

## **ADD 25 NEW PEOPLE TO YOUR CHURCH**

**Fred G. King**

Every pastor would like to see new people added to the church. Often it is a matter of breaking down an idea into tangible techniques. Once you have developed a basic list of ideas, then go back to each one and write out how the particular idea can be implemented. That's all this is... an idea list. It is up to you to think it through and make decisions as to how it can work in your particular situation.

### **Twenty-five New People**

The size of the typical American family is about three people. Twenty-five new people is actually eight or nine new families. I believe we can all envision just a few new families for the coming year. That is less than one new family per month. It will require some work and clear thinking. It will require a commitment to prayer so seek the mind of the Lord as to what approach He would have you take.

### **Know Your Target Group**

This is no time to be ambiguous. Do you expect to grow your church with those who have been unchurched or with those who already know Christ? Determine your target first, then design how you intend to draw them into your church.

### **Christians**

In America we do have a luxury, if you will, that most other countries do not have. We have a very large number of believers in our community who may be seeking a church that has a strong statement of faith, focuses on expository preaching of the Word, desires to help people grow and mature in the faith and has a passion for worldwide missions.

It is most important to lay a strong church foundation of believers who will almost immediately help the church to develop.

They may be believers who are genuinely seeking a church just like yours! You are not interested in "stealing sheep" for another good evangelical church in town. Your target are those who are looking for a church and will eventually end up in one of the community churches in your area, so, it might as well be your church!

What is the benefit of targeting and drawing in those who are already believers? Well, they often show up ready to be a part of the vision God

has given you. They are usually ready to serve, support and be a part of seeing the church grow.

### **Non-Christians**

While our ultimate objective is to reach people who do not know the Lord Jesus, we must understand that it will take a long time to see any substantial number come to Christ and grow to the point that they can serve, support and reproduce. In other words, you must be ready for the long-haul in seeing your church develop if you are focused only on non-Christians. Though it is very exciting to see people come to Christ, it is a slow process to grow the church in this manner.

*If you focus on folding in those who are already believers, perhaps you can see your church develop sooner and become spiritually strong and viable to the point that the church will then be able to be far more effective at reaching out to the lost.*

### **Decisions and Actions**

Prior to designing techniques and strategies to grow the church there are certain steps you must take if you expect to be successful. You may adjust these suggestions to suit your local situation.

#### **1. Decide.**

It is decision-making time! You need to decide to I.D. certain, specific individuals or families. Recently I provided you with the JUST ONE technique. This involves your people in identifying those they are concerned for. While this approach is confidential, it does cause your people to take a simple but tangible step to think about one person or one family they know.

You as pastor need to decide to build a list of names. This is the time when you ask some of your people to assist you in gathering a list of individuals who potentially could be added to the church. Remember, you need to decide if you are going to target believers who are seeking a church or non-believers. Sometimes it will be both.

Build your list. Do not publish the names. This is a matter for you and key leaders to be praying about. Pray for each by name and ask the Lord to provide you with opportunities to meet them and fold them into the fellowship.

## 2. **Determine.**

You as pastor must be determined to find creative ways to meet the people on the list and develop strong friendships with them. This could be a meal with each at your house or some sort of outing. It could be at a sporting event or some other opportunity in the community. This takes some time.

*As an example I spent time developing friendships with the owners/managers of the local Christian bookstores. (They have a pulse on the churches of the community and also are aware of Christians who have recently moved to town). Anyway, I met David and after a few visits at the store invited him to have lunch at a nearby restaurant. I did not talk about our church. I showed a great deal of genuine interest in his bookstore and his own spiritual journey. After a few luncheons, of paying attention to him and not me, David asked about our church. I very briefly told him about the Alliance and what I was preaching on. I left it at that. That Sunday he and his family showed up and became a terrific part of our fellowship. I didn't even know he had been looking around for a church! But the Lord knew it. That story can be repeated many times!*

## 3. **Define.**

You need to take a close look at yourself! What's that mean? Well, think about *who you are* as a person. What are your likes and dislikes? What sports interest you? What hobbies? What skills? What talents? Also, think about your own journey. What is your family background? With what social group of people do you best identify?

Now, think about the kind of people you really enjoy hanging out with. Usually they will be those who share similar interests. I have seen pastors who came from just average, middle income, hard-working, blue-collar backgrounds but decided they wanted to reach people in the higher income brackets. They ended up in frustration. On the other hand I have seen people who attempted to reach out to people who were from the other end of the social spectrum and those pastors also ended up frustrated.

*Know yourself and define who you are.* That will give you a pretty clear picture of who you need to focus on. I know, there will always be exceptions and we must never neglect any group, but it certainly helps to have a very clear definition of self!

*As an example, I have a friend who has a great heart to reach people who are down-and-out. He is really concerned for the homeless and those who have been living under the bridges. This is commendable but he really should have been a regular volunteer at a mission that is expert in this. Instead he began to bring home people that clearly were a danger to his*

wife and children. They also began to cause damage to the church. Nothing wrong with his passion to reach them, but he was approaching this in a very unwise manner. If he had concentrated on developing the church I do not doubt that he could have accomplished a great deal more to help these people who were generally rejected or ignored by the church and society.

#### 4. **Design and Develop.**

Our objective is to add twenty-five new people, or eight or nine families, to our church within the next twelve months. This will require designing some very tangible ways to actually fold them into the fellowship, assuming, as mentioned above, that there has been a viable effort to develop friendships.

The question is, *How do I help them visit our church three times in a row?* You might ask, *Why three times? Why not just once?* It has been proven through a lot of church growth studies that people who attend three times in a row are likely to continue coming to the church. Of course this is not always the case, but it is more common.

There are some good techniques that help people come to your church without feeling like strangers. I think most of us will agree that even for pastors it is rather awkward to walk through the door of a church which you have never before visited. So, how can we ease the pain?

I believe it was Carl George who suggested that we focus on the *side door and not the front door*. By that he meant we need to provide venues outside the church for our new friends to meet a number of your church members prior to inviting them to one of the church services. This could be a Fourth of July Picnic, a little league game, a group of members going to a pro ball game, and so on. *You come up with your own list*. By taking this approach, a number of times, your new friends have become acquainted with the church people, so when they *do* visit, they do not feel like strangers. Now, doesn't that make sense?

*As an example, we used to plan a huge beach picnic the last Sunday of each month. It was a pot-luck picnic with a lot of games for the kids, softball for the young adults and great shade trees for those who just like to sit and jaw! Just before sundown we would have a public baptism for new Christians. Everything was casual, informal and lighthearted. In other words, it was a fun event. We found this was a great way for our new friends to meet many of our church people. It was not at all surprising when they would show up for Sunday worship. They did not feel like strangers.*

### **Preparing Your People**

As pastor you need to think through what you need to do to prepare your people for some of the above techniques. You could do this by bringing together small groups of people at your home or someone else's home for a pot-luck and brief them on what you are up to.

Help them to understand that the various events and approaches are informal for the purpose of developing friendships. They are not to pressure people into visiting the church. They are to show a genuine interest in the new friends, but never gush or overwhelm them. Just be friendly and show them that you are interested in them as individuals. They must never pry into a person's personal life. That will drive people away. Perhaps you can suggest the kind of questions or conversations that would be appropriate.

If you are targeting non-Christians perhaps you could help your members find ways to be witnesses without button-holing people. There are a number of good instruments you could provide to your people understanding that no one way fits all. Some are more comfortable with the Four Spiritual Laws, while others like the Roman Road. They could practice reading the instruments to one another just so they can have a sense of how it flows. Remember, not everyone will want to do this, and that is okay. Let the Spirit of God speak to their heart.

I continue to urge pastors to develop a daily early morning prayer time with the church leaders, and of course anyone else who wants to come. This is the one thing that will motivate your people more than anything else.

I trust that these suggestions are helpful. You will want to adjust them to meet the needs of your respective situation. If this stimulate some thinking and gets some creative juices flowing then let's just Praise the Lord!

Again, I am always looking for new ideas as to how to help pastors and churches grow the Body of Christ. Please share your successful ideas with us!