

Dag Heward-Mills



How to

Start a Church



How To Start A Church

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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[Chapter 1 - Why People Fear to Start Churches](#)

Many people are afraid to start a church because they do not know how to pioneer a new work.

The art of beginning a church is the art of witnessing, following-up and gathering sheep together.

You do not need to break up someone's church to begin your own! How would you feel if someone was building his house next to yours and decided to break down your house to get some blocks for his? That is madness! Unfortunately, this seems to be the only way that some people feel they can start a church.

From today, do not be afraid of starting out in an honourable way. If God has really spoken to you, it will succeed!

Chapter 2 - Count the Cost

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost...

Luke 14:28

Carefully consider the implications of starting a church. It is not going to be easy! Not many people want to identify with a small thing.

I learnt many years ago that there are two types of people in the world. There are those who push the canoe from the sand into the sea. Then there are those who jump into the boat when it is safely on the water. When the canoe is on the sand, it is very difficult to push it into the water. When it is on the water it is safer and many more people jump in. That is why it is easier for a large church to grow.

When I began in the ministry I was despised and opposed! Looking back, I am surprised that I was able to survive the storms of beginning a church on my own. At certain times, I felt like giving up. Everyone in the world seemed to be against me. They called me names and ridiculed me.

When I carried a set of drums from my room in the medical school hostel to a nearby classroom, I must have looked like a crazy zealot! "What does this person think he is doing with a few medical and nursing students?"

I had no help from any of the bigger churches of my day. Some of them ridiculed me whilst others even opposed me. There was no help or approval from any man of God!

Chapter 3 - Do Not Become Desperate

Do not become financially desperate in the early stages of ministry. Be careful not to become dependent on the church you are pioneering for your financial survival. That is a big mistake! If you do, you will become a desperate man, clutching at every straw for survival.

A small church usually cannot afford to pay the salary of a pastor, much more buy him a car. **My advice to anyone who is beginning a church is to find a job and start the church as a lay person.**

When people see that you are not ministering for financial gain, they will be more interested in your new church.

Too many pastors are desperate for more and more offerings from their few members. Sixteen people cannot look after you. Twenty-one people cannot support your upkeep and pay your children's school fees. Do not be a desperate pastor! Get a job right now! At the right time, the church will have more than enough money to look after its pastors.

I had to invest a lot of my own money to get our church to work. Although I am now in fulltime ministry, I was not paid for the first five years of the church's existence.

There is another reason why you should not draw a salary in the early stages of a church. Money will be needed to buy equipment and to pay other expenses like rent. If you siphon out the lifeblood of the church, it will not develop normally.

Chapter 4 Two or Three Is Enough

How many people are needed to start a church? The answer is in the Bible! Two or three!

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:20

Some people have criticized me for having two or three people in a church. Well, such criticism comes from an ignoramus. **I prefer to hear my dogs barking in the morning than to listen to critical and inexperienced scoffers!**

I do not start my churches with half a section of another person's church. If I have one pastor who is ready to obey God, all I need to do is to send him and he will start the work. The Lighthouse Cathedral was started with as few as five people.

When I went to Zürich, Switzerland to start a church, I knew only one person. Today, that church has several hundred people in it. One pastor who did not know anybody in South Africa, but was willing to do the work of God, started our church in South Africa.

You do not need more than one person to start a church. I have churches that have only three people, and I am not ashamed to say it. Do not try to impress anyone; just do the work of God!

Sometimes people are afraid to pioneer a church because they do not know how to do basic Christian tasks. What do I mean by the basics? The basics are praying, witnessing and following-up converts.

If you are truly called of God, then the only person you need is yourself! All churches which began in this way have grown to become great trees. The Bible says that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed.

...The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Matthew 13:31,32

What does that mean? Whereas an Old Boys' Association or a Keep Fit Club may begin with quite a number of people, the beginnings of churches are like insignificant seeds. But they can grow, and they will grow. Many of my pastors are surprised when their churches grow. They cannot believe that the church will work. The beginning looks so miserable, yet that is how the kingdom of God is.

The Mega Church Had One Member!

One day, one of my pastors went to church and only one person was present. He told me that he was very discouraged and depressed. He led that one person in worship. Then he preached to that one person. Afterwards, he took an offering from that one person and then closed the service.

He narrated to me how he went back home to his apartment in the deepest and blackest depression of his life. I am happy to tell you that today his church is a Mega Church and is still growing.

Chapter 5 Do Not Be in a Hurry

There is no tree that grows from a seed into a large tree overnight. No human being grows to be six feet tall in one year. No two-year old grows into an eighteen-year old within six months. *If you have a hasty spirit, you will not be successful in starting a church.*

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Proverbs 28:22

In fact, when you are in a hurry, you are likely to cut corners, break someone's church and criticize those ahead of you. You will commit dangerous sins in the early days of your fledgling ministry. Do not expect much within a year. 12 Do not be surprised if you only have twenty people after two years. The mustard seed will surely grow into a Mega Church!

Chapter 6 Pray for and Recruit Pillars

Pray for labourers. Ask God to give you helpers. Then go out and recruit pillars. Jesus called individuals to follow Him. Jesus recruited Simon and Andrew. Then He also recruited James and John.

Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother... And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Mark 1:16,17

And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother... And straightway he called them: and they left their father... and went after him.

Mark 1:19,20

These people later became pillars in the church.

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars...

Galatians 2:9

Sometimes you need to travel quite far in order to convince certain important pillars to join your church. **Be extra careful that you do not break down somebody's church in the process of building your own.**

Making an open invitation to all is different from coercing people to leave their church to join you. The very existence of a church is an open invitation. Remember that you will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7).

If you pressurize pillars in another person's church to leave, the same thing will happen to you one day.

One important thing to do in recruiting people is to pray for labourers. Let it be your daily prayer topic. Ask God for workers and committed people. Pray for people who will be loyal to you in everything that you do. Pray for people who will support you.

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:38

Chapter 7 - Lay a Foundation of Prayer

I recommend an average time of prayer and fasting of three weeks or more before you start a church. Pray for the future of the church. Do not expect results the following week. The answer to these prayers will be seen in the years ahead.

When I first went to Korle-Bu (the area in Accra where our church was originally located), I would go at ten o'clock every night with four other medical students to the beach to pray. We would pray until midnight. As I stood on the rocks near the seashore, my prayer was simply, "Lord, let your will be done. Do whatever you want to do with my life."

As the years have gone by, the Lord has answered this prayer beyond my wildest imagination.

I believe in laying a solid foundation of prayer and fasting at the beginning of every church. The church is a spiritual entity and not a social club. It must be established on scriptural and spiritual foundations. Some useful Scriptures in praying for church establishment and church growth are:

...Thy will be done...

Matthew 6:10

Thy kingdom come...

Matthew 6:10

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance...

Psalm 2:8

...enlarge my coast...

1 Chronicles 4:10

...increase them with men like a flock.

Ezekiel 36:37

...for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

Isaiah 66:8

...I travail in birth again...

Galatians 4:19

Chapter 8 - Be a Motivational Leader

After gathering a few people into a room, you will need to greatly encourage them, including yourself. People will be thinking in their minds, "Are you out of your mind? Is this what you call a church?" You must learn to do what David did when faced with discouragement. *Encourage yourself first.*

...but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

1 Samuel 30:6

Then you must encourage the people. Tell them that though the beginning seems to be small, the future is going to be great!

Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

Job 8:7

Tell them not to despise the small start. Explain to them that the end is always better than the beginning. When they see that you are encouraged, they will be motivated to continue with the church.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof... Ecclesiastes 7:8 For who hath despised the day of small things?

... Zechariah 4:10

Tell them that they are privileged to be founding members of a great church. Explain that the foundation of a building is the most important part of a building. Therefore, they are the most important members that the church will ever have. 21 Tell them that Jesus always had a special place and reward for the Apostles because they were his foundational members.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles...

Ephesians 2:20

Do not make the mistake of rebuking and shouting at them. Do not vent your frustration on your few members. It is not their fault that the church is small in the beginning stages. Preach faith!

Preach hope! Preach establishment! Preach about a better tomorrow! People love to hear that tomorrow will be better than today. You must be bold and shameless in your preaching.

I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity [shamelessness] he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

Luke 11:8

In the above Scripture passage, the Greek word *anaideia* translated importunity, also means shamelessness. The shamelessly persistent person gets results. Let us face it! There is some amount of shame in beginning a ministry with a few people. That is why people despise small beginnings!

Shamelessness (Anaideia) must characterize all that you do when you begin a church. Shamelessly invite people to join you on Sunday morning. When they see that you are not shy of your church, they will be interested in coming. Shamelessly advertise your church.

People will believe what you say about your church. If you have an assistant, he must say good things about the preaching and about the church in general. All these things help to create a good atmosphere for church growth.

Chapter 9 - Witnessing and Follow-Up

This must be predominant in all of your church activities. You must boldly enter into the houses of your city and preach Christ to the people. You must shamelessly lead people to Christ in their living rooms. Pray for them and invite them to church. Stand on the street and talk to passers-by about Jesus Christ. If you cannot shamelessly do street evangelism, then you cannot be a pastor. Lead the congregation in inviting people to church every Sunday.

Do not be depressed if most of the visitors do not come back. Most of them will not stay anyway. God will supernaturally bring the increase.

Pastors must realize that there is a spiritual principle of sowing and reaping. Whatever you sow is what you will reap.

...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Galatians 6:7

If you sow seeds through invitations and witnessing, you will reap from it one day. My experience is that after a crusade or an outreach, we initially have very few results.

However, after a while we begin to have people from the very place we held the outreach coming to the church. Usually they are not the people we witnessed to. But

God divinely sends them to us from that place. Use all the principles of *anagkazo* (for further study see my book, *Anagkazo*).

Chapter 10 Avoid These Mistakes

- 1. Do not hurriedly appoint people to leadership positions.** Allow time to pass before you make definite appointments. Many of the people who are with you in the beginning will leave anyway.
- 2. Do not be discouraged because of fluctuating attendance.** Do not be discouraged because of a rotational shift of the members, i.e., half attend this week, the other half the following week. That is how sheep behave. Take no notice of them!
- 3. Do not rent an expensive hall.**
- 4. Do not keep the church's money in your house or in your personal account.** One day somebody will accuse you of stealing, although you may have contributed a lot to the church.
- 5. Do not count the money yourself but assign people to do so.**

You Do Not Need These Things

Contrary to what people think, several things are not necessary when you are starting a church. *You do not need a complimentary card or a briefcase to build a Mega Church! A constitution is not vital in the early stages.* What is important is to have members and a regular congregation. A church logo is not important, neither is a church flag. *Initially, it may not be necessary to register a church.* Many countries allow freedom of association and freedom of religion. Just build the church and fill it with people. Pray for them, preach the Word, visit the sheep and trust God! Since the Greater One is in you, you cannot fail!

Chapter 11 - Starting a Network of Churches

Every pastor can expect the Lord to use you to start more than one church. After a period you will have a network of churches. These churches will have to be managed. Managing a network of churches involves training, encouraging and guiding a team of ministers as they work.

Three Keys to Starting a Network of Churches

1. Teaching on how to do the work of the ministry

The first key to starting a network of churches is the TRAINING of ministers. The congregation is a field in which you plant seeds. If you plant seeds of leadership and inspire the members to do pastoral work, they will do it. The more you teach on how to do the work of the ministry, the more potential ministers will be released.

When you teach your leaders, you are actually teaching many more people. You are also teaching the followers of this leader. Pastors must know the principle of explosive growth: if you want GROWTH, teach your members, if you want EXPLOSIVE GROWTH, teach your leaders!

Teaching leaders establishes authority over the leaders who work under you. This is because the authority over the leaders is demonstrated by your ability to feed them.

Teaching ordinary members is an investment into the church today. Teaching leaders is an investment into the future when you are gone. Success without a successor is failure!

Every pastor must teach leaders because Jesus Christ taught leaders all the time. Pastors must spend more time teaching leaders than teaching ordinary church members. This is the pattern set by Christ Jesus. Teaching leaders is your greatest key to true expansion. You will not have anyone to delegate to if you have not trained leaders. Every pastor must teach his leaders because the leaders will never know what to do unless you teach them. Many pastors assume that the potential leaders around them will acquire vital knowledge by osmosis. People feel that leadership is for special people who are born that way. Osmosis is not the key to leadership – teaching is!

I have written many books on these subjects which I recommend to you: *Lay People and the Ministry*, *The Mega Church*, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry* etc. As you teach your members these materials, you will be surprised at what they will become.

2. Teaching on loyalty

The second key to starting a network of churches is LOYALTY. Loyalty is essential for maintaining a network of churches. The churches you will start will not be in the same location. It is therefore necessary for people to be loyal wherever they are situated. I have taught a lot on loyalty. I have also written three books on this subject: *Loyalty and Disloyalty*, *Leaders and Loyalty*, *Know Your Men*. I recommend that you read these books, as they will be a blessing to your ministry.

I once heard someone criticizing me for teaching on loyalty.

He said, “Why should you teach on loyalty and disloyalty?”

He went on to say that loyalty is not something that is taught but is something that people are inspired to be because of your leadership.

I was not surprised that this dear critic of mine had not started a single branch of his church but was criticizing someone who had started over four hundred churches.

On another occasion, a dear pastor criticized me for teaching on loyalty. However, when his church split, he became an avid reader of my books and even promoted them to other ministers. Loyalty is a key subject which must be taught until the culture of faithfulness and loyalty is established!

3. Teaching on church administration

Church administration involves the managing of the churches that have been created. It involves managing a combination of secular and spiritual issues. It involves balancing natural things with supernatural things.

Church administration involves the blending of hierarchical leadership and a democratic form of government. Both of these styles are biblical.

The Bible has examples of committees being formed as in Acts, chapter 6. As in the case of Paul and Timothy, the Bible also has examples of an autocratic style of leadership with direct instructions being handed down.

Church administration requires combining the power of God and the wisdom of God. See my book, *Church Administration*.

Without good church administration everything that you build will eventually collapse. You need to master church administration, otherwise your ministry will be likened to a rocket that shoots off and falls apart shortly after take-off.

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:24

Chapter 12 - The Advantages of a Network of Churches

1. History has proved that networks of churches or branches are very successful. These networks of churches are sometimes called denominations.
2. There are several well-known networks of churches in the world today. These networks are often the most stable and established congregations everywhere. The Assemblies of God Church, the Church of Pentecost, the Church of God in Christ are but a few notable examples of these networks. The largest church in the world, pastored by David Yonggi Cho in South Korea, belongs to the Assemblies of God Church network.
3. History has shown that belonging to a network of churches can give rise to very large stable congregations. It may be the key to church growth for your congregation.
4. Belonging to a network of churches sometimes eliminates the instability that characterizes young independent churches. The institutional stagnation that sometimes develops in a network of churches may be a lesser evil compared to the advantages that come with it.
5. In a network of churches, there are tried and tested principles which are passed on to sister churches.
6. In a network of churches, the already existing name serves as publicity and attracts people to the churches. This name becomes like a franchise and serves as a powerful asset. The good name of a network of churches also has spiritual significance that cannot be quantified.
7. In a network of churches, trained members benefit from an established and respected system of pastoral recommendation and appointments.
8. The network of churches can benefit from each other financially. You are not likely to get financial support outside your network. Through a system of brotherly interdependence, churches are able to accomplish much more.
9. Church members readily flow between churches belonging to the same network. The network of churches is therefore to keep members within the fold.
10. Churches within the network easily benefit from anointed senior ministers of that network. These churches do not have to go through the protocol nor experience the cost of having such a ministry.

11. Pastors within the network of churches can receive fatherly counsel and encouragement from seniors. Pastors of independent churches are usually suspicious and wary of external ministers who parade as fathers. There is little trust because independent churches often compete with one another rather than support each other.

12. Churches within a network operate under a particular spiritual covering. The same anointing runs through the entire network because it is really one church.

Furthermore, by these few pages, my son, be admonished because of making many books there is no end.

Other Best-Selling Books by [Dag Heward-Mills](#):

[Loyalty and Disloyalty](#)

[Leaders and Loyalty](#)

[Transform Your Pastoral Ministry](#)

[The Art of Leadership](#)

[Model Marriage](#)

[Church Planting](#)

[The Mega Church](#)

[Lay People and the Ministry](#)

These titles are also available in Spanish and/or French. Information about other foreign translations of some of the titles above may be obtained by writing to our email address.