

# SEND WELL

## 9 THINGS A SENDING CHURCH MUST DO BEFORE SENDING A CHURCH PLANTER

By Dr. Ed Love

*Then He said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest."*

– MT 9:37-38

Every day FedEx sends over four million packages to valued customers. FedEx's delivery routes cover every U.S. street and services more than 220 countries. In order to send well, FedEx has over 170,000 employees, 675 aircrafts, 50,000 ground transportation vehicles, and 1,800 office locations. It's a bit mysterious, but somehow FedEx has figured out a way for customers to ship packages within a one day turnaround. If FedEx knows anything—they know how to send well!

The church may not be in the package delivery business, but she is in the people delivery business. At least, that's what Jesus wanted the church to be about! However, sending people isn't always the top priority in churches and, if we are being honest, sometimes the church hasn't done a good job sending out laborers for the Lord's harvest.

FedEx has a unique way of looking at the world. FedEx operates with a deep conviction that everyone in the world should have the ability to send and receive packages. God may not be all too concerned about packages being delivered on time, but the scriptures make it clear that God desires all people to receive the message of salvation and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God operates with a deep conviction that everyone should have the ability to send and receive eternal hope! What is God's distribution plan? Simply put—God's people! This reality means the church may need to take a few notes from FedEx's commitment to send well.

Below are nine things sending churches must do before sending out church planters and workers for the Lord's harvest:

### **1. Implement a prayer strategy.**

A great revivalist once said, "I continue to dream and PRAY about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God's creational intentions." Sending churches must lead their congregation in prayer

strategies around the new church plant. Don't assume prayer is going to happen. Be intentional and develop a strategy. This strategy could include regular prayer times for the church planter, a prayer walk through the city that the church will be planted in, or a virtual prayer tour. Praying for other communities on a regular basis is a powerful way to begin developing a healthy sending atmosphere.

## **2. Empower lay leaders to lead the planting partnership.**

It's easy for a lead pastor to feel connected to the birth of a new church, but sometimes the congregation can feel distant and the church plant ends up being known as the pastor's project. By empowering another person within the church body to serve as an advocate ends up spreading the multiplication vision faster and builds a stronger multiplication DNA in the long run.

## **3. Take the Church Planters Assessment Center seriously.**

Most leaders want to believe in people and support their calling; however, church planting is a serious undertaking. Some individuals may like the idea of planting a new church, but they may not be wired to start new churches. Even more, some planters may need to go through a self-discovery process to find out what areas he or she needs to grow in. When Church Planters Assessment Centers are done right, they provide wonderful opportunities to speak into a future leader's life through encouragement and correction. Don't assume your potential planter is good to go until they have been thoroughly assessed. Use the Assessment Center as an opportunity for testing and affirmation.

## **4. Help your planter get the right training and coaching.**

Very few church planters come to you pre-trained. Even the most skilled and experienced staff leaders are still ill equipped for church planting. The right church planting training track will inform the church planter's intuition, help them avoid some costly mistakes, and increase their survivability rate. In kickball, a person can call for a do-over, but in church planting there are no do-overs. Send your church planter out well trained and make sure they are connected to a trained coach for the first two to three years.

## **5. Develop a broader network of supporting churches.**

Even though your church might be taking the lead on a church plant, don't let other churches miss out on the blessing of supporting the new church. Church planting is a hard journey and the new work may require multiple support systems, which includes prayer, launch team people, and financial resources. Share your church planter and invite other churches in your denomination or network to surround them however they can.

## **6. Bring clarity to the financial realities.**

Many church planters have not even seen, much less managed a church budget. Don't think talking about the planter's budget and personal salary is a birds-and-the-bees conversation. Talk about the finances and recommend being involved in setting the planter's salary and benefits so they don't have to feel awkward setting it themselves.

## **7. Clarify who can go with your church planter.**

One of the largest sources of tensions within a mother-daughter planting relationship is caused because key people may choose to leave the sending church and go with the planter. When people leave, sending church leaders will most certainly enter into a time of grieving. It's not easy losing key relationships and especially if they were significant givers. Be sure to prepare your church planter with appropriate expectations and let them know how much you want to be involved in the process with people. Some sending church leaders inform their church planter anyone is open for recruitment; however, other church leaders prefer to set the terms and be involved in those discussions. However you approach this subject matter, just be clear.

## **8. Commission your planter and planting team.**

The sending church has the awe-inspiring opportunity to enter into a holy moment and publicly commission the planter and planting team. This is the moment when you announce to your church, "We are having a baby! Now, let's show our support!" Don't let this day go unannounced. Make it a party!

## **9. Implement an ongoing communication and care strategy for the planter.**

Once you commission your church planter, don't consider your job done. Your church planter is going to need your ongoing relationship, prayers, and financial support. The relational dynamics will change and the planter will quickly begin to develop their autonomy. Be sure to come to an agreement on what level of connection is desired. Sending churches should not feel overbearing or distant. Regularly converse with your planter about what they desire and be there when you need to be there. Along the planting journey, find ways your church can continue to bless the planting couple. Consider raising funds to send them to the Bahamas—seriously, the Bahamas! Be a blessing!

As you move toward not just being a sending church, but being a sending church that sends well, you will find great joy in knowing you were a part of God's incredible distribution center. One day, maybe in eternity, you will encounter someone whose life was eternally changed because of your commitment to send well and that makes it all worthwhile.