10 Keys To Breaking the 200 Barrier

1. Launch public services with a core group of 50-100, no less
   a. A church plant doubles in attendance the first 18 month, doubles again over the following 3 years, then begins to level off.
   b. Healthy growth in an existing church is 10% annually or 100% decadal growth.
   c. An established church that more than doubles in size in less than 10 years usually splits. Established people have a hard time adjusting to all the changes necessary for growth.

2. Pastor has to be willing to pay the price for growth
   a. It’s time consuming and energy draining
   b. Taxes your family
   c. Takes very long hours and a willingness to sacrifice intimacy in relationships for more relationships: shepherd vs. rancher

3. Leadership must be willing to pay the price for growth.
   a. It’s risky hiring people in anticipation of the growth.
   b. You don’t have access to the pastor like you would if he were there just for you. (I rarely see the core members of the church)
   c. The pastor and lay leadership must be ruthless in evaluating results:
      i. What do visitors say? Card.
      ii. How do the members communicate with you?
      iii. How do you know if your sermons are hitting the mark? If your music is running people off?
      iv. Are you willing to kill programs that either are not effective or out of line with your vision?

4. The laity needs to be willing to pay the price for growth.
   a. Change is almost always more uncomfortable than staying the course. Different is almost always more uncomfortable than status quo.
      i. People don’t like coming to worship services at different times.
      ii. People don’t naturally look for changes in their behavior that will help the church growth: we ask our membership to sacrifice regularly: eg., capital
campaigns, parking in worst parking spots, driving shuttles, taking bad seats, coming to earlier services, standing in order to give a visitor their chair (I model this).

b. Open to always welcoming visitors
c. Do members have an evangelistic lifestyle? I don’t mean do they share Jesus (less than 2% of a congregation have the gift of evangelism). I mean do they invite people to their church? Do they talk about their church with their friends and neighbors? 80-85% of people come to church at the invitation of a friend or relative.
d. Willing to live outside their comfort zone. (ie, ministry focus on others instead of themselves-many people simply don’t care about the needs of others at church, they want their own needs met

5. Staffing must be a priority:
   a. Lack of commitment to taking a risk with staffing dollars leads to the risk of pastor/lay burn out; bottleneck of growth at the stress points

6. Facilities must accommodate growth
   a. Many churches build before they know how large the church will be which limits the size the church can become.
   b. The shoe tells the foot how large it can grow
   c. This is a philosophy question: Will the priority in growing/stabilizing the church plant be facilities or staffing
   d. When the auditorium or parking lot is 80% full, visitors will stop visiting

7. Willingness and ability to deal with conflict in a healthy way.
   a. Our experience was that the third wave of leadership became the ultimate leaders that took us into exponential growth

8. Visionary leadership must be taught by the pastor and caught by the people
   a. Expose your people to churches that are a little ahead of you and a lot ahead of you
   b. We’re having a church growth conference that’s ideal if you’re trying to plant a similar church-if you’re not, find churches like you and go there

9. The infrastructure must be able to accommodate growth.
a. Membership requirements can’t hold back growth even though they may be much tougher than requirements for established churches (they often are in new churches)
b. Small groups or Sunday school must be elastic enough to handle growth. If children’s programs don’t feel safe, visitors won’t bring their kids back (or won’t leave them in the first place).

10. The church **must** move from a single cell to multiple cells
a. Summarizes the sacrifice everybody must make.
b. The big happy family feel that comes from a 100-200 people all worshipping together has to change.
c. But the sense of community **must** remain. There must be other cells that are building healthy community within the church.