



SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH: THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION SYSTEM – Part 1

by Glenn Smith

There are **three critical systems** that every new church needs to develop to be healthy and sustainable:

1. An Assimilation System
2. A Spiritual Formation System
3. A Leadership Development System

This is the first of two papers on creating a **Spiritual Formation System**.

The most difficult part of church planting is gathering. However, it's not unusual for church planters to become so consumed with "gathering" that they forget what they are gathering people for. Our mission is to make disciples, not just gather people. So how do we do it?

The place to begin is to focus. What does a real disciple look like? Dallas Willard calls this an "Apprentice of Jesus." What does he/she look like? I prefer to guide church planters through a Biblical study and personal reflection process. You can download my worksheet by going to our website, www.nciglobal.org and clicking on "Essential Experiences."

Steven Covey tells leaders to "begin with the end in mind." This is critical if we are going to have an effective spiritual formation system. Begin there and then work backwards.

After a church planting pastor completes the worksheet he typically concludes that you can't work on everything all at once. So I suggest that you identify the top 4-6 qualities that need to be focused on in your congregation over the next 12 months. Then refine your qualities by stating them on very concrete objective statements. Once you get your spiritual formation objectives clarified, identify 3-5 measurable behaviors that will give indication that these objectives are being achieved.

Remember, if you can't measure it you can't manage it. Most pastors and church leaders have no system for measuring the spiritual progress of their people. They don't really know if they are making disciples or not. Also, I have seen very few clearly defined systems for spiritual formation. We tend to depend on a class or a program to accomplish this central objective. However, we must take the time to evaluate our effectiveness and measure our progress. A good coach will help you with this.