



# PRACTISED BY GROWING BAPTIST CHURCHES

**A**t the Firestarters Network we have discovered Baptist churches that seem to experience significant growth do so by practising a few simple habits, writes Chrissy Remsberg. These seven traits are found over and over again in the stories we have heard of growing Baptist churches. What makes these traits so profound is their utter simplicity. These are habits that literally any church can put into practice.

Here is a quick look at six of these traits with a deeper look at the seventh below.

Churches that grow have experienced an **Intensity of Prayer and Fasting** that is leader-led. 'For the leader, missing that daily dose of prayer should be as noticeable as a diabetic missing an insulin shot.' (P16, *On This Rock*)

These churches have committed to being ones where the **Gospel is Simply Told**. 'The simple gospel message is not the only thing that is preached, but it is always preached.' (P31, *On This Rock*)

Growing churches have a high level of **Clarity and Agreement** about their vision and values. 'Churches that grow quickly are ones that know what they're about and everybody is about it.' (P58, *On This Rock*)

These churches have a clear recognition that **The People You Have Are Enough**. 'Ultimately, it's a belief that God is too wise to make a mistake and too loving to wish us harm and if he has genuinely called us to step out and do something, then he's already given the church - or

he will give them - the people, leaders or resources they need to achieve that.' (P68, *On This Rock*)

'Like the church in Acts 4, these growing churches learned to trust an unknown future to a known God.' (P79, *On This Rock*) Because of this, they had the courage to **Take Real Risks**.

A sixth principle in our quick list is churches that have seen significant growth have found that you have to **Reorganise More Often Than You Think**. 'Churches that are able to continue to grow recognise the need to reinvent the trellis to both cater for and catalyse growth. If the trellis isn't big enough or strong enough then the vine cannot be fruitful.' (P96, *On This Rock*)

The seventh and final trait of these growing Baptist churches perhaps bears a deeper look. Combined with an *Intensity of Prayer and Fasting* and the *Gospel is Simply Told*, these three traits seem to carry the most weight in why some churches experience significant growth. In this instance there's an ability to **Let Your Evangelists Be Heard**. 'Ephesians 4 describes a vital team approach to church leadership. It's worth noting, in the Bible the church was never led by one person, but rather by a plurality of leaders. We also see in the Bible a plurality of gifting.' (P43, *On This Rock*) Ephesians 4 describes five different gifts found in those who made up the leadership of the church - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

This plurality of voices and gifting in our leadership is very much reflective of our Baptist way of thinking and being the church. And yet over time we have become very skilled at calling, training and empowering our pastor/teachers. We have learned to empower and release those with pastoral and administrative gifts in leadership. But we have, perhaps, lost the 'voice of our evangelists, even while in some parts of the UK, less than 1% of people know Jesus... They need an evangelist!' (P44, *On This Rock*)

What we have seen in these growing Baptist churches is an ability to recapture and empower the evangelist. Often these churches are led by an evangelistic leader. But even when the person leading the church is not a natural evangelist they practise Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5, 'But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your

ministry.' These leaders have the heart of an evangelist and recognise this is part of the faithful fulfilment of the call to lead the church.

This commitment to hearing the evangelist's voice leads these churches to make simple changes to the way they make decisions or appoint leaders. They take opportunities to recognise who the evangelists are in their church, taking special note of those who always bring a friend to church events. When possible, they give these evangelists positions of leadership and when character or maturity make that difficult, then they invite these people to come and share with the diaconate or other leaders, so that decisions can be made with the evangelists' voice having influence. However, even when no evangelists can be found within the church, they work hard to either 'borrow an evangelist', by asking a regional minister who they could invite to sit in on an important discussion or they play the 'what-would-the-evangelist-say' game, taking time to consider how they would answer that question in light of significant decisions.

These simple but intentional decisions have a significant impact on the way a church engages with their community and practises its values. And, over time, we have seen that churches experiencing significant growth always listen for the evangelist's voice.

This quick look at the seven traits of growing Baptist churches just scratches the surface of these simple habits. At every Firestarters Conversation we dig deeper into each habit by hearing stories from two or three churches who have lived these habits and experienced growth. We discuss them at length, ask questions and learn together. If you want to learn more about an upcoming Firestarters Conversation or get a copy of the book that unpacks these principles, you can find information at [www.firestartersuk.com](http://www.firestartersuk.com)

You can also hear more stories and learning about the traits on The Firestarters Network Podcast, which can be found on our website or wherever you listen to great podcasts.



Chrissy Remsberg is the co-leader and pastor of Beacon Church, a Baptist church in Stafford. She co-leads the Firestarters Network with Alex Harris, with whom she has also co-authored, *On This Rock: Simple lessons and achievable habits for church growth.*



*Simple lessons and achievable habits for church growth*



Across our Baptists Together family there is an increasing number of rapidly growing churches. The Firestarters Network exists to share the stories and simple lessons from these churches to help other churches grow.

Firestarters released its first book earlier this year. *On This Rock: Simple lessons and achievable habits for church growth* by Alex Harris and Chrissy Remsberg shares principles of growing Baptist churches, as well as their stories.

The next Firestarters Conversations take place at **Exeter (22-23 May)** and **Blaby (25-26 September)**.

Firestarters is part funded by our national body, working in partnership with Associations, to have a tangible gospel impact on our local churches.

The Firestarters Network has also launched its own podcast. Each episode is packed with real stories of churches that have seen the power of the gospel at work. The podcast can be listened to pretty much anywhere you listen to podcasts.

Find out more: [firestartersuk.com](http://firestartersuk.com)