BOOKS I HAVE READ: CHURCH PLANTING IN EUROPE

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A worthwhile reflection on mission in one of the hardest places in the world.
Category: Reviews

In case you haven't time to read the whole blog post;Â Church Planting in Europe: Connecting to Society, Learning from ExperienceÂ is an excellent book. It's about 270 pages long, with 19 chapters and is a good buy on Kindle, but rather expensive in paperback.

And now in more detail...

Church Planting in Europe:Â consists of papers from a conference which was held in Belgium in July 2014. As is always the case with conference proceedings, the quality of the papers varies, but that can't be avoided. It is also the case that from time to time the different papers reflect different approaches to Church planting. If you are looking for a coherent, sealed system, this book doesn't provide it, but if you want to be exposed to a range of opinions and ideas, this is definitely the place to come.

After an initial introduction, there are four broad sections.

Biblical Reflections:Â I found these three chapters very helpful and thought provoking. To be honest, they would be relevant to church planters or missionaries anywhere in the world; there is nothing specifically European about this bit.



Church in Europe:Â this is the longest section (8 chapters) and covers a range of issues from historic Christianity, through post-modernism and on to the need to plant churches in multicultural societies and among Muslims.

Church Planters:Â to my mind, this was the stand-out section of the book. Joanne Appleton's paper on Missional spirituality was very thought provoking and Jim Memory's paper on Measuring the Effectiveness of Church Planting was just about worth the price of the book on its own. In an age where measuring mission effectiveness tends to focus purely on numbers, it is good to have a paper which takes a more thorough, albeit brief, theological evaluation of the question.

> *I am convinced that we must engage in a thorough critique of our church planting thinking if we are to break the "quantitative fallacy" which measures success by numbers rather than the transformative mission of God.*

Case Studies:Â The final three chapters look at different case studies across Europe, providing some practical examples of the issues discussed earlier in the book.

This isn't a "how to" book; a guide on the ten steps to take if you want to plant churches in Europe. It

is, however, a very good reflection and personal experience against the background of church planting in Europe. To be fair, it isn't a general interest book. I wouldn't suggest putting it at the top of your list for reading on the beach this summer. However, if you are involved in church planting (or any type of mission work, for that matter) you will want to get hold of this. I also suspect that those studying for degrees in cross-cultural mission will find themselves quoting from various parts of this book in their essays.

Though I generally found the book well worthwhile, I do have a significant reservation and that concerns things that were not there. To my mind, it is strange to see a book on church planting in Europe that does not include something from Steve Timmis or Tim Chester who have written creatively on the subject for a number of years. Equally, one of the largest growing movements, Pentecostal, Black-majority churches in large cities did not get enough coverage. However, I recognise the obvious limitation faced by the editors of the book; they could only include material from people who actually attended the conference.

The publishers, Wipf & Stock kindly provided me with a copy of this book to review here, my remarks (both positive and negative) are not influenced by this.