



Charles Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting: A Practical Journey*. Neosho, MO: Church Growth International, 1994.

\$10.00 (U.S.) if ordered from www.churchgrowthinternational.com

This is one of my favorite books on church planting partially because it was through Charles Brock that the Lord lit my fire for the multiplication of churches among the peoples of the world. In this highly practical work, Brock includes six sections related to the church planting process. Section one begins by focusing on the preliminaries to church planting, asking questions such as, "Who can plant churches?," "What are we seeking to plant?," "What are our motives?," "What is the lifestyle of the church planter?," Section two entitled, "Focus Before Starting," addresses the importance of knowing your parameters and objectives before beginning missionary work. This section explains matters such as "What is an indigenous church?," "Who is your target?," "What strategies and methods will I use?," "What style of leadership will I use?," and "What do you do when there is little to no response to the gospel?" Section three, "The Church Planting Process," is divided into three sections. First, "The Pre-Salvation stage" discusses the people prior to their conversion. Second, "Salvation-The First Objective," emphasizes that biblical church planting is evangelism that results in new churches. Finally, Brock devotes a chapter in this section to one technique of planting churches: small group bible study. Section four of this book, "The Birth of a Church," addresses the practical realities of what to do with a group after their conversion and the church is planted. Section five entitled, "Post-Birth," examines issues such as leadership training, church structure and organization, membership, finding a pastor, and continuing evangelism through that new congregation. Finally, section six, "The Churches in

Fellowship," is a section devoted to church multiplication and the organization of those new churches into a fellowship or an association.

Though this book was originally published in 1994, it maintains great relevance to church planters in the 21st century. In fact, this book is required reading in my church planting classes. There are numerous strengths of this book, too many to include in this brief review. First, this book was birthed out of the author's personal experience while serving as a missionary in the Philippines. This is a text that weds both theory and practice. Second, this book is grounded in biblical, theological, and missiological principles regarding the planting of churches. The importance of understanding the simple nature of the church, the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, and the significant place of the messenger of the gospel, add great value to this book. It is Brock's conviction that the sower, the soil, the Spirit, and the seed of the gospel are all that is necessary for a church to be birthed. Third, Brock advocates that biblical church planting is evangelism that results in new churches. Though there are multitudes of ways to plant churches, it is his conviction that much evangelism must occur to see the birth of churches among a people. Out of this conviction is the belief that prolonged exposure to the Word of God is one of the most powerful methods to use in church planting, hence the need for small group evangelistic bible studies. A fourth strength of this work is Brock's focus on highly reproducible methods. His church planting strategy includes the churching of a region for a people rather than the planting of a single isolated congregation. Brock strongly believes that the Holy Spirit will call other people from new congregations to plant other churches. Because of this work of the Spirit, the missionaries must model before the new believers reproducible contextualized church

planting methods. Next, another strength of this work is its highly practical nature.

Brock responds to many questions that church planters ask before arriving on the field as well as while they are involved in their missionary activities. How-to steps and numerous personal illustrations are peppered throughout this book.

There are at least two minor limitations to this work. First, it must be remembered that though the author was involved in church planting in the United States, the majority of his experience came from his work in the Philippines. Some western church planters may find it difficult to connect with his examples and matters of concern. Second, though I am a strong advocate for using small group bible studies to birth churches, Brock's approach may be challenging to apply in certain parts of the western world; whereby, unbelievers are sometimes leery about gathering in small groups with total strangers. A variety of contextualized reproducible methods need to be used in the process of birthing North American churches in particular.

This is an outstanding book. If you had to read only one book on the topic of church planting, this work would be my recommendation. Brock is also the president of Church Growth International in Neosho, Missouri. He has written other resources related to church planting that can be located at www.churchgrowthinternational.com. More church planters in the western world need to read and heed the wisdom, the missiology, and the practical steps that are included in *Indigenous Church Planting: A Practical Journey*.

-- J. D. Payne

J. D. Payne, Ph.D. is a National Missionary with the North American Mission Board and Assistant Professor of Church Planting and Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He can be contacted at jpayne@sbts.edu.