

Cross-Cultural Perspectives



Walking through the Open Door of Opportunity

Recently at the Apostolic Renewal Conference in Vienna, Austria, Brother Antonino Giacalone from Italy spoke during a session on the “Apostolic Process.” He explained how he took advantage of various opportunities in church planting. Some worked. Some did not. However, by walking through the open door of opportunities, he started nine or ten churches in Italy.

I loved his testimony concerning missionaries he has worked with: “They changed me. They shaped me. They taught me. I owe everything to the Foreign Missions Division.”

His advice to all: Take advantage of opportunities. Do not miss them. It is the will of God to start churches.

Our General Superintendent, Brother David K. Bernard also spoke concerning church planting in one of the sessions. He reminded us that growth is our mission and the field is the world. Our apostolic message is pivotal to our success as church planters. Eight souls in the ark are better than gathering a thousand souls outside of the ark.

In order to achieve success at church growth a strategy must be implemented. You must be deliberate and intentional about seeing the church grow and in establishing church plants. Neither just happens. Brother Bernard advocates walking through every open door to church planting or establishing the church but then come up with a strategic plan for the bigger picture. You might need to start in a marginalized area of the city or among a minority group. The beginning may not be optimal. Start there and take it one step at a time.

He asked that we target un-evangelized and under-evangelized cities. We cannot ignore the population centers. Additionally, special care should be given to reach ethnic groups and language groups in your locality.

The secret to success is to keep doing outreach of different types until we find something that works and church growth happens. What works in one area may not work in another. What works in establishing one church planter may not work in every case. Diversity is the key to growth.

Brother Bernard told a story of a caged tiger that was being tormented and poked by a group of kids. The best way for the tiger to defend itself is for someone to open the cage and let it go. Preach the Word and let it go.

Some church plants are started by going to a nearby town and starting a daughter work. Some by teaching a home Bible study. Others by ministering to one or two families from the mother church residing in a particular area of the city. Still others are started by teaching and preaching among a certain ethnic or language group.

These suggestions and strategies have worked well in Austin, Texas where Brother Bernard has seen their mother church grow to nearly one thousand with another thousand scattered in the sixteen or more church plants they started. Perhaps, some of the points in this *Cross-Cultural Perspectives* will also work for you.

Giving birth to a new church is seldom easy. There are many obstacles. Charles Swindoll once said, "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." Someone else mentioned, "You can never find a lost opportunity." Walk through the open door of opportunity now. After all, opportunity often only opens once.