



Train, refresh and encourage leaders and teams: Introduction

Step eleven is phrased as something that the network does, and as a network we are committed to training supporting, refreshing and encouraging leaders. We live in an age rammed full of information, good and bad. We can find anything, important and trivial, with a few taps on our phones. The key factor in deciding our training is not the events that the network organises, and it's not the availability of content: it's the desire of the learner to get the training.

That means that the content that networks like Antioch deliver is less important than the choices that church members and leaders make about getting the training they need. You can see this reflected in the REAP course. We do write content, but we also link out to some podcasts, articles and resources on church planting.

What we have tried to do on the REAP course reflects the shape that we think our training will take. We want to signpost people to material that could help them and encourage them to think about it and talk about it. The future of our training does not lie in a book, or a set of materials that we write, but in a community of learners, thinking, searching, and asking questions. As you (for it is you that we speak of) find materials that help you, we would like to be able to signpost others to the material, so that as we grow, you all contribute to a map of materials helping us at each stage of the church planting loop. So far, this has been done by a small group of people in the network. In the future, we hope that this will be a job that all of us contribute to.

People come to people

None of this means that we don't think that face-to-face training has a role. We are saying that we want face to face time to include prayer, stories, inspiration and exploration of people's experience on the front line, while most of the formal technical teaching is done elsewhere. We will continue to bring people together for training, but we want this to be done in a way that reflects our priority of working with leaders who aren't paid to do this, at least full time. And we want our training to be fun, refreshing and encouraging, a point we'll come back to later.



It's also true that sometimes we need a push to get more training – someone to schedule our time so that we do that thing that we meant to, but somehow got pushed out by other things. This is also true for external processors, who read people better than books.

We learn by doing

There is an old proverb: I hear, I forget, I see, I remember, I do, I understand. This is true for church planting as it is in other parts of life. We learn best when we reflect on what we're doing, and when we talk through it. It's worth taking time to talk through 'what happened there?' because we learn and change when we think about God is doing in the events of our lives. The training that the network will always be less important than the training that we give each other.

Here are the some training networks that we in Antioch have looked across to at various points. It's not an exhaustive list, but they are mines of material.

- <https://www.3dmovements.com> – Mike Breen led St Thomas Crookes and Philadelphia in Sheffield. They created a network church and continue to develop that material for church planting and growth.
- <https://m4europe.com> – This is a Europe-wide church planting movement. The focus is obviously wider than the Antioch Network, but the material is excellent.
- <https://thebroadcastnetwork.org> – This is library of material from our friends at CCM is our go-to resource package. They are great, mixing Biblical and technical training and have a very similar outlook and context to the Antioch Network.
- <https://ccx.org.uk/myriad-plant/> – This is a newish centre based in the Diocese of London, but they are developing training centres across the country, although not yet in the North West.
- <https://redeemercitytocity.com> – This network grew out of Redeemer Church in New York, led by Tim Keller. They are excellent.

With all these resources, and others, it's worth asking questions about what they're trying to do and where. It's easy to think that because someone has planted four churches in Manila that if we do the same things they did, we too would end up with 6,000 in our churches in three years. Or if we simply mastered the art of discipleship groups, as they have in Colombia, then we would



have a thousand groups of 12 in no time. But cultures are different, and church sizes are different. One of the reasons we tend to go back to CCM and the Broadcast Network is that they are speaking into a similar context and have similar goals.

Different kinds of training

There are different kinds of training. Some people come out in a rash at some of them, and take aim at the dustbin as soon as they start reading a book they don't like. But it's important that we don't feed ourselves with what we already know and approve of. Here are some categories.

- **Biblical training**: this means reading the church planting task through the Bible. This obviously has a crucial role in allowing Jesus' life and ministry to shape our life and ministry. As we plant under the Great Commission, exploring our call through the words of the Commissioner is non-negotiable.
- **Technical training**: this is the *how-to* training. Where you are at in the loop, what do you need to do to gather team. You'll often see culturally relevant terms in these training sessions: team, leader, vision, mission. And, depending on what kind of person you are, you may be tempted to drink this all in as the future of the church, or alternatively dismiss it as semi-atheist techno-speak and throw it in the bin. Try to take the middle ground. For example, I learnt a lot from Christian Schwarz and the Natural Church Development movement, partly I like statistics and research, and there's a lot of bad and misleading research out there, where the wrong lessons are learnt from weak data sets. Christian Schwarz is more serious than others about the quality of his data. Other people find his charts, graphs and metaphors confusing and alienating. There is almost always something to learn from the experience of others.
- **Heart training**: this is rather like the animate part of our REAP course, where we focus not on the how-to or the task, but the heart. In most ways this is a no-brainer. Jesus said "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) This is the most fundamental truth of ministry. My only word of caution is that we can't always define being with Jesus as stillness, quietness, rest, and a calm spirit. Jesus has always put his followers in danger, has always



challenged them, has always shown them a dying world. Our walk with him takes us into that world, but to walk with him, not firstly to do things for him.

- **Prayer training:** this is the constant call related to heart training, to put prayer and worship at the centre of all that we do. Church planting is a form of worship. Again, though, we can define spiritual warfare or intercession as being distinct from action – but in God’s economy, it seems to me that prayer and the word are joined in the work of intercession. You can see this principle as Paul talks about spiritual warfare:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

Church planting models

There are a lot of church planting movements with different methods, whether it’s resource churches, the G12 movement (<https://www.g12uk.com/about>), Disciple making movements (look it up), megachurches, multisite house churches or others. Although some of these work really well in other contexts, such as disciple making movements, they may not have the same impact in the UK. The important thing, in any case, is to understand what you’re doing, and learn about what matters to you. Jumping from model to model or using material from one model when you’re actually using another can be tricky.

Encouraging and refreshing

We don’t just talk about training. We also talk about encouragement and refreshment. Or, as we say in the whole network: whatever you’re doing, you should usually be enjoying it and always be praying for it. It is so easy to forget that people often feel bruised and slightly hurt, and people who take risks to church plant are no exception. Christian Schwartz gives an example of the pastor of a small Danish church saying how small and insignificant his ministry was. But his church was growing. The numbers were small, but, in percentage terms, it was growing faster than Hillsong. The small numbers in our churches can make people see weakness



rather than progress. I've been in meetings where people around me were unreasonably excited by larger numbers coming, or unreasonably down when people didn't come. Smaller churches can seem frail when a few people are away.

So while we point to the good things that are going on, those who are finding God, we also have a Psalm 73 attitude. In Psalm 73, the Psalmist is depressed when he sees that those who disobey God seem to get everything promised to the obedient, while the obedient seem to suffer for very little. Then he goes into the sanctuary and understands the world with God's perspective and everything changes.

Somebody once talked about 'catching people in the act of doing something good'.

Encouraging people means catching them in the act of doing something good. When we encourage, we use positive feedback to reinforce a constructive attitude or behaviour, and it is far more powerful than criticism, which uses negative feedback to eliminate an attitude or behaviour.

Refreshing has something of the same element to it. Dump grace into your church and your church plant team. Encourage sabbaticals. Don't insist on things constantly being done to the highest standard. Enjoy worship. Take breaks and Sabbaths in your rhythm of church. Psalm 127 says: *"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves."* It doesn't mean that we shouldn't work hard, or labour, or watch. It does mean that it's the Lord who builds, and we can always afford grace in our plants. In the Antioch Network, we can financially afford it. There's always a chance for people to go to places where they can meet with God and find spiritual refreshment.

Finally, refreshment also happens when we worship, as we pray, as we seek God. As with training, no one in leadership can do this for leaders. But we can encourage people in that direction, by modelling prayer and worship and by paying close attention to it in the rhythms of our network as well as our church.



From our 11-Stage Church Planting Loop:
Stage 11 – Train & Refresh Leaders and Teams

Questions for Discussion:

1. How can I encourage people to get the training that they need?
2. How do I need to equip others and to be equipped?
3. How am I being refreshed, and how am I refreshing and encouraging others in my church leadership team?