

Leadership Letter #2 – September 2, 2006

To my dear Nigerian pastor friends,

Greetings to you once again. This is the second "Leadership Letter" that I am sending to you in preparation for our church planting conference November 7-10. Last week I wrote to you about our reasons for sponsoring this church planting conference. The bottom line is that I believe as we plant more and more churches throughout Nigeria, we will be able to present the gospel to more and more people – and many will come to faith in Christ.

### **What Does It Mean to Fulfill the Great Commission?**

If you read Matthew 28:18-20, it is easy to get the impression that "evangelism" is the main objective. And it's certainly part of the Commission. But read again what it says:

*Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Do you know what the main verb in those verses is? It may surprise you to realize that the main verb isn't "go." In English, "go" is a participle ... it really should be translated "As you go into all the world..." That's surprising to me. It never occurred to the New Testament church NOT to go. They had lived with Christ for three and a half years. They knew His heart for the world. They knew that He was all about giving every person the opportunity to hear the gospel. But this command went further. The main verb is "MAKE DISCIPLES." A disciple is a student, a learner, a follower. But that's only the beginning. Once the disciple learns and is fully taught, he/she becomes "just like his teacher." Luke 6:40 teaches us that very concept: "A student is not greater than the teacher. But the student who works hard will become like the teacher." That means that ultimately the disciple becomes one who leads and influences others, just like his teacher did.

As we go into all the world, we are called to build disciples. You must train men and women who will ultimately lead others. We do this by "going, baptizing and teaching" – the three participles that make up the Great Commission.

### **What Does This Mean to Nigerian Pastors and Church Planters?**

It means that it's not enough to build a church. We must train an army: an army of men and women who will take the love of God and the gospel of Christ to the rest of the country. And that's what we are trying to accomplish through this conference for church planters.

### **How Can We Make This Conference Most Successful?**

In America we measure far too many things by "numbers." You have a successful church if it is "big," whatever that means. But I think numbers are only one indication of the job you are doing. May I suggest some "measuring sticks" by which

we will determine if the conference is successful?

1. The "right" people come to the conference. That means LEADERS come. INFLUENCERS come. And POTENTIAL LEADERS come. Whether they be pastors of large churches or church planters who are just starting, we want leaders.

2. We also want implementers. We want people to come who will take the training and actually start planting churches. Some may be in large cities like Abuja. Some may be in very remote villages. Some may grow to be 1,000 in size in large cities. Some may be small but influential churches in small villages. Size isn't the key. The key is church HEALTH. Why? Because we need all types of churches to reach all types of people in all places. My prayer is that this conference will accelerate Ken's vision of "one thousand churches" throughout Nigeria.

3. We want people who come who will be reproducers. They will not only reproduce leaders, they will reproduce churches. I am excited that Living Springs Church in Jos is planting other churches. But when I hear about some of their church plants (like the church in Jalingo) that are planting other churches, that really excites me. Why? Because that tells me they "get it." They really understand what ministry is all about.

When a married couple is healthy, they have children. They reproduce. So too a church. A healthy church always starts other churches.

So how will we know if our conference in Jos is a success? In two years, I want to see how many churches have started as a result of that conference. Are there five? That's not bad ... but not nearly enough. What about ten? Fifty? One hundred? I don't know where the "success line" is – but I do know that if we see fifty to one hundred healthy churches planted in the next two years, I will be VERY ENCOURAGED. I believe God will be glorified and Christ will be honored if that happens. Do you agree?

### **So what can we do right now to make this conference a success?**

I'm glad you asked! Here are a list of things that I would like to ask you to commit to doing:

1. **Pray.** Pray hard every week (maybe even every day) for this conference. Ask God to bring the type of people we have talked about. Pray for the leaders and speakers of the conference.

2. **Come.** Come yourself to the conference. Come with a hungry heart and a teachable spirit. Come ready to listen to God. I believe He will speak to MANY at that conference about planting churches throughout Nigeria. God may even call you to a new ministry situation.

3. **Invite.** Invite many leaders to come. Each of you know pastors, church planters and potential church planters who need to be at the conference. Do you know pastors of large, influential churches that might become "church planting centers?" Invite those pastors. Pray that they catch the vision. Last week we were in a planning session with Ken and I asked him to give me the names of several young men he knows who could be church planters in a year or two. He listed 2 names. By God's

grace, those men need to be disciplined, brought to this conference, prayed for, and ultimately sent out as church planters. Maybe they go with another young planter, or maybe they go with a seasoned leader who can continue to develop them.

4. **Teach.** Teach your church what we are talking about here. Ask them to pray. I want your people to have a vision for this conference. Get them involved. Some of them may come to the conference to serve. We will need servants and workers to make the conference successful.

5. **Give.** I know Nigeria is not a rich country. And we in America are raising money to help make this conference a success. But you never want to be in a position where you are a "taker," and not a "giver." Teach your people principles of generous giving. Isn't it interesting in the Bible that when Jesus used an illustration of a generous giver, He did not point to someone who had a lot of money ... but to a widow who only had a few coins to her name ... but she gave what she had ... and God was pleased. We in America love you all and are committed to being generous with you ... but we want to inspire that same generosity in you so that you can be generous to others. Teach your churches to give. God will be very pleased. *(By the way, just so you are aware of our funding policies, all money we give from America will be given to Living Spring Ministries, and we will ask Ken Eze to distribute the money as he sees fit. We will not accept funding proposals outside of Ken's recommendations.)*

6. **World Vision.** Finally, I want you to begin thinking beyond your borders. Ken was telling us about a few churches that Living Spring has planted in Cameroon. Let's get some leaders from other countries to this conference. Let's have Nigeria be known as a blessing to all of West Africa ... and ultimately all the world.

### **Next Steps**

1. Please forward this email – and the previous email letter – to other pastors you know. Encourage them to become part of our movement.

2. Also, send me their email addresses, so I can keep in touch with them.

3. Attached (as a pdf file) is another Bible study for you. This is a study on "faith, hope and love" -- the three measuring sticks that I believe God has for a healthy church. Let me know if these are helpful.

4. Please keep in touch with me. Let me know any prayer requests that you have as our time in November approaches.

Henry Oursler