to God without the aid of any intermediary. Individuals can and should read and interpret the Bible for themselves without religious officials dictating to them what to believe.
2. Believer priests are all equal to one another in Christ (see Galatians 3:26-28). There is only one High Priest, that is Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 7:23-8:13).
3. Each believer priest has a responsibility to be committed to Christ and to share Christ through word and deed. As Peter stated it: to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (see 1 Peter 2:9, NIV).
4. Each believer priest has been granted specific spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. Because of this gifting the believer is therefore adequately suited to be an active, contributing member of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:3-8).

While the church will probably have only one pastor, it does not have only one priest. Potentially it has many who communicate the love and forgiveness of God and demonstrate concern and compassion for those who have yet come to know Christ.

Notice how certain “rights and responsibilities” are delineated to each and every believer in the “Evangelism & Missions” section of the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man’s spirit by God’s Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

It naturally follows that every church should encourage all believers to be personally involved in the great commission to the extent that they are sharing Christ and making disciples. God has created His church for many purposes. One such purpose is to serve as a body that equips believers and sends them into the harvest. *Epoch* is a strategy aimed at helping the church and its leaders serve as encouragers and supporters of God’s purpose of sending all believers into the activity of gathering all peoples for His worship and glory.

The Mission of God

While God wishes that none should perish (see 2 Peter 3:9), His mission is more than the redemption of humanity. It is the redemption of humanity so *that* they can worship and glorify Him. Worship, not missions, is the ultimate purpose of mankind. Missions is our temporal task. When we leave this earth we shall share the gospel with lost people no more. Our eternal assignment will be to worship and glorify our creator.

The church has been entrusted here on earth with the message of the gospel. We have been commissioned by Christ to make disciples of all nations (see Matt. 28: 18-20), to invite all peoples to accept God's offer of redemption and become a part of His family (see Psalm 96:3). However, the mission of the church is not merely to reach as many people as possible from the most receptive groups of people.

We must strive to "bring about the obedience of faith *among all the nations*" (Romans 1:5, NASB). One day there will be "a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" worshipping our heavenly Father (Rev. 7:9, HCSB).

The mission task of the local church therefore is to see that *every* group of people (people group, population segment, affinity group, etc.) hears the gospel and is given an opportunity to respond in faith to the message of redemption so *that* people from every tribe, every tongue, will worship and glorify our creator. Therefore, like the Apostle Paul, the church must do everything possible to reach *all* the peoples of the world (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

As people come to faith in Christ they become part of God's family—they become one in Christ Jesus. We are no longer Jew or Greek, no longer white or black. We are no longer male or female, young or old, slave or free man. We become one in Christ Jesus (see Gal. 3:26-28). Missions focuses on the redemption of all peoples and forms them into one people in Christ Jesus so *that* they can worship and glorify of God and Father.

We seek to reach all peoples with the gospel because they have no hope apart from Christ. Some would say that we make disciples so that they can make disciples. But missions is more than the multiplication of those committed to reaching others with the gospel. Missions is the vehicle which results in liberating lost people from their sin, bringing them into the family of God and *freeing* them to worship. Missions is not the ultimate focus of the church. Worship is.

- ✦ God desires that none should perish (see 2 Peter 3:9).
- ✦ The church is to make disciples from all peoples (see Matthew 28:18-20).
- ✦ Through faith in Christ we become one body (see Gal. 3:26-28).
- ✦ Missions frees people from sin so that they can worship God.
- ✦ In eternity people from every tongue, every tribe will worship Him (see Rev. 7:9).
- ✦ Missions is the temporal task of the church.
- ✦ Worship is the eternal task of the church.
- ✦ God's mission is to form one people from all peoples for His worship and glory.

God spared the nation Israel and delayed His wrath for the honor of His name. He restrained Himself for their benefit and for His praise (see Isaiah 48:9-11). God deserves and desires that people from all nations glorify Him (see Psalm 117:1). God's ultimate mission is that He be worshipped, that He be glorified by people from all nations. In order to reach people from every group we must strive to identify those around us who are somewhat invisible to the local church.

The Person of Peace in God's Mission

Missionaries have relied upon a scriptural approach to evangelism for years. It is often referred to as a “person of peace.” When God thrusts his people into areas where few or none know Him, he often leads them to individuals who will be open to hearing about God. He does this because people who are already an accepted part of a community have an easier time reaching others for Christ than do “outsiders.” This method of penetrating a people provides many benefits in the process of establishing communities of faith.

When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not it will return to you. (Luke 10:5-6, NIV).

The practice of discovering and developing a person of peace that has existed throughout the history of evangelism, missions and church planting was instituted by Jesus as he sent his followers into the harvest. Several key descriptors are helpful in understanding this approach. The following outline, popularized by Dr. Tom Wolf, depends heavily on scripture for its strength.

1. The Person of Peace is a Person of Receptivity (see Luke 10:6)

According to this passage, a person of peace is a person sovereignly prepared by God to receive the gospel before anyone arrives. God places the person there. If they are NOT there, the instruction is to go to another area. Several excellent illustrations of this principle of receptivity are found in Acts 16 with the conversions of Lydia and the Jailer.

2. The Person of Peace is a Person of Reputation (see Mark 5-7)

The person of peace possesses a reputation (good or bad) to gain attention for the message among family and community. In Gadara (Gergesa) Jesus delivered a demoniac. Jesus sent him into the area to tell of the “Lord’s mercy.” When Jesus returned to the area a short time later, it is obvious that the man had been proclaiming the truth. A great example of a person of peace with a reputation is Cornelius (see Acts 10).

3. The Person of Peace is a Person of Referral (see Acts 10)

The person of peace is able to gather a group. He or she is the person of reference or referral. When Peter arrived in Ceasarea, Cornelius already had a group of his friends and family assembled to hear the message of Christ. The visit by Peter culminated in the baptism of many Gentiles.

As missionaries use this method of gaining access to a people or place, their efforts should be aided by prayer and hospitality. Every community and group of people will have persons of peace. Pray that God will lead you to them. Begin building relationships of trust. When the doors are open, walk right in. Never underestimate the power of what God can do with just one person.

Sowing in the Mission of God

The Great Commission is clear regarding the role of everyday Christ followers in God's Mission—a mission of reconciling the world to Him. Jesus instructed his disciples in Matthew 28:19 to “Go and make disciples.” Believers most commonly relate disciple-making with encounters or events linked to a personal or church evangelism strategy that result in a harvest—a person praying to receive Christ. What about that person, though, who does not come to faith in Christ after initially hearing the gospel?

Tim Downs in his book, *Finding Common Ground*, states,

*Because of evangelistic success of the last forty years, we have concluded that we have entered a state of perpetual harvest—the Last Harvest—and the fields of our society will be forever white. In our enthusiasm we have declared harvesting to be our exclusive domain, forgetting that we have reaped the benefits of someone else's labor—the labor of sowers—and that we are also responsible to sow, or the next generation of Christians will have nothing to reap.*¹

What is more important? Harvesting or Sowing?

“Do you not say, Four months more and then the harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the field! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages; even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying “One sows and another reaps” is True. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor” (John 4:36-37).

Disciple-making is a process.

The process of making a disciple is illustrated in the Apostle Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. Paul wrote, “*What after all is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow*” (1 Corinthians 3:5-6, NIV). This passage outlines a process that includes the initial planting or “sowing” of the gospel—attentive nurturing of those where seed had been sown, growing/maturing and the awaited harvest.

Sowing is essential to the process.

Gospel sowing is often downplayed in the disciple-making process. However, just as in farming, if the gospel seed is not sown the harvest of new believers will suffer. Sowing is an art in which a person intentionally reflects the life of Christ to an unbeliever leading to an opportunity for that person to accept the Truth.

Sowing leads to a harvest.

No farmer in his right mind would expect to see a great harvest from a field that was not properly sown. He understands that work is required to reap a crop. In the same way, before souls are ready to harvest a believer will most likely need to invest time in people's lives before they are willing to receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

¹Tim Downs, *Finding Common Ground: How to Communicate with Those Outside the Christian Community* (Moody Press, 1999), 18.

Love is the key.

We must love God. Jesus said, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment”* (Matt. 22:37-38, NIV). Loving God with our entire being compels believers to love others as he does. While the commandment begins with loving God, it continues until we love others, too. Loving others begins by believers loving other believers. Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:34-35, NASB). It doesn't stop there. God's compelling love drives those who follow him to love all people, even the unlovable. The more we love Him the more we desire for others to know Him and experience His love.

Conclusion:

So which is greater in importance to the disciple making process? Harvesting? Or sowing? The answer is they both are. God's mission for his church is to make disciples. A Christ follower's passion should be no less than our Father's passion. Disciples need to focus on making disciples. All believers have a role in the disciple making process. They are to sow Gospel seed.

Community in the Mission of God

The question may arise as to the role of community in making disciples. God is a relational god and experiences perfect community, as expressed in the Trinity. Therefore, it should be no surprise that life and spiritual transformation happens within the context of human relationships, not apart from them.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23, NIV).

Here are a few important things to remember about a disciple-making community:

1. People will accept community before they do Christ. Individuals will be drawn to live life together with others if there is trust and there is a safe environment to learn, even though they have different spiritual beliefs (story of Nicodemus [see John 3; 7:50-52; 19:38-42]).
2. A loving biblical community exhibits God’s love for those not following Christ. When those who aren’t following Christ are welcomed into a small group they become an eye witness to authentic love being demonstrated and needs being met. Through the actions and associated conversations they connect what is happening in that community with the love God has for humanity. Therefore, are more likely to come to Christ in steps of faithfulness and obedience (see John 17:21, 23).
3. Spiritual maturity happens within the ambience of healthy relationships. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in programs, but in people. Community facilitates learning through experiencing life together by practicing love, hospitality, and service (see Philippians 2:4; Romans 15:7-9; Romans 15:14-16).

Jesus’ relationship with his disciples modeled the need to be connected with people to do life together as part of the discipleship process. When the disciples began their journey with Christ they know little about their Tour Guide (Jesus the Christ) and less about the path ahead of them. Yet, they were drawn into a relationship with Him and each other and through that common communion the disciples experienced Christ, His mission, and how to live out their role in His mission.

Making Disciples in the Mission of God

In the great commission Jesus commands his disciples and all who follow in their footsteps that they are to make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:18-20). The making of disciples is not *one* of the ministries of the church. It is *the* ministry of the church. Some how we have turned discipleship into a program, we have made Christianity a lesson to be learned instead of a life to be lived. In the process we have separated evangelism from discipleship.

Nowhere in scripture will you find the making of converts. Instead you find a process which takes an individual separated from God and turns them into a fully devoted follower of Christ. Success therefore is not just winning someone to Christ. Multiplication comes when we win someone to Christ who then leads another to Christ—when someone repeats the process.

A disciple is someone who knows how to lead another to faith in Christ and then takes him from his point of conversion to the place where he is a fruitful, committed follower of Christ who repeats the process in the life of another. They come to a saving knowledge of Christ because of God's grace (see Eph. 2:8,9) so that they can do good works (see Eph. 2:10) and make disciples.

Scripture teaches that God has chosen some to prepare or train everyday Christ followers for works of service (see Eph. 4:11) and that these workers are to be sent into the harvest to repeat the process (see Matthew 9:37). The disciple-making process looked something like this in the New Testament:

- ✦ Select individuals were chosen carefully and prayerfully (see Luke 6:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:22).
- ✦ This small group of individuals were trained while doing ministry; in the midst of life, with their teacher (see Mark 3:14).
- ✦ They were given instruction as well as experience (see Mark 6:11; Acts 2:42; Col. 1:28-29; 1 Thess. 2:11-12).

Therefore the discipleship process was not done by something (a program), but by someone. It started somewhere and went somewhere (see Col. 2:6-7). The teacher led by example (see Phil. 4:9). It resulted in the transformation of life itself (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

For the one being made into a disciple, the phases look something like this:

- ✦ Investigation (see John 1:35-51)
- ✦ Invitation (see Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:16-18)
- ✦ Imitation (see Mark 9:35-38; 3:13)
- ✦ Implementation (see Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20)

Gathering for Worship in the Mission of God

What is worship? The very question stirs emotions and passionate responses that has lead to the splitting of many churches. A few general comments about worship:

1. Worship is about more than music style. Music style tells more about the worshiper than it does God. God asks us to sing to Him a new song and to worship with all different types of instruments (see Isaiah 42:10; Psalm 150).
2. Worship is about more than a building. God consecrated certain places as “holy ground” because of the activity that happened at that spot. Mainly, because someone had a supernatural encounter with God—not because of its particular location (see Exodus 3:5).

Worship is expressing love and sincere adoration to God in forms that are biblically and culturally appropriate. Because every gathering will have a unique ethos the worship will be just as unique and reflect the very best of who the worshippers are. A gathering of artists may worship with a Bible in one hand and a paint brush in the other. Cowboys may adorn God as the sun rises over the range. Either way, it is worship as long as the splendor of God remains at the infinite center of all that is done.

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. **And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through**” (Colossians 3:16-17, NIV).*

Here are a few important things to remember about gathering for God’s worship and glory:

1. Worship helps shape believers to be followers of Christ and be dedicated to God’s purposes of justice, peace, and salvation in the world. *“To go and bear fruit—fruit that will last”* (see John 13:35; John 15:16; Luke 14; Luke 19:5-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).
2. Genuine worship is compelling to nonbelievers. Several times Paul speaks of the nonbelievers in the midst of believers. The effectiveness of worship must, in part, be measured by the experiences of nonbelievers (see 1 Corinthians 14).
3. Worship is a participatory action and should be an opportunity for everyone in your community to be actively involved (see 1 Corinthians 14:26).

Continuing the Mission of God

Built within God's heart and within His mission is multiplication. His mission is meant to continue by the natural processes involved in the multiplying of disciples and churches. Healthy things reproduce. They produce fruit after their own kind.

And the things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

This encouragement from Paul to his young son in the ministry illustrates the “generational” aspects of multiplication: Paul to Timothy; Timothy to reliable men; reliable men to others. This is four generations of spiritual heritage. When this type of replication takes place, the ministry grows in divine ways.

We may not find the term “multiplication” in the Bible, but we clearly see the practice in all of God's creation. One of the best illustrations of multiplication in scripture is Christ's ministry. He worked with primarily twelve followers. They were in turn “commissioned” to make disciples (see Matthew 28:18-20). This is a great picture of ongoing multiplication. You and I, as followers of Christ, are a part of the multiplication chain down through the ages.

What needs to be multiplying? Multiplication needs to be taking place in every sphere and at every level in the mission of God. Here is a short list of places we should be experiencing the principle of multiplication.

1. Spiritual Fruit in Individual Believers (see Galatians 5:22-25)
2. Followers of Christ (see Matthew 28:18-20)
3. Leaders (see Ephesians 4:11-13)
4. Small Groups (see Acts 2:46-47)
5. Churches (see Acts 13:2-3)

The mission of God will be healthy when multiplication is occurring naturally and widely. Christian Schwarz in *Natural Church Development* (p. 68) examines this theme effectively.

The principle of multiplication applies to all areas of church life: Just as the true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another tree; the true fruit of a small group is not a new Christian, but another group; the true fruit of a church is not a new group, but a new church; the true fruit of a leader is not a follower, but a new leader.¹

The measure of success in God's economy is not necessarily growth and growth alone. God looks for new life, for multiplication at various levels of the body. We must be aware of what results are taking place as an extension of our ministry. We must continually evaluate the work of God in our midst based on what brings joy to his hear.

¹Excerpted from *Natural Church Development* by Christian A. Schwarz, 1996. Used by permission of ChurchSmart Resources. All rights reserved.

Appendix B

Sample Coaching Conversation (*Epoch* Component One: Session One)

- Coach: So, John, what goal from component one would you like to focus on today?
- John: It would have to be “Forming a Team.”
- Coach: That’s great. What kind of team do you have in mind?
- John: I don’t know for sure. At first I was thinking we could just use a smaller group out of our Bible study group, but now I am not so sure that’s a good idea.
- Coach: Why isn’t that a good idea?
- John: Well, as I began to have conversations with them, I am not so sure any of them have the same passion Lori and I have for taking the gospel outside the walls of the church. It’s obvious they are committed. It just seems that they are committed to so many things in the church that they can’t see how they can add anything else to their already busy lives.
- Coach: So what are your options in forming a team?
- John: I could try to work with the members of the Bible study group to convince them to join us. Or I could look for individuals who already have that passion and may have the time to help.
- Coach: Which of these two options is most appealing to you?
- John: I can see how both of them have advantages. I already know the people in my Bible study group so we could probably move forward faster. But it would probably be more effective to use people who are passionate about the activity.
- Coach: Which advantage, in your estimation, out weighs the other?
- John: That’s a good question. Let me think about that for a moment ...
- John: I think it would be better to have a fresh team with common passion.
- Coach: Good. Now how do you think you will go about pulling this team together?
- John: First, I think I better pray about it.
- Coach: Do you think it would be a good idea to enlist others to pray with you about forming this team?
- John: Of course.
- Coach: Who could you ask?
- John: My family will pray for this. I also have a couple of guys in my men’s group who would pray for this if I asked them.
- Coach: Do you want to make a goal of enlisting a prayer team?
- John: Yes.
- Coach: When would you like to have that completed?
- John: I could get that done this week. Next week at the latest.
- Coach: So you want to say the 15th?
- John: Sure.
- Coach: Now back to actually forming the team. Do you have some individuals in mind to talk with about joining you?
- John: Actually, when I was at the Men’s Retreat last month I had several exciting conversations with a few men. I think I could start with a couple of guys: Richard and Dave. They seemed really intrigued by the concept of living like a missionary. Both of them are fairly new to our church and are not overly involved in church activities at present.
- Coach: That sounds promising. You said you could “start” with them. Have you thought of some ideas for getting them involved?
- John: Actually, my wife and I could invite these two men and their wives over for dessert and we could make a more indepth presentation of how God is leading us.
- Coach: When do you see yourself doing that?
- John: I think we can do it this Sunday evening. I’ll check with my wife and then contact them.
- Coach: That’s good. Are there any specific things you can think of that you need to do to prepare for that meeting?
- John: I’ll probably look over the *Epoch* booklet and make some notes about what it is that really gets us excited in the process. I should probably be able to share my heart—so maybe my wife and I could verbalize in advance to each other what we might share in the meeting.

Coach: John, it sounds like you've come up with some very specific actions you can work on. As a reminder: (1) You are going to talk with your wife and then invite the two couples over for dessert and a further discussion about *Epoch*. (2) You are going to enlist a prayer team by the 15th and ask them to pray for you as you put this team together. (3) You are going to make some preparation for the meeting with the two couples. Does that sound like an accurate list of what you intend to do?

John: Sure does. I'm excited!

Coach: When do you want to talk again?

John: I think the schedule we talked about—once every two weeks—will work for now.

Coach: So, let's see, two weeks from today is the 17th. Does 1:30 in the afternoon work for you again?

John: Yep.

Coach: Remember, if something comes up you would like to discuss, just shoot me an e-mail and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

John: Thanks so much. You really helped me break down what I need to do to get this started.

Appendix C

Sample Coaching Agreement

Coach _____ Date _____

Coached _____

Frequency of sessions _____

Location or Method of Sessions _____

Contacts between sessions _____

Mutual Commitments _____

Mutual Expectations _____

Dates of this agreement: Start _____ Finish _____

Date of Evaluation _____

Signatures

Coach _____ Date _____

Coached _____ Date _____

Appendix D

Recording the Coaching Session

Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

Coach _____

Epoch Participant(s) _____

Epoch Component(s) Focused On _____

Questions Asked:

Answers Given:

Items to Check-up on Before Next Meeting:

Areas of Preparation for Next Meeting:

NEXT MEETING:

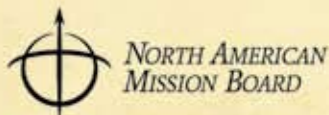
Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

IS GOD CALLING YOU TO HELP OTHERS TO LIVE AS MISSIONARIES?

Then maybe God is calling you to implement *Epoch!*
There are many additional resources designed
and developed to help you do just that.

Please visit the Web site below to discover these resources.

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



4200 North Point Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30022

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