

PIONEER EVANGELISM IN BRAZIL

I was asked by a local would I come and be the interim pastor of their church. I said no that I did not feel called of God to do this but what I did was form a team of 15 Brazilians. At that particular point in time they were pastors and I trained them in evangelism and planting churches. In the next two years we started 13 new works.

The state in which I lived had 16 million people. What I did then was develop a plan to use the laity. Let's go further than this; let's use the laity. You take a layman who has never been to seminary, never been to Bible College, hadn't even finished high school and you want him to become a church planter. So he is going to get on the bus go down to this town and start a new church from scratch. He doesn't know one person, a soul and he isn't going to start with Christians. What does he do? I tried to answer this question and that is where this book Pioneer Evangelism comes from. There are three parts to this manual. First part is the principles of church planting. This is the most controversial part because it has a lot of emphasis on the role of the lay person and how he is to be used of God in the areas of discipleship and evangelism. There is nothing new here to you. I tried to credit everyone with their ideas and the authors of where this material came from. The second section is the practical part. This teaches the person to do practical evangelism that will result in a new work, in a new church. The third part is the strategy. How to go about implementing this strategy. Now we are in a harvest field so a lay person can start from scratch and in 6 to 9 months he can have a new congregation out there by using this particular strategy.

What I did the second time around was, I gathered 40 men and women [majority being laity] and trained them in this strategy [pioneer evangelism]. In two years we started 63 new works with 43 people. Then we had another Brazilian in the northern part of Brazil who did the same thing. I was in the central part he was in the north. The next phase was done at the request of the Brazilian Home Mission Board. I started training people all over Brazil. Today we have trained over 11,000 people in what was called pioneer evangelism. There have been 700 new works and that was 1.5 – 2 years ago. According to our research, in our state alone we have started 383 new works. We know the names of the places that pioneer evangelists call them. Question – what would be a new work??? I was going to tell you the conferences I've been attending in Mexico City and here, particularly coming from CSI people what they call a church is not what we would call a church, we would call that a new work, congregation or a mission. Brazilians won't organize it to the church until there is land, a building and many times an ordained pastor. So what is being classified as church in some parts of the world is what we call a new work. A congregation of 30-40 people, lay led that kind of thing; maybe property maybe not, no building and no ordained pastor. Biblically it is a church but that is not what we're calling it so we are never going to hit those statistics that some of these other people in the world are going to hit here in Richmond because of the terminology we use. Question: Why don't you just change your reports to Richmond? We probably will, but I am not sure what we are going to do.

What church is to Brazilians might be one thing .. let me tell you what we are doing. Even though I have become strategy associate for our region I have personally felt I need to be on the front line. I felt this is good for me in exercising my gifts and it would

be a good model. I have just met with the Brazilian leadership in our state where we live and we're going to plant 100 new church in 1998-99. My goal is to form a team of 100 Brazilians. We are training these teams to go out and start new works. We have 33 right now listed on our list. They are going to continue to work and by next March/April we will have our team complete. My wife, Barbara and I will be training them and working with them over the next two years. Let me say one more thing, that when a pastor comes to these training conferences he is encouraged to do is to go back and form a team. I may have 40 guys in my team or even 15 or whatever but he is going back to his church, he's asked to form a team of twelve people. [If he has that many.] He would form a team. One pastor is starting 6 new works at one time. He has a team of 6.

Why is it working?

1. It works because the Holy Spirit is the one who leads this program. We devote, in this training conference, about 2 hours to prayer, how to have your quiet time, and the Holy Spirit.
2. It's Biblical! There is nothing new in here. There is not one thing in here that is new – it is all Biblical.
3. It's Practical, it's simple, it's really simple to do. Laity can grab hold of these concepts. We use both lay men and lay women in our country. All the materials are for lay people. We teach them a plan, a strategy and give them a kit of materials to use and teach them how to use the kit. So that when they walk out of the conference, they have the tools they need to plant a church.

What are the obstacles?

Major obstacle is legalism on the part of the Brazilian Baptist pastors. They want to control things. They are gatekeepers. To give you an illustration, they don't want to empower the laymen to go out and baptize or serve the Lord's Supper so that stops the flow. A lot of the time a pastor wants the lay people to report directly to him, so he can be the controller of it. We had a police officer that came to one of our training conferences and he got to thinking and said, 'you know I can go start a church on my beat'. We don't have a Baptist church out where I work. He went out and started winning people to Christ; he started a new congregation. The next year I went back out to that same town. He showed up with fifteen of his converts. We taught them how to plant a new church. He had been to the conference the year before and had started a church now he was bringing 15 of his members. He told me privately during a break-one of the big problems he has there is; he went to a church there and told them he had started this church. Now that pastor wants to be the mother church- they want to control it and tell him everything he can/can't do. What kind of music he can sing. The gatekeepers there are the pastors and they do try to control. We've had to really deal with this issue.

2. Misunderstanding of evangelism. In all of our training sessions, conferences, seminars, and workshops we are training them that evangelism is not -come and hear me preach on Sunday night. It is done outside the church. In all our pioneer conferences we've put a major emphasis on what Biblical evangelism really is.

3. Another obstacle is their lack of understanding of discipleship. You don't ever find a pastor in Brazil that has a discipleship team that he is discipling. It is just unheard of. What seems too basic and simple to us is not the same for them. A pastor in the Amazon, stood up in one of our conferences and, told us the other day, "the things I'm hearing here – I've been a pastor for fifteen years and I've never heard this before, ever". All this is new to them.
4. How to reach the upper class, reaching the non-readers. How do we do that? We train our people to go into areas of nonreaders and teach them how to read Portuguese. Have a class on how to read Portuguese for an hour. Then tell Bible stories just like telling junior or primary kids and win them to Christ. One of our evangelists came to me and said, "you know in the village where I am working not one person can read." So I said, 'look you teach Portuguese for an hour and you teach them the Bible.' And he did that. I saw him in the airport about a couple of months ago and he said Pastor Tomus [that's what they call me] you know I did that and won those people to the Lord and we started a church there. That was a tough place because the priest had said anybody who converts will lose their land. He succeeded by preaching the gospel and love.

What principles can we learn through this strategy?

The Grace Brethren Denomination sent a group of missionaries to Brazil from Argentina to go to one of our training conferences to learn how we were planting churches. They wrote up a report, I don't have time to share it all with you but I will share some concepts. Pioneer evangelism is a strategy that mobilized lay workers to begin new churches by placing them in target areas to evangelize, disciple new converts, and train church leadership. Their goal is to produce self-governing, self-sustaining, self-propagating churches as quickly as possible. They place a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and prayer. Churches are encourage not to focus on just one new work. They are to send out the largest numbers of lay people possible called evangelists. The majority, of these men, are involved in secular employment and dedicate their free time to the ministry. Six months is usually sufficient to gather a group of 30-40 new believers. The mother church endows these evangelists with all the authority necessary to fulfill their role and that includes the authority to baptize and lead the communion services.

All churches are planted with a goal that they become reproducible.

The strategy is that when we go into an area we start with zero. We just start asking people if they are interested in having a Bible study in their home? What we believe and the premise upon which we work is that in every city there are people seeking God. You can not be in a city in Brazil and not have people who are seeking God. It is our job to seek those people who are seeking. If you just keep at it long enough and just go to the streets, go to homes, go to bars, go to night clubs, go to the plazas and ask that one question. 'I'm here to lead a Bible Study are you interested? Sooner or later you will find someone who will say yes and you start right there. We did extensive studies for two years. My group of forty and we tell them in all of our conferences 50% of the people will drop out before they finish the lessons. We have 7 lessons that Charles Brock wrote and Wayland Moore just wrote a new series called Good News from God. We are now using those but 50% will still drop out. Eighty percent of those who complete all the lessons will receive Christ. Almost 100% of who receive Christ will

move into the next phase, the follow-up stage. Then comes the problem that we have to deal with of baptizing those who have gone through the whole thing. We have different issues that we need to go through such as a divorce that has never legally been settled. If you smoke we are not going to baptize you. Husbands may refuse for the wife to be baptized. So these are new issues. Another issue we face is we take the layman in this program and teach him basic evangelism, church planting and simple follow-up. We need to get another program in place that will take these laymen another step farther in their training. We are hopefully setting up a TEE program in our country to train the laity.

Questions

How long is your training conference and is this something you would do in a center base or local church base. We do these all over the nation and we do them in local churches. The structure they have is just like in the states where they have associations so we go into an association and they will bring in people from all over that association to attend. We try to get this promoted 6 months to a year ahead of time. So it is not something that just happens it is something that is well planned.

Let me tell you one more thing that we do. Barbara and I do about 25 of these a year. We are now training in Brazil and our goal is to train 200 trainers to do what we are doing. We are asking them to do 5 training conferences a year. That's 1000, think about it. We average about 100 – 120 in attendance but if they have an average of only 30 then we are going to train those thirty thousand [30,000] people a year. Our goal is to train 90,000 lay people in three years how to plant churches. If we get 10% of them to do it then we will start 9,000 new churches/works in three years. We're on our way to doing this. We have already trained 11,000. We are now going back to these regions and bring in some good trainers for training trainers.

How long do the training sessions last? In Brazil, we do it Friday night and all day Saturday. It moves quickly. We have two speakers and my wife and I do it together. A lot of it is practical training. We divide up into small groups, one on one. We deal with the principles on Friday night we have a spiritual awakening conference. We emphasize prayer and the Holy Spirit. We put it in a worship service setting. It is really like an old time fashion, Holy Ghost, country revival service. Saturday morning from 8 – 10.30 we deal with the principles of church planting. From 10.30-4.00 we deal with the practical part. We train them how to use the materials. The last part is the strategy, how to implement this, how to multiply yourself. It takes one night and a full day to cover the material. We've gone to Angola / Mozambique, two years ago, and this year was in Angola and we've done it in four days there. It has been much better. In Angola we were able to go out into the streets and did witnessing. We've done it in the Caribbean, this January we will be going back to Ron Wilson's area to train those in Venezuela and Belize. This year we did it in Dominican Republic and last year we did it in St Vincent. It is better to have three or four days especially in another language.

How do you follow that up? Do you go back to that area for further training [another phase]? No, I don't. In our setting, like you would have your state evangelism director or association coordinator then it really largely depends on those pastors there. They are asked to bring twelve of their lay people so when they are finished they have their team right there. Now, they don't all do that. The breakdown is when the team comes

but the pastor doesn't and the laity get all fired up and say – man I wish my pastor had come.