

① THE SOUTH AMERICAN STRATEGY

The Church of the Nazarene has been ministering in South America for approximately 100 years. The years of planting the seed were long and difficult. Pioneer missionaries often faced intense persecution, and many of them gave their lives to present the gospel to those who had never heard it. But their commitment, experience, and evangelistic fervor brought about an explosion of growth that still continues.

The statistics speak for themselves. After 70 years of labor, the Church of the Nazarene in South America reported 18 districts, 349 organized churches, and 19,000 members. This is a respectable level of growth. But after implementing an aggressive plan of multiplication, the church grew to 39 districts, 883 organized churches, and 60,000 members—all in less than 10 years.

Now some could say, “South America is different from our continent. We could never do that here.” However, God has used the same strategies to advance the church in the larger cities of North America and Europe as He did in the cities of South America. These strategies also work in rural areas. Pastors in the United States are just one example of those who are starting to use them with great success.

These strategies are simple and biblical. They were used in the rapid growth of the Early Church and will work anywhere they are prayerfully and properly implemented. Let’s take a look at these 10 strategies that characterized God’s work in South America:

1. A NEW MENTALITY

God gives us new light not only on living a holy life but also on developing new spiritual communities—communities that will practice holy living. The mind-set of the Early Church was on growth, both spiritually and numerically. Acts 16:5 says, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.” Thus spiritual commitment and growth resulted in numerical growth.

In the 18th century, the spiritual-growth mind-set of John and Charles Wesley influenced their fellow students at Oxford University and set in motion the Methodist movement. Their method—with its small-group Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and discipleship—influenced scores of people in the 18th century, as it still does in the 21st. Once again, the result of spiritual growth was a growth in numbers.

The global efforts of the Church of the Nazarene began in the same way. Men and women committed themselves to personal spiritual growth, which resulted in the advancement of the Kingdom.

As all these servants of Christ—the Early Church, the Wesleys, and the pioneer Nazarenes—grew spiritually, they were intensely motivated to do all they could to lead others to Christ. They had a spiritually refreshed mind-set—a new mentality—that energized their efforts to ex-

pand numerically. They weren't afraid to use new methods to reach new people for the Kingdom. They had a mind like Paul:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings (*1 Cor. 9:19-23*).

Paul was willing to use a new plan to reach *as many as possible* with the message of the gospel. That's what happened in South America. The Lord gave new light, and the church walked in it. New plans evolved out of a new mind-set, and rapid growth resulted.

South American Christians believed that Jesus wanted the church to make an impact on the continent—no matter what. They began to expect growth from every Christian, pastor, and church. But it became more than a goal; it became a way of life. They were no longer content with the same percentages. They wanted the Holy Spirit to move through their lives in a new way to reach lost souls and build the kingdom of God on earth.

Actually, their "new mentality" wasn't new at all. It went *back* to the teachings of the New Testament. Just like Paul, they were employing new methods to reach every person possible. They changed their minds from an *exclusive* mentality to an *inclusive* one, giving authority and responsibility to all who were willing to be involved in impacting the continent. Believing that "God does not show favoritism" (Acts 10:34), they mobilized *all* Christians—regardless of education, income, or nationality. They involved believers in winning new believers!

2. A PLAN OF MOBILIZATION: EACH ONE WIN ONE

Total participation must become a priority. For example, the church in the Dominican Republic used the program Each One Win One (which we will cover later). The goal of this program is to involve all of the members of the church in fulfilling the biblical principle found in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The church printed posters (see Appendix L) with the phrase Each One Win One and distributed them during a district assembly. In that assembly, reports showed 436 members in the church. According to the program's goal, during the year the pastors were to plant new churches and the Christian laypersons were to win new persons to Christ. Each pastor was encouraged to sign a promise of faith saying that with the help of the Lord, he or she would begin a new church that year (see Appendixes K and O). Members of the district were encouraged to return to their local churches filled with vision and enthusiasm to win the lost. They also promised to disciple their converts and bring them into the membership of the church.

Following the assembly, denominational leaders preached in each of the churches, challenging each member to win one new person to the Lord during the year; and they were also encouraged to sign a poster, promising to do just that. This resulted in an astounding number of people wanting to sign up.

During the next district assembly, it was reported that 557 new members had joined the

church. Not only had the membership more than doubled, but 10 new churches had been organized as well. Imagine the atmosphere in that assembly as pastors reported victories won! They were reliving the Book of Acts!

The marvelous part about using the Each One Win One plan is that it is so simple everyone can get involved. New believers understand—and participate. And those who have been “sitting in the pew” for years have their excuses eliminated.

Each One Win One is a plan for the entire Christian community. It includes pastors, new converts, and those who have been believers for many years. Sometimes those who have been in the church for many years have few social contacts outside the church. This plan will enlarge their list of friends who do not attend church. The opportunities are endless. They can form friendships with persons who visit the church, with those in the workplace, and even over the phone.

Since new converts usually have many more contacts in the world outside the church, Each One Win One is a natural plan for them. Others have seen their transformed lives and are asking with the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?”

3. THE POWER OF OUR WITNESS

Rapid church growth begins with enthused believers sharing their faith with others. When the church mobilizes its members to share their experience, it turns into a spiritual epidemic. South American believers began to share their experiences with others in their community. And the church grew as a result.

Believers do not need to have extensive theological training to be effective witnesses. God blesses those who simply share their faith in a spirit of concern for others. They are bridge builders from the church to the world.

It is the *personal* relationship of the believer that best influences the lost. After surveying almost 1,000 unchurched people, the Barna Research Group concluded that in order for the church to reach these people, “someone in their midst will have to make the Christian faith real for them.”¹

We’ve seen it work in our own lives. Through the loving concern of a *godly pastor*, a father accepts Christ as his personal Savior. Through the change in *his* life, *another* becomes interested in the gospel. Then through the invitation of the *father*, that person accepts Christ as *his or her* personal Savior. This gospel chain of *one reaching one*, in a spirit of real-world faith, has resulted in scores of lost souls being won into the Kingdom.

George O. Hunter III expressed it this way in his book *To Spread the Power*:

When Christians report the chief characteristic of their human bridge in the discipleship, the two most cited adjectives are: caring and loving. Other adjectives are somewhat synonymous: encouraging, concerned, accepting, understanding, supporting, warm, affirming, sensitive, kind, and so on. Others report admirable or inspiring traits, like committed, believable, credible, patient, happy, fulfilled, honest, alive, friendly, humble, consistent, reasonable, authentic, stable, Christ-like, positive, reliable, faithful.²

Hunter also believes, “About half of all evangelical Christians have difficulty recalling anything their human bridge said that made the difference.”³ He says that the key to the ministry of evangelism is not *programming* but *participation*. Believers must simply express what God has done in their lives and be concerned that other persons become like Christ.

Especially in such an impersonal society, many people have a desire for someone to love

them and to be interested in them. Each One Win One gives believers such an opportunity to show love and interest. And especially when the *whole church* expresses that love and interest, it produces an atmosphere that will help the unchurched feel welcome and want what the church has to offer. A growing church identifies with the needs of new people and preaches the gospel in such a way that sinners can find salvation.

4. AN EMPHASIS ON NATURAL GROWTH

The church grows on the basis of ministry, not money. That's how the church in South America grew—believers gave without thought of return. They were intent on increasing the Kingdom by adding new believers. One of the most important factors in the fulfillment of the Great Commission is the natural growth of the church. Many Christian leaders have been taught that growth happens in direct relation to the amount of money that is spent. They say, “If you give us *more money*, we will achieve *greater growth*.” That mind-set does not die easily. But it must!

The New Testament church in Macedonia didn't have a large bank account, but it had a heart that was rich in ministry—and this resulted in an aggressive influence. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 8:1-5:

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

The enemy wants us to think that growth is hard to produce, that we must depend on economic resources—a greater *program* to attract people from other churches and better *facilities* to attract a materialistic world. But God has given us light at this point. The church doesn't grow because of its resources; it grows because of its Source—the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 says, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

Aggressive church multiplication in South America did not depend on outside resources, not even district funds. It depended on the power of the Holy Spirit working through the lives of people in the local church—people who had a deep concern for the lost; people who were willing to give of their personal resources; people who were willing to reproduce their Christian life in the lives of others and bring the lost into the Kingdom.

The New Testament church wasn't a subsidized church; it was a sanctified church. It was set apart, called out to be a beacon of light to a darkened world. The churches described in the Book of Acts met in houses, not elaborate worship centers. Their leaders were not trained seminarians; they were bivocational men and women with a heart for ministry.

That gives us the biblical pattern for extending the church. We must not attempt to grow the church by mere economic means. We must grow it *naturally*, by spiritual means! We do not want to return to the old system of dependency (subsidy). It was that dependency that kept us from organizing more than one or two churches each year. Today, the natural growth of the church has become the standard. It is wonderful to live with the New Testament spirit, expecting wonderful things from God and attempting great conquests for Him!

5. THE INFILLING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The principal foundation of the South American movement has been the clarion call that every believer be filled with the Holy Spirit. God's willingness to transform believers, cleanse their hearts from sin, and give them the power to witness for Christ has always been our message. However, there must be a renewal of its emphasis.

Pastors must preach this marvelous message with confidence and passion. They have been doing just that in South America, and the result has been the accelerated growth of the church in that region. It is a Spirit-filled church movement.

6. A SPIRIT OF GIVING

The change of mentality mentioned earlier also challenged South American believers to raise their level of vision from themselves to the world. They became committed to building the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of individuals.

South American Christians have a spirit of giving. When they give, God gives them abundant joy and blessing. God has broken the spirit of selfishness. In the past, pastors pleaded, "Lord, don't take that young person who has been called to preach and put him in another church. He is my right hand." Today, pastors have a different spirit and are willing to give up their *gifted* people to build the kingdom of God, rather than just their own church.

As a result, people have captured the vision of not only building the local church but also building their district, other districts in the same country, and districts around the world. Something has happened to them. They have begun to support one another and have become united. God is using them in the movement.

Aggressive church multiplication begins with an accelerated spirit of giving! God can bless such a program as Each One Win One when its leaders have a greater interest in building the Kingdom than in building their individual reputations.

7. THE POWER OF THE TEAM

Team spirit was another important aspect of the movement. Pastors had ministry teams in their local churches and a willingness to share their teams with other pastors to plant new churches. Pastors in large cities were joining hands, working together as a united force to reach the entire city. Pastors from other cities paid their own way to come to a neighboring city to help with a church's special emphasis. Laypersons caught that vision and joined in the strategy, working in a united spirit to build the kingdom of God.

The pastors and laypersons developed an evangelistic network, carrying out campaigns in each local church during a period of three months. They also had campaigns in house churches, citywide campaigns, district campaigns, and campaigns on the national level. There were teams doing outreach—preparing the location, coordinating the services, and discipling converts.

One of the examples is the Ecuadorian community of Puyo-Shell. With 30,000 people, there are 7 churches. The pastors had a goal of planting 20 more churches and worked together to reach it. They supported the evangelistic campaigns in each church and worked as a team to hold campaigns in various parts of the city, with the goal of planting new churches in those locations.

8. EMPOWERING THE LAITY

The total mobilization of laypersons and pastors required another mind-set change. Supervisors had to place the church in God's hands. That meant there would be less control on their part. They found they could give guidance through inspiration, without having so much direct supervision or regulation.

When people are allowed to use their own (leader-inspired) initiative, they will often respond spontaneously with Kingdom-building efforts. Their sense of worth has increased. Their confidence has been built. The leadership is still supervising, still motivating, but the workers are doing their own thing—they're ministering with their own God-given gifts, using their unique personalities to reach people for Christ.

District leaders encouraged and even expected pastors to plant churches. Pastors entrusted their laity with the growth of the church. Leaders supervised and challenged the church, but they told their people, "This is your responsibility: Go and make disciples." Today, pastors and laypersons are starting churches all over South America.

That rapid growth constantly calls for new pastors, new leaders—new disciplers. What are the results? The laity is mobilized to become leaders of the new congregations, pastors are developing and entrusting new leaders in systems of church growth, and the church is becoming the church!

9. A CALL TO TAKE UP THE CROSS

Emphasis on sacrifice and vision has also been a motivating force of the movement. The South American church believed in sacrifice! Like the first disciples, they felt joyful being considered worthy to suffer insult and reproach for the love of the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:17-42). The devotion of these Christians in South America compares in some ways to the dedicated devotion of the first disciples. They were willing to sacrifice everything for love of the Kingdom.

This call to sacrifice included the challenge of beginning churches without money. Many pastors gave sacrificially from their own pockets to start new churches. Laypersons moved to areas where churches did not exist and started churches in their homes.

In Peru, where many churches were started in this way, there are now 400 churches and the Church of the Nazarene is one of the largest denominations in the country. Others gave sacrificial offerings. The tithe, for many in the region, is only a minimum. Many South Americans donated their time in work groups to build churches. In one year, in the city of Bogota, Colombia, with its high cost of living, four properties were donated for church sites. With that spirit of sacrifice, it is not surprising that God started an evangelism explosion.

10. DECENTRALIZING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Another key factor in the South American movement has been theological education by extension. The church has taken the seminary to the people. Those who have felt called to preach in South America can now participate in a program of theological education close to their homes. This method of training pastors and leaders has resulted in a constant resource of trained pastors for the growth of the church.

Previously, there were 200 students in residence seminaries. Now there are 2,600 studying in programs by extension in South America. Besides the educators that serve on an international

level, the church is developing educators at the national, district, zone, and local levels, as well. As a result, many people have entered the ministry who in the past would never have had the opportunity to gain a ministerial education or to become a pastor of a local church.

This system of offering regional ministerial training is having an effect throughout the Church of the Nazarene. Bible classes and ministerial courses, coupled with pastors mentoring other pastors and laypersons trained in ministry, are flourishing today. This advice to a son in the faith is inspiring scores of new ministers—and ministries: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Opportunities to let people begin second careers as ministers of the gospel have resulted in new church plants, added staff, and exciting outreach ministries. And what is the outcome of all this? Aggressive church multiplication.

These are thus the 10 activities/factors that have characterized the movement of God in the South American church:

- Developing a New Mentality
- Mobilizing All Believers (A Plan of Mobilization: Each One Win One)
- Sharing Experiences (The Power of Our Witness)
- Encouraging Natural Growth
- Preaching the Infilling with the Holy Spirit
- Increasing a Spirit of Giving
- Working as a Team (The Power of the Team)
- Supervising and Inspiring (Empowering the Laity)
- Sacrificing (A Call to Take Up the Cross)
- Decentralizing Theological Education

These are methods of ministry that are simple and cost little or nothing. They can be utilized anywhere in the world—even in your community. And through God’s power they can result in a mighty movement of Kingdom building. The reason they are so successful is that they are based on a philosophy that is straight from the pages of the Book and the history of the Church—as we’ll explain in the next section.