# Developing Models and Approaches

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Well, hey everybody, my name is Norton Herbst, and today we're going to be talking about developing models and approaches for planting a church. And you probably already watched one video that I did, so I won't spend too much time reintroducing myself, but I'm a church planter myself. I'm still a pastor here at New Denver Church in Denver, Colorado. We planted about 13 or 14 years ago, and since then, we've also planted a couple of other.

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churches. I've also been a part of a lot of different churches in my past, some mega churches, and I've seen how they do church planting, and some medium-sized churches, some smaller churches. And so what I'm going to do is just take a lot of that experience, what I've seen. Of course, when we planted our church, we did a lot of reading on models to try to figure out what kind of models we wanted to plant. We did a lot of what we wanted to do, and then as I've had... Helped a few other churches plant here in Denver and met with other church planters here.

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Have just seen some things that have worked well and other things that have maybe been challenges. And so I want to try to pass along some of those things to you today. I'm not going to give you necessarily one model that you have to do. We'll walk through some different models and the pros and cons or strengths and weaknesses of the model. So you should have some notes there. I'll follow those pretty closely and reference some things on there. So hopefully you can do that as well. And really the first question to ask is, does structure matter?

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Does structure, does the structure or order or model of your church really matter? And how you answer that question probably depends on the kind of churches you've been involved in or have joined. Drifted towards or have. worked at and how structured they are or how structured the current church, if you're involved in another church and have not planted yet, how structured that is. Or perhaps there's been some.

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bad church experiences in the past. And if those were really structured churches, then maybe you think the best thing is to be in a church that's less structured or less organized. Or if you've been in churches that are the opposite, that just were so chaotic and crazy and you didn't like that, then you probably believe that structure is really, really important. Or the churches that you've been involved in,

if you want to go plant something different, then you're probably reacting against what you've been involved in.

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So your own experience and your own perspective probably shapes how you answer this question the most. Does structure really matter? What I would suggest is that the structure, of a church is the church of the church. trellis upon which ministry is built. So this image of a trellis is really important. It's been used in some different ways, in some spiritual formation ways, it can be really helpful. But let's think about it in terms of a church. If there's too much structure,

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then the organic growth can be stifled because everything sort of has to fit into to the pre-existing structure. And if it doesn't, then you're not really giving the freedom, for the spirit to move in new and organic and sort of lively ways. Things that you want to happen, this sort of life that you want to be built, often won't happen if you just have too much structure. If you have too little structure, then you're going to lack the ability to steer the growth, right? Or to,

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uh, oversee the growth or to shepherd the, growth, right? To guide and direct and to live out the values that you want your church, to live out. Like in a garden, you'll find that weeds and things are growing in crazy ways if you don't have any trellis or any way that you can sort of organize or shepherd that growth. So the question is, how can you build a structure or develop a structure for the church you're.

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starting, where the Spirit of God can move freely and bring about the growth that you would love to see happen, but the church can accomplish the mission that you have envisioned it to accomplish and the mission that you want it to accomplish. There's this great quote I put in there by G.K. Chesterton. He says, the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it has an established rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things, to run wild. That's really the...

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goal here, how to have enough structure that it facilitates the Spirit to grow things, maybe in ways that, you know, are really in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Here's one image that I think can be helpful. It came from a book by Alison Gopnik called The Carpenter and the Gardener. And it's really about parenting. So some of you that are, if you're a parent, you'll understand this pretty quickly. She talks about two parenting styles. One is the carpenter. A carpenter builds things, right? And a carpenter has an exact.

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vision of the table that they're going to build. And then they build that table to match those blueprints or those plans exactly, right? And if it doesn't match it exactly, if the leg is wobbly or if this flat surface is not flat, then the table does not

function as, it was designed to function. A gardener is different. A gardener, has to till the soil, prepare it, make sure it has nutrients, puts the seeds in the soil,

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tries to make sure the soil and the seeds are going to get water and sun. But at the end of the day, there are a lot of factors that are not in the gardener's control. They're trying to stimulate and support this biological life that is growing, but they have to do it in such a way that it's really stimulating and supporting it. So she makes the argument that parenting is that way. Are you going to be like a carpenter where you're trying to create the perfect children? Obvious answer is like, no, that doesn't work with parenting very well. Or are you going to.

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be like the gardener where you're building an environment and an ecology for things to grow in healthy ways, but maybe also unexpected ways? What's true of kids is true, I've found, of children. As well. And so if you approach it like a carpenter, that's probably, Probably not too much structure, but you have to approach it like a gardener. What's the trellis? What are the components? What's the fertilizer? What's the sun and the soil nutrients?

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What are the things that we need to provide that allow this thing to grow well? All right. So, one question before we jump into those things is, does the New Testament provide a structure, a model, right? Is there a specific church order that the New Testament says, here's how to organize your church? Well, I put it in the notes. If it does, then the New Testament doesn't do it very well, right?

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Because there's a lot of different Christian groups. That have utilized different types of orders. And many of them would say, we're just following the biblical example. But these orders look quite... different. And that leads to an important truth to just realize there are diverse expressions, of church orders or structures or models that are described in the New Testament. There's not any one.

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biblical model or structure, right? The church in Jerusalem, when you're reading through Acts and the other letters, you see the church in Jerusalem looks different than the church in Corinth, and that is okay. So, there is not any one prescribed model or order or approach. And yet, I would also say the New Testament does uphold that order is important. Certainly, when you get to 1 Corinthians, you see what Paul is dealing with is a church that is chaotic,

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that doesn't have order, that's all kinds of problems as it relates to worship. He talks about in 1 Corinthians 4. And he even says there, For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. everything must be done so that the church may be built up. So basically he's saying you need some order because things are not working right now and the people are not growing in their faith. They're not able

to worship well. And so you need to provide some order. I also think about Genesis 1. The entire account of creation is God bringing order from chaos.

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And so the organization of the church is designed to support the ministry of the church. Again, getting back to that trellis picture, the organization, the structure, the model, the framing of the house, if you will, is designed to support the ministry of the church. So there are a couple of aspects of order that are prioritized. In the New Testament that you see, the first is the use of gifts.

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developing and figuring out what people's gifts are and then setting up some structure and some order for people to utilize those gifts. That's really important. There's a bunch of passages about gifts. I won't go through all of them. First Corinthians is one. Ephesians 4. You might have heard of the APEST model. Doesn't mean everything has to fit into that perfectly, but that can provide some framework for what kind of gifts do we have in leaders in this church, right? And a well-rounded use of gifts is going to produce an effective structure for a church.

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The other aspect of order that's talked about in the New Testament are structures of authority, right? There are numerous passages that talk about you need some overseers. Different words are used there. Maybe they're pastors, overseers, whatever you want to call them, shepherds, but you need some overseers. Paul says, right, to Titus, Um, you need some elders, sometimes elders and overseers are used interchangeably and you can figure out how you want to interpret those passages. But, um, and then also there's this, this role of deacons or really the word diakonos in, in Greek just means servant. So maybe it's three different groups, maybe it's two groups. How do you want to break it out? It's clear. There are people that are overseeing and shepherding the church.

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There's some sort of elder role of people overseeing the spiritual health of the church. And then there are servants or deacons, people that are actually doing the ministry of the church. Now here's something really important to notice. Out of balance gifting can shape the ethos of the community. So if the primary gifts of the leaders of the church are just evangelism, right? And relational networking, um, or, or apostolic gifts, entrepreneurial gifts.

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And the ethos of the church is always going to bend towards starting new programs, reaching new people, being very relational, and it's going to lack some other things that are missing. So, whatever, if you have a predominant number of a few gifts, but you're missing other gifts, that's going to shape the ethos of your community. But this is maybe more important. Out of balance authority can destroy a community. All right, so the authority structures, how you think about overseers, staff, where they fit in, elders, deacons, if you have those.

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If you have problems with that structure and one person gets too much power or one group has too much power, they can easily abuse it. And that's what destroys churches. So, think about gifts and having balance. Have balance there and think about authority and how that's going to. be structured. Two questions you might ask there of your church planting team. How are our gifts.

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represented? Let's just go around and make sure. What are the different gifts people have? Are there any really important gifts that should be a part of any church planting team that we're missing? That's going to make us a bit out of balance. So think about how our gifts are represented and then how are we going to view authority and who will be invested with that authority? Will that be elders? Will it be staff? Will it be a group of pastors? Who is that going to be? Now, a few more factors that I want to talk about, sort of big picture.

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things before thinking through a church planting model, because we're not going to dig any more into gifts necessarily or elders or authority structures or anything like that. I really want to help you think through what is the model we're going to have, the trellis or the structure we're going to have. What is the model we're going to have? What is the model we're going to, have? What is the model we're going to have? What is the model we're going to have? going to think about how we're going to plant this church, but a few factors to think about before we get into those specifics, and I want you to look at this next page. It's from J.R. Woodward, who's thought a lot about these things, and he says, here's a number of factors to consider.

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when you're planting a church, and there's two poles, meaning there's sort of two ends of the extreme, and you're going to probably be somewhere in the middle on all of these things. So I'm not going to go through all of them at length or in detail, but for instance, the very first one is structure, right? One pole, one end of the spectrum will be to have a very institutional, organized, coherent, mapped out, clear, you know, structural grid, hierarchy, those kind of things. The other.

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would be liquid, right? We're going to be informal, fluid, de-centered, decentralized, spontaneous, decentralized, decentralized, spontaneous. We're going to make decisions. on the fly, right? Leadership can be hierarchical. We have an organizational chart that is very clear. This person reports to this person, reports to this person. These are the authority structures. It's sort of like a pyramid, right? There's roles, there's positions. Or we're going to do it fully based on gifting, right? This is going to be kind of free-flowing.

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We're going to let people lead in accordance with their gifts, not where they are on the organizational chart, right? It's going to be based on needs. We're going to

be more spontaneous. Leadership can be programmed. That's more of that like carpenter kind of thing. We have a plan. We're going to stick to it. Or it can be more like we're just going to build an environment and see what grows. Leadership can be centralized or it can come from the margins, right? And so you can go through all of these different things.

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Evangelism down there, that's a big one. How are we going to approach evangelism? Are we going to be attractional? Are we going to be doing something here? Are we going to be doing something, trying to invite and win people to that and attract people to it, or are we going to be more missional or incarnational where we're going out and doing mission there, formal or informal? So there's lots of pieces to this, and it might be helpful for you to take some time to literally go through this chart and kind of think through all of these things.

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But let me say some important things about this chart. Everything on the right side of the chart, the right column, is probably going to sound better. It sounds like it's more sort of living in the spirit, right? To be more fluid, right? To be driven by gifts and not by hierarchy, all of those kind of things. Probably sounds better, but don't be too tempted by this. There are some churches that live way more in the right column, and they're doing great.

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work. There's churches that have been... living in the left column and they're more structured and they're and they're they've made decisions. They're not going to be multicultural. They're going to mostly be, monocultural. Right. They're not going to be future thinking. They're going to be more ancient thinking. And that can be super healthy as well. So one poll is not better than the other poll. This is more about figuring out who are you going to be? Who do you think you are?

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What kind of church do you want to be? And I think we all need to be realistic about this. It's OK to have aspirations. Right. But not unrealistic aspirations. So here's a couple of examples. It sounds really biblical and compelling to lead a church that is liquid and is focused on gifting and not like it has these org charts and all that kind of thing. But I'll say the first to say personally, I'm not going to be a church. I'm not going to be a church. I'm not going to be a church. I'm not going to be a church.

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really wired that way. I kind of have an engineering background. I'm very structured and strategic. I tend to work well when the structure is more hierarchical and is very clear who reports to who and what kind of authorities are in place. And I can certainly grow in this area. I've had to over the years to figure out, like, sometimes I'm too structured. Sometimes I focus, but I've also realized I'm never going to function well in a church that is really,

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really unstructured, right? A church that's really liquid and really focused on charisms and gifts and all that. I'm probably not going to function well. So I have to be honest about that. Another example is multicultural sounds great. I would love to be a part of a church and help lead a church that's way more multicultural. But even when we were starting our church, we realized that was going to take, huge amounts of energy and effort and focus. It would have to be one of our number one goals.

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It would have to become one of our driving values in order to try to become multicultural. And some churches will choose that. And we should applaud them and celebrate them and say that's awesome. And other churches like the one that we ended up starting, we said that would be great, but it's not at the top of the list for us. And in order to do that will probably mean being something that we're really not and not doing the things that we're are good at. And so for the most part, we're not a multicultural church and that's, that's okay. So be realistic about thinking of.

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these kinds of values and these kinds of values are what's going to shape your structure. They're going to shape the model that you decide. To adopt. All right. So I want to give you, um, four models, uh, of church here. I've got some tea I'm drinking, so I don't lose my voice. Um, but I want to give you four models and, uh, these models are guides. Okay. Um,

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they're descriptions of what we do. They're not exact, uh, representations. I don't know many churches that fit perfectly into one of these models. We tend to take things from a lot of models and, uh, I would encourage you to do that. Um, probably it would be helpful to say, which of these four models do I most identify with? Do I think we most resonate with, and we're going to mostly learn, um, or implement that model. Right. And, and yet there are some.

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strengths I'm going to talk about in the other models. And, uh, you might realize that we want to take some of those pieces as well. So maybe, embrace one model, but learn from what some of, the other models have to offer. Now, there's a danger here, and the big fill-in-the-blank there is, but recognize the possible incongruities, and the fill-in-the-blank is multiple personality disorder. You cannot embrace the strengths of all four of these models and ignore the.

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weaknesses of all four. If you do, you're going to be a church that's just totally scattered, that has no identity, because you're just trying to take values from model A and values from model B that don't align. They're incongruous, right? And so, be aware of that as we talk about this. Pick a model that fits your

giftedness, that fits your context, what I think works in the neighborhood, or the city, or the place, or the rural, or the suburban, or the downtown,

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or the urban, the place that we're going to be, and then pick one that fits your conviction. I've seen success in all four of these models. model. So it's not that one of them is right and the others are wrong. It's one of them fits who you are and the kind of church that you want to help start and plant. And that's important. And remember, the model is a tool. It's not a goal that we have to do this perfectly. It's not a guarantor of results. And yet, in the beginning, it's important to say, this is the model we're.

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moving towards, because it's going to set the DNA of some other things in your church. All right. So that's a lot of intro stuff. Let's just jump into it and talk about it. And I think it'll become more clear as we do that. The first model is the satellite model. The satellite model. These are four models of church planting. The satellite model, is where the ascending.

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or planting or mother church plays a large role in shaping, funding, resourcing, and often governing the daughter church, if you will. So, sometimes the driving need for this, is for the mother church to facilitate growth. The mother church, a church has grown a lot, and they realize they can't grow anymore at the location they are, and they want to have greater kingdom impact. And so, they buy into the idea that we need to plant more churches, or maybe we.

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need to extend who we are into new neighborhoods in our city or new places in our city. And so, they embrace this model of church planting. And when the mother church begins to plant new churches, there can be different levels of autonomy that that new daughter church has. One way of doing, is just the, mother church setting up multi-site campuses, right? If a mother church is setting up multi-site.

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campuses, then really those campuses are fully integrated with the mother church. They're just campuses of the mother church. So that's where sort of the mother church has full control, if you will, and the campus church doesn't really have any independent autonomy apart from the mother church. Another model is what I would call the franchise church, where the big church or the mother church is planting new churches, and they want to give the new churches some autonomy, but those daughter churches are still expected to strongly resemble the vision and the values.

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and the programs of the mother church. They might tweak some things. They might contextualize some things, but it's kind of like a franchise. You're going to go and get a lot of similar things. You're going to get a lot of similar things. You're

going to get a lot of similar things at the daughter churches. And then, of course, there's the more independent route where the mother church, helps plant new churches and then gives those new churches a lot of freedom and a lot of independence. The DNA might be set from the beginning by the mother church because the mother church has sent people to that church, maybe has made financial investment into that.

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church, maybe has sent staff people, maybe the daughter church starts by mimicking or utilizing some of the same programs as the mother church. But over time, the daughter church has a lot of independence to do things very differently if they want. So there's different levels of autonomy when a mother church sort of helps start satellite churches. All right. The strengths of this model are the first is the most obvious and it's resources, right?

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Resourcing can be huge. If you're planting a satellite church, you might get a lot of financial backing from the mother church. You'll get... staff training. They might send people your way. There's all kinds of existing systems they've developed, administrative systems they've developed that you can just plug and play and use. And it can be super, super helpful to have so much resourcing. Another strength is networking, right? You get a lot of networking from the mother church. You get a lot of support.

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You get synergy and community. And I would say that the strength is there is a rate of success that is higher. If a really successful mother church is planting new churches and they're helping new churches use the same model, the same program, the same vision and the same values, really the biggest variable is going to be leader. If the leader of that new church is a really poor leader, then the church might not be successful.

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But if the leader of that church is a really strong leader and they're implementing the same model that's been successful at the mother church, then often. they're going to be successful as well. So the rate of success, and again, in quotes, because I'm talking about sort of numbers and things like that, can typically be higher. The drawbacks of the satellite model are a lack of innovation, right? Oftentimes you're just implementing something that's already been tried and true, but you don't have room to innovate or.

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do new things, especially if you don't have much autonomy. And you're relying on the giftedness of leaders there, right? So another big thing that I would say is a drawback of the satellite model is big philosophical questions that can be raised about contextualization. And what I would call, the Chick-fil-A-ization of church, right? And pop in any of your franchise.

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there. But, you know, Chick-fil-A has decided they're going to open a Chick-fil-A restaurants in a new town. Well, the new Chick-fil-A can't decide they're going to suddenly start serving burgers. They're going to serve the exact same thing. And so the drawback is if you are an entrepreneurial leader, if you are an innovative leader, if you want to have a different vision, if you want to do things differently than the mother church does them, if you see some weaknesses in the mother church and you want to shore those up, oftentimes you don't have the freedom or the.

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autonomy to do that. You might be told you have the freedom or autonomy, but if the mother church has invested a lot of money, has sent a ton of people, and those people are expecting you to start a church that's going to be just like the mother church, then there's a whole level of expectations there that you have to deal with. And there's philosophical, questions of other about whether that's actually healthy or not all right so that's the satellite.

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model second would be the organic or traditional model the organic or traditional model um traditional is is i think a helpful word there because this is virtually how all church planters operated before the 1980s here's what would happen and and eugene peterson is a great example of this when you read his book the pastor um you'll see this is basically how he planted the.

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church he planted even in you know the 1960s and 70s um usually the church planter comes into a community the church planter is often bivocational they don't have to be they might get some initial funding from a denomination where they don't have to be bivocational, but sometimes they are bivocational, They embed themselves within a community. They develop a core group of 10 to 15 people. They start worship together on Sundays. Maybe it's even in your house or in your basement.

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That's, again, how Eugene Peterson did it. Or you find a small rented space in a place. And then the community grows slowly. And as they grow, they add programs to facilitate that growth. So once they have enough people, maybe they add Sunday school. That was the old school way of doing it. Or you add small groups. Or you add some sort of educational environments. You add kids ministry as you have enough people coming. You don't do a lot of advertising because you just built into your 10 to 15 people.

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And they're the ones that are slowly inviting friends and helping grow the church. It's not program driven. Early on, the only program you're offering is Sunday worship with a small group of people or a Bible study or something like that. The strengths of this approach. Is that it's very relationally driven. And so if you're

really extroverted, if you're a networker, if you're an evangelist, if that's your gift, you can gather a group of people pretty quickly who are excited about being a part of something like this.

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The other strength is the ministry effort fits people who are there rather than programs designed for people who are not there. Okay. Okay, so you're starting with basically just putting together a gathering of 10 to 15 or 20 people, and you're not starting with a whole bunch of programs that are designed for 50 or 100 or 150 people. You're only adding programs as you find the needs for them.

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Another strength is this is low cost, especially if the church planters are bivocational. You don't have to spend a lot of money. Only money you have to spend on. is a few resources and maybe rental amounts for a space to meet, but you can start something like this pretty cheaply. It's also easy to start, right? All you need is a networker. Somebody who's bivocational would be great. Someone who can maybe raise support if they don't want to.

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be bivocational, but if you have an extroverted networker type person, you can start something like this pretty quickly. Now, obviously there's drawbacks. Growth can be slow. People are coming because they just hear about it relationally. And if you start with 10 people, you might slowly, grow and it might take you some time to reach 50 or 100 people. Another drawback is that it tends.

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a church like this tends to go towards homo. Indigeneity, meaning you're going to attract the people that are like you early on. So if you are, let's say, middle class, white, suburban, and you have two or three kids and you're living in a suburban neighborhood, you might find a few other families that are just like you. And you're going to find a lot of synergy with them. And they're going to invite other people from the neighborhood who are just like you guys.

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And that's the way you'll grow. And that could be awesome. It just means your church is going to start with, for the most part, one type of demographic. And so if you want diversity, not just ethnically, but age-wise, generationally, all those kind of things, it's going to be harder to find that early on. Also, a drawback is that it's hard to change the DNA as the church gets bigger. Because here's what happens. There will be the glory days. There will be the glory days when, you know.

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You had 15 or 20 or 30 people, and you were all huddled in somebody's basement, and it was kind of cool and fun. And the people that come early on are coming because they like that. They actually might be coming because they left a big church because they didn't want to be in a big church anymore. They had a whole bunch of splashy programs. They like the really loose, unstructured, we're

meeting in the basement, and it's just 20 of us kind of church. Well, you grow to 40. You grow to 50. You grow to 70. We need to move to another space. We need programs.

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We need to add this. The people who actually bought in in the beginning were there because they didn't want that. And so if you want to change that DNA, that's going to be hard because you might have a different DNA that you're starting the church with. All right? So that's sort of the organic, traditional model. Now, that would be very much contrasted with what's called the big launch model. And this is one of the most popular models right now.

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There's a few different groups. I won't name them, but there's a few different groups that have really bought into this model. There's a lot of denominations that have bought into this model, and they're promoting it. And this model is, it seems to be based on what I would call sound business principles. In other words, it's often based on what is it like to go start a nonprofit organization, or what would it be like to start a business? I mean, if you're going to start a restaurant, how do you start a business that's going to be successful?

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Well, there's a number of principles, and a lot of those can be applied to the church world as well. So the big launch model basically says you need to start with a core team or staff, people who are fully bought into this thing, of three to ten people. Right? And bigger is better. And pretty quickly, you need to develop a core team. core group that's bigger than that sort of a core team a core group of 30 to 60 people.

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and the initial months are spent investing in the core team and the core group and you are casting vision about what this church is going to be like you're preparing for the programs that you're going to have to launch and you're preparing for launch day when you're going to tell anybody and everybody they need to come because here's our big launch day before that launch day the launch service it's usually a Sunday right when you have your first sort of services the core group is.

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going to start doing advertising you might figure out how to do digital advertising online you might have preview services like sneak peek at what we're going to be when we get going you're going to have lots of vision casting events like come hear what the vision is right you might have a, you're handing like something that's really look, good that says, here's our plan. Here's what we're going to do. Here's where we're going. You're doing everything you can to create energy and get the word out. And when you get to launch.

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day, you're going to hit the ground running and everything's going to be done well

and with excellence. You've got a full band. You've got an awesome service. You've got a great sermon series plan to cast vision. You've got children's ministries ready to roll. And the goal is to start with 200 to 400 people in attendance on that first Sunday. So those, you know, six months or a year, of planning is leading up to that. How can we get 200, 300, 400, 500 people there on that first.

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Sunday? And how can we wow them? So when they come on that first Sunday, they say, this is an amazing church and they're busy. They're busy. They're, bought in and you have all of the momentum coming out of the gates. Now, let me talk about the strengths, because I actually believe there are some important strengths of this model. And you might, as I describe this, immediately be thinking like that's not the model we're going with. I don't buy that model. I don't believe in that model. But I don't think we should write it off too quickly.

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The strengths are it can be effective in an event based culture. We have to acknowledge we we love to talk about contextualization a lot. Really important. So understand our culture. What is our culture? Our culture is an event based culture. People like attending events that are put on well. That's why people go to arts events. It's why people go to sporting events. It's why people go to Broadway shows.

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It's why people go to things and they expect them to be done well. Right. Right. Particularly among white, sort of middle, upper class, younger generations. It's the reason people go to concerts and they are willing to pay a ton of money to go to a concert because they know it's going to have an amazing show. And it's going to be an experience that they can, you know, video on their phone and they can remember and talk about and tweet about and all those kind of things. And so if we're students of our culture, then we're going to recognize events are important.

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So putting on a good event could be and will be seen as a great way to reach our culture. And that's why this model can be effective. Honestly, let's be honest, it feels exciting to be a part of something big that's going to have instantaneous impact. If you go to a vision casting meeting and there's a clear direction and there's an excitement. And there's momentum being generated and everyone has a role.

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And we're all excited about like, that's exciting. If you go to a vision casting meeting and the pastor's like, yeah, we're going to start slow. And if there's five people there, that's okay. And we're going to be figuring it out as we go. And we're not going to, we don't have any programs to start with. We're just, you know, we'll add them as we need them. Like there can kind of be a lack of

excitement there. It is exciting to be a part of something that's going to have impact, right? It's also easier to cast vision to a core group of people. People who you're asking to donate money, to donate time, to volunteer, to lead, to.

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give their gifts to. It is way easier to cast vision for that when the goals and the intended results are so measurable. And they're very measurable in this model, right? We want this many people there on launch Sunday. We want this many kids in our kids environments. We're going to launch small groups. Two months later, and this is how many people we want to sign up for small, like, those are very measurable, tangible results.

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And when you have that sort of measurable, tangible aspect, it's a lot easier to cast vision for that, all right? Don't underestimate the strengths of this model. Now, there are some weaknesses. One weakness is you spend a lot of money really quickly, right? You have to plan for that group of people. You have to get rental space, which for a size that big, for a lot of church plants, that's expensive.

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You're often not going to have bivocational people, so you're going to have some staff that you're going to pay early on. You want to have a great worship service, so you need great sound equipment and video equipment. If you want to stream things online, like, there's a lot of resources that go into putting things on well. And that kind of thing. cost a lot of money and you're going to burn through it pretty quickly. And so you have to sustain a lot of people coming and continuing to come and giving financially to support.

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those costs pretty quickly. All right. Another weakness. There's a higher tendency to take people from other churches. It's just the way it goes. When people are dissatisfied with their church, they're looking for something new. And if you start a new church in an area or in a town and you're offering something that is better than the other older, more boring or more traditional churches, then you're going to have people leave those churches that come to your church.

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And most church planters don't start with the vision that they want to take people from other churches. They start with a vision that they're trying to reach new people who are not being reached. By other churches. So there is a tendency to take people from, And I think most church leaders would say that's not our goal. And then the final weakness is this can become very consumer and marketing driven. And every church has that danger, but certainly this one more than any.

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Because you're asking how can we get the most people there early on? What can we do to meet people's needs? What can we do to get people to come back? What can we do to get people to give? How can we get the word out? How can we have a great website? So those kind of questions can certainly lead to

models that are more consumer and marketing driven. All right. One more model, then we'll be done. The last one is called, and there's lots of words you can give to this.

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I've called it the missional community model. And there are several different models that I think you could put. Put under this umbrella term. different kinds of missional models that in some ways are variations on the traditional organic model. So the best way to describe some of these is is a church planter starting with a missional community, maybe a little bit bigger than the traditional model, like 10 to 25 people.

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and 10 to 25 people that are bought in and maybe are like a house church. They're going to meet at church. But what makes them a little different is they're going to be heavy on discipleship. 3DM is an organization that was doing this for a while. How can we have discipleship through intentional relationships? Let's share meals together. So maybe it's not a worship service we're doing in the basement, but maybe we're just going to come together every Tuesday night. We're going to share meals. Joe's going to play the guitar and we're going to sing some songs and.

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we're going to share and do life together, right? Maybe we're going to serve. We're going to serve and get involved in a justice or an outreach thing. We're going to volunteer for this organization. There's an evangelistic mentality oftentimes in the missional community model that says we want to help people belong before they believe. So invite your friends. And they know this is going to be a Christian thing, but we're also doing life together. We're sharing meals. We're serving. We're doing things that are going to appeal to non-Christians.

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And the Christians that are involved in the missional community, the leader of the missional community or the pastor of the church planter might be very intentional in discipling those people. But we're also welcoming in a lot of outsiders. And honestly, for a lot of missional community models, the Sunday gathering that's more formal, that's more worship driven, that's more sermon driven, that's more traditional, that actually might come later. And it might be, let's plant this missional. And then we're going to plant a second.

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And then once a month, they'll start coming together on Sundays and have a worship service together. Or maybe we'll do this twice a month, right? And that's the big difference with the organic or traditional model. It's not starting with a Sunday worship expression. It's starting probably more with like a Tuesday night or Thursday night missional communal community model expression that looks somewhat different. Another variation of this, you've probably heard this term and

you might be thinking about it, is micro church model. This is a new description or I would say a new expression of this more missional model.

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And it's a lot of innovative leaders that are recognizing there is a niche group of people living in my city or in my neighborhood that are never going to be reached by a traditional church expression. And so I'm going to start this. community that meets in a burrito shop on Tuesday mornings or whatever, you know, Tuesday for lunch or whatever it is. And, uh, or I'm going to start this thing at my, you know, gym doing CrossFit and I've gotten to know some people there and I'm going to start doing a devotional maybe every.

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once in a while. And I'm going to gather them together. And there there's very creative expressions of church on the margins that are reaching niche groups. Often these micro churches are totally fine being small. And, um, and they very much downplay the institutional aspects of the church because they believe leaders leading these churches. And this might be you that in order to reach unchurched people, that's going to be the new model, these micro churches.

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Um, so that's one aspect of these, um, communities as well. Uh, the strengths of this model is that they're highly relational. They're highly contextual. Let's go meet people where they are. And they're often very flexible. They're not rigid about structures and models and forms. There's a low cost or overhead. I mean, to invite people over for dinner at your house once a week, just kind of host something. I mean, there's literally no cost to that.

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Now, most of the time, the leaders have to be bivocational. They have a job doing something else. They're not getting paid. Um, and so there's almost no cost to it. This model also recognizes, and Alan Hirsch and others have been big proponents of these types of models. It recognizes that the role of mission in a post-Christian context is going to look very different, particularly for Gen Xers, you know, who several years ago sort of abandoned.

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authorities and institutions, millennials, Gen Zers, and the next generations. Um, are just less enamored with tradition. organizational models and are going to be more drawn to something at the margins. The drawbacks of this model are, there's a few. Number one, they're organizationally chaotic. It's hard for people who are like engineers or want some organization to know how the thing is.

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even happening. It can be so fluid and so loosey-goosey that it can be difficult for some people to understand, to attach to, and it can be difficult to facilitate what growth actually looks like. It can be hard to create lasting sustainability. A lot of house churches and microchurches and missional communities just don't last

years and years and years. They're vibrant and vital for a few months, maybe a year or two, but they.

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don't have the structure to keep a lasting sustainability going. Children's ministry is a huge challenge. I've talked to very few house church or missional community or micro church leaders who figure out how to navigate families with little kids. There's often an idealistic sort of idea that the kids are going to be integrated and we're going to be this big family thing and kids are going to run around. And that's OK.

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And we're totally OK with that. And they'll also tell you that after a while, it just doesn't work. And it's really hard to understand. What do we do with kids when we're gathering? In some contexts, it's OK to have the kids screaming and running around and having fun. And other times where we really want to talk about things or do certain things, we don't know how to navigate that. And then the last thing I would say, I put this under drawbacks, but what I've seen is micro churches. That have been successful. are typically supported by and connected to a larger institutional church.

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There's usually a larger institutional church that says, we're going to support and fan the flame and come behind these microchurch or these missional community things that are happening. And we're going to stay connected to them and make sure they're healthy. Um, microchurches that are connected to an institutional expression or a denomination have found some success doing that. Those that tend to just pioneer things on their own independently by themselves typically don't last very long and find it really hard.

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All right. So that's a lot of information to think about different models. As I said, no one model is perfect. No one model is right for any one context. You'll have to think through them on your own, but I hope this gives you a lot to think about. maybe meeting with other people on your team and asking which of these model, maybe we've never named it, which of these models have we drifted towards? What are the strengths? What are the weaknesses? What are some pieces of other models that we might want to leverage? Is that going to.

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be inconsistent with the model we've adopted? So just having those conversations and asking those questions can be one of the most important things you do as you think through what kind of model you're going to adopt. Hope that's been helpful. I hope it gives you some lenses and models to measure what you're doing against.