

Kyle Searcy: Birthing a Church 101

When my wife and I decided to start a family, we thought we were ready to become parents. We had read the best books, asked for advice from our most auspicious relatives and mustered our prayer life around what God had in store. And He didn't disappoint us!

Last weekend, I spearheaded a new church in a different state. It reminded me of the exhilaration I experienced while waiting for our first child to be born. And the process to create a successful beginning to this baby church paralleled some of what we had to do to prepare for our progeny.

Conception begins the baby's life; vision for the new church had to be conceived and defined. Babies take nine months to grow through strategic and intricate design modules in order to have the necessary parts to support life; a new church must work through a strategic plan so that the outcome matches the original concept. The DNA of both babies and churches integrates the function of the body in a cohesive manner. The anticipation is exciting, but once the new one (baby or church) appears, you realize you experience joy but are also awakened by a feeling that although you have worked hard and waited long, your real work is only beginning.

The new church in Norcross, Ga. (outside Atlanta), experienced a marvelous birth. Amazingly, a great crowd of people attended that first Sunday. Some were well-wishers from the mother church, Fresh Anointing House of Worship in Montgomery, Ala. But a healthy contingent of Georgians was present, checking out who we were and what we might do in the future.

I learned so many things during the preparation for last Sunday, but five essentials stand out as principles I need to

remember for any future launches:

1. Teamwork makes the dream work. I learned that phrase from leadership expert John Maxwell, and sure enough, I spent a year and a half building the planting team and putting the exact spiritual DNA in them. Patiently, we made sure the team could gather strength even as they had to persevere through those 18 months without starting the church. The character was proved in the team members and paid off with a strong leadership group.

2. It won't get done without the funds. I have started churches before with little to no money and discovered financial hardship increases the difficulties. Having enough money to do proper advertising and procure needed equipment is truly essential. I believe a test of one's call to pastor can be whether or not the pastor has a compelling enough vision that people will give toward it. Starting a new church is expensive. Raise the money before you start.

3. Rely on grace but have key components in place. When starting a new church, there are some essentials you don't want to leave home without. You need an excellent, aesthetically pleasing environment. You must have the capacity for presence-filled worship and a preacher that can actually preach. To draw families, you must provide an outstanding, safe and fun children's ministry. I delayed our launch until we had each of these components solidly in place with a certain level of excellence.

4. You must pray if you want to stay. Many make the mistake of trying to succeed in God's work without spending lots of time with God. Church-planting is spiritual work, and it requires a great deal of spiritual exercise. Planting a church without much prayer becomes frustrating. Starting a church with lots of prayer is fascinating. Before launching we prayed—a lot!

5. Do your best and leave the rest. I can never forget the

nagging feeling I had Saturday night and Sunday morning before the launch. The team of 60 people I had built did all it knew to do. We prayed, we fasted, we trained, we planned and we raised money. We sent out 110,000 mailers to homes near our launch site. We hung door hangers and served the community months before the launch. In spite of all we did, there were no guarantees. We had no idea who would come. So we just rested, saying, "Now it's up to the Lord."

We rejoiced at the 444 people that showed up that Sunday—but we were elated at the presence of God that filled the room. What a glorious service it was! Our prayers had been answered.

So the baby is home from the hospital and now the real work begins. But joy abounds in all of our hearts as we excitedly anticipate what God has placed in this baby called Fresh Anointing House of Worship, Norcross, Ga.

Pastor Kyle Searcy serves as senior pastor of the thriving, multiracial ministry Fresh Anointing House of Worship, located in Montgomery, Ala., and Norcross, Ga. His latest book is *The Secrets of Biblical Wisdom, which shares the secrets to unlocking the power of wisdom*. Follow him on Twitter at @kylesearcy.