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Book Review: Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication by Craig Ott and Gene Wilson

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Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011, 464 pp., \$29.99.

Reviewed by Tom Steffen. Steffen is professor of Intercultural Studies at the School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, where he directs the Doctor of Missiology program. His most recent book is *The Facilitator Era: Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication*. He may be reached at tom.steffen@biola.edu.

Readers will not be disappointed with this book. With close to fifty years of church planting and consulting experience between the authors, this book contains church planting theory that walks. Craig Ott is associate professor of mission and intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he occupies the ReachGlobal Chair of Mission. Ott planted churches in Germany, as well as consulted and taught theology with expertise in theology of mission, contextualization, and church planting. Wilson is church planting director for ReachGlobal, the international mission of the Evangelical Free Church of America, and director of their annual Cross-Cultural Church Planting School. Wilson planted churches in Canada for eighteen years and trained and coached church planters in Latin America and the Caribbean for eight years.

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The authors' primary goal for writing the book is to combine sound biblical principles with best practices from around the world to provide a practical guide for church planters (including grassroots workers in the Majority World) working in a wide variety of contexts. They place strong focus on the apostolic role found in the New Testament while avoiding the promotion of a single model or methodology. The authors recognize that effective models in one context do not necessarily translate well into another setting. They define church planting as "that ministry which through evangelism and discipleship establishes reproducing kingdom communities of believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to fulfilling biblical purposes under local spiritual leaders" (8).

Ott and Wilson divide the book of 464 pages into four parts. Part I lays the biblical foundation for church planting, the reasons for it, and New Testament beginnings. In Part II, the authors address strategic considerations. These include: church multiplication and movements; apostolic church planters; the shape of the church; and pioneer, reproduction, and regional approaches to church planting. Part III lays out developmental phases: preparing, launching, establishing, structuring, and reproducing. The book concludes by addressing critical factors, such as the personal life of church planters; church planting teams; developing

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servants, leaders, and planters; partnerships and resources in church planting; and
planting churches with kingdom impact. Numerous case studies and sidebars
pepper the pages. The works cited section comprises twenty-two pages, and the
book concludes with a helpful index.

The authors provide depth of topic, comprehensiveness, connections and
challenges to the past, new configurations, fairness toward those with whom they
disagree, clarity of content, a strong connection to Scripture, an holistic approach
to ministry, multiple practical applications, some denominational assumptions,
numerous lists of best practices, and a strong bibliography.

Here are few additions I would love to see incorporated into the first revision
of this book. First, rather than tell the reader to be contextual, the authors should
raise specific cultural questions for each area that will provide the answers. For
example, in relation to pedagogy, how does the host culture learn or teach others?
Second, the authors should show the church planter how to make a tighter
connection between evangelism and follow up. Third, at least 30–40 percent of the
“global” audience are not primarily oral learners. So, how does secondary orality
play out for a post-modern audience in the various contexts? Lastly, as more and
more western long-termers and short-termers find their callings not as pioneer
church planters but rather as facilitators working with existing churches abroad,
how will this change impact the selection, training, and mentoring of planters?
How will this change affect the pioneer role of church planter?

Thank you, Craig and Gene, for providing us an excellent work that will prove
to be instrumental in reaching the one-third of the world that remains without a
church.

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping Around Gospel and
Community*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008, 224 pp., \$15.99.

Reviewed by Rod Earls, Ph.D.. Earls is the Director of Missions for the Central Valley Baptist
Association in Turlock, California, and Assistant Professor with Liberty Baptist Theological
Seminary.

Steve Timmis pastored a “traditional church” which for all intents and
purposes was growing and healthy. However, his heart stayed arrested by the fact
that so many “outsiders” were not hearing the Gospel and being impacted by the
love of Christ through Christian witness. He believed that somehow church life
and ministry had to be accomplished in a different fashion. Tim Chester grew up in
the home of a pastor and often discussed ecclesiological issues with his father. He