

5/52

How Every Church Can Start a New Church

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Any church can afford to support a church plant. Most churches can afford to be the sole sponsor of a church plant if they will engage their member's hearts into church planting and use a strategy that is proven to work. Of course, there will be members who will see sponsorship as an impossible venture because "*the church is barely meeting budget, and there is the debt to pay off, plus we already give so much.*" However, a pastor-leader who is a true visionary with a heart for planting churches can have major success through a stewardship emphasis called **5/52**.



What is 5/52?

5/52 is a stewardship emphasis, over and above the tithe, in which the congregation simply is asked to give **\$5 a week for 52 weeks**. It has a huge success rate because the pastor is only asking a family to give **\$5** per week. Now in almost any American home, **\$5** is not something that will cause the family to suffer. Because the pastor is asking for so little, the membership is quick to embrace the new stewardship effort.

What is important for the pastor to realize is that **5/52** pays off several huge dividends.

1. **First**, it's a great way to raise money. Five dollars a week over 52 weeks turns out to be a gift of \$260. This is an amount many people wouldn't ordinarily give to church planting except through this type of installment plan.
2. A **second** benefit of **5/52** is the high level of participation. In the last church where I used this emphasis to raise money to sponsor a new work, we experienced over 70 percent participation from the church family. To put this into context, this was a church of 300 members with 70 percent making a commitment; we had over 200 commitment cards. The reason was both husband and wife would turn in separate cards. Students would pledge because the level was within their grasp. This level of participation is typical of a **5/52** emphasis done correctly.

5/52 works because of the power of weekly giving. Here is why it works for just one year:

- 25 people commit \$5.00 per week for one year = \$6,500 in support.
- 50 people commit \$5.00 per week for one year = \$13,000 in support.
- 75 people commit \$5.00 per week for one year = \$19,500 in support.
- 100 people commit \$5.00 per week for one year = \$26,000 in support.
- 200 people commit \$5.00 per week for one year = \$52,000 in support.

The beauty of **5/52** is that it is an **annual commitment**, with those funds coming in each year as long as the new work needs funds or as long as the congregation has a passion for new church starts.

5/52: Just the Beginning

While the power of weekly giving from just 200 people is truly amazing, what is even more amazing is what can be raised leading up to and including the **5/52** commitment Sunday.

5/52 works best as a total stewardship program through which people are taught to give over and above the tithe for the purpose of planting new churches. It is a time of vision casting by the pastor that can lead to greater gifts in enlisting the people to sacrifice for the material needs of the new church and preparing the people's hearts for a cash offering on the day they make the commitment to **5/52**.

With proper vision casting about the new church and how it will be funded — *through a weekly sacrifice everyone can afford* — the pastor needs to let the people know what the costs will be for the church start. Planting a church today can quickly run into several hundred thousand dollars in just a few years by the time rent, salary, community and media awareness, evangelistic activities, and church needs are all considered.

Three Areas 5/52 Can Support

One thing the pastor can do as a lead-up to the **5/52 Kick Off** is allow the congregation to discover some of the more important financial needs of the new church. For example:

1. **Support Salaries** – The cost of living varies drastically in different areas of the country. For the congregation to understand the essential costs of providing for the salary and housing needs of a church planter and potentially other staff.

To effectively accomplish communicating these needs, your congregation will need to be able to “put a face” with the need. Bring the church planter to your church for your **5/52 Kick Off Service**. Have the planter share a personal and emotional story with your people of his life and ministry reaching people in the new church's area. This can also be accomplished via satellite, internet web cams, or by video if distance and cost are a factor. When people hear the church planter, they will be much more likely to make a **5/52 Commitment**.

2. **Support Start Up Costs** – A new church requires many things that are typically taken for granted by an established congregation. Leadership can help the congregation to know what the new work will have to buy and the approximate costs which can be taken from the **5/52** Stewardship Emphasis. A likely benefit of distributing this type of needs list is so that God may impress someone to give that amount of money. That way, it won't have to come out of **5/52** funds.

Illustration: One example is a good sound system. It would be a mistake to simply say the new church needs a sound system. If you do, it is likely that some well-intentioned person will donate their old sound system or a small hi-impedance system from a local electronics retailer. **Instead**, list the specific items needed and their cost from your preferred electronics source. You specifically ask for

- a Shure SCM800 Eight Channel Microphone Mixer for \$599.90 and
- eight Shure SM58 microphones for \$99.00 each.

By being specific, you get what you need instead of what someone purchases without adequate expertise or information something they just want to throw away.

3. **Support Purchasing Smaller Items** - On other smaller items, **5/52** can be the launch for creative activities such as a Women's Baby Shower. I know of one church sponsor that used the baby shower idea to get the church's nursery materials purchased according to exacting specifications, along with other items needed for worship. This also gave the women of the church a fun way of embracing and expecting what God would do through this new church. Again, these items could be purchased using **5/52** funds, but the emphasis may very well be the stimulus to creative solutions for providing many of the smaller cost items.

Four Ideas for Success (See Strategic Implementation Timeline at end of article)

IDEA #1: Planning and Preparation - Give at least six weeks from the time you announce the stewardship emphasis until the **5/52** commitment Sunday. Allow people to prepare. On the day, you announce the campaign, meet with your church leaders in the afternoon and thoroughly go over the emphasis. Seek out questions and readily give answers. This is called "working the grass tops." As leaders, the rest of the members of your church will follow these people. Their opinions count more than you know. When I meet with the grass tops, I meet with anyone in any position of service. Grass tops include Bible study leaders, committee team members, and every other person who serves. In fact, I open the meeting up so wide that I say, "*If you consider yourself to be a leader, then you are invited.*" The rule of thumb for this gathering is to include all persons of influence.

The people will join the pastor if he will share his heart, his vision, and the power of giving small amounts weekly by a large number of people. At the leadership meeting, I prepare a handout that includes a place for people to submit questions they may be afraid to ask and a place for them to commit to pray, commit to promote, or commit to give to the campaign. I have them check all the boxes that apply. That way the next Sunday I can say, "*Seventy people have committed to*

give already and we are still five weeks away.”

IDEA #2: Sending Letters - The next idea is to send out **three letters**. Research has been done that shows that three is the magic number before the law of diminishing return comes into play.

1. In the **first letter**, I set the stage and make the case for starting the new church. Keep this letter relatively short, but get your point across.
2. In the **second letter**, I ask them to make the commitment in their heart and to attend one of the special events as well as prepare a cash offering.
3. The **third** is the most time-sensitive letter; it needs to hit the week before the **5/52** Commitment Service and offering with an offering envelope and commitment card. The letter needs to remind people of the cause and prepare them to visualize success.

IDEA #3: Keep it Simple – By maintaining the theme of **5/52**, it will sustain a simple focus for the emphasis. A \$10-a-week donation may throw people off at first. Five dollars is non-intimidating, and that is one reason it is well received. Seven dollars may account for inflation, but all of the sudden the numbers become more confusing; we are society with a number system based on fives and tens.

However, on the commitment card, have a place for **\$5** a week, \$7 a week, \$10 a week, \$15 dollars a week, and other. People aren't limited to giving **\$5**; it is just a theme for the stewardship emphasis. Be sure to clarify this at your leadership meeting. In addition, use the term “stewardship emphasis” over “financial campaign” and you'll be much better received.

On the day of the offering, it is always a good idea to ask for cash along with the **5/52** commitment. It is a good idea to have a testimony from someone whose life will be impacted by the new work, along with someone who has been behind the giving aspect of the promotion since inception.

In addition, it is always good to have a simple “*come forward, drop your gift in the box*” kind of collection on your **5/52 Kick Off & Commitment Day**. In the church of 300 mentioned earlier, **5/52** actually raised over \$100,000 with the pre-gifts and cash offerings on that Sunday, and the annual commitments. The reason is that you can spend cash much easier than you can a commitment.

IDEA #4: Express Gratitude - **5/52** doesn't end with the Commitment Day and offering.

1. As soon as possible after the commitment cards are returned with donor addresses, I send out a thank you note to everyone who gave any amount.³ It may be that you send three letters to the same home, but one of those may be to a student who is just discovering giving; saying thanks will keep the commitment alive.
2. Finally, develop an e-newsletter, for supporters only, as to the progress of the work.

Give the task to the staff of the new church as their way of saying thank you in an ongoing way for the sacrifice of the people. The e-newsletter can be printed and mailed to individuals that do not have an e-mail address. Remind the new church staff that each year their support comes up for renewal. The renewal is not through the partner church's budget process, but through what individual people will give to **5/52** next year.

Three Tips for Smaller Churches

The majority of Southern Baptist churches run 100 or less each Sunday. Therefore, you may be wondering how **5/52** can help your church be involved in church planting. There are plenty of ways if you will be creative.

1. **First**, you can build a partnership with two or three other small churches and together win a great victory for the Kingdom. This will take an exceptional partnership between the pastors and the people, but it is worth the effort for Kingdom growth.
2. **Second**, you can raise the money each year and put it in a fund to help one church get started. Three years of savings could amount to a large amount of money, which may be enough for a church in a less-populated region where rent is cheaper and the planter may be bi-vocational. (The higher cost church starts are usually in the newer suburbs where facility rental, even at a school, can run well over \$1,000 per week.)
3. **Third**, you can send the money given through **5/52** to your association or state convention and designate it for church planting. It may be that there is a new church plant on the other side of the association or state that needs your partnership and sacrifice and without **5/52**; they wouldn't receive needed financial support.

Why Churches Should Use 5/52

There isn't anything magical or mystical about **5/52**. As a matter of fact, it has its roots in the sports world, where a coach of a major football team told the alumni he could produce a better team if they would each give so many dollars a week for 50 weeks. From there, I saw it successfully used to fund a mega-church's media ministry. Then, as the need for dollars for church planters rose, I began to wonder whether it could be used to plant churches, and God has blessed us.

The beauty of **5/52** is that each week, the membership makes a decision to support church planting. It puts church planting where it belongs, back in the heart of the people of our great convention. In addition, who can't cut back just **\$5** a week to change their community or their world?

Suggest to people that they drink water one night when they go out to eat at their favorite restaurant, buy the smaller container of popcorn at the movies, or go down one name brand in tennis shoes. That way they will always have the **\$5** that is necessary, and state conventions

won't have to turn down requests for a needed church plant due to budget constraints. Five dollars a week can't do much on its own, but when combined with a mighty number of passionate people, it can change the world.

3 Things that can Influence Failure

1. Partner Church – Inadequate preparation for **5/52 Kick-Off**
2. Partner Church - Inadequate follow-through for **5/52 Kick-Off**
3. Church Starter – Inadequate monthly communication with **5/52 Supporters**

SUGGESTED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

8 Weeks before Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Confirm all 5/52 Emphasis materials	Finalize all plans to attend 5/52 Kick Off Service(s) at Partner Church
Send out 5/52 Luncheon invitation letters to all leaders	

6 Weeks before Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Announce 5/52 Stewardship Emphasis	
Luncheon & meeting with all church leaders (influencers)	
Pass out luncheon leadership handout, with response/commitment card & a place for private questions or comments	

5 Weeks before Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Announce to congregation how many leaders have committed to the 5/52 Emphasis	Provide partner church with a “cost” sheet of specific items that need to be purchased for 5/52
Promote 5/52 & Commitment Day cash offering	

3 Weeks before Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Distribute “costs” sheets with a challenge to pray about helping with a specific area in addition to the 5/52	
Mail 1 st Letter (why plant a church)	
Promote 5/52 & Commitment Day cash offering	

2 Weeks before Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Mail 2 nd letter asking for commitment in their heart and to attend one of the special events as well as prepare a cash offering	
Promote 5/52 & Commitment Day cash offering	

THE Week before 5/52 Promotion Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Mail 3 rd letter with a 5/52 offering envelope and commitment card. Remind people of the cause and prepare them to visualize success	Confirm with Partner Church pastor about 5/52 Kick Off activities
Promote 5/52 & Commitment Day cash offering	

Day of 5/52 Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Leadership Testimony on the giving aspect of the promotion since inception of 5/52	IN 5/52 COMMITMENT SERVICE: Tell specific story of transformation of lives and the difference new church is making in community
Distribute 5/52 Commitment Cards	
Receive 5/52 Commitment Cards and Cash offering in a “ <i>come forward, drop your gift in the box</i> ” kind of collection during service	

After the 5/52 Kick Off

Partner Church	Planter / New Church
Provide Planter with names and contact information for all donors	Mail a personal, hand written thank you note to each donor.
	Include a small Thank You gift with note (i.e. Church pen, special church bookmark, key ring, etc.)
	Prepare and send Introductory newsletter to all donors within 1 month after 5/52 commitment day
	Schedule to send monthly newsletter to all donors from each partner church Be sure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some photos • Life transformation stories • Stories of how donor's gifts have made a difference in a person's life

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³ It is recommended that the church planter remain "blind" to what individuals gave, but send a personal, handwritten thank you note to each donor. Church counters, ushers or some other group can provide the Church Planter with the names and addresses of each giver.