

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

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Global Church Planting, by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson. Baker Academic, 2011. 449 pages. ISBN 978-0-8010-3580-7. Softcover. US\$29.99.

Craig Ott (PhD, Trinity Divinity School) is associate professor of mission and intercultural studies at Trinity Divinity School where he is the chair of ReachGlobal Missions. He served for twenty-one years in Germany as a church planter, trainer and church-planting consultant throughout Central Europe. Gene Wilson (DMin, Westminster Theological Seminary) is church planting director of ReachGlobal, the Evangelical Free Church of America's international mission. In the past he worked for eighteen years as church planter in Quebec, Canada and ten years as a church-planting coach in Latin America.

In the preface the authors state that their primary goal is to "combine sound biblical principles with the best practices from around the world to provide a practical guide for church planters working in a wide variety of cultural contexts" (p. x). To this end, the book is divided into four parts: Biblical Foundations, Strategic Considerations, Development Phases and Critical Factors.

The first part dealing with Biblical Foundations for Church Planting is divided into three chapters of just under sixty pages. The authors state that while entire books have been written on the nature of the church, the first chapter "maps in summary fashion a theological blueprint for the practical work of church planting" (p. 3). While this section might have received more in-depth analysis, it goes beyond most books which deal with the subject and includes two excellent tables which outline the churches Paul planted and New Testament Principles of Church Planting.

The next four chapters deal with Strategic Considerations in about ninety pages. In chapter four the authors "emphasize the need to plant churches that have multiplication potential in their DNA" (p. 65). To this end it is clearly stated that indigenous churches must not be overly dependent on expensive church buildings which can not be reproduced

by the local people. Chapter five carries on this theme by discussing three types of church planters and their specific role: 1) Pastoral Church Planter, 2) Catalytic Church Planter and 3) Apostolic Church Planter. Several case studies, tables and figures help the reader to understand and implement the right leadership for a given context.

Chapter 6 entitled "The Shape of the Church," and was written to "help church planters select a basic church shape and work with the local believers to contextualize church structures and ministries" (p. 107). The last chapter in this excellent and important section deals with both pioneer church plants where there are few Christians and the various strategies that can be used by an existing church to start a new congregation. The information given is comprehensive without being dogmatic and is one of the key strengths of the book.

Part III deals with the Developmental Phases of church planting and is the longest section of the book comprising seven chapters and almost 150 pages. In this very detailed section the authors spend a chapter each on the Overview, Targeting and Commissioning, Understanding and Strategizing, Launching, Establishing, Structuring and finally Reproducing. The pages are filled with many helpful diagrams, tables and case studies which greatly add to the understanding of the concepts being discussed. Indigenous and contextual issues are always highlighted and will be greatly appreciated by those working in a non-Western context.

The last section entitled "Critical Factors" comprises five chapters and just over 100 pages. In this part the authors in a sensitive and knowledgeable way spend a whole chapter dealing with the Personal Life of Church Planters, Church-Planting Teams, Developing Leadership, Partnerships and Resources and finally Planting Churches with a Kingdom Impact. The book concludes with an excellent bibliography and an index.

Personally I found the book very instructive as I am currently involved in planting an indigenous church in the Philippines. The two authors years of experience shine through on every page and strikes an very good balance between the theory and the "how to." I feel the book would be of even greater service if the index was expanded and a list of the many excellent figures and tables would be listed in the front of the book.

However, these very minor points aside, because *Global Church Planting* is currently the most up-to-date, comprehensive and contextualized book on the subject, it could well serve as *the* textbook in seminary courses around the world for years to come.

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