

certainly continue to be asked. Despite the few limitations of their work, Muck and Adeney have provided Christians an insightful approach in answering this difficult question.

Nelson Searcy with Jennifer Dykes Henson. *Ignite: How to Spark Immediate Growth in Your Congregation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009. Pp 203. \$14.99.

Reviewed by James Cho. James is the Distance Learning Administrator for the Cook School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University and has served as church planter at New Life Oasis Church in downtown Los Angeles.

One of the lingering questions of church planters and pastors is “Is my church growing?” We wonder if we could do more to help the church grow. In the book, *Ignite: how to Spark Immediate Growth in Your Congregation*, Searcy and Henson gives us a straightforward guide to developing a church with a passion to grow.

294

The authors’ central concern is how to grow the church through a system of targeted outreach opportunities to the community. These events are called “A Big Day” (26). They summarize this concept as: “an all-out push toward a single Sunday for the purpose of breaking the next growth barrier and setting an attendance record in order to reach as many people as possible for Jesus” (26). The reasoning for the Big Day is fourfold: 1) to reach new people; 2) to make the devil mad; 3) to grow Christians in the church; and 4) to build momentum in the church.

The authors note that there are four areas that lend much support to the Big Day. The majority of the book’s contents address these four aspects: 1) pastor’s role; 2) significance of personal evangelism; 3) promoting; and 4) preserving.

In the section concerning the pastor, the authors note that the leader cannot simply be a cheerleader, but must exemplify to the congregation how to reach out to the lost. He must set the stage by providing the environment for evangelism. This includes sharing personal testimonies of evangelism, teaching the members how to evangelize, and creating a teaching schedule that works in conjunction with the members personal evangelistic endeavors.

The pastor must also challenge his staff and keep them accountable for being active in evangelism. The staff must be praying and fasting for the lost and the Big Day. They must also be participating in any evangelistic activities and bring their own lost friends to the Big Day.

In the second section addressing personal evangelism, the authors note that a good environment for such ministry must be provided. People must be given the right tools, proper training, and good timing must exist. Missing one of the items

will hamper the members from being excited about evangelism. The pastor must challenge the members to pray for unchurched friends, provide them with invitation cards to the Big Day, and encourage the members to do acts of kindness in the community. The church should work hard at evangelism, and prepare for the Big Day with their best foot forward.

In the third section addressing promotion, the authors challenge the pastor is begin with critical thinking. The target audience should be determined. After that, pastors should determine what types of promotional material is needed. “Big” thinking is encouraged, with promotion grounded in faith and prayer.

The authors encourage the readers to consider several factors related to promoting. Church leaders must make sure they are consistent in their promotion. A one time mass mailer or advertisement will not suffice. In the advertisement, the message must be clear. Clarity includes having all the information needed to join in on the Big Day event. Leaders must try to be creative in how they promote the event and customize the promotion to the needs of the target audience. Finally, leaders must be have faith and trust God that He will use the promotion to bring the unchurched to the church.

295

The final section of the book concerns preservation. The reader is informed that the purpose of inviting people to come is not simply to get them to show up, but rather to become involved. Two guidelines are suggested for assistance. First, churches must provide many different ways for people to get involved. Second, the church must help people to honestly evaluate where they are spiritually.

Throughout reading the book, several questions came to mind regarding the nature of the church. The authors suggest practices that appear to work well in newly planted churches, but not necessarily in well established churches. For example, they note that we are not to focus on the naysayers, rather pushing ahead in leading the church to growth. Such is a challenge in older congregations.

Also, the authors assume the pastor of the church has a leadership team in place. In church planting contexts, effort must be made to develop a team before pushing too far forward. In an established church, time must be allotted to develop trust from the leadership. Also, pushing ahead without considering the evangelistic temperature of the church can have some undesired consequences. I do agree that as leaders we must move forward, but to do it more judiciously than advocated in the book.

Beyond this critique, I see great value in what is shared in the book. There are many practical suggestions to help us plan for our Big Day. Also, the thrust of the book is not found in marketing, but marketing as a means to demonstrate faith. Throughout the book, two things were clear: 1) the need to have great faith; and 2)

prayer and fasting as the foundation for the Big Day. In the planning process, the desired result is not merely to have the Big Day, but that church members learn how to develop a deeper faith in God and stronger relationships with one another. The purpose is not for bragging rights about numbers, but rather to see more people come to faith.