

STAGE 3

PLANTING AND MULTIPLYING CHURCHES

LEARNING FROM THE ORIGINAL
CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT



John L. Amstutz

CHURCH PLANTING MANUAL AND STUDY GUIDE

FOREWORD BY RALPH MOORE

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Planting and Multiplying Churches: Learning from the Original Church Planting Movement

Church Planting Manual & Study Guide
by John L. Amstutz

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Acknowledgements

When I was a child, our family attended a “first” church. I came to discover that when it was planted years earlier, it was intended to be the first of a number of such churches. It was to be a church that gave birth to other churches. When our family moved from the Midwest to the West Coast, I was introduced to church planting by my uncle, Dr. Edison Habegger. As the superintendent of the Southern California district of our denomination, he oversaw and facilitated the starting and development of new congregations. My father, a carpenter, was involved in work teams in the initial construction of buildings for several of these new congregations. During my uncle’s tenure, the number of churches in the district nearly doubled, with the church our family was attending giving birth to two congregations, one intentionally and one unintentionally (read, “backdoor birth”).

It was overseas I saw church planting such as I had not seen before. Several students in the Bible college in which I taught were church planters. One pastored a church he had planted in the most rapidly growing denomination in the nation. I had occasion to visit one of the churches and discovered a burgeoning nationwide church planting movement. Eventually, returning to the U.S., I was invited to pastor a newly planted church. It grew steadily but slowly in an increasingly Hispanic community. After five years, convinced I needed to complete my education, I returned to seminary. A new pastor took over. The church began to decline and within two years was disbanded, but in dying it lived. It gave birth to a Hispanic church which began to grow and expand, eventually planting over twenty churches in the U.S. and Mexico.

Upon returning to Fuller Theological Seminary, I enrolled in the School of Theology’s Doctor of Ministry program, which included courses in the School of World Mission (now, the School of Intercultural Studies). Dr. C. Peter Wagner, who became my doctoral dissertation mentor, taught several of the courses. After graduation he, along with John Wimber, invited me to work with them in the Department of Church Growth of the Charles E. Fuller Institute. What was a novice like me doing, working with two of the foremost church planting authorities in the nation at that time? Learning fast! Eventually, I returned to teach in a Bible college as a missions professor. Along with other courses, I taught a course in church planting. Among the students who eventually went on to plant

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a church was my son, John, who also began serving as a coach for other church planters. And I ended up also mentoring, beginning a church planters network. Like an athlete with minimum playing time who ends up coaching, so it was with me. I am deeply grateful to all who have taught and mentored me—my uncle, Peter Wagner, John Wimber, my students, my son, my mentees, and prolific practitioners such as Ralph Moore, Roy Hicks, Jr., Wayne Cordeiro, Jim Hayford, Daniel Brown, Don McGregor, John Louwerse, Ted Olbrich, Leslie, Keegel, Isaak Komolafe, and Josue Bengston to name just a few.

I also want to express my sincere appreciation to those who have facilitated and made possible the publication of *Planting and Multiplying Churches*. Special thanks goes to my very helpful readers, Delinda Higgins and Ryan Davis, and my excellent copyeditor, Dean Christensen. To my generous publisher, Borden Newman, I owe a debt of gratitude for also simultaneously translating and publishing the book in Spanish. To my endorsing practitioners, Ralph Moore, Gabe Barreiro, Ted Olbrich, and Daniel Brown, I am honored that each has so graciously taken time from already busy schedules to review and recommend the book. And to the praise of his glory who is building his church this book is dedicated—Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Foreword

I have known John Amstutz for nearly four decades. Years ago it was his teaching on the characteristics of a healthy church that spawned the model of Mini-Churches we use for turning faithful disciples into leaders and church planters. Without this model that grew into a leadership discovery and training device for church planters, the Hope Chapel church planting movement would not be multiplying at the rate it is today.

Though he writes with a deeper understanding of the strategies and tactics of the early church, *Planting and Multiplying Churches* is amazingly consistent with the message the author has always taught. He is a man on a mission—Christ’s mission—to see disciples made of all nations through the proclamation of the gospel and the planting of churches in every *ethne* (people group).

In this book Dr. Amstutz mines the book of Acts to unveil the strategies of the Holy Spirit that turned the efforts of a small team into a world-impacting movement. In focusing on the impact of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus that spawned a movement of second and third generation churches throughout Asia Minor, he shows how the gospel profoundly impacted not only a city, but an entire region and culture. He clearly points out that such a movement would never have taken place if there had been no disciple-making movement in Ephesus. In reading you will see the lines drawn between Paul and his many disciples and the paths linking Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea and the churches in Revelation. The letters to disciplined leaders such as Timothy and Titus will take on regional connotation.

I have heard “successful” pastors claim that they are too busy managing the church to involve themselves in personal discipling. A pastor who never plants, or multiplies, a church may be missing the entire point of the book of Acts, or Jesus’ call, to make disciples.

In my current travels, mostly in developing nations with newer church movements, you can be sure that I will be using and teaching from *Planting and Multiplying Churches*. This is the most insightful book on Acts I have ever read, a book you will want to absorb and teach others who are capable of teaching others.

Ralph Moore
Hope Chapel
Honolulu, Hawaii

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Preface

“I will build my church,” declared Jesus. But he did not talk much about it.¹ It was the kingdom he constantly talked about.² I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God,” he said, “because that is why I was sent.”³ He told his disciples that they would be given the keys of the kingdom. What they bound and released on earth would be bound and released in heaven. He gave them authority and sent them to preach the message of the kingdom, first to their fellow countrymen, and eventually to the nations. As the Father had sent him, so Jesus sent his followers. And as they proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, Jesus built a church that not even death could overcome. Through those whom he sent to preach the good news of the kingdom, Jesus built his church. They were his co-laborers. They planted and watered, God made it grow.⁴

It began with Pentecost, with one hundred twenty Christ-followers in an upper room. Empowered by the Spirit, they became his witnesses. They spread the good news about Jesus everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, into Samaria and to the nations. “The clear strategy of the early church, starting with the commission from Jesus in Acts 1:8, is that followers of Jesus will not keep the gospel for themselves, but will reproduce it over and over again in others. This led to churches that birthed churches.”⁵ Although not explicitly stated, Jesus’ command to “make disciples of all nations” implied the planting and multiplication of churches.⁶ Clearly, church planting was the primary method of evangelism in the book of Acts. And so it is today. Research continues to confirm that “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”⁷ It is the planting of new churches that spreads the gospel. It is churches that reproduce churches, which in turn reproduce churches that reproduce churches—a church planting movement—that advances and expands the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom in all the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes when Jesus returns.⁸

In the book *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Missions Until He Comes*, I identified and described how the early church grew and expanded through a four-stage, infinitely reproducible process—the multiplication of disciples, leaders, churches, and missionary-sending movements (see the Appendix A). *Making and Multiplying Disciples: the Master’s Plan of Discipleship* was the first of four manuals more

Planting and Multiplying Churches

fully developing each of these four stages. This initial manual was a study of how Jesus and the early church made and multiplied disciples (stage one). The second manual, *Discipling and Multiplying Leaders: Lessons in Leadership from Peter and Paul*, explored the transformative process of making and multiplying servant leaders in and through the lives of Peter and Paul (stage two). This present manual, *Planting and Multiplying Churches: Learning from the Original Church Planting Movement*, examines the dynamics of the expansion of indigenous church movements in the early church (stage three). The planting and multiplication of churches expedited an exponential growth of the gospel. What is to be learned from this original church planting movement of the first century? What church planting and church multiplication practices, patterns, and principles are to be found in the growth and expansion of the church in Palestine, Syria, Greece, and Turkey?

As with each manual, this manual is a biblical study using the Bible as the primary textbook—the most widely available book to pastors and leaders around the world. As with all the manuals, a study guide is included, designed to assist in learning, applying, and passing on what God’s Word teaches. This third manual is intended to help in understanding, implementing, and furthering the planting and multiplying of churches that advance the gospel and Christ’s mission to make disciples of all nations...until he comes!

John L. Amstutz
January 2016

PLANTING AND MULTIPLYING CHURCHES:

Learning from the Original Church Planting Movement

Introduction

Jewish Movement

The growth of the early church was explosive. The initial church in Jerusalem multiplied exponentially. It grew from 120 to 3,000 in one day! As the Lord added daily those who were being saved, the total soon exceeded 5,000. So rapid was the growth that not even twelve apostles could keep up with the care of the multitude of believers. Within a short time, groups of Jewish believers were found throughout Judea in cities such as Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa. The gospel continued to spread to Caesarea and into Galilee. Native-born Hebrews, diaspora (non-native) born Hellenist, Greek-speaking Jews, proselytes (non-Jewish converts to Judaism), and God-fearers (non-Jewish adherents of Judaism) were coming to Christ throughout Palestine. Even as far away as Damascus, Jewish followers of the Messiah were found. Within a decade, a people movement was taking place among Jews in and beyond Palestine.¹

Samaritan Movement

Meanwhile, Hellenistic believers driven out of Jerusalem by persecution took the gospel to the Samaritans. As Philip preached the good news of the kingdom of God many believed and were baptized. When the church in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John. Upon praying for them, these new Samaritan believers received the Holy Spirit just as Jewish believers had when they believed. As they returned to Jerusalem, Peter and John preached the gospel in many Samaritan villages. A people movement now began to take place also among the Samaritans.²

Gentile Movement

Through Peter a door opened to the Gentiles when he preached the gospel to Cornelius. This Roman centurion's entire household turned to the Lord, were filled with the Spirit, and baptized. But it was in

Antioch in Syria where the gospel began to spread rapidly among the Gentiles. Hellenistic Jews, scattered by persecution in connection with the death of Stephen, had traveled as far as the island of Cyprus, Phoenicia in Lebanon, and Antioch in Syria, preaching the gospel only to Jews.

However, on coming to Antioch, some from Cyprus and Cyrene (north Africa) began to tell the good news about the Lord Jesus to Gentiles as well. Within a comparatively short time, a great number believed and turned to the Lord. When the Jerusalem church heard of this widespread turning to the Lord, they sent Barnabas to investigate. Once he saw the undeniable evidence of God's grace, he encouraged these new believers to remain faithful to the Lord. As a result, even more came to faith. So great was the number coming to Christ that Barnabas recruited Paul to help teach and disciple these new converts who were largely Gentiles. It was here in Antioch that believers were first called Christians, as the Christward movement among the Jews had spawned a Christward movement among the Gentiles.³ Such people movements appeared largely spontaneous and unplanned as is true of most people movements.⁴ And it was the planting of churches that aided and expanded these people movements.

*Paul, the Church
Planter*

Surprisingly, other than in reference to Jerusalem, the word "church" is not used to describe local gatherings of believers prior to Antioch. Clearly there were communities of faith among both the Jews and the Samaritans throughout Palestine. Although there is no explicit reference to the planting of specific "churches" prior to Antioch, there is abundance evidence that the church was growing and expanding throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.⁵ However, it was the Apostle Paul, the converted Pharisee, who became the prolific "church planter." In less than ten years he, with his coworkers, planted churches in nine, possibly ten, cities.⁶ And this took place after his experience at Antioch, for there is no record of Paul planting churches prior to his ministry with Barnabas in Antioch. Yes, from the time of his conversion, Paul knew he had been divinely chosen to "carry [Jesus'] name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."⁷ But it was over a decade later before he started planting churches.

It was in the synagogues in Damascus that Paul began preaching the gospel shortly after his conversion. In Jerusalem several

*To the
Jews First*

years later, he moved freely about the city and boldly talked and debated with Grecian Jews in the Jewish community. However, in both instances Paul was forced to leave the city when the Jews threatened to kill him. But it was not until about a dozen years later when he, along with Barnabas, were sent out from the multi-ethnic church in Antioch, that Paul began taking the gospel to the Gentile world. And where did he go? He went to the Jews first, to their synagogues in cities with sizeable Jewish communities. Apparently he did so both for spiritual and strategic reasons. The covenant, the law, and the promises first came to the Jews. So now also must the new covenant, the gospel of grace, and the fulfillment of the promises be proclaimed to God's chosen people. Thus, to the synagogue Paul went first.⁸

*And Also to
the Gentiles*

Commissioned to the work to which God had called them, the initial journey took Paul and Barnabas back to their homelands. In Cyprus they preached the word of God in the synagogues of Salamis. Apparently the Jewish community was large enough to require more than one synagogue. They then traveled westward through the whole island until they eventually came to Paphos, the seat of the provincial government. Though opposed by a Jewish sorcerer, Paul and Barnabas spoke to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, who wanted to hear the word of the Lord. Amazed when he saw the sorcerer struck with blindness for opposing the word of God, this Gentile believed the message and turned to the Lord.

*Galatia:
Central Turkey*

Having evangelized across Barnabas's native island, they sailed to the southern coast of central Turkey, Paul's homeland. Passing through Perga, they entered the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. The first city they came to was Antioch located near the border of Pisidia. Antioch of Pisidia was a Roman colony, the chief civil and military center of that part of Galatia. In this center of influence was a Jewish community. Entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak "a message of encouragement to the people."⁹ Paul addressed his listeners, both "the men of Israel and the Gentiles who worship God (God-fearers)."¹⁰ He explained to them the good news about Jesus—that through him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed and those who believed are put right

with God. Many Jews and devout Gentile converts to Judaism (proselytes) believed, and Paul and Barnabas urged them to continue in the grace of God. But unbelieving Jews were jealous, and stirred up persecution against the apostles. “We had to speak the word of God first to you,” they declared. “Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us.”¹¹ Quoting Isaiah’s prophecy, they acknowledged that God had made them “light for the Gentiles that they may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”¹² As a result, the word of the Lord began to spread among the Gentiles throughout the whole region of south Galatia including the cities of Lystra and Derbe.

Even though opposition from unbelieving Jews continued, Paul “went as usual into the Jewish synagogue.”¹³ This became the pattern of his ministry—evangelize Roman colonies by preaching initially in the synagogues where he found greater receptivity among Gentile proselytes and God-fearers, and through them the gospel spread into the Gentile world.¹

*Macedonia:
Northern Greece*

It was the “Macedonian call” during his second journey that led Paul to Greece.¹⁵ Having been forbidden by the Spirit to preach the word in the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, Paul and his party headed to Philippi, a Roman colony, which was the leading city of that part of Macedonia. Although the Jewish population was small and had no a synagogue, on the Sabbath Paul went to a Jewish place of prayer by the river just outside the city gates.¹⁶ There he found a number of women, including Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira who came from the province of Asia in western Turkey. Lydia was a God-fearer. The Lord opened her heart to Paul’s message and she and her entire household believed and were baptized, becoming the first converts in Europe. The missionary team continued to go to the place of prayer. Apparently, more believed, and Lydia’s house became the gathering place of these first believers. With the conversion and baptism of the Philippian jailer and his entire household, the gospel took root and began to bear initial fruit among Gentiles in Macedonia, the northern province of Greece.¹⁷ It was this Philippian church that would become one of Paul’s most faithful partners in the gospel, sending gifts and individuals to support and help him, even when he was in prison.¹⁸

From Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy followed the Roman road, the Egnatian Way, west through Amphipolis and Appolonia to Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia. Again, as was his practice, Paul went to the local synagogue. And as in the cities of southern Galatia on his first journey, some Jews believed. But again, the majority of converts were Gentile God-fearers, including a number of prominent Gentile women. Claiming that they were defying Caesar's decrees by saying there was another king—Jesus—the Jews stirred up the crowds and forced Paul and his team to leave the city. Paul attempted to return to Thessalonica several times. But unable to do so, he sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage these new believers, since the persecution that had broken out against Paul had come against the church. In spite of severe suffering, Timothy reported that the Thessalonians were standing firm. Not only were they not unsettled by these trials, their unwavering faith became a model for other believers. In fact, Paul would later write that the gospel “rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere...how you turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God.”¹⁹ He asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his team, “that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”²⁰ As in Judea, persecution in Thessalonica pushed the gospel into Gentile territory, for those scattered spread the word of God wherever they went.

*Achaia:
Southern Greece*

In Berea and Corinth in the province of Achaia, it was again the synagogue that became the launching pad for the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. In Berea the Jews searched the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many believed, as did a large number of Greeks, including many men and a number of prominent women.²¹ In Corinth, a Roman colony, Paul devoted himself to preaching and testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. When Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he “shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own head! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”²² Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a Gentile God-fearer. Many Corinthians believed and were baptized, including Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household. Paul continued to preach and teach, for in a vision the Lord had told him to “keep on speaking...because I have many people in this city.”²³ As a result, even more Gentiles believed as Paul remained in Corinth for another year and a half.

*Asia Minor:
Western Turkey*

On his return from Corinth to Judea and Syria, Paul made a brief stop in Ephesus. There he reasoned with the Jews in the local synagogue. When they asked him to spend more time, he declined, telling them he would return “if it is God’s will.”²⁴ About a year or two later, Paul did return. And it was here in Ephesus, the chief commercial and political center in the province of Asia, that Paul spent three years. When he returned, he again went to the synagogue, where for three months he spoke persuasively about the kingdom of God. But again, some Jews became stubborn and refused to believe, “publicly maligning the Way.”²⁵ So Paul left, taking with him the disciples who had believed, and went to the hall of Tyrannus. There, for two years, he had daily discussions, teaching and preaching the gospel. During this entire time, Paul remained in Ephesus, but other coworkers and disciples began taking the gospel into the surrounding region.²⁶ As a result, “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”²⁷ It was during these years that the churches in the Lycos Valley—Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea—were founded, including possibly all the other churches addressed in the Book of Revelation.²⁸ Thus, within less than three years, “the province [of Asia] was extensively evangelized, and remained one of the leading centers of Christianity for many centuries.”²⁹

The planting and multiplying of churches characterized the growth and expansion of the early Church. Church planting movements took place throughout the eastern Mediterranean region, first in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee in Palestine. Then in Syria and the provinces of Cilicia and Cappadocia in eastern Turkey, the gospel spread rapidly among Gentile nations. In less than ten years, the apostle Paul and his coworkers evangelized four Roman provinces—Galatia and Asia Minor in Turkey, and Macedonia and Achaia in Greece (See Appendix D). Within less than thirty years after the day of Pentecost the good news about Jesus Christ had spread so widely that Paul could claim the gospel had been fully proclaimed from Jerusalem to Illyricum (modern day Albania). Therefore, lest he build on someone else’s foundation, he decided to travel west to Spain.³⁰ Apparently, Paul considered that “his missionary ministry in the region complete because churches had been planted that would *further preach the gospel* to those who had not yet heard and would *further multiply* by establishing churches in as yet unreached regions.”³¹

What can we learn from such an extensive and rapid planting and multiplying of churches? What church planting and church multiplying practices and patterns can we find? What relevant principles are evident? In short, what we are seeking is not imitation, but continuation of the dynamic of mission depicted in Acts.³²

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Part One

Planting Churches

*God's chief
instrument*

Jesus said he would build his church. He gave the keys of the kingdom to his disciples, whom he commissioned to preach the gospel of the kingdom and make disciples. They were to proclaim the good news of repentance and forgiveness in his name, baptizing those who believed, and make disciples, teaching them to obey all he commanded. In so doing, Jesus built his church—communities of the King, where he was “all in all”—Lord of all and in all.¹ The planting of churches—kingdom communities—is essential in the fulfillment of Christ’s mission. The church is “God’s chief instrument for expanding his kingdom, bringing redemption to the nations, and forming a people who will manifest his glory.”² Consequently, church planting and multiplication was central to Paul’s mission as an apostle to the nations. His mission was not only to preach the gospel, it was to plant churches. A “churchless mission” would have been inconceivable to the apostle.

Although the term “church planting” is not found in the Scriptures, the phenomenon is. The early church grew through successive waves of expansion beginning with Pentecost. From Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to Galilee to Syria, communities of believers were established as the gospel expanded. From Antioch in Syria, the movement into Gentile regions rapidly increased as Paul and his missionary band established indigenous churches in centers of influence among the Jewish diaspora, from which the gospel spread widely. During the first journey, from the church in Antioch in Pisidia, “the word of the Lord spread through the whole region.”³ During the second journey from the Thessalonian church, “the Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”⁴ Of special note during the third journey is Ephesus, when “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”⁵

We have more information about the church in Ephesus than any other. In addition to the account in Acts, which described the planting and expansion of the church,⁶ there is extensive material in

*Church Planting
and Multiplication*

the letters of Paul. In Ephesians, which may well have been a circular letter, Paul described the nature, life, and unity of the church as the body of Christ.⁷ In his two letters to Timothy, whom Paul urged to remain in Ephesus, he gave instruction about preaching the word, teaching sound doctrine, appointing elders, and multiplying leaders.⁸ In a letter to the church in Colossae, planted by Epaphras out of the church in Ephesus, Paul discussed the supremacy of Christ as the head of the church and the fullness of revelation and life in him.⁹ In his letter addressed to Philemon and the church in his house in Colossae, Paul appealed to him to receive back his runaway slave as a brother.¹⁰ And in Revelation, the apostle John sent a message from the risen Christ to the seven churches in the province of Asia, beginning with the church at Ephesus, calling for renewal and revival.¹¹ With the accounts in the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, let's see what we can learn about the planting and multiplying of churches in the first century.

Chapter 1

Sending Teams

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”
(Acts 13:2, 3)

The earliest expansion of the gospel was both voluntary and involuntary. The death of Stephen, the first martyr, unleashed a wave of persecution against the church. Although the apostles remained in Jerusalem, many believers were forced out of Jerusalem involuntarily. Up until this time, the gospel had apparently been spread voluntarily throughout Jerusalem. However, this outbreak of persecution scattered believers throughout Judea and Samaria. And wherever they went they preached the gospel. It was this involuntary dispersion of believers, especially Hellenistic Jewish believers, which pushed the gospel into non-Jewish territory. Phillip went to Samaria. Others scattered to areas beyond Palestine. Some went to Phoenicia in Lebanon, others to the island of Cyprus, and still others to Antioch in Syria, but all spoke the word only to their own people, the Jews.

*Inward to
Outward Movement*

Nevertheless, some who traveled to Antioch began speaking not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. Thus it was here that not only Jews, but now a large numbers of Gentiles came to faith as well. It was here that the multi-cultural community of believers was first called Christians. It was from this multi-cultural church in Antioch that the first missionary team was sent out.¹ And so began an intentional advance of the gospel to the nations. This outward movement of the gospel reflected a reversal of the inward movement of the nations to Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Rather than the nations coming to Jerusalem, the movement now is outward as the church intentionally and voluntarily, or even at times unintentionally and involuntarily, took the gospel to the nations.²

*Church
Planting Teams*

The church in Antioch was intentionally missional, responding to the Spirit's directive to send out Barnabas and Saul. After fasting and prayer, hands were laid on them and they were sent out. They had been "set apart" by the Spirit and now were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit."³ This was a Spirit-initiated sending of two primary leaders of the church. As Jesus had sent out his disciples two by two, so Barnabas and Saul were sent out as a team with John Mark as their helper. Why a team? Multiple witnesses confirmed the word. Further, they complemented one another and supplemented the work, for two were better than one, and a threefold cord was not easily broken.⁴ Working together they were multiple times more effective than working separately.⁵ When John Mark left after their ministry in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas continued to team up, taking the gospel into the Province of Galatia. There they planted churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe before returning to the church in Antioch in Syria. Even when they split up over a disagreement about taking John Mark on a second journey, both Barnabas and Paul teamed up, Barnabas taking his cousin Mark, and Paul taking Silas along with Timothy.

When directed to the province of Macedonia, Luke apparently joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Together they traveled to Philippi where a church was planted. Leaving Luke in Philippi, the team traveled on to Thessalonica and Berea, planting churches in both cities.⁶ Due to an outbreak of persecution in Berea, Paul was sent to Athens in the province of Achaia. This was the only time recorded that he entered a city alone. Nevertheless, as was his practice, he first sought out the Jewish community and reasoned in the synagogue with

the Jews and God-fearing Greeks. He also entered into discussions in “the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there,”⁷ including members of the Court of Areopagus. But response was minimal. No church was planted.⁸ Traveling west in the province to Corinth, Paul stayed in the home of fellow tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla. When Silas and Timothy arrived, Paul was fully engaged in preaching in the synagogue. But opposition forced him to leave, so he went to the Gentiles and continued to teach the word of God for another eighteen months. As a result, a church was planted.

On his return to Antioch he took Priscilla and Aquila with him. He stopped briefly in Ephesus, leaving Aquila and Priscilla there. Eventually he returned and a church was established, including a church that met in their home.⁹ When Paul left Ephesus, he returned back through Macedonia, accompanied by a team of seven from the churches he had planted during the first two journeys.¹⁰ No solo church planter, Paul was a team player. He constantly mobilized others. “How Paul enlisted these many co-laborers is not clear. What is clear is that he never traveled alone, if at all possible...for he knew the harvest was great, and many more workers were needed.”¹¹

*Practices and
Patterns*

What do we learn from these church planting teams? What practices and patterns are evident? *First*, they were missional. They remained focused on extending the kingdom and reaching the lost. Mission did not bog down in maintenance. The care of congregations was placed in the hands of local leaders. Thus, the teams were able to continue to advance the spread of the gospel.

Second, experienced and seasoned leaders led the teams. Paul and Barnabas had faithfully and effectively worked and served together in a multicultural environment. Leadership experience was essential, especially in sending cross-cultural church planting teams.

Third, the basis of their authority as leaders was a spiritual calling and gifting that was recognized and confirmed by the church. With authority they were under authority—the authority of both the Lord and his people.

Fourth, members of the teams were mentored while on mission. Recent converts from newly planted churches were apprenticed on-site with insight. Experienced leaders disciplined and reproduced leaders.

Fifth, the church-planting teams were dynamic and flexible. They adapted and functioned jointly or were deployed individually as needed. Teamwork worked because the mission of the team was clear and primary—to advance the spread of the gospel.

Sixth, team members were servant leaders. Together they worked and served the churches they planted. Although they did not always resolve conflict positively, the Lord continued to use them. When Paul and Barnabas had a strong disagreement over whether or not to take John Mark on a second journey, they did not speak against each other or become competitors. Rather, both continued on missionary journeys, Barnabas with Mark to Cyprus, Paul and Silas with Timothy to Turkey and Greece. Happily, some years later, reconciliation took place when Paul, a prisoner in Rome, asked Timothy to bring Mark “because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”¹² Team disagreements can multiply or maim ministry, depending on whether leaders have the mind of Christ or a mind of their own.¹³

The value and advantages of team ministry are evident. Complementary apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching gifts helped lay the foundation and establish the church, equipping the saints for the work of ministry.¹⁴ Team ministry provided on-the-job training and the development of gifts. It provided support and protection in times of crisis. Team ministry confirmed and validated witness, strengthened and expedited the work, and expanded and extended the kingdom. Sending teams made possible engaging and reaching different cultures and diverse people groups. The synergistic advantage of teamwork in church planting resulted in greater evangelistic impact, greater power in prayer, greater sustainability in ministry, and greater fruitfulness in making disciples of the nations.

The practices and patterns of the sending of workers to spread the gospel and establish fellowships of believers reveals an important ***Church Planting Principle: the use of missional teams in planting churches.***

Chapter 2

Following the Spirit

“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”
(Acts 16:9, 10)

Jesus was building his church. He had given his disciples the keys of the kingdom to release it. This divine-human synergy is seen in the sending of Paul and Barnabas. They were sent of the Spirit and by the church at Antioch. It was a twofold “sending.” The church confirmed the Spirit’s “calling” and the church obeyed his directive to “set apart” these two leaders by laying hands on them. This calling of Paul and Barnabas was Spirit initiated, and came during a time of worship and fasting by the leadership of the church. Further, it was after a time of fasting and prayer that they then “sent them off” (literally, “released them”). So the two of them, “sent on their way” (literally, “sent away”) by the Spirit, departed for Cyprus on their first missionary journey. The Holy Spirit called and sent them, and the church confirmed and released them—a combination of

*Divine-human
Synergy*

two kinds of sending by the chief sending agent and the primary releasing agency.

*Strategy and
the Spirit*

The two-dimensional sending of Paul and Barnabas was indicative of the way in which they were guided on their journey. Sent of the Spirit they were led by the Spirit. At times it appeared they had a planned strategy. Their initial journey took them back to their homelands. In both Cyprus and Turkey they intentionally went to the Jews first, to their own people in the synagogues. And it so happened that such diaspora Jewish communities were found in cities located on major trade routes. Further, the more receptive Gentile God-fearers were also found in these synagogues. And when Jewish opposition forced them to leave, believing God-fearers became the bridge into the surrounding Gentile community where the gospel spread more rapidly and widely. Their plan was “spiritually strategic.” Upon their return to Antioch, they reported “all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”¹ At the Jerusalem Council “the whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.”² Not only was their plan “spiritually strategic,” it was “strategically spiritual”...it was of God.

*Open and
Closed Doors*

At other times the leading of the Spirit was more direct and explicit. This was particularly evident during Paul’s second journey when he and his team traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia in central Turkey. They had been “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia” in western Turkey and when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia in northern Turkey, but “the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.”³ Finally coming to Troas on the western coast of Turkey, Paul had a vision during the night of a man begging him to “come over to Macedonia and help us.”⁴ As a result of Paul’s vision, the missionary team conferred together and concluded that “God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”⁵ Immediately they made preparations and sailed to Macedonia in northern Greece. Thus, for the first time, the gospel was taken to Europe. “That invasion of Europe was not in the mind of Paul, but it was evidently in the mind of the Spirit.”⁶ By closing two doors and opening another, the Spirit led Paul to preach

the gospel and plant the church in a continent that would one day become a base for missionary outreach around the world.

It was at the end of this second journey that Paul did make his first visit to the province of Asia. As was his practice, Paul went to the synagogue in Ephesus and reasoned with the Jews. When asked to stay longer, he declined, but promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.”⁷ Leaving Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, he departed for Jerusalem and Antioch. In due season, apparently it was God’s will for Paul to return, for a year or two later Paul did return to Ephesus. The door that had been closed was now open. Thus, Paul remained in Ephesus longer than in any other city—nearly three years, because “a great door for effective work has opened to me.”⁸ As a result of Paul’s coming to Ephesus by God’s will and in his time, the gospel took root and bore fruit throughout the region. Miracles happened, the city was evangelized, the church was established, workers were sent, multiple churches were planted, and “all the Jews and Greeks who live in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”⁹

Paul was spiritually sensitive and sensibly strategic. He was discerning and responded to the Spirit. He was perceptive and knew what to do. Similar to the men of Issachar, he “understood the times (and seasons), and knew what Israel should do.”¹⁰ Following the Spirit, he could be strategically predictable or spontaneously flexible. Predictably, he went to the Jews first; spontaneously he went to the Gentiles also.

*Practices and
Patterns*

What can we learn about calling, strategy, and guidance from the journeys of Paul? What practices and patterns are evident? *First*, the work to which he and Barnabas were called was divinely initiated. It was the Holy Spirit who told the leaders to “set apart Paul and Barnabas to the work to which I have called them.”¹¹ Responding to what God was doing and wanted to do was essential in advancing his kingdom rather than the team’s agenda. Spirit-initiated calling and sending was primary in doing the will of God, not theirs.

Second, corporate consensus, confirmation, and release were vital for support and covering. The church confirmed, set apart, and released Paul and Barnabas to the work to which God had called them. With fasting and prayer the leaders came into agreement with the

Spirit's directive, and released two of their finest, most experienced leaders.

Third, with divine calling and sending came divine empowering and enabling. The work to which the Spirit called Paul and Barnabas, he enabled them to carry out. "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."¹²

Fourth, God's personal call may directly come to individuals, but indirectly it comes through them to others. The call of Paul and Barnabas included other people. In their call was included a "call" of many others, such as John Mark, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Aquila and Priscilla, and a host of other co-laborers.

Fifth, Paul planned his path, but the Lord directed his steps.¹³ His plan and pattern of going to the Jews first in the synagogues found in cities located on major trade routes was strategic, but it was the Lord's purpose that prevailed in the bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles.¹⁴ Following the Spirit, who knows the mind of the Lord, brought about the fulfillment of God's will and purpose.

Sixth, the Lord opened and closed doors. The Lord led Paul through positive and negative guidance. Forbidden to enter both Asia and Bithynia, the Lord directed him to Macedonia confirmed by his missionary team. And though initially forbidden to enter Asia Minor, Paul was given an open door on the third journey and spent three years in Ephesus. In God's time a "great door for effective ministry" opened. A door that had been closed was now open. Sensitivity to seasons is essential. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...a time to plant."¹⁵

The practices and patterns of the sending and directing of missionary teams reflects a vital ***Church Planting Principle: the reliance on the Holy Spirit for direction and guidance.***

Chapter 3

Preaching the Gospel

*“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”
(Acts 20:24)*

Called and led by the Spirit, Paul was clear about the task the Lord had given him—“testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”¹ This gospel was not something Paul created. “I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it,” Paul declared. “Rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”² It was a divine, not a human, gospel. What Paul had received he proclaimed: “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve...to more than five hundred...to James, to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”³ This was not a message of man’s efforts to gain salvation, but the gospel of God’s grace, the good news of what God had done in Christ for the salvation of the human race.

*Gospel of
God’s Grace*

*Power of
the Gospel*

The gospel of God's grace was the message that God's kingdom had come in Jesus Christ, his messiah. In him, God's king, the rule of God had come to earth. Through him, the promised deliverer after the line of King David, all people, both Jew and Gentile, could be freed from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light.⁴ In the death of the "Lamb of God," the sin of the world had been taken away.⁵ Sin's penalty had been paid and sin's power broken. In the resurrection of the Son of God, death's power had been broken and Satan's kingdom defeated. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life were now freely given to all who believe, to all who "turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."⁶ Thus, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, because "it is the power of God to save all who believe, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last."⁷ Paul was eager to preach this good news of God's grace, for he had experienced God's mercy and grace in saving him who was once "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man."⁸ "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst," Paul admitted. "But for this very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."⁹ Paul knew the power of the gospel of God's amazing grace.

*Appeal to
Scripture*

The gospel of God's grace was Paul's unchanging message. He proclaimed it in every city. But the way he communicated it changed as he adapted his approach to his hearers. In communities where there was a Jewish community, Paul went to the synagogue, which was the center of religious and social life. There, in this place of prayer, worship, and instruction, Paul taught and sought to show the Jews and God-fearers that Jesus was the promised messiah. He reasoned with them from their Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures. He declared the Law, the Prophets and the Writings testified that the messiah would "suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance of forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name."¹⁰ Some believed, some did not.

But beyond the synagogue, reasoning from the Hebrew Scriptures was not possible. How could the good news of Jesus Christ be communicated to a biblically illiterate Gentile world? On at least

*Appeal to
Creation*

two occasions, we have an account of how Paul preached to Gentiles outside the synagogue. During their first journey, Paul and Barnabas encountered a largely pagan Gentile community in Lystra. As Paul was speaking, a lame man was healed. The crowd thought the gods had come down to them in human form, and they attempted to offer sacrifices to them. When Paul and Barnabas heard what was happening, they rushed into the crowd and shouted, “Why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the earth and seas and everything in them.”¹¹ Rather than appealing to Scripture, they appealed to the general revelation available to all people—the witness of God in his creation. “In the past God had let all nations go their own way,” declared Paul, “yet he has not left himself without testimony. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”¹² From the beginning of creation, God’s invisible qualities have been clearly seen in what he has made—his eternal power and divine nature. Paul’s appeal from creation called the Lycaonians to turn from worshipping worthless idols to worshipping the true and living God, for they had “changed the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”¹³

On his second journey Paul encountered in Athens a “city full of idols.” When some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers heard Paul preaching in the marketplace, they began to dispute with him. They claimed that he “seemed to be advocating foreign gods,” for they had heard him preaching “the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.”¹⁴ So they took him to a meeting of the Areopagus, the supreme council of Athens who were the guardians of the city’s religion, morals, and education. There they questioned him and wanted to know the meaning of this strange “new teaching.” Paul had observed many idols in the city, including one with the inscription to an “unknown god.”¹⁵ “Now what you worship as something unknown,” Paul declared, “I am going to proclaim to you.”¹⁶ He explained that the true and living God is the creator of the universe, the sustainer of life, the ruler of nations, and the Father of all human beings in whom “we live, and move and have our being.”¹⁷ Quoting the words of some of their own poets who had said, “We are his offspring,” Paul concluded that “since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill.”¹⁸ “In

the past God overlooked such ignorance,” Paul declared, “but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”¹⁹ At the mention of resurrection of the dead, some sneered, others claimed they wanted to hear Paul again on this subject, and a few followed Paul and believed.

As in Lystra, Paul’s appeal to the Athenians was from creation, from what was common knowledge about God which was understood by what he had made. Thus, Paul was a preacher of the gospel of God’s grace to both Jews and Gentiles, but he adapted his approach to his hearers. He sought to find common ground from which to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ. To religious Jews and God-fearers he based his appeal on God’s special revelation, the Scriptures. To idol worshipping Gentiles his appeal was based on God’s general revelation in creation.

*Repentance
and Faith*

Whether in synagogues or the marketplace, whether publicly or from house to house, Paul “declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”²⁰ And all who believed, whether Jews or Greeks, called on the name of the Lord. They confessed with their mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believed in their heart that God raised him from the dead.²¹ Clearly, this was the work of the Spirit, for no one can truly say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.²² To believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord, the Son of the living God, was the result of a divine revelation. It was the “rock” upon which the church was built.²³ Then, as on the day of Pentecost, those who believed repented, were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ This cluster of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit was the norm of Christian experience.

Though the sequence of faith and repentance might vary, and the sequence and timing of baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit might vary, the first two always came before the latter two.²⁵ Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ were the prerequisites for water baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repentance was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit who convinces of “sin, righteousness and judgment.”²⁶ In contrast to worldly sorrow that only leads to regret, godly sorrow leads to repentance that brings life.²⁷ To see sin as God sees it was to experience his sorrow and agree with his

diagnosis of one's sinful condition. Such godly grief led to genuine repentance reflected in a change of mind and direction. No longer justifying—but rather confessing—one's sin, a repentant person turned to God to receive forgiveness and cleansing. No longer trusting in one's self to save—but fully trusting Jesus who alone saves—a person who confessed Jesus was Lord received forgiveness and new life. To so repent and believe was to be born anew, to be born from above by the Spirit of God.²⁸ This is salvation by God's grace through faith. It is "the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."²⁹ This was the gospel Paul preached. This was the gospel both Jews and Gentiles believed. This was the good news of Jesus Christ upon which his church was built.

*Practices and
Patterns*

What is to be learned from what and how Paul preached the good news of God's grace? *First*, the gospel Paul proclaimed was of divine, not human, origin. It came from heaven; it was not man-made. What Paul received he passed on—the good news of what God had done in Christ to save humankind. In the death and resurrection of his Son, God has reconciled the world to himself by making "him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."³⁰ Therefore, what Paul preached was "not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord—delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification."³¹

Second, the preaching of the gospel called for a response. With the proclamation of this good news of God's reconciling grace came an appeal: "Be reconciled to God."³² To both Jews and Gentiles Paul declared that "they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."³³

Third, Paul became "all things to all men so that by all possible means (he) might save some."³⁴ He appealed to the Jews from their Scriptures. He appealed to the Gentiles from their knowledge of God in creation. This he did for the sake of the gospel, that he might point them to Christ who is the savior of all people. The message of God's grace in Christ remained the same, but the way of communicating this message had to be adapted to the audience.

Fourth, it was the preaching of this gospel of salvation through faith in Christ that was the foundation upon which the church was built. By the grace God gave Paul, he "laid a foundation as an expert

builder...for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."³⁵ Like farmers, Christ's messengers were coworkers with God. Some planted, others watered, only God made it grow. Church planting is our part. Church growth is his. We are to be wise in how we plant and water. We cannot make the church grow, but by how we plant and water we can restrict or release its growth.

The practice and pattern of the apostle's proclamation of the word reflects an essential *Church Planting Principle: the contextualized preaching of the gospel of grace for conversion.*

Chapter 4

Reaching the Receptive

“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”
(Acts 13:46)

Paul was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. His initial attempt to go into Asia Minor was blocked by the Spirit. When he finally did arrive in Ephesus at the end of his second journey, he was unable to stay. But he promised that he would return if it was God’s will. When he did return he found some who, like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John the Baptist. When Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, these disciples were unaware of such a reception of the Spirit. Paul explained to them that John’s baptism of repentance was preparatory for the coming of the Messiah, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.¹ Upon hearing this, all were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them “the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”² These disciples who knew only the baptism of John were receptive. In contrast to the Pharisees who refused to

*Prepared
People*

believe and receive a baptism of repentance, tax collectors and prostitutes did, as did Jews who were open to the message John preached.³ Paul's ministry in Ephesus began with these twelve receptive Jews preceded by the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila to a receptive Apollos.

And not only among Jews but among the Gentiles God had prepared people to receive the gospel. In fact, Paul declared that God "determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."⁴ No person and no nation is self-sufficient, in need of nothing. Boundaries of place and time eventually bring all to the end of their resources, preparing them to seek and reach out for the One in whom they live and move and have their being—God, their creator. Felt needs—physical, emotional, relational, social, financial—prepared and awakened people to their deeper need to know their Creator and his love, peace, joy, hope, forgiveness, and eternal life, which are found in Jesus Christ his Son.

*Soil
Testing*

It was the response to the proclamation of the gospel that revealed who was receptive and who was not. In the synagogues, Paul found some were open and some were not.

So it was in Ephesus. During the three months Paul argued persuasively about the kingdom of God in the Jewish community, he found that the good seed of the gospel fell on different kinds of soils.⁵ Some fell on good soil, some fell on hard soil. Some had ears to hear, others did not. Some became disciples, followers of "the Way," but others became obstinate, maligning "the Way." "Soil testing" could only be done as the word of the gospel was proclaimed consistently and widely.

*Person of
Peace*

When Jesus sent out the Twelve to preach the message of the kingdom, he told them that "whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave."⁶ Likewise,

when sending out the Seventy, Jesus also instructed them to look for such a "person of peace."⁷ If such a person welcomed them and listened to their message, they were to stay and not move around from house to house. Because these earliest disciples of Christ were sent without "purse, bag, staff, sandals or extra tunic," they were in need of

hospitality wherever they went. An open home indicated receptivity. And through such an open door the gospel spread throughout the household and into the community. Such was the case with Peter and the household of Cornelius in Caesarea, and with Paul and the household of Lydia and the household of the jailer in Philippi.⁸ The gospel traveled across relational bridges and spread through familial, social, and occupational connections. Although there was opposition, Paul found that in Ephesus a “great door for effective work has opened to me.”⁹ In fact, it was opposition by unbelieving, unreceptive Jews that pushed the gospel beyond the synagogue into more receptive soil throughout the province of Asia Minor.

*Christ's
Ambassadors*

Jesus taught his disciples that “he who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who has sent me...and if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”¹⁰ With this understanding, Paul wrote, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”¹¹ It was on the Damascus Road Paul was shocked to discover that in opposing and persecuting Christ’s followers he was in reality opposing and persecuting Jesus himself. In rejecting them he was rejecting the One who had sent them, for through them God was appealing to a persecuting Pharisee to be reconciled to the God he thought he was defending. Paul discovered that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself and that Christ “came into the world to save sinners.”¹² He confessed he was “shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who should believe on him and receive eternal life.”¹³

Yes, there is hope for even the most resistant, for God is indeed patient, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.¹⁴ Hard soil can change. Though Paul focused on reaching the receptive, he did not lose compassion for the resistant. He wrote of the “great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel...my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”¹⁵ But times change. The resistant can become receptive. Paul understood a day would come when all Israel would be saved after the full number of the Gentile nations had come to salvation.¹⁶ In Ephesus, as in so many

cities, the Gentiles were more receptive to the gospel. Could it be that the timing of Paul's coming was "in season," a season when the people of Ephesus and the province of Asia Minor were receptive? Apparently so. And what accounts for such a season? We do not know. What we do know is that Paul recognized a door had opened for effective work in Ephesus and he walked through it. A "doorknob" that opened a great door was found in the synagogue, in persons of peace, through whom the gospel began to spread into the community and the surrounding region.

*Practices and
Patterns*

We are to take the good news of the gospel to the entire world and make disciples of all nations. Some groups are more receptive than others. And some are resistant. So where and to whom shall we go to reach people for Christ? What practices and patterns are found in the way in which the earliest church spread the gospel? *First*, it was as the gospel spread widely that responsiveness was discovered. Following Pentecost, the Lord added daily to the number of believers, because apparently they were sharing the good news daily, "enjoying the favor of all the people."¹⁷ After Stephen's death, those who were scattered by the resulting persecution preached the word wherever they went. Philip went to Samaria and found great receptivity among the Samaritans. Others were scattered beyond Palestine. In Antioch in Syria, responsiveness to the gospel was found, as in Samaria, beyond the Jewish community. In this case, Gentiles came to faith in Christ in great numbers. In the synagogues Paul discovered a degree of responsiveness among some Jews, but an even greater responsiveness among the Gentile God-fearers. In Ephesus a dozen Jews who knew the baptism of John the Baptist readily received the truth. Opposition by some resistant Jews pushed the gospel out of the synagogue into Gentile territory. As a result, the gospel spread throughout Ephesus and into a highly receptive province.

Second, God has prepared people to receive his Word. The desire to seek and know the Creator is universal. God has "set eternity in the hearts" of all people made in his image.¹⁸ Gentile God-fearers were seekers who became worshipers of the God of Israel by coming to know his Son, who is the way to God, the One who is the truth and gives eternal life.

Third, God prepared people to receive the truth: "people of peace." Through Cornelius, a God-fearer, the gospel spread to his

entire household. Through Lydia, another God-fearer, the good news came to her household. Through a Philippian jailer, all his family came to faith. Through Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, his entire household believed in the Lord. “Finding a person of peace...brings you into his or her close circle of friends and family, opening many new doors for the Word of God.”¹⁹ Such relationships were bridges of God that accelerated people movements to Christ.

Fourth, although initially less receptive, resistant people were neither neglected nor forgotten. Eventually even a large number of priests in Jerusalem became “obedient to the faith.”²⁰ Moreover, Paul’s continual heartfelt prayer was that his resistant fellow-Jews would be saved. Further, he encouraged Timothy that of highest priority was that “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority.”²¹ Why? “This is good,” Paul continued, because this “pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”²² Paul saw himself as an example of God’s unlimited patience in bringing him to salvation. He found it was “hard to kick against the goads” of the Spirit and conscience.²³ Even hardened soil can soften by prayer and the Spirit. Resistance is seasonal. The consistent spreading of the seed of the gospel tests the soil, indicating a season of possible harvest, even among unlikely peoples such as Samaritans and Gentiles.

From these practices and patterns of spreading the gospel by the apostles we can see a significant ***Church Planting Principle: the focus on reaching the receptive.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 5

Engaging Spirit-empowered Witness

*“So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.”
(Acts 14:3)*

The book of Acts describes the continuation of what Jesus began to do and teach through his followers.¹ He told his disciples that “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to my Father.”² Thus, upon his departure he promised to send the Holy Spirit. He promised that when the Spirit came they would have power to be his witnesses. When the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, an empowered Peter, along with the eleven disciples, proclaimed the good news about the Messiah. Through his death and resurrection, forgiveness of sins and new life was now offered to all who repented and put their faith in him. Further, as promised, signs

*Proclamation and
Demonstration*

accompanied the preaching of the disciples confirming the word.³ As with Jesus, the sick and those tormented by evil spirits were healed. Such signs followed the proclamation of the word not only by the Twelve but by the Seven, such as Stephen and Philip.

Likewise, Paul's proclamation of the word was characterized by a demonstration of divine power. The proconsul of Cyprus was amazed at the teaching about the Lord when he saw the Jewish sorcerer struck with blindness. At Iconium Paul and Barnabas spoke "boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders."⁴ In Corinth Paul's message and preaching "were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power."⁵ In Thessalonica the gospel came to them through Paul, Silas, and Timothy, "not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction."⁶ The teaching and proclamation of the Word was frequently accompanied by the miraculous throughout Paul's journeys. This was particularly evident in Ephesus. At the outset, when Paul baptized and laid hands on a dozen disciples, they were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. In fact, it was in this city that God did "extraordinary miracles" through Paul, even healing and delivering people when handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and those bound by evil spirits.⁷

*Signs of the
Kingdom*

Jesus had called the Twelve "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons."⁸ Thus, when he sent them out he told them to preach that the kingdom is near, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers and to drive out demons.⁹ Likewise, when he sent out the seventy-two disciples he told them to preach the kingdom of God is near and to heal, giving them authority over "all the power of the enemy."¹⁰ Jesus declared that when he drove out demons by the power of the Spirit of God, "the kingdom of God has come upon you."¹¹ This kingdom was proclaimed both in word and in power. Miracles were signs of the presence of the God's kingdom. In the coming of Christ, God's anointed king, God's rule and reign had come to earth. His kingdom had come that his will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The message of God's grace in Christ was the gospel of the kingdom. It was the proclamation of good news to the poor, the needy in body and spirit. It was good news of freedom to those enslaved to

sin, of recovery to those who were blind, and of release to those oppressed of the devil. It was the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor, the day of salvation.¹² The proclamation of the good news of the kingdom was authenticated by miraculous works and accompanied by good deeds. And so it was that as the apostles continued to preach the gospel with great power, great grace was upon the church. "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."¹³ Following the outpouring at Pentecost, all were Christ's witnesses. All communicated the good news in word and deed, both natural and supernatural, first in Jerusalem and Judea, and then beyond.

*Conversion: a
Threefold Encounter*

The Apostle Paul was divinely called and sent to his own people and the Gentiles to preach this good news. He was called to appeal to them to "repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."¹⁴ He was sent "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified [made holy] by faith in me."¹⁵ Thus, conversion to Christ involved a threefold encounter. First, it involved a truth encounter: a turning from darkness to light. Paul acknowledged that "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God."¹⁶ Therefore, Paul did not use deception nor distort the word of God, but set forth the truth plainly. This he did both publicly and from house to house in Ephesus.

Second, conversion to Christ involved a power encounter: a turning from the power of Satan to God. Paul declared that God "has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."¹⁷ Therefore, Paul openly confronted the powers of darkness in Ephesus. When the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, attempted to cast out demons in the name of the Jesus Paul preached, they were overpowered, beaten, and stripped naked. When word of this encounter spread throughout the city, many were seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. As a result, many who believed confessed their involvement in sorcery and brought their scrolls and publicly burned them. And so, "the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."¹⁸

Third, conversion to Christ involved an allegiance encounter: turning from false gods to the true God. Paul testified that believers in Thessalonica had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”¹⁹ In Ephesus, silversmiths lost business because believers no longer purchased the silver shrines of the goddess Artemis. Paul’s preaching resulted in so many coming to faith in Christ that the economy was affected. Growing numbers of believers confessed Jesus as Lord and turned from serving false gods to serve the true and living God.²⁰

*Practices and
Patterns*

What can we learn from the way in which these earliest witnesses of Christ proclaimed the gospel in the power of the Spirit? What practices and patterns were involved? *First*, Spirit-empowered witness was the result of the coming of the Spirit. Although the Spirit at times came upon various individuals prior to Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit enabled all believers to become Christ’s witnesses.²¹ All—men and women, young and old—could be God’s mouthpiece and speak his message.²² Spirit-empowered witness involved the whole body of Christ.

Second, Spirit-empowered witness to Christ was holistic, in word and deed. The words and works of Jesus characterized his followers.²³ Like him, the communication of the good news of the kingdom was both in proclamation and demonstration. A demonstration of good works, natural and supernatural, accompanied the witness of believers. They cared for the needy, fed the hungry, healed the sick, and delivered the bound.²⁴

Third, Spirit-empowered witness was divine and human. Miraculous signs followed their witness to Christ. As “the disciples went out and preached everywhere. . . the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.”²⁵ Paul spoke of what Christ had accomplished through him “in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.”²⁶

Fourth, Spirit-empowered witness resulted in the conversion of the whole person, heart, soul, and mind. Paul proclaimed the gospel for conversion, for it is the primary way to advance the kingdom. Those who believed the message encountered the truth and the power of the gospel and confessed Jesus as Lord. They were delivered from

darkness to light, from the rule of Satan to the kingdom of God's Son, and from serving false gods to serving the true and living God.

From these practices and patterns of the earliest witnesses of Christ we note a significant ***Church Planting Principle: the demonstration of the power of God in word and deed.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 6

Making Disciples

*“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”
(Acts 20:20)*

Christ’s command to “make disciples” was twofold: baptize those who believed the gospel, and teach them to obey all he commanded.¹ Throughout the book of Acts, believers who were baptized were identified as disciples, for having called upon and confessed Jesus as Lord, they had obeyed Christ’s initial command. They were baptized, an “obedience of faith.”² When baptism is mentioned in the book of Acts, all who believed were baptized.³ Faith in Christ was consistently followed by baptism in his name.⁴ In baptism, believers identified with Christ in his death and resurrection. Buried with him in baptism, they died to sin and came alive to righteousness.⁵ Their testimony was that of the Apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”⁶

*Becoming
Disciples*

*Being
Disciples*

To be baptized was to become a disciple. To continue in his word was to be a disciple, a true follower of Christ.⁷ Upon repentance and faith in Christ and baptism in his name, believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit. As Peter told the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, “the promise is for you and your children [Jews] and for all who are afar off [Gentiles]—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁸ All who believed were promised the gift of the Spirit, and when the coming of the Spirit is mentioned in the book of Acts, all received and were filled.⁹ By the Spirit, God’s love was poured out in their hearts, a love God demonstrated in this: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”¹⁰ “Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”¹¹ Believers expressed their love for the One who died for them by living for him. They learned to walk in his ways and put into practice his word. They showed themselves to be Christ’s disciples by bearing fruit as they remained in him and in his word.¹² They learned to live a life of love—love for God, and love for one another. Such transformed and transforming living was possible because God was at work in them by the Spirit “to will and to act according to his good purpose.”¹³

*Community
of Disciples*

Becoming a disciple was personal. Being a disciple was communal. The first act of the “obedience of faith” was baptism, a personal identification with Christ as Lord. And it was simultaneously an identification with a community, with all who had likewise confessed him as Lord—his church. When Jesus called his disciples to follow him, it was to do so in the company of other disciples he had called. Being a disciple who learned to walk in his ways took place in community. Loving God involved loving his family. Following the Good Shepherd was personal, but it was not private. It involved other sheep of his pasture. The Twelve learned to put into practice what Christ commanded in the company of a band of followers. Following Pentecost, those who believed and were baptized met together in their homes and in the temple. Together they gave themselves to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Together they gave themselves to the apostles teaching.¹⁴ Together they learned to put into practice what Christ had taught the Twelve.¹⁵ And it was to this community of believers the Lord added those who were being saved

*Planting
the Church*

To make disciples who follow Christ is to plant a church. Although Paul was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel, when people believed, they were baptized, and a church formed. In Philippi, when Lydia and her household believed and were baptized, believers met in her house, a church formed.¹⁶ In Corinth Paul baptized Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, when he believed. And as his entire family believed, they too were baptized and a church formed in the house of Titius Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue.¹⁷ In Ephesus, Paul left Aquila and Priscilla to begin the work, and a church eventually formed in their home. When Paul returned he came across twelve disciples, probably in the synagogue, where Aquila and Priscilla had met Apollos. Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit came upon them. These were probably among the disciples Paul took with him when he left the synagogue and went to the hall of Tyrannus. There Paul taught publicly for two years, as well as from house to house. As a result, many came to faith and churches were formed. Proclamation of the gospel, making disciples by baptizing those who believed and received the Spirit, and teaching disciples the way of the Lord—this was how a church was planted throughout the journeys of Paul.

*Christ is All
and in All*

What was the church—planted by Paul, watered by others like Apollos, and made to grow by God? It was the community of the Spirit. All who had been born of the Spirit had been baptized into one body by the Spirit.¹⁸ It was the body of Christ. All who had been united to Christ had been united to his body. It was the household of God. All who had become a child of God had become a member of his family. Simply, the church was and is the gathering of the Spirit-born family of God, where Christ is “all and in all.”¹⁹ He is all—pre-eminent above all, and he is in all—present. He is Lord, “the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”²⁰ He is with and in his body: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”²¹

Believers met regularly wherever they could—largely in homes and at times in halls—to pray and worship, to fellowship and break bread, and to hear and put into practice the word of God. They came together as family, with all contributing to the common good, building each other up in the faith, lifting each other up in hope, and

stirring each other up to love and good works. “The reality of the Church consisted of the shared life imparted by the Holy Spirit, of a sense of human fellowship which was grounded upon a prior fellowship with God. The oneness and joy which characterized the early church were not externally generated but the natural product of Christian experience.”²² This is the church Paul planted, and Jesus built, in key centers such as Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus.

*Practices and
Patterns*

What practices and patterns are evident in the way in which Paul planted churches? *First*, Paul made disciples of those who believed. He preached the gospel and followed the pattern of Pentecost. Those who believed repented, were baptized, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and were taught the way of the Lord. In Ephesus Paul declared he had taught publicly and from house to house what was helpful to them. He went about preaching the kingdom, testifying to the gospel of God’s grace, and did not hesitate to “proclaim to you the whole will of God.”²³ Evangelism and the making and teaching of disciples were combined. The proclamation of the gospel was a call “to the obedience that comes from faith.”²⁴ To believe in Christ was to submit to him as Lord and do what he had commanded. The fruit of repentance was to walk in a new way, his way, to become his disciple.

Second, being a disciple was to do life together with other believers. To be united with Christ was to be united with a community of faith. In Ephesus there were apparently many house churches, such as the one that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. But there was only one flock, “the church of God which he bought with his own blood.”²⁵ The fruit of repentance was to become and be a disciple in community. Making disciples and planting a church were synonymous.

Third, the churches Paul established were the result of evangelism. Even “transfers” from the synagogues were converts who had experienced new birth. The gathering of Spirit-born believers was a fellowship where there was “no Gentile, or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but [where] Christ is all, and in all.”²⁶ In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul challenged believers to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, for there is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”²⁷ The fruit of repentance was to become and be

a disciple in community where Christ was all and in all—pre-eminent and present. This was, and is, the essence of the church.

The practices and patterns of discipleship by Paul and his coworkers reveals a vital ***Church Planting Principle: the making and gathering together of disciples in communities of faith.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 7

Developing Leaders

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart.” (1 Peter 1:22)

To make disciples is to develop leaders. Disciple-makers model leadership. In discipling the Twelve, Jesus exemplified leadership—a different kind of leadership—servant leadership. In contrast to this world’s top-down leadership, Jesus’ style was bottom-up. True greatness in God’s kingdom was to serve rather than to be served. It was to lead as a shepherd who cares and lays down his life for the sheep. After his resurrection Jesus asked Simon Peter who, with all the other disciples, had deserted him: “Do you love me?” If so, then “feed my sheep.”¹ Jesus had taught Peter, along with the Twelve, to be fishers of men. Now Peter was also to become a shepherd of sheep. So it was that Peter became a servant leader like his Master as did the other eleven disciples. No longer competing to be “top dogs,” they became shepherds of God’s flock. They taught those who believed, cared for those in need, and led the growing church in Jerusalem and Judea.² And when the task became

*Servant
Leaders*

too great, seven more servant leaders were appointed to assist the Twelve in caring for the rapidly increasing number of disciples.³ Paul, along with Peter, identified himself as “a servant of Jesus Christ.”⁴ For the churches he planted he became “your servant for Jesus’ sake.”⁵ Like Jesus, Paul was a servant leader. He came to serve, not to be served.

*Discipling
Leaders*

Paul was an effective discipler and developer of leaders.⁶ He never traveled alone. He always had a team of workers with him. He disciplined and mentored his coworkers like Jesus taught and trained the Twelve. Using a rabbinical type of on-the-job training, Paul apprenticed leaders in the field. They learned by listening and watching, taking part and participating, testing and experimenting, and receiving feedback and instruction. Most of the coworkers Paul disciplined and developed came from the harvest, those won to faith on his missionary journeys. Together, Paul and his band of coworkers planted and nurtured churches. And when he departed, Paul left or sent back coworkers to strengthen and care for the churches planted. However, neither Paul nor his coworkers became permanent, long-term shepherds. Ongoing leadership came from the local congregation. Leadership was homegrown. With prayer and fasting, Paul and his coworkers appointed elders in the churches.⁷ In Ephesus, as in each church, such overseeing elders who shepherded the flock were selected and appointed. Some may have previously been leaders in the synagogue before coming to faith in Christ. Others may have emerged as leaders of house churches. Whatever the case, all were leaders in their homes.⁸

With the rapidly growing number of believers, the need for shepherds to feed and lead the flock was great. When Paul was returning from Macedonia to Jerusalem at the end of his third journey, Paul met with these Ephesian elders in the coastal town of Miletus. There he spoke with them at length.⁹ These were the leaders that had been raised up, so Paul reviewed his years of ministry in Ephesus. He reminded them of how he lived and served the Lord with humility and tears. He spoke of the severe testing by the plots of the Jews and the impending hardships he would face as he prepared to return to Jerusalem. He warned them about teachers who would come in, distort the truth, and divide the flock. He urged them to “guard yourselves and the flock of which the Holy Spirit made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.”¹⁰ Paul reminded them how he worked hard to supply his own

needs and that of his companions, coveting no one's money or clothes. This he did to show how we must help the weak, for Jesus himself had said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."¹¹

Like Jesus, Paul modeled servant leadership, leaving an example for the Ephesian elders to follow as he followed the example of Christ.¹² As he left, he committed them to "God and the word of his grace."¹³ As they knelt down and prayed, all wept, for Paul had told them they would not see him again. Paul had deeply invested in these leaders. He loved them. Most, if not all, were probably sons in the faith he had won, disciplined, and developed—indigenous leaders now overseeing the flock of God which he "bought with his own blood."

*Multiplying
Leaders*

Paul not only knew how to disciple and develop leaders, he knew how to multiply leaders. Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted coworkers, a son in the faith, whom he had disciplined and developed. Some years after his last visit, Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus and urged him to remain there so that, among other things, he might deal with false teachers and appoint overseeing elders. Apparently, the growing church in Ephesus now required additional elders to teach, preach and "direct the affairs of the church."¹⁴ Paul explained to Timothy the qualifications for those who desired to become overseers. They must be above reproach, that is, they must be faithful in marriage, managing their families well, self-disciplined, hospitable, humble, free from the love of money, have a good reputation with outsiders, and apt to teach.¹⁵

Further, Paul counseled Timothy that, although young, he was to set an example in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity. Sound living must accompany sound teaching. He was to devote himself "to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."¹⁶ Therefore, Paul charged Timothy to "watch your life and doctrine closely."¹⁷ Overseeing elders were to do likewise. Teachers who had an unhealthy interest in controversies and arguments, and taught false doctrines that did not lead to godly living, were to be silenced. If an accusation was brought against an elder, it had to be confirmed by two or three witnesses, and "those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."¹⁸

In a subsequent letter, Paul told Timothy to keep as the pattern of sound teaching what he had heard from him. He urged him to "do

your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”¹⁹ In Ephesus the multiplication of disciples required a multiplication of qualified and reliable leaders who modeled and taught the truth. What they had received through Timothy from Paul, they were to pass on to others. Further, Paul also instructed Titus, another faithful coworker whom he had disciplined and developed, to identify and appoint qualified elders in the churches throughout the island of Crete.²⁰ The identification, appointment, and multiplication of local leaders was essential to overseeing and shepherding the rapidly growing number of churches in the region.

*Practices and
Patterns*

Paul’s practice and pattern of discipling, developing, and multiplying servant leaders is instructive. *First*, Paul disciplined leaders by doing life together. They heard and observed “his teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions and sufferings.”²¹ They followed Paul as he followed Christ. They learned what it meant to be a servant of Christ by following his example. “Train a servant, and you will get a leader.”²²

Second, Paul developed leaders by apprenticing them in ministry. They watched him and heard him. They learned ministry by serving and doing ministry together. By example, exhortation, experimentation, and evaluation, Paul trained and developed servant leaders.

Third, Paul multiplied leaders by instructing coworkers how to identify elders and appoint them to oversee and shepherd God’s flock.²³ Their lives would model what they taught. They were gifted and given grace for the task. “Therefore in addition to the more general prerequisite of spiritual maturity, we look to invest in potential leaders who have demonstrated faithfulness in service and an appropriate giftedness for leadership in the church and mission.”²⁴

Fourth, Paul and his team turned over leadership to recognized local leaders as soon as possible. They did not seek to dominate or retain control over the churches they planted. They indigenized the work as soon as possible by appointing leaders who would be self-supported or supported by the churches.²⁵

The practices and patterns of the apostle and Paul and his teams in developing leaders to shepherd God's flock reflects an important ***Church Growth Principle: the discipling and appointing of leaders to oversee the communities of faith.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 8

Making an Impact on a City

“They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.” (Acts 14:21)

The preaching of the gospel had an impact on cities. As people came to Christ, the good news began to spread. The initial witness of the apostles expanded through the witness of disciples who had believed, been baptized and received the Spirit. The gospel spread through relational networks as more and more came to faith. As the number of believers multiplied, so did the number of gatherings where believers met for worship, prayer, fellowship and teaching in homes and larger venues throughout the community. As a result the gospel began to affect cities spiritually, economically and politically.

*Religious and
Spiritual Impact*

In Jerusalem the preaching of the good news resulted in thousands coming to Christ. Daily meeting in the temple, eating and breaking bread together in their homes, and sharing with those in need, the community of believers “enjoyed the favor of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”¹

Although the shocking death of Ananias and Sapphira caused great fear, and people were hesitant to join them, they still highly regarded the community of believers. “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.”² As a result, people in Jerusalem began bringing their sick out into the streets so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on them as he passed by. Crowds even from surrounding villages brought their sick and those bound by evil spirits, and all were healed. As the word of God spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem rapidly increased, with even a large number of the priests coming to faith. The spiritual affect was so pervasive that the religious leaders charged the apostles with “filling Jerusalem with your teaching.”³

Even when threatened, imprisoned, and beaten, the apostles never stopped teaching and preaching the good news. When persecution broke out, the believers who were scattered went everywhere preaching the gospel—to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria. Although initially speaking only to Jews, some from Cyprus and Cyrene in North Africa began speaking to Gentiles also, and a great number believed. When Barnabas arrived from Jerusalem, many more were brought to the Lord. For a whole year, Barnabas and Paul, who came from Tarsus, taught great numbers of people, both Jews and Gentiles. Apparently, the gospel had such an impact in Antioch that a new name was coined to describe this large multi-ethnic multitude: “Christians.”

In Antioch in Pisidia, the initial proclamation of the gospel resulted in many Jews and God-fearers coming to faith in Christ. Interest in the gospel was so great that at the next meeting “almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.”⁴ Jewish opposition caused Paul to turn to the Gentiles, resulting in the word spreading throughout the whole region.

In Iconium a large number of Jews and Gentiles also believed as Paul and Barnabas boldly spoke for the Lord, “who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.”⁵ A plot among unbelieving Jews and Gentiles to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas forced them to flee to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding country, “where they continued to preach the good news.”⁶ In Lystra the healing of a lame man caused the Lycaonian-speaking crowd to declare, “The gods have come down to us in human form.”⁷ Calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, they attempted to offer sacrifices to them. Even when

they told them they were but men, bringing them good news and telling them to turn from worthless idols to the living God, they had difficulty in keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. In city after city, the spiritual impact was so great that the backlash of unbelievers forced the spread of the gospel even further.

*Economic, and
Political Impact*

In Philippi the owners of a slave girl, out of whom Paul had cast a fortune-telling spirit, lost their source of income. They then accused Paul and Silas of “throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”⁷⁸ As a result, they were beaten and jailed. About midnight an earthquake rocked the city. The prison doors flew open. The jailer, thinking his prisoners had escaped, was about to kill himself when Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”⁷⁹ Answering his question about what he must do to be saved, Paul told him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”⁸⁰ He then explained the word of the Lord to him, and his entire household believed and were baptized. When the Roman magistrates ordered them to be released, Paul and Silas demanded that the officials escort them from the prison since they were Roman citizens who had been beaten publicly without a trial and thrown in prison. The magistrates were alarmed and escorted Paul and Silas from the prison, asking them to leave the city. The economic and political impact of the gospel in Philippi was clearly evident.

Meanwhile, in Thessalonica, a large number of Gentiles believed, including prominent women in the city. Jealous Jews accused Paul and Silas before the city officials of “turning the world upside down” by defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there was another king—Jesus. A charge of political subversion forced Paul and Silas to leave the city.

Although the impact in Athens was minimal, in Corinth many came to Christ. The ruler of the synagogue and his entire family “believed in the Lord, and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.”⁸¹ Again, opposition from the Jews caused Paul to go to the Gentiles. In a vision the Lord told Paul, “No one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”⁸² Thus Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching the word of God, until the Jews made another attack against him. When they brought Paul before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of the province

refused to get involved in “questions about words and names and your law.”¹³ Therefore, he had them thrown out of the court, and the crowd turned on the ruler of the synagogue and beat him. But Gallio showed no concern whatever and Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Jerusalem, Syrian Antioch, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth—the power of the gospel in these cities was apparent—spiritually in most, politically in some, and economically in at least one.

*The “Metropolis
of Asia”*

It was in Ephesus that the gospel made its greatest impact. Ephesus was the leading city of the Roman province of Asia. Its citizens liked to call it “the metropolis of Asia,” for even though it was not the capital, it was indeed the most important city of the province.¹⁴ Its population was one-third of a million. Only Rome was larger. In its day it was a commercial center situated on the trade route from Rome to the east. It was a cultural center with a theater seating up to 25,000 people, with gymnasiums, baths, and numerous impressive buildings located along a main thoroughfare connecting the theater and the harbor.

Perhaps most significant, Ephesus was a political and religious center. Temples built in honor of emperors were located in the city which prided itself on being “temple warden” of the places of emperor worship. The Temple of Artemis (Diana, her Roman name) at Ephesus was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens and contained an image of the goddess, which, it was claimed, fell from heaven, having come directly from Zeus. As a twin daughter of Zeus (Apollo was her twin sister), she was variously known as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. Artemis, the “goddess of Ephesus,” was revered throughout the Roman Empire. And within the city was a large community of Jews that enjoyed a privileged position, coming under the protection of the Roman government as a legal religion that was allowed to be practiced in the empire.

*Religious Impact:
Truth Encounter*

The gospel came to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla when Paul left them there after a short visit at the end of his second journey. When Paul returned about two years later, he argued persuasively about

the kingdom of God in the synagogue for three months. Some believed the truth, but others did not, who became obstinate and slandered “the Way.” So when Paul left the synagogue, he took with him the disciples who had become followers of Christ and went to the Hall of Tyrannus. For two years Paul held discussions daily in this public meeting hall, preaching the gospel and declaring the truth about Jesus. As a result, the number of disciples multiplied in Ephesus, for not only publicly, but from house to house, Paul taught both Jews and Greeks that they must “turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”¹⁵ The Lord had opened “a great door for effective work.”¹⁶ The religious impact on Jews and Gentiles was pervasive as they encountered the truth of the gospel

*Spiritual Impact:
Power Encounter*

While in Ephesus, unusual miracles of healing and exorcism accompanied Paul’s ministry. Like those who touched the fringe of Jesus’ coat, the touching of pieces of cloth from Paul cured those who were ill and evil spirits left them. So powerful was the name of Jesus invoked by Paul to drive out evil spirits, some other practitioners of magic began to invoke it, too. When the seven sons of Sceva, a renegade self-designated Jewish high priest, attempted to cast out a demon “in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches,” the evil spirit answered: “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you?”¹⁷ The man possessed by a demon assaulted and left them beaten and bloodied, fleeing for their lives. News of this incident spread throughout Ephesus, and all, both Jews and Greeks, were filled with awe at the power of the name of the Lord Jesus. Many believed and, openly confessing their involvement in sorcery and collecting their magical scrolls, publicly burned them. As a result “the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.”¹⁸ A city known as a center of magical practice was profoundly affected. The spiritual impact was dramatic as the Ephesians encountered the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ

*Economic and
Political Impact:
Allegiance Encounter*

So great was the impact of the gospel that the local silversmiths began losing business. The sale of miniature silver shrines of the goddess Artemis had fallen off dramatically. Demetrius, a prominent member of the guild of silversmiths, called a meeting and staged a mass protest against Paul, accusing him of saying that “man-made gods are no gods at all.”¹⁹ The loss of income was upsetting, but even more so, the discrediting of the great goddess

Artemis. The silversmiths were furious and began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.”²⁰ Soon the whole city was in an uproar. Two of Paul’s companions were seized and taken into the theater arena. When Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, the disciples, as well as some political officials of the province, begged him not to enter. Finally, after two hours of tumultuous shouting, the city clerk quieted the crowd. He assured them that the place and power of the goddess Artemis was secure and that the men they had dragged into the theater were guilty of no crime. He told them that if the silversmiths wanted to press charges they would have to be settled in a legal assembly. As things stood, the city was in danger of being charged with rioting, and “we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.”²¹

Ephesus was greatly affected by the truth and power of the gospel that confronted the religious, spiritual, economic, and political principalities and powers of the city. Although we have no information of the transformation of the religious, socio-economic, and political structures, the impact in the city of Ephesus was evident in the transforming power of the gospel in the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of its citizens. Paul would later write, exhorting those who had come to faith in Christ to live as children of light. He called them to make the most of every opportunity, because the days were evil. He told them to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (and) put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”²² The light had come to Ephesus and the darkness could never be the same.

*Practices and
Patterns*

What can we learned from the way cities were affected by the gospel? *First*, Paul “fearlessly made known the mystery of the gospel.”²³ When persecuted and imprisoned, he asked believers to pray for him that he might “declare it fearlessly, as I should.”²⁴ Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to save all who believed, Jew or Gentile. Paul did not hesitate to preach anything that was helpful, calling Jew and Gentile alike to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul preached the whole counsel of God, that is, his saving purpose and will as revealed in the gospel. He made disciples who learned to walk in the way of the Lord. After just three months of

preaching in the synagogue, Paul had made disciples—disciples who joined him in the Hall of Tyrannus.

Third, gatherings of believers were established, meeting in public places as well as homes, such as that of Aquila and Priscilla. Elders were identified and appointed to oversee and teach the flock. These fellowships became lighthouses of the gospel in the community, leavening society.

Fourth, much like what took place in the communities in which Jesus peached the message of the kingdom, response was both positive and negative. Some believed, others did not. Some received, some rejected. Some seed fell on good soil, some on hard soil. Other seed fell on rocky soil and grew for a time, but then wilted in the heat of opposition, while still other seed was choked out by the cares of this world. “Persons of peace” who were receptive to the message was what Paul found among the Gentile God-fearers in the synagogues—good soil in and through which the seed of the gospel multiplied.

Fifth, the gospel not only affected individuals, it affected communities religiously, spiritually, economically and politically. As growing numbers encountered the truth and power of the gospel, their allegiance changed as they turned from serving false gods to serve the true and living God.

The practices and patterns of how the gospel made an impact on cities reflects a key ***Church Planting Principle: the multiplication of disciples who lived and spread the gospel.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Part Two

Multiplying Churches

Apostolic Church Planting

Planting a new church reaches new people. Multiplying reproducing churches reaches a region. “Mission” for Paul meant not only to preach the gospel but to also plant churches, and his mission could not be considered completed apart from planting churches that would *multiply*. Only then a region could be considered ‘reached.’¹ In contrast to a pastoral church planter who begins a new church and continues to pastor it, Paul was an apostolic church planter. In contrast to a catalytic church planter who begins a new church and continues to pastor it and plant churches out of it, Paul was more itinerant.² He never planned to pastor the churches he planted. Like a missionary, he planned from the start for “church planter phase-out.” He sought to plant indigenous reproducing churches with local leaders and local support so he could move on and continue to plant reproducing churches in the “regions beyond.” At times, Paul enlisted local believers as a part of his itinerant missionary team, instilling in them and the local church a vision for the larger region. Even in Ephesus, where Paul ministered for three years, it appears that he did not pastor a church nor plant churches but raised up others who not only led the churches but planted churches. As a result, all the province of Asia heard the word of God.

Although Paul was primarily an apostolic church planter, he did nurture and teach believers. This was evident during his stay in Ephesus when he taught publicly and from house to house, not hesitating to preach anything that was helpful as he proclaimed the kingdom of God and the whole will of God.³ Further, he raised up and appointed elders to shepherd the flock. Thus, in addition to evangelism, Paul made the “developing, empowering and releasing of local believers a priority...ever cognizant of the temporary nature of... his ministry...[with] a view to multiplication.”⁴ Even after departing, Paul continued by letter to encourage, instruct, equip, and urge the church to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”⁵ He also sent coworkers such as Tychicus and Timothy to help encourage, establish and strengthen believers and multiply leaders. Paul was an apostolic church planter who planted churches that multiplied

Planting and Multiplying Churches

churches, resulting in a church planting movement that reached entire provinces with the gospel.

Chapter 9

Expanding Witness

*“The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”
(1 Thessalonians 1:8)*

The spread of the gospel transcended the witness of the apostles. With the apostles remaining in Jerusalem, those driven out by persecution went everywhere preaching the gospel.

Philip went to Samaria. Others went to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Although we have no explanation of how it happened, the gospel spread throughout Galilee and farther north into Damascus.¹ In Thessalonica the witness of believers spread throughout the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, a church he did not plant, that their “faith is being reported all over the world.”² This is a church that may have been planted by “visitors from Rome” returning from the day of Pentecost.

*All Believers
Christ’s Witnesses*

To Colossae, another church he did not plant, Paul wrote, “all over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and under God’s

grace in all its truth.”³ The early church was a witnessing church. In addition to the apostles, believers spread the gospel. Having received the promise of the Father, they became Christ’s witnesses. The Holy Spirit was poured out on all—men and women, young and old.⁴ All became God’s messengers. Though not all may have been evangelists, like Philip, all were Christ’s witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Paul, having asked the Colossian church to pray for him for open doors for the gospel, encouraged them to “be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” He counseled them to “let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”⁵ Further, his prayer for the church in Colossae that met in Philemon’s home was “that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”⁶

*Life
Transformation*

Transformed lives became a witness to the power of the gospel as followers of Christ learned to live a life of love. Living as God’s holy people, they became the salt of the earth—so different they made a difference, penetrating and influencing society spiritually, socially, and culturally. No longer living in darkness, they became the light of the world all—so different they made a difference, penetrating and illuminating “a crooked and depraved generation”, shining “like stars in the universe as they held out the word of life.”⁷ Healed marriages and families, reconciled relationships between slaves and masters, deliverance from demonic oppression and sickness, answered prayer and divine favor, care for the needy, love for enemies, and grace in persecution—“when transformation happens, there is always evidence.”⁸ Paul prayed that believers would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will so that they might “live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”⁹ Good works and changed lives accompanied the witness to Christ and expedited the spread of the gospel.

*Avoiding Church
Development
Syndrome*

In Ephesus the expanding witness of the gospel had a profound effect. Paul’s extensive discussions in the Hall of Tyrannus and the extraordinary miracles of healing and deliverance affected the entire city. So many were turning from idols to Christ, including a large number who practiced sorcery, that

Paul was accused of leading astray “large numbers of people here in Ephesus.”¹⁰ The pastoral care and nurture of this rapidly increasing number of believers was also taking place in the growing number of house churches multiplying throughout the city. However, this important shepherding ministry was increasingly carried out by overseeing elders. Thus, Paul was able to continue to evangelize and avoid the trap of the “church-development syndrome.” This happens when the care of believers overtakes evangelism, when shepherding sheep supplants, rather than supplements, finding lost sheep.¹¹ In contrast, Paul’s ongoing preaching of the gospel publicly and from house to house spawned and catalyzed evangelism throughout the church in Ephesus, while the ongoing pastoral care was entrusted to elders, whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers of the flock. Thus, the witness to the gospel continued to expand and the “word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.”¹²

*Practices and
Patterns*

Several patterns and practices are evident in the expanding witness of the early church. *First*, the outpoured gift of the Holy Spirit upon all believers empowered them to be Christ’s witnesses. Beginning with the one hundred and twenty in the upper room, the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit was also given to the three thousand who believed, and to “all whom the Lord our God shall call.”¹³ The Spirit was poured out on all people, not just leaders. Thus, all believers were empowered to be witnesses of Christ.

Second, when opposed, these witnesses prayed for boldness and all, leaders and people alike, were again filled with the Spirit and “spoke the word of God boldly.”¹⁴ In addition, when scattered by persecution they “preached the word wherever they went.”¹⁵ The witness of both leaders and people continued and expanded.

Third, their witness was accompanied by good works and transformed lives. Believers learned to live out their faith, “faith expressing itself through love.”¹⁶ Fourth, church planting teams continued to evangelize, turning over the shepherding of believers to local leaders. Incorporating workers from newly planted churches they modeled and instilled a larger vision for reaching the regions beyond.

Planting and Multiplying Churches

The practices and patterns of the witness of newly planted congregations reflects an important ***Church Multiplication Principle: the consistent focus on spreading the gospel.***

Chapter 10

Mobilizing Workers

“He (Paul) was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also (from Derbe), and from the province of Asia Tychicus and Trophimus (the Ephesian).” (Acts 20:5)

Paul continued to expand the witness of the gospel by raising up leaders to shepherd and care for the churches he planted. In so doing, he was released to continue to evangelize. Further, he mobilized workers from these newly planted churches to join him in reaching new areas for Christ. When Paul first came to Ephesus at the end of his second journey, he was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, tentmakers who had served with him in the establishing of the church in Corinth. At some point, other workers joined him from churches he had planted on his first and second journeys—Gaius and Timothy from Derbe, Aristarchus from Thessalonica, and Erastus from Corinth. During those two years the number of disciples and house churches multiplied in and beyond Ephesus. Luke implied that what went on during this time in the lecture hall of Tyrannus resulted in all who lived in the province

*Workers for the
Harvest from
the Harvest*

of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles, hearing the word of the Lord.¹ Apparently, something beyond what Paul did in preaching publicly and from house to house was taking place. It may well be that some type of training may have been happening, mobilizing workers to oversee house churches and others to take the gospel to outlying areas including their hometowns.²

*Equipping
the Saints*

Meanwhile in the churches, the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry was also taking place. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explained that when Christ rose from the dead and was exalted to God's right hand he gave gifts to his church. He gave "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."³ These gifts were given to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ would be built up and mature. Thus, the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching ministry of Paul's team was twofold: to plant and serve the churches, and to equip believers also to do the work of ministry. The planting, strengthening, and growth of the church in Ephesus was initially the result of the work of Paul and his coworkers. But the continuing edification and expansion of the church was the result of the equipping of believers for the work of ministry in leading, feeding, evangelizing, discipling, and establishing new fellowships of followers of Jesus. Paul and his team and the churches they planted continued to spread the gospel, both shepherding the found and reaching the lost, as they discipled believers, mobilized workers, raised up leaders, and multiplied congregations throughout Ephesus and beyond.

*Mobilization
for Mission*

The context of the mobilization of workers and the equipping of the people of God was missional. The post-Pentecost community of believers was a "people belonging to God, that they might declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light."⁴ Jesus told his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." He then breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."⁵ When the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, multiple nations heard the disciples "declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues."⁶ Peter explained to the amazed crowd that "this is that"—the promised outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh in the last days when "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."⁷ As Peter preached

the good news about Jesus, whom God had made both Lord and Christ, three-thousand called upon his name and were saved.

The Spirit's coming empowered God's people as Christ witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth among the nations. So it was that Paul with Barnabas, called by the Spirit and sent by the church in Antioch, proclaimed the gospel to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, in key cities in Cyprus and Galatia. With a growing band of coworkers Paul continued preaching the gospel in city centers in Macedonia, Achaia, and eventually Asia.

*Practices and
Patterns*

What is to be learned from Paul as a mobilizer and multiplier of workers? *First*, Paul was a man on a mission and he consistently mobilized coworkers to join him in that mission. The harvest was great, the laborers few. Paul disciplined and multiplied workers from the harvest for the harvest. As with Jesus and the Twelve, training was largely an informal, in-the-field type of apprenticeship.

Second, Paul clearly understood Christ's foundational gifts to the church were for both doing ministry and for equipping others in ministry. As members of one body, every believer was gifted by the Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were given to equip all of God's people to play their part.

Third, the mobilizing of workers and the equipping of the saints was to build up the body of Christ that it might be mature for effective service in the world. Pentecost signified the Spirit's intent to create a missional community, for "the formation of the church was for the sake of the world."⁸

The practices and patterns of involvement of the young church in ministry and outreach reflects a vital ***Church Multiplication Principle: the equipping and mobilization of workers for mission.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 11

Planting Multiplying Churches

*“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who live in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”
(Acts 19:10)*

Paul was an urban church planter. He was called to take the gospel first to his own people, the Jews, then to the Gentiles. The largest Jewish communities were found in cities, thus the synagogue became the initial entry point for the gospel. When Paul, the rabbi, was given opportunity to speak, he sought to show from the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus was the promised Messiah after the line of David. He explained the good news, that by Jesus’ death and resurrection the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. “Through him.” Paul declared, “everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.”¹ Though response was limited, it was sufficient to cause a backlash among unbelieving Jews. They, like Paul before his conversion, were convinced a crucified

*Urban Church
Planter*

messiah could not be God's son, let alone a savior. So they sought to drive Paul out of the city—but not before a sizeable number of Gentile God-fearers had believed and turned to the Lord and a church had been planted. Thus the gospel took root among Gentiles and spread in the city and into surrounding regions.

Although it would appear that Paul's plan was not necessarily to plant churches in urban areas, this is the way it turned out, for it was in the cities where the Jewish communities were found that became the springboard for reaching Gentiles. And this proved to be most strategic, for most cities were located on major trade and travel routes in the Roman provinces. As centers of population and economic, social, and commercial influence, these cities became the hubs from which the gospel spread into Gentile territory. Antioch of Pisidia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus were such a cities.²

*A Church Planting
Movement*

The Roman Empire in Paul's day was overwhelmingly rural, yet, if at all possible, he remained in the city even after forced to leave the synagogue. In Corinth he stayed another year and a half and in Ephesus two more years. Teaching and preaching from house to house and in the Hall of Tyrannus, many came to faith in Christ, including some who had migrated to the city. Apparently, Epaphras, who had come from Colossae, was one those converts who Paul described as a "fellow servant" and a "faithful minister of Christ."³ He returned to his hometown, bringing the gospel to Colossae, and was most likely instrumental in establishing the church in this community. Epaphras was also at work in nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis and may have been involved in planting the church in these communities as well. The churches of Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamum, Philadelphia, and Sardis mentioned in Revelation were also planted during this time as Ephesus became "a center for evangelism and training for the Lycos Valley and much of Asia Minor."⁴ Although Paul remained in Ephesus, the gospel spread and churches were planted throughout the Province of Asia. This is probably the clearest example of what could be called a "church planting movement" in the book of Acts—"a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment."⁵ Churches, probably primarily house churches, planted and led by local leaders, multiplied within a short period of time throughout the region of western Turkey.

*Indigenous
Missional House
Churches*

Due to the wide and continual sowing of the gospel during the time Paul was in Ephesus, house churches multiplied, shepherding elders were appointed, and workers took the message of Jesus and planted fellowships of believers in the cities of Asia Minor. The church in Ephesus became a catalytic church-planting church. Further, Paul's coworkers, Aquila and Priscilla, who had planted a house church in Ephesus returned to Rome where they planted another house church.⁶ They were, in a sense, pastoral church planters who led the house churches they planted.⁷

Thus, the church planting movement that took place in the province of Asia involved apostolic, catalytic, and pastoral church planters. By constantly mobilizing workers from the churches he planted, Paul was able to instill in the churches a vision for the regions beyond. Further, he enlisted the churches in joining him in advancing the gospel by asking them to pray for him. To the church in Thessalonica he wrote, "Brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."⁸ To the church in Ephesus he requested that they "pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."⁹

*Practices and
Patterns*

From Paul's practice and pattern of planting reproducing churches we learn several things. *First*, Paul went to population centers. Not only were Jewish communities in these cities, there were many Gentiles as well that could be reached.

Second, Paul remained in urban centers where there was responsiveness. Because the Lord had "many people in this city," Paul remained another year and a half in Corinth.¹⁰ Because the Lord had opened "a great door for effective work," Paul continued to preach and teach in Ephesus nearly three years.¹¹ During his extended stay in Ephesus, Paul appointed leaders to oversee the house churches and empowered and released workers to spread the gospel beyond the city into the surrounding region.

Third, the churches Paul planted multiplied, planting other churches. Epaphras went from the Ephesian church to Colossae and

Planting and Multiplying Churches

planted the church. Aquila and Priscilla went from Ephesus to Rome and planted a house church.

Fourth, Paul instilled a vision for the regions beyond by mobilizing workers from the churches and asking them to pray for the gospel to continue to spread. Such intercessory praying and missionary-sending churches became missional churches

Paul's practices and patterns of the constant pioneering of new churches reveals a crucial ***Church Multiplication Principle: the planting of multiplying churches.***

Chapter 12

Strengthening the Churches

“He (Paul) went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches so the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.” (Acts 15:41; 16:5)

Paul parented the churches he planted. Although he was an itinerant church planter, he was committed to the care of the churches. To the Thessalonian church he wrote, “Like a mother caring for her little children,” Paul was “delighted to share not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”¹ “As a father deals with his own children,” so Paul dealt with this young congregation, “encouraging, comforting and urging (them) to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”² Paul made every effort to stay in touch, returning as often as possible. The well-being and health of the churches was his constant concern.³ Even when persecuted and driven out of cities such as Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, Paul returned, “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.”⁴ He also sent coworkers to assist the churches. He sent Timothy to Philippi and Titus to Corinth. At the outset of his second journey he visited the

*Return Visits of
Paul and Coworkers*

churches in Syria and Cilicia to strengthen their faith. At the beginning of his third journey he traveled throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, “strengthening all the disciples.”⁵ Near the end of this journey he went back to Macedonia, “speaking many words of encouragement to the people.”⁶

Paul followed through with the churches he planted, returning himself and sending back his coworkers. At times the opposition and persecution Paul experienced broke out against the church, such as in Thessalonica. Concerned that the new believers would be unsettled by such trials, he made repeated attempts to return. Unable to do so, Paul sent Timothy back to the church in Thessalonica to encourage and strengthen their faith. He was troubled that “in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.”⁷

*Prayer and
Intercession*

Upon his return Timothy reported that the faith of the Thessalonians was steadfast, their love was genuine, and their endurance was “inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus.”⁸ Greatly encouraged, Paul assured the Thessalonians that “the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”⁹ The battle was spiritual. Thus, Paul prayed constantly for the churches. He prayed that they would “stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.”¹⁰ Not only did Paul pray for the churches, he asked them to pray for him. He asked the churches to join him in his struggle by praying to God that the gospel would spread rapidly and he would be delivered from wicked and evil men.¹¹ Paul told the Ephesians to put on the whole armor of God and pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests for all the saints. “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.”¹² In prayer, Paul battled for the protection and strengthening of the faith of new believers, and by their prayer he boldly continued to proclaim the gospel.

*Letters to
Churches*

Paul continually strengthened and encouraged the churches, returning as often as he could, sending coworkers, and praying earnestly. Further, he followed up his visits with letters. Almost half of the writings of the New Testament consist of Paul’s letters to the

churches and overseeing coworkers. His letters were written to churches he had planted in Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, and to personal associates such as Timothy and Titus. He also wrote a number of letters to churches he had neither planted nor visited, churches in Colossae and Rome. In writing to the church in Colossae, Paul requested that after his letter had been read to the church it also be read in the church at Laodicea. Further, a letter written to the Laodiceans (now lost) was to be read in Colossae. He also wrote to Philemon and the church in his house in Colossae. And Paul's longest letter was written to a church he had yet to visit—the church in Rome. It is in this letter he most thoroughly explained the gospel of grace he preached to Jew and Gentile and which he was now eager to preach in Rome. In the letter he included a request for their assistance as he goes to Spain, since there was no longer any place for him to evangelize in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Perhaps Paul's most widely circulated letter was the letter known as Ephesians, which may well have been a circular epistle to be read by multiple churches. Several things suggest a wider audience than the Ephesians. First, the absence of personal greetings and the use of a generalized concluding benediction to a church he had served for three years is surprising. Second, the author's lack of knowledge of some readers and the reference to readers who may not have heard about of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles implies an audience beyond just the church in Ephesus. Third, since several early manuscripts lack "in Ephesus" in the address of the letter, many hold that Ephesians was very likely circulated to a "group of churches...not very different from that addressed by John in Rev. 1:4...[and] became widely known mainly through the circulation of the Ephesian copy."¹³ Thus it appears that the churches planted out of the Ephesian church throughout the Province of Asia during Paul's years in Ephesus were also the recipients of one of the apostle's most instructive letters concerning the nature and purpose of the church. Most of these were churches he had never visited.

Whether churches he had planted or churches planted by coworkers, Paul was devoted to the strengthening and maturation of the body of Christ. The churches planted by Paul and his coworkers were personally cared for and consistently nurtured and strengthened in the faith. Thus, they "grew daily in numbers" and multiplied.

Strengthening the churches was vital for healthy and reproductive congregations. Thus, the pattern of follow-up Paul consistently

*Practices and
Patterns*

practiced included at least four things. *First*, he personally made visits back to the churches. This was especially evident when a church faced opposition and persecution, such as the church in Thessalonica.

Second, he sent coworkers when he was unable or prevented from returning. At times he sent fairly young assistants, such as Timothy, who was sent to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus. And some coworkers made repeated visits, such as Titus, who was sent to the church in Corinth.

Third, Paul continually and earnestly prayed for the churches, even churches he had not visited, such as the churches in Colossae and Rome. Further, Paul asked the churches to pray for him that he would be bold in declaring the truth of the gospel and be delivered from the attacks of unbelievers. The battle was spiritual. “Wrestling in prayer” was essential in order to “stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”¹⁴

Fourth, Paul wrote letters to the churches and overseeing coworkers. In some cases, he wrote more than once to a church or a coworker. Owing to ongoing problems, Paul wrote at least two, and possibly as many as three or four, letters to the church of Corinth. Twice Paul wrote to Timothy to instruct and guide him in administering the life of the church in Ephesus. Strong, healthy, and maturing congregations were essential for the advance of the gospel.

The practices and patterns of Paul’s follow-up of churches he had planted reveals a vital ***Church Multiplication Principle: the encouragement and strengthening of churches.***

Chapter 13

Teaching Sound Doctrine

“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.”(Titus 2:1)

The church is strengthened by the teaching of “sound doctrine” (literally, “healthy teaching”). It is life-transforming teaching that leads to sound and holy living. Paul reminded the elders in Ephesus that for three years he did not hesitate “to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”¹ He indicated that such preaching began with teaching that “declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”² Preaching a message that does not include repentance toward God leads to worldly sorrow and bondage, rather than godly sorrow that leads to forgiveness and life. Preaching a message that does not include faith in our Lord Jesus leads to salvation by works and human effort, rather than by God’s grace and mercy. But preaching a message of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus is to proclaim a gospel that brings forgiveness, freedom, and life abundant and eternal. Having received Jesus as Lord through repentance and faith, Paul instructed believers to “continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him,

*Pattern of Sound
Doctrine*

strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”³ This was the pattern of sound life-transforming teaching that led to sound and holy living.

Thus, Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian church was that “out of [God’s] glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” He continued, “that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.”⁴ Sound doctrine is healthy, life-changing teaching that helps believers by the Spirit’s power to grasp the richness of Christ’s love and know the fullness of God’s life-giving presence.

*Richness of God’s
grace “in Christ”*

In his letter to the churches in and born out of Ephesus, Paul described the richness of what believers have “in Christ.” In him they are made rich with every spiritual blessing in the eternal realm.⁵ No longer “in Adam” through natural birth, they have been born anew from above by the Spirit through supernatural birth. They have become new persons “in Christ.” The old has passed away, the new has come.⁶ All who are “in Christ” have been chosen in him “before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his (God’s) sight.”⁷ Paul declared that because of his great love, God elected to adopt them into his family and poured out his rich grace upon them through Christ. Therefore, “in Christ” God’s children have been redeemed by the sacrifice of his Son’s death on the cross. Sin’s debt has been paid in full and its penalty cancelled. “In Christ” forgiveness of sins has now been freely given and God has marked us as his children with the seal of his Holy Spirit. This gift of the Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing that all God has promised to give us “in Christ” shall be ours. Further, in him God has revealed the purpose of his will “when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”⁸ God’s rich grace in Christ is sound teaching and bears fruit in sound living.

*All one
“in Christ”*

Further, “in Christ” the mystery is now revealed that “through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers

together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”⁹ Because Paul persecuted the church, he sees himself as less than the least of all God’s people. But grace was given to him make known this mystery and “preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”¹⁰ Outsiders who were far from God and insiders who were away from God are now brought near through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In him Gentile and Jew are made one, for he destroyed the hostile barrier that separated them—the law code with its commandments and regulations. Through Christ both have received the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father. “In Christ” God has brought together under one head Jew and Gentile who are now fellow citizens of God’s family—an initial expression of that unity that one day will characterize all creation when all things in heaven and earth are brought together under one head, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Paul urged all who believe to walk worthy of their calling, to be imitators of their heavenly Father and walk in love. He called them to make “every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”¹¹ Sound teaching fostered such sound and holy living in love and unity, for there is one body created by one Spirit, called to one hope, under one Lord, confessed in one faith through one baptism that has brought us into the family of one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.¹²

*Pattern of
Unsound Doctrine*

Paul charged the Ephesians elders to “guard yourselves and the all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.”¹³ Paul had proclaimed the whole counsel of God and continually warned them about those who would come in and distort the truth. Paul called such people savage wolves who would not spare the flock. They would seek to draw away disciples after them rather than after Christ. When writing to the church in Colossae, Paul warned believers not to let anyone take them captive through “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”¹⁴ The Colossians had heard the truth of the gospel and had come to understand God’s grace in all its truth. Paul reminded them that “in Christ” was the fullness of Deity in bodily form, and therefore in him they had been given fullness of revelation and life. Therefore, he cautioned them not to let anyone ensnare them in legalistic regulations and rules that have an appearance of wisdom

but have no value in restraining sensual indulgence. Such unsound teaching leads to unsound and unholy living.

Distortion of the truth and mixing of worldly principles with the gospel divide and pollute the body of Christ. The unsound teaching of legalism and syncretism was a constant challenge and needed to be refuted and removed lest it weaken and divide the churches.

*Dealing with
Unsound Doctrine*

So Paul instructed Timothy, whom he had sent to Ephesus, to “command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer, nor devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies... [that] promote controversies rather than God’s work—which is by faith.”¹⁵ He told Titus, who had been left in Crete, to straighten out what was left unfinished and to appoint overseers who held firmly to “the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that they can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”¹⁶ A divisive person who taught foolish controversies and genealogies and promoted arguments and quarrels was to be warned once, and then a second time. If such a person continued to teach unsound doctrine, Paul instructed the church to have nothing to do with him. “You may be sure,” said Paul, “that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”¹⁷ He told both Timothy and Titus to “encourage and rebuke with all authority and not let anyone despise you.”¹⁸ He acknowledged that “speaking the truth in love and growing up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” was what led to maturity. “Then,” said Paul, “we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”¹⁹

By growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ that we become strong in faith and fruitful in our life in Christ.²⁰ Grace as revealed in Christ teaches us “to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.”²¹ Such grace avoids the extremes of religious legalism and self-indulgent licentiousness, for Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”²² Teaching what is in accord with sound doctrine aids sound living, facilitates spiritual growth, strengthens the church, and furthers healthy reproduction and multiplication.

*Practices and
Patterns*

The churches faced the constant challenge of false teaching. From within, it was the error of legalistic religionists and godless men who changed the grace of God into either a law-keeping faith or into a license for sin. From without, it was the error of cultural and religious syncretism that mixed the grace of God with worldly principles and philosophy. How did the apostles deal with such false teaching? They dealt with it by teaching what was in accord with sound doctrine. *First*, such teaching was based on the gospel of God's grace "in Christ." It was received through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Second, believers were taught that as they had received Christ Jesus as Lord through repentance and faith, so they were to continue to live in him. Rooted and built up in him, they were strengthened in faith as they came to understand all they had "in Christ."

Third, they were taught that "in Christ" all believers, Jews and Gentiles, were members of one body, the body of Christ. Therefore, they were to live a life worthy of their calling by being "completely humble and gentle...patient and bearing with one another in love...making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."²³

Fourth, "in Christ" is the fullness of God and life. Therefore, Jesus is enough. No legalistic regulations or worldly philosophies are to be added or mixed in.

Fifth, all who teach false, unsound doctrine that divides and does not lead to healthy, righteous, and holy living are to be silenced. The health and strength of the body of Christ is essential for its development, advance, and multiplication.

The practices and patterns of developing healthy churches reflects a crucial ***Church Multiplication Principle: the teaching of sound doctrine to ground believers in the faith.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 14

Setting the Church in Order

*“I am writing you these instructions so that...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”
(1 Timothy 3:15)*

If churches are to be fruitful and multiply, they must be spiritually vital, healthy, and strong. This is why Paul was committed to strengthening the churches, teaching sound doctrine, and guarding them from false teaching. His goal was to “present everyone perfect [mature] in Christ.”²¹ To this end, Paul fully devoted himself to all the churches, including those he had not planted. Thus, he wrote: “I have become its [the church’s] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness...the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”²² Paul’s passion was that the church might know Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”²³ Therefore, they should not be deceived by fine-sounding arguments that added to or detracted from the truth of the gospel as revealed in Christ. Paul’s joy was “to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.”²⁴

*Firm in
Faith*

A church in order and a solid faith in Christ—these were the reasons Paul sent Titus to Crete and Timothy to Ephesus. The church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of truth. Its faith in Christ must be firmly established in the truth of the gospel and its life together as God’s household set in order. The revelation of godliness is great, for it was revealed in a Person, Jesus Christ, whom the church confessed had “appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”⁵

*Godliness in
Life*

“In Christ” God’s people had come to “the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.”⁶ In contrast to false teaching, the understanding of the fullness of God’s revelation in Christ was to result in conduct “according to godliness.” Life together in the family of God was to reflect a devoted piety characteristic of a God of peace where “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”⁷ Therefore, Paul instructed Timothy to teach believers in Ephesus “how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household.” He told Timothy that the teaching of sound doctrine that conforms to gospel involved a proper understanding of the law which is in itself good. It was given not for the righteous, but the unrighteous. It was to show sinful people their need of a Savior. “Here is a trustworthy saying,” Paul told Timothy, “that deserves full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”⁸ Paul, the self-righteous, persecuting Pharisee, had a shocking revelation. The law, which he sought to keep perfectly, did not justify him, but condemned him. It did not reveal his righteousness, but his sinfulness. The law led him to Christ that he might be put right with God by faith.

Those who put their faith in Christ are no longer under law but under grace. The law of the cross—the law of love—has replaced the law code of rules and regulations. Teachers of the law who use it improperly promote controversy and shipwreck faith. They are to be commanded to stop. Thus, Paul counseled Timothy to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”⁹ Setting the church in order has to do with teaching of God’s rich grace in Christ which promotes godliness.

A church strong in faith and godly in life is a praying church. The early church was birthed in prayer as the one hundred and twenty “joined together constantly in prayer” for ten days prior to the coming

*Given to
Prayer*

of the Spirit at Pentecost. Following Pentecost the church devoted themselves to prayer, giving themselves to the apostles' teaching, which was the teaching of Jesus, who taught his disciples to pray.¹⁰ They prayed consistently at the hours of prayer.¹¹ Along with the ministry of the word, the leaders devoted themselves to prayer.¹² They prayed and fasted when sending out workers and appointing elders.¹³ The church prayed when opposed, threatened, and persecuted.¹⁴

Paul instructed the Thessalonians to pray continually.¹⁵ Fitted with the full armor of God, Paul told the Ephesians to “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 saints.”¹⁶ He told Timothy that prayer was of highest priority and urged “first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”¹⁷ The advance of the gospel required a church given to prayer, for Jesus intended his church to be “a house of prayer for all nations.”¹⁸

*Qualified Leaders
in Place*

Paul and his team made the equipping and empowering of local leaders a priority. The church planters developed and released “church waterers” to lead and feed the flock. At times such pastoral overseers were appointed before the team departed. At other times the team returned to appoint elders. As the churches grew, additional elders were needed. Thus, Paul directed Titus to appoint elders in every town on the island of Crete. Likewise, he instructed Timothy concerning the appointment of additional elders in Ephesus who were qualified and had set their heart on the noble task of overseeing God's flock.¹⁹ He was not to be hasty in the laying on of hands, for an overseer must not be a recent convert. He must be above reproach and have a good reputation with outsiders. He must be a proven leader in his home and have an ability to teach. Likewise, deacons who serve are to be first tested, and if there was nothing against them, they can serve. They too must be worthy of respect.

Elders who both teach and direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor—respect and financial support. Any

accusation brought against an elder must be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If indeed he has sinned, he is to be publicly rebuked so that others may take warning. Setting the church in order involved the appointment of leaders who were mature and proven, and it also included the proper and public discipline of leaders who sinned. Trustworthy and effective leaders were essential for a strong, healthy, reproducing church.

*Care of
the needy*

The early church took care of those in need. Following Pentecost, selling their possessions and goods, the community of faith gave to those as they had need. "All the believers were one in heart and mind.

No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."²⁰ From time to time, some even sold their lands and brought the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need. Thus, there was not a needy person in the church in Jerusalem. And among the churches this practice continued. When the church in Jerusalem and Judea faced famine, Paul collected offerings from Gentile churches and took the gifts to the Jewish believers in Palestine. The care of widows was a high priority, for true religion was not only to keep oneself from being polluted by the world, but to look after the widows and orphan in their distress.²¹ When the daily distribution of food for the large number of widows in the Jerusalem church overwhelmed the apostles, seven men were chosen to oversee this ministry of "waiting on tables."

So it was that Paul instructed Timothy in the proper recognition and care of widows in the church at Ephesus. If they had no families to provide for them, they were to be cared for by the community of believers if they were "widows indeed." If they were alone, over sixty years of age, devoted to good deeds, and had been faithful to their husbands, they were to be put on the list of widows to be cared for by the church. Younger widows, Paul advised, were to marry and have children. The way in which the family of faith loved and cared for one another and helped those in need gave credibility to the gospel and made "the teaching about God our Savior attractive."²² Further, doing good to the family of believers was to be extended to doing good in the community. "We are not to become weary in doing good," was Paul's counsel, "for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people."²³ The witness of a healthy, strong, caring

church aided and facilitated the expansion of the gospel and the multiplication of churches.

*Practices and
Patterns*

The manner and way in which Paul ordered and structured life in the churches is instructive. Several patterns are evident. *First*, he consistently grounded the faith of believers in Christ and his saving work. He faithfully proclaimed and explained the richness and fullness of God's grace in Christ. He diligently worked to see believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus that they might become firm in faith, mature and fully developed, in him.

Second, Paul taught the truth that was in accord with godliness. Sound doctrine must be accompanied by sound living. False teachers who claimed to know God, but whose actions denied him, were to be confronted and commanded not to teach.

Third, Paul was a man of prayer and called the churches to be faithful in prayer. Prayer was of highest priority, the court of first, not last, resort. Spiritual battle required spiritual weapons, the full armor of God.

Fourth, Paul, or his coworkers, appointed mature and qualified local leaders in the churches as soon as possible. Feeding, leading, and guarding of the flock of God was the primary assignment of the elders in each congregation. Preaching and teaching of sound doctrine and pastoral oversight in directing the affairs of the church was essential for the health and well-being of community of faith.

Fifth, Paul taught the churches to care for those in need. He gave instruction in caring for widows. He facilitated and delivered the collection of the churches to help famine-stricken churches in Jerusalem and Judea. He encouraged doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the family of God. To grow and multiply healthy, reproducing churches requires churches that are in order in faith and practice. They are sound in teaching, firm in faith, godly in conduct, faithful in prayer, caring for the needy, and led by gifted and trustworthy servant leaders.

These practices and patterns of Paul reveals an essential ***Church Multiplication Principle: the setting in order of the faith and practice of the churches.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 15

Multiplying Reproducing Leaders

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

“**F**ollow me and I will make you fishers of men,” said Jesus. He called his disciples to follow him so, like him, they would reach and teach others. What Jesus had taught them they, in turn, were to teach those they won to faith in him who would, in turn, do likewise. The disciples were to make disciples who would make disciples who make disciples. Multiplication was built into discipleship. Discipleship was the basis of multiplication. “If you can’t reproduce disciples, you’ll never reproduce leaders. If you can’t reproduce leaders, you’ll never reproduce churches. If you can’t reproduce churches, you’ll never see movements.”¹

*Basis of
Multiplication*

Paul understood discipleship. He had been discipled by Rabbi Gamaliel before his conversion, and then by Barnabas after his conversion. In turn, Paul discipled coworkers and multiplied leaders. Timothy was one of his closest associates. He had traveled with Paul on two of his three journeys. Although young, Paul had entrusted him with major responsibilities in Ephesus. Timothy had been serving for several years, putting things in order in the church, when he received a second letter from Paul who had been imprisoned a second time in Rome. He charged Timothy to keep what he had heard from him as the pattern of sound teaching. He told him to “guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”²² Paul then instructed Timothy to entrust the things he had heard from him in the presence of many witnesses to “reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”²³

*Reliable and
Qualified*

Multiplying leaders who reproduce was a key in the expansion of the gospel and the multiplying of churches. Paul discipled and trained Timothy, who had become a trustworthy coworker, competent to teach others. How did Timothy become such a trusted and qualified associate? It would appear that he was not the most promising prospect. Timothy was young. He came from mixed parentage. He was somewhat timid. He suffered from frequent illnesses. But Timothy proved trustworthy. Paul trusted him by sending him back to the churches they had planted. When sent to the persecuted church in Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage their faith, he did so. Upon his return, he was able to report that these new believers were standing firm in the Lord. Paul also sent Timothy to churches in Corinth and Philippi. When preparing to send him to the church in Philippi, Paul told them, “I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare...you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served me in the work of the gospel.”²⁴ It was Timothy Paul asked to accompany him with the gifts for famine relief from the Gentile churches for the churches in Jerusalem and Judea. Timothy was tried and tested, a faithful, reliable and trusted servant and son in the faith to Paul.

When sent to Ephesus, Paul told him not to let anyone look down on him because he was young, but to be an example for the believers. He urged him to devote himself to the reading of Scripture, preaching, and teaching. He advised him not to neglect the gift that was given him through a prophetic message when the body of elders

laid their hands on him. Timothy was gifted to preach and teach the word of God. Paul had mentored him, the Holy Spirit had gifted him, and the overseeing elders in the church at Ephesus had affirmed and confirmed him. Timothy was qualified to teach others and entrust to them the good deposit of sound teaching he had received from Paul. He had become a reliable coworker and a competent teacher.

*Qualities of
Reliable Leaders*

What Timothy had received from Paul he now was to pass on to others who were also reliable and qualified to teach. Thus, Timothy needed to identify such leaders. What characteristics should he look for?

The same things Paul encouraged and saw developed in Timothy—devotion and endurance, discipline and integrity, dedication and faithfulness. Paul used several analogies to identify the qualities of a trustworthy leader. He told Timothy to “endure hardness with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.”⁵ Full, undivided devotion to the person under whom one serves characterizes a dependable leader, whose ultimate allegiance and loyalty is to his Master, Jesus Christ. Such a leader is durable and steadfast. He is able to endure when the battle is difficult and demanding, for he wants to please the One to whom he is fully devoted.

Paul also challenged Timothy to “compete as an athlete... according to the rules.”⁶ Discipline characterizes any athlete whose goal is the victor’s crown. All competitors go into strict training, willing to pay the price and forgo self-indulgence in preparation for the race. And when they compete they do so according to the rules lest they be disqualified for the prize. They are willing to submit and abide by the requirements of competition. They are honest and truthful, persons of integrity. Therefore, reliable leaders are to be disciplined and authentic.

Paul then told Timothy to be like a “hardworking farmer who should be the first to receive a share of the crops.”⁷ A farmer is dedicated to doing whatever it takes to reap a harvest—to plow, sow, cultivate, and irrigate the crops. This he does faithfully, refusing to give up and quit, until the time of harvest comes when he will be rewarded, receiving a share of the crops. Thus, dependable leaders are dedicated and faithful. They are willing to work hard and not become “weary in doing good, for at the proper time [they] will reap a harvest if [they] do not give up.”⁸ Paul concluded by telling Timothy,

“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all of this.”⁹ Divine discernment is essential in understanding and identifying reliable leaders whom the Lord is calling to serve.

*Qualified to
Teach Others*

Reliable leaders are able to pass on that which has been entrusted to them. They are qualified to teach others because they, like Timothy, have put into practice what they have heard and been taught. They are doers of the word. In contrast to false teachers, their lives confirm the truth they teach. They know God and their actions honor him. They teach and live the truth that, as Paul said, “conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which he entrusted to me.”¹⁰ He passed on what he had received, the things Timothy heard him say in the presence of many witnesses. Paul indicated that such publicly confirmed teaching included that God is the savior of all and sent Jesus into the world to save sinners, for “God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”¹¹ This gift of God’s grace in Christ that brings salvation has been revealed to all, and it teaches us “to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”¹²

Such trustworthy sayings deserve full acceptance so that “those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”¹³ Again, the emphasis was on life-transforming truth—sound doctrine that led to sound living. Thus, reliable leaders who are qualified to teach are those who know and live the truth of the gospel of grace. It is the multiplication of such leaders, in whom the word has become flesh, that makes possible the multiplication of strong, healthy, reproducing churches.

*Practices and
Patterns*

Paul’s pattern of reproducing qualified leaders who multiplied reproducing leaders involved at least four practices. *First*, like Jesus, Paul made disciples who became followers of the Way. He taught and trained believers in the Word that was able to make them wise to salvation through faith in Christ and equip them for every good work.¹⁴ After just three months of ministry in the synagogue in Ephesus, Paul had made such disciples, whom he took with him to the hall of Tyrannus.

Second, Paul multiplied disciples who learned to live out and give out truth. Like Timothy, they became examples of the believer and served and disciplined others. Multiplication of disciples was the basis for the multiplication of leaders.

Third, Paul disciplined and multiplied leaders who were trustworthy and qualified to teach others. They in turn did likewise, identifying reliable leaders and passing on what they had been taught so they could teach others. Thus, Paul taught Timothy who taught reliable leaders who taught others—four generations of leaders. Like devoted soldiers, disciplined athletes, and dedicated farmers, such leaders were durable, truthful, and faithful.

Fourth, Paul entrusted what he taught to those qualified to teach who both knew and lived the truth. Sound doctrine was confirmed and accompanied by sound living. The discipling and multiplying of reliable, godly, servant leaders who multiplied reproducing leaders was a key in the multiplying of churches in Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor.

Paul's practices and patterns in identifying and developing leaders points out a key *Church Multiplication Principle: the discipling and multiplication of reliable, godly, reproducing leaders.*

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 16

Renewing Established Churches

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:7)

Few regions received more extensive ministry than Asia Minor. Although divinely delayed in reaching this province, Paul eventually spent more time here than in any other. His initial visit was brief, but he left trusted coworkers to begin the work. When he returned, two or three years later, he remained over two years preaching and teaching the gospel, during which time all of Asia Minor heard the word. Although Paul apparently never left Ephesus, coworkers carried the gospel to the cities of the province, including Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Less than a year later, he made another short visit, meeting the Ephesian elders at Miletus on the coast. To these leaders Paul gave instruction in guiding and guarding the flock of God, of which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. Sometime later, during his initial imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote

*Extensive Ministry
in Province of Asia*

a letter to the church in Colossae and to the church in Laodicea. He then encouraged them, after reading the letter, to exchange letters so each church would receive his teaching. Further, Paul wrote a second letter to Colossae addressed to Philemon and the church in his house. During this time in prison Paul also wrote the letter we know as Ephesians. This letter, sent to Ephesus was, as previously indicated, most likely a circular letter also sent to the churches in the Province of Asia, which included those mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Later, when the work in Ephesus was carried on by Timothy, Paul wrote two letters instructing him on how to put things in order and administrate the affairs of the church. In addition, the apostle Peter, while in Rome, wrote to five provinces in Turkey, which included the province of Asia. He encouraged them to continue to stand fast in the true grace of God and not be ashamed to suffer for the name of Christ.

After the death of Peter and Paul, according to traditions in Irenaeus and Eusebius, the apostle John became associated with the church in Ephesus, where he ministered until banished to the island of Patmos, from which he eventually wrote the book of Revelation. Clearly, the church in the province of Asia Minor received ongoing ministry and continued to multiply until the region had been extensively evangelized. The gospel was spreading widely throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire, especially in Asia Minor, from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties of the first century.

*Established
Churches*

Persecution broke out in Rome during the time of Emperor Nero in the mid-sixties. Christians were blamed for a fire that damaged eight of the eleven districts of the Imperial City. Although fairly localized initially, sporadic persecution gradually began to spread. No longer considered members of a sect of Judaism, an officially protected religion, “Christians under the Roman Empire had no legal right to existence, and were liable to the utmost stringency of the law.”⁷¹ They were accused of being atheists for refusing to participate in emperor worship, since no Christian would confess “Caesar is Lord.” Only Jesus is Lord. Eventually Christian worship and Caesar worship would collide head-on.

It was against the backdrop of rising opposition from Rome that the book of Revelation was written near the end of the first

century. The apostle John had apparently taken up residence in Ephesus sometime after the deaths of Peter and Paul in the mid-sixties. Exiled to the island of Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” John was instructed to “write on a scroll what [he] saw and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”² All were churches birthed some thirty years earlier during the ministry of Paul in Ephesus. Further, there were more than seven churches in the province of Asia. All these seven churches had neighboring churches “so that the route indicated secured the distribution of John’s encyclical among all the Christian brotherhoods in Asia.”³ All were to hear what the Spirit was saying to the churches, all established, and in terms of age, second generation churches. As such, these churches, as many second generation churches, could become less than what they were when planted—nominal and lukewarm spiritually, in-grown and traditional organizationally, and compromising and loose morally.

*Maintaining and
Proclaiming the
Gospel of Grace*

Of the seven churches directly addressed, two of the smallest churches with the least strength had no words of correction addressed to them. Both were facing opposition and slander from those who claimed they were Jews and were not, but were of “the synagogue of Satan.”⁴ Similar to what Paul faced in many synagogues, unbelieving Jews who rejected Jesus as messiah were opposing believers in both Smyrna and Philadelphia. Paul made it clear that “a man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly. . . a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit.”⁵ Salvation was by grace through faith in Jesus, the Messiah, not by works of law-keeping. Therefore, they were exhorted to hold on to what they had and be faithful, even to the point of death. Though some were to be tested, put in prison, and suffer persecution, it would be short-lived.

It is Jesus who holds the key of David. To him alone “has been given absolute and exclusive power to give entrance and to exclude from the Kingdom of God.”⁶ He has placed before believers an open door to salvation that no one can shut. And even unbelieving Jews will be made to acknowledge that God has loved even Gentiles who have put their trust in his messiah. Further, since Jesus has also shared with his church the keys of the kingdom, a door that no one can shut has been opened to all who believe.⁷ Thus, the preaching of the gospel opens the door of opportunity for salvation for all who

call upon the name of the Lord. But “how, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful the feet of those who bring good news!’”⁸

Faithfully holding on to what they had received—the gospel of grace—established churches were called to evangelize, taking the gospel to those who have yet to hear the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He who has ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, hears the call to maintain and proclaim the gospel of God’s grace even when satanically opposed. Such witnesses overcome the enemy “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”⁹

*Walking in Purity
and Fidelity to Christ*

Two other of the seven churches were commended for their faithfulness and faith—the church in Pergamum, an important political and religious center, and the church in Thyatira, a prosperous trading center noted for its many trade guilds. Unfortunately, both churches were struggling with compromise and sexual immorality within their flocks. The teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans had infected the church in Pergamum. Like Balaam who enticed the Israelites to sin by participating in religious practices and immoral relationships with idolatrous neighbors, some in the church had succumbed to the temptation to use their freedom in Christ as a license to indulge in sinful pagan practices.

In the church at Thyatira a self-styled prophetess called Jezebel had misled some to compromise and follow her in adulterous and idolatrous practices. “Repent!” was Christ’s urgent command to such moral and religious compromisers, lest he fight against and repay each according to their deeds in suffering and even loss of life. However, there were those who had not learned Satan’s so-called “deep secrets.” They were to hold to what they had received—a gospel of freedom from sin’s penalty and power, a gospel of freedom to walk in purity and love, honoring the Lord and serving others.

In Pergamum, a stronghold of paganism and satanic activity, believers had remained true to the Lord and did not renounce their faith even when one of their own was put to death for his witness

to Christ. And in Thyatira, a prosperous commercial center, there were also faithful disciples who were commended for their love, faith, service, and perseverance, doing more than they did when they first believed. Second-generation churches were called to walk in purity of life and faithfulness to Christ, refusing compromise and capitulation to Satan's temptation and attacks.

*Spiritually Alive,
Vital and Zealous*

The churches in Sardis and Laodicea were given no commendation. Nothing is mentioned about Jewish opposition, open persecution, or heretical teaching. Rather the main problem was apathy, complacency, and decline in spiritual vitality "which may have resulted from the softness and love of luxury which characterized the secular society."¹⁰ Both congregations were located in comparatively affluent and prosperous communities. In Sardis the church had a reputation of being vital and alive, but it was dead. Their deeds were incomplete in God's sight; they were nominal Christians, "having a form of godliness but denying its power."¹¹ Therefore, they were urgently called to wake up and strengthen what remained, repent and obey what they had received and heard. However, there were still a few who had vital faith. The promise to them was that they would walk with Christ, "for they are worthy."¹²

The church in Laodicea was much like the church in Sardis. Both were nominal and self-satisfied, but with one major difference. At Sardis there were some who preserved a vital faith, whereas at Laodicea the entire church was apathetic and permeated with complacency. In a city noted for its wealth, flourishing medical school, and beautiful black woolen cloth, the church claimed to be rich and in need of nothing, but was in reality "poor, blind and naked."¹³ Like a lukewarm stream, the Laodicean church was neither spiritually hot nor cold. They were neither on fire for Christ nor were they hostile to him. They were halfhearted. They were self-deceived, for "to be lukewarm is to be blind to one's true condition."¹⁴ Because Christ disciplines those he loves, his counsel to these apathetic and lukewarm second-generation churches was to wake up, be zealous, repent, and open the door to his persistent knock, welcoming him back in for true fellowship and vital relationship.

The church in Ephesus, the "mother church," was commended for its hard work and perseverance. This candlestick church had toiled and patiently endured in dealing with false teachers. Paul had warned

*Loving
Orthodoxy*

the elders years earlier that “savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”¹⁵

In addition, indeed, when this happened, the church stood strong and did not grow weary, but persevered and endured hardships for the name of Christ. It did not tolerate these evil and divisive distorters of the truth, but “tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.”¹⁶

However, though successful in their struggle against false teachers, the church abandoned and lost something—their first love for the One whose truth they were defending and a love for those he loved. Apparently in testing the false teachers they became testy with each other. Their hatred of heretical teaching had created hard feelings and harsh attitudes, deadening their love for the Lord. Loss of love for God’s family and loss of love for God are tied together, “for anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”¹⁷ Directly addressing this forsaking of first love, Christ graciously and firmly confronted the Ephesian church: “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place.”¹⁸ He commended them for hating the practices of the false Nicolaitan teachers, which he hated. But don’t let hating what he hates cause you to abandon loving God and loving what he loves—people, those who are his as well as those who are not yet his.

*Repentance, Return
and Renewal*

Apparently, the church at Ephesus did repent and return to its first love, doing the things they did at first. Their lampstand was not removed. The church did not cease to exist. It not only survived, it thrived as a center of loving orthodoxy. In the second century, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, commended the church because no false teaching could gain a hearing among them.¹⁹ Further, not only the church at Ephesus but also other second-generation churches apparently were renewed, because the gospel continued to expand throughout the region. “By the end of the second century the new faith was on its way to becoming the most forceful and compelling movement within the empire.”²⁰ In the second century the number of

churches doubled, and by the end of the third century, the number quadrupled (see Appendix E). Thus, through the second and third centuries, Asia Minor, along with Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, remained some of the strongest areas of witness, even during a time of increasing persecution.

*Internal and
External Factors*

As might be expected, some churches that may not have been renewed probably did not survive. Greater than external contextual factors, such as famine, war, societal shifts, and even persecution, are the internal institutional factors that affect the life and growth of a church. Decline in spiritual life, nominalism, false teaching, divisiveness, and unholy living have a far greater adverse effect on the health and vitality of a church than pressure and opposition from without. Christ's words to the churches made this clear. When love for him and love for others decline, it is likely that evangelistic passion and church multiplication will also diminish. But when the Great Commandment to love God fully and neighbors as oneself is renewed, so will a love for the lost and a commitment to the Great Commission to make disciples of the nations.

A study of over seven hundred plans to evangelize the world discovered that the reasons over four hundred plans had failed were due to largely internal rather than external issues. Causes over which the churches had no control only accounted for less the twenty percent of the total number. Over eighty percent related to spiritual, economic, and political issues within the churches.²¹ The continuing advance of the gospel and the multiplication of churches must include spiritual renewal of established churches. Spiritual health is essential for continuing life, growth, reproduction, and multiplication even during times of pressure and persecution.

*Practices and
Principles*

To hear what the Spirit was saying to the churches, several things are evident. *First*, each evaluation came by the Spirit from the One who is the head of the church. No one knows a church better than Christ, the true and faithful witness. Each word of assessment was true. Each word of correction was spoken out of love, for whom the Lord loves he disciplines.

Second, some established churches had no apparent weaknesses, some had no apparent strengths. But most had both strengths and weaknesses. Some were strong at points where others were weak, while others were weak at points where others were strong.

Third, each congregation was responsible for its own spiritual condition. The fundamental issue was spiritual and had to do with relationship to Christ. Thus, each was given specific and appropriate counsel by Christ to correct and strengthen their condition.

Fourth, the purpose of each evaluation was that each church might overcome rather than succumb to sinful practices and satanic opposition. And to each who overcame was given a promise of lasting reward. The battle was spiritual, so must be the weapons of warfare. Therefore, repentance, return, and repeating of first works was prescribed for loss of first love, false teaching, immoral practices, nominalism, and lukewarmness. Perseverance, faithfulness, holding fast to the truth of the gospel, and strengthening what remained was the answer for all churches.

Fifth, to every church, including Sardis and Laodicea, there were encouraging words to those within the congregation who were faithful and to those who responded to the word of the Spirit. But individuals who refused to repent and respond to what the Spirit was saying would suffer loss, separation, and death, and for the church, a possible removal of “their lampstand from its place.”²²

Sixth, each church was given a promise of eternal reward for responding to the word of the Spirit of Christ. Those who obeyed and were renewed would be overcomers and would be given special honor in the coming consummation of the kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth.

Seventh, each message to the seven churches concluded with an admonition to “Let him who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”²³ Therefore, we rightly conclude that each message was for all seven churches as well as for all other churches then and now. To overcome, the spiritual renewal and vital faith of Christ’s church is absolutely essential in every generation... until He comes.

The practice and pattern of the Spirit's dealing with each church reveals an essential ***Church Multiplication Principle: the spiritual renewal of established churches.***

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Chapter 17

Conclusion

Jesus called his disciples to be with him that he might send them. His followers were to be his ambassadors. As the Father had sent him anointed of the Spirit, so he sent them as his witnesses to make disciples of all nations. He told them to begin in Jerusalem, and continue in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The account of the apostles in the book of Acts indicates that the multiplication of churches was “the model Jesus intended for building His Church... [for] their primary strategy was rapid multiplication of congregations.”¹ Mission was not only to preach the gospel and make disciples but to plant and multiply churches. This is how Paul understood his work as an apostle of Jesus Christ. “His mission would not be considered completed apart from planting churches that would *multiply*.”² Thus, near the end of his third journey, Paul could make the amazing claim that “from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ...[hence] there is no more place for me to work in these regions.”³ He considered that the churches planted in Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan region would “*further preach the gospel* to those who had not yet heard and would *further multiply* by establishing churches in as yet unreached areas.”⁴

*The Vision of
Multiplication*

*Planting
Churches*

Establishing local congregations was the practice and pattern of Paul's mission teams. Led by the Spirit, they initially preached the gospel to the Jewish communities found in urban centers. The greatest receptivity was among Gentile God-fearers. Through these converts, the gospel flowed into the Gentile world as unbelieving Jews drove them and the apostles out of the synagogues. At times, miracles of healing and deliverance accompanied the proclamation of the gospel. Those who believed were baptized and discipled. Congregations were established and elders appointed to lead and feed the flock of God. As the number of disciples multiplied, the gospel spread among the Gentiles.

*Multiplying
Churches that
Multiply*

The DNA of multiplication was built into these newly planted congregations. As in Ephesus, many, if not most, were house churches. Initially, the consistent focus was on spreading the gospel through the network of familial and social relationships. In addition workers from the harvest were equipped and mobilized to go into the harvest. Enlisted by Paul, men such as Tychicus and Trophimus, joined his mission teams and took the gospel and established churches in additional cities. The strengthening and grounding of believers in the faith, the setting in order of their faith and practice, and the discipling and multiplying of reliable, reproducing leaders was essential, for from these churches were birthed more churches as the gospel spread throughout the region.

As churches matured and multiplied into second and third generations, their continuing viability required spiritual revitalization and renewal. Healthy churches were fruitful and grew, and growing churches reproduced and multiplied churches that multiplied. Initial multiplication took place through traveling apostolic church-planting teams, such as Paul's, that pioneered and strengthened churches, discipled and raised up indigenous leaders, establishing beachheads of the gospel in unreached areas. Ongoing multiplication took place through these indigenous churches who sent catalytic church planters who pioneered churches. Such was Epaphras, who returned to his hometown of Colossae and planted the church there and likely in the adjoining cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. "What made the difference between a church plant and a church multiplication movement? The second generation. And the third and the fourth. New churches must

stay engaged in the planting process if multiplication is going to become a reality.”⁵

*Christ Died for
All—All Must Hear*

Several years following his declaration that he had fully proclaimed the gospel from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, Paul wrote a letter from a Roman prison to the church in Colossae, which was to be read also in the church in Laodicea. In the letter Paul declared that “all over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing.”⁶ In fact, he claimed that, “This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature [literally, “in the whole creation”] under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”⁷ However, perhaps a figure of speech, Paul’s statement indicated that he understood his ministry in the context of the universal nature of the gospel and its universal proclamation. If Christ died for all, then all must hear.

Those who had an ear to hear what the Spirit was saying to the churches subsequently heard the messenger read the victorious song of the overcomers recorded by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation:

*Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.
Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.
(Revelation 15:3, 4)*

Thus, this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes. Disciples will be made of all nations. Churches will be planted and multiplied among every people before Christ returns.

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Notes

Preface

1. Only two times in the Gospels (Matthew 16:18; 18:17).
2. Over 100 times in the Gospels.
3. Luke 4:43.
4. 1 Corinthians 3:6.
5. Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), p. 20.
6. “His command was to disciple the nations (Mt. 28:18ff)...in light of the command, the Church must assume that it has not completed Christ’s purposes until every person has had an opportunity to hear with understanding the gospel and until disciples have been made, establishing a community of God’s people, the congregation, in each locality” (J.Robertson McQuilkin, *How Biblical is the Church Growth Movement?* Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1973), 56. Also see Jim Montgomery, *DAWN 2000: 7 Million Churches to Go*, Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey Library, 1989, pages 12-13.
7. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), p.11. “The growth of global Christianity at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries is nothing short of astonishing. Hundreds of millions of persons, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been welcomed into thousands of new congregations, some in the most unexpected places (such as China) and in the most unlikely shapes and forms (such as Christian ashrams)” (Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Practices for Multiplication*, Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2011, Preface) p. ix.
8. Matthew 24:14.

Introduction

1. A people movement is a large and rapid movement of people coming to Christ within a segment of society with common heritage and culture. “The early Church grew *within* Judaism. For at least a decade the Jews who were becoming Christians were not conscious at all of joining a non-Jewish religion...peoples become Christians fastest when least change of race or clan is involved... when it is felt that ‘we are moving with our people and those who

have not come now will come later', then the Church grows most vigorously" (Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*, United Kingdom: World Dominion Press, 1955), 22-23.

2. Acts 8:4-25; cp. John 4:4-42.
3. McGavran's terminology for people movements to Christ. "The New Testament records how large segments of one people, the Jews, became Christians and how from that new Christian society Christward movements in other peoples began" (*The Bridges of God*, 17).
4. "The (Christward) movements are the outcome of the mysterious movement of the Spirit of God...they have provided over 90 percent of the growth of the newer churches around the world. The great bulk of the membership of the congregations of the younger churches consist of converts and the descendants of converts won in People Movements" (*The Bridges of God*, 68).
5. See Acts 9:31. It may well be that Jewish believers, including Samaritans and God-fearers, were still seen as a part of the Jewish community (see James 2:2 "a man comes into your synagogue") before the breach between the "church" and the synagogue after Antioch.
6. Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus, and possibly Cenchrea.
7. Acts 9:16.
8. See Romans 1:16, 17; 3:1, 2; 9:1-6.
9. Acts 13:15.
10. Acts 13:16.
11. Acts 13:46, 47a.
12. Isaiah 49:6.
13. Acts 14:1 (Iconium), cf. 17:1 (Thessalonica), 17:10 (Berea), 18:4 (Corinth), 19:8 (Ephesus).
14. Roman colonies mentioned in Acts are Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Troas, Philippi, Corinth, and Ptolemais.
15. Acts 16:9. 10.
16. Ten Jewish men was the minimum number required to establish a synagogue.
17. Acts 16:40.
18. Philippians 1:5; 2:25; 4:16.
19. 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 9.
20. 2 Thessalonians 3:1.
21. Acts 17:10-12.
22. Acts 18:6.
23. Acts 18:9, 10.

24. Acts 18:21.
25. Acts 19:9.
26. Colossians 1:6, 7.
27. Acts 19:10.
28. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (see Revelation 1:11; 2:1-3:21).
29. F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: the Book of Acts*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 366.
30. Romans 15:19-14.

Part One - Planting Churches

1. Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 25.
2. See Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 46. They identify “three degrees of relevance for practices from the narratives—*prescriptive* (commanded), *descriptive* (illustrative), and *representative* (applicable), 45. Repetition and reoccurring patterns suggest that which is typical and normative. However, since “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching” (2 Timothy 3:16) which includes narrative portions (over 50% of Scripture), descriptive passages may carry prescriptive force (e.g., the wilderness wanderings, see 1 Corinthians 10:1-5; Hebrews 3:7-11).
3. In the simplest of terms, the church is where Christ is pre-eminent and present (Colossians 1:15-20; 2:6, 7; 3:11; Romans 8:9-11). See Appendix C for a summary of the eight church planting principles and eight church multiplication principles identified in this stage 3 manual.
4. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 27.
5. Acts 13:49.
6. 1 Thessalonians 1:8.
7. Acts 19:10.
8. Acts 18:19-19:41; 20:13-38.
9. Ephesians 1-6.
10. 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4.
11. Colossians 1-4.
12. Philemon 1:1-25.
13. Revelation 2-3.

Chapter One - Sending Teams

1. Acts 13:2, 3.
2. Ralph Winter has identified four types of expansion of the gospel throughout the past twenty centuries: voluntary and involuntary going (expansive: centrifugal), voluntary and involuntary coming (attractive: centripetal). See Ralph D. Winter, "The Kingdom Strikes Back", 209-227, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, fourth edition (Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey Library, 2009) edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Also *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: The Study Guide*, fourth edition (Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey Library, 2009), 61.
3. Acts 13:4.
4. Matthew 18:16 (cp. Deuteronomy 19:15); Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
5. Deuteronomy 32:30, 31.
6. The first of three "we" passages in the book of Acts (16:10-17) ends as the author of Acts no longer describes himself as accompanying Paul, Silas and Timothy when they leave Philippi to go to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).
7. Acts 17:17.
8. "If the response to his preaching in Athens was scanty, the reason may lie with the Athenians' refusal to take him seriously rather than with the terms of his message. The idea...that his determination, when he arrived in Corinth to 'know nothing' there 'except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2), was the result of disillusionment with the line of approach he had attempted in Athens, has little to commend it" (F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: the Book of Acts*, revised edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 344. Also see N. B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1957) 31-40.
9. 1 Corinthians 16:19.
10. Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius and Timothy from Derbe, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Ephesus (see Acts 20:4).
11. John L. Amstutz, *Discipling and Multiplying Leaders: Lessons in Leadership from Peter and Paul* (Fresno, CA: Editorial Reneuvo, 2015), 116.
12. 2 Timothy 4:11.
13. See Philippians 2:1-5.
14. See 1 Corinthians 3:5-11; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:7-12.

Chapter Two - Following the Spirit

1. Acts 14:27.
2. Acts 15:12.
3. Acts 16:6, 7.
4. Acts 16:9.
5. Acts 16:10.
6. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), 287.
7. Acts 18:21.
8. 1 Corinthians 16:9.
9. Acts 19:10.
10. 1 Chronicles 12:32.
11. Acts 13:2.
12. 1 Thessalonians 5:24.
13. See Proverbs 16:9.
14. See Proverbs 19:21.
15. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2.

Chapter Three - Preaching the Good News

1. Acts 20:24.
2. Galatians 1:12.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.
4. See Colossians 1:12, 13.
5. John 1:29, 35.
6. Acts 20:21.
7. Romans 1:16, 17.
8. 1 Timothy 1:13.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15, 16.
10. Luke 24:46, 47. Paul told Timothy that from a young age “he had known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 3:15).
11. Acts 14:15.
12. Acts 14:16, 17.
13. See Romans 1:20-23.
14. Acts 17:18.
15. Diogenes Laertius, a Greek author of the third century A.D., tells (*Lives of Philosophers*, 1:110) of how the Athenians once, during a pestilence, sent for Epimenides, the wise man of Crete (c. 600 BC), who advised them to release black and white sheep from the Areopagus and then, on the spot where each lay down, to sacrifice it to “the appropriate god” upon an unnamed altar. Apparently,

soon thereafter the plague lifted. Diogenes Laertius does not mention the inscription “unknown god,” but two other ancient writers—Pausanias in his *Description of Greece* (vol. 1, 1, 1:4) and Philostratus in his *Appolonius of Tyana*—refer to “altars to an unknown god” implying that such an inscription was engraved upon them. See F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: the Book of Acts*, revised edition, 336 (footnote 62), and Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts: the Untold Story of Christianity among Folk Religions of Ancient People* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981), 15-23.

16. Acts 17:23.
17. Acts 17:28.
18. Acts 17:29.
19. Acts 17:30, 31.
20. Acts 20:21.
21. Romans 10:9, 10.
22. 1 Corinthians 12:3.
23. Matthew 16:16-18.
24. Acts 2:38-39.
25. See Acts 2:38-40; 8:14-17; 9:17, 18; 10:44-47; 19:1-6. In every instance, repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ were prerequisites to water and Spirit baptism. However, the sequence of water and Spirit baptism sometimes was reversed (Acts 9:17, 18; 10:44-47) and the time of Spirit baptism delayed (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6). “Even though Paul seldom mentions (in his letters) any of the visible evidences...the experience of the Spirit in the Pauline churches was very much as that described and understood by Luke—as visibly and experientially accompanied by phenomena that gave certain evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God... Many of the difficulties moderns have...lie with the general lack of appreciation for the dynamically experienced nature of life in the Spirit in the early church” (Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 383-384.
26. John 16:8.
27. 2 Corinthians 7:10.
28. John 3:3, 5.
29. Ephesians 2:9. The gospel, the good news, is what God in his love and mercy has done in Christ for our salvation. This is God’s amazing grace. It is a gift. It is totally undeserved. It can never be earned or purchased. It can only be received or rejected. It is by grace through faith we are saved, not by works, even good works. It is what God has done, not what we have done. This is

the whole gospel. There is no hole in it that we have to “fill in.” However, although we could never be saved by good works, good works follow and are the result of salvation by grace, “for we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are the fruit, not the root, of salvation.

30. 2 Corinthians 5:21.
31. 2 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 4:25.
32. 2 Corinthians 5:20.
33. Acts 20:21.
34. 1 Corinthians 5:22.
35. 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11.

Chapter Four - Reaching the Receptive

1. Mark 1:4-8.
2. Acts 19:6.
3. Matthew 21:32; see also Luke 33-18.
4. Acts 17:26, 27.
5. Mark 4:1-20.
6. Matthew 8:11.
7. Luke 10:6.
8. Acts 10:22-47; 16:13-16, 25-34.
9. 1 Corinthians 16:9.
10. Matthew 10:40, 42. The solidarity between Jesus and his disciples is the basis of the judgment of the nations. Did they receive or reject the “least of these my brothers” and in so doing receive or reject Jesus when the gospel was preached in all the world as a witness to all nations? See Matthew 24:14; 25:31-46 and Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 118.
11. 2 Corinthians 5:20.
12. 1 Timothy 1:15.
13. 1 Timothy 1:16.
14. 2 Peter 3:9.
15. Romans 9:2, 3; 10:1.
16. Romans 11:25, 26.
17. Acts 2:47.
18. Acts 17:26-28; Ecclesiastes 3:10. See Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts: the Untold Story of Christianity Among Folk Religions of Ancient People* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981).

19. Patrick Robertson and David Watson, *The Father Glorified: True Stories of God's Power through Ordinary People* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 231-232.
20. Acts 6:7.
21. 1 Timothy 2:1, 2.
22. 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.
23. Acts 26:14.

Chapter Five - Engaging Spirit-Empowered Witness

1. Acts 1:1.
2. John 14:12.
3. Mark 16:15-20.
4. Acts 14:3.
5. 1 Corinthians 2:4.
6. 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
7. Acts 19:11, 12.
8. Mark 3:14, 15.
9. Matthew 10:7. 8; cp. Luke 9:1, 2.
10. Luke 10:8, 19.
11. Matthew 12:28; cp. Luke 11:20.
12. Luke 4:18, 19; cp. Isaiah 61:1, 2; Acts 10:38. "There is a temptation to stop short at meeting physical needs only. However, until the poor realize what lies behind the food, clothing, housing, education, and friendship coming their way, little is accomplished in Kingdom terms...You can be the nicest person in the world—but if you don't share the gospel, no one is going to come to Christ" (Patrick Johnstone with Dean Merrill, *Serving God in Today's Cities: Facing the Challenge of Urbanization*, Colorado Springs, CO: Global Mapping International, 2015), 55-56.
13. Acts 4:32.
14. Acts 26:20.
15. Acts 26:18.
16. 2 Corinthians 4:4.
17. Colossians 1:13.
18. Acts 19:20.
19. 1 Thessalonians 1:9.
20. See Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: a Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), chapter 17 "Christian Conversion as a Dynamic Process."
21. Numbers 11:24-26; Judges 3:9-11; 6:34; 11:29; 14:19; 1 Samuel 11:1-11; 2 Chronicles 20:14-17.

22. Acts 2:17, 18; cp. Joel 2:28, 29; Numbers 11:29.
23. Acts 1:1, 8; 4:13.
24. See Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 11:27-30.
25. Mark 16:20. See Acts 3:1—10; 4:29-31; 5:1-11, 12-16; 6:8; 8:4-8, 12, 13; 9:32-42; 14:3, 8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11.
26. Romans 15:18, 19. “There is no hint of any kind that what he (Paul) describes is limited either to himself or to the apostolic age. This is simply the way Christ has been at work to bring about ‘the obedience of the Gentiles’” (Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 631. The supernatural is to be expected, not sought. Signs follow those who believe, believers do not seek signs. “Christians see the *possibility though not the necessity* for supernatural intervention in all earthly existence” (John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism*, San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986, page 81). Two extremes are to be avoided...“that God does not intend to ever again accompany his servants with supernatural manifestations, and that the change agent’s work is futile if not accompanied by signs and wonders” (Greg Livingstone, *Planting Churches in Muslim Cities: A Team Approach*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993, page 27).

Chapter Six - Making Disciples

1. Matthew 28:19, 20.
2. Romans 1:5; 16:26.
3. Day of Pentecost (2:41); Samaritans (8:12); household of Cornelius (10:48); household of Lydia (16:15) household of Philippian jailer (16:33); household of Crispus (18:8); 12 disciples in Ephesus (19:6).
4. Acts 2:38a. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the same, since “in Christ the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9), and he is “the exact representation of his (God’s) being” (Hebrews 1:3).
5. Romans 6:4.
6. Galatians 2:20; see also Colossians 1:27.
7. John 8:31.
8. Acts 2:38b, 39.
9. 120 on day of Pentecost (2:4); Samaritans (8:17); household of Cornelius (10:44); 12 disciples in Ephesus (19:6).
10. Romans 5:5, 8.
11. 2 Corinthians 5:15.

12. John 15:7-10.
13. Philippians 2:13.
14. Acts 2:42.
15. See John L. Amstutz, *Making and Multiplying Disciples: the Master's Plan of Discipleship* (Fresno, CA: Editorial Renuevo, 2013) for the "apostles teaching" in which the early church was discipled.
16. Acts 16:14, 15, 40.
17. Acts 18:7, 8.
18. John 3:3, 5, 6; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.
19. Colossians 3:11.
20. Colossians 1:18.
21. Colossians 1:27.
22. George E. Ladd, *Bible Guides: The Young Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1964), 87.
23. Acts 20:27.
24. Romans 1:5.
25. Acts 20:28.
26. Colossians 3:11.
27. Ephesians 4:3-6.

Chapter Seven - Developing Leaders

1. John 21:15-17.
2. Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; cp. 1 Peter 5:1-4.
3. Acts 6:1-6.
4. Romans 1:1; cp. 2 Peter 1:1.
5. 2 Corinthians 4:5.
6. See John L. Amstutz, *Discipling and Multiplying Leaders: Lessons in Leadership from Peter and Paul* (Fresno, CA: Editorial Renuevo, 2015), 69-118.
7. Acts 14:23.
8. 1 Timothy 3:5, 6.
9. Acts 20:17-35.
10. Acts 20:28.
11. Acts 20:35.
12. 1 Corinthians 11:1.
13. Acts 20:32.
14. 1 Timothy 5:17.
15. 1 Timothy 3:2-7.
16. 1 Timothy 4:13.
17. 1 Timothy 4:16.
18. 1 Timothy 5:20.
19. 2 Timothy 2:15.

20. Titus 1:5-16.
21. 2 Timothy 3:10, 11.
22. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 352.
23. 1 Timothy 3:1-14; cp. Titus 1:5-8.
24. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 353.
25. “Church planting, then, focuses on three main activities: proclaiming the gospel to those who are unsaved; discipling those who accept the gospel; and mentoring qualified men to serve as elders” (Greg Livingstone, *Planting Churches in Muslim Cities*, page 73).
26. Acts 2:47.
27. Acts 5:14.

Chapter Eight - Making an Impact on a City

1. Acts 5:28.
2. Acts 13:44.
3. Acts 14:3.
4. Acts 14:7.
5. Acts 14:11.
6. Acts 16:21.
7. Acts 16:28.
8. Acts 16:31.
9. Acts 18:8.
10. Acts 18:10.
11. Acts 18:15.
12. John R.W. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), 21. Although Pergamum had the title of capital of the province, Ephesus was the most important city.
13. Acts 20:21.
14. 1 Corinthians 16:8.
15. Acts 19:15.
16. Acts 19:20.
17. Acts 20:26.
18. Acts 20:28.
19. Acts 20:40.
20. Ephesians 6:10.
21. Ephesians 6:19.
22. Ephesians 6:20. Paul was an “ambassador in chains” in Rome when he wrote these words to the Ephesians requesting they pray for him. Apparently they did pray and Paul did fearlessly present the gospel. A year or two later he would write to the church in

Philippi sending greetings from “all the saints who are with me... especially those who belong to Caesar’s household” (Philippians 4:21, 22).

Part Two - Planting Multiplying Churches

1. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 26.
2. See Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 91, for a comparison of these three types of church planters.
3. Acts 20:20, 25, 27; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-10; 4:2-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:5-15.
4. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 103.
5. Ephesians 4:1.

Chapter Nine - Expanding Witness

1. Acts 9:1, 2, 10, 31.
2. Romans 1:8.
3. Colossians 1:6.
4. Acts 1:8; 2:17, 18.
5. Colossians 4:5, 6. See also 1 Peter 3:15, 16.
6. Philemon 6. “It ought to be a cardinal principle with missionaries that anyone who knows enough to be saved by Christ knows enough to tell another how he may be saved” (Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Explosion of the Church and the Causes that Hinder It*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997 reprint), 54.
7. Philippians 2:15, 16.
8. Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 124. “We can say categorically that the powerful testimony of transformation so resonates with the discouragement and disillusionment inside Islam that it is the single most significant reason for rapid multiplication of churches among Muslims today.”
9. Colossians 1:10.
10. Acts 19:26.
11. See C. Peter Wagner, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit: a Modern Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 378-379.
12. Acts 19:20.
13. Acts 2:39.
14. Acts 4:29-31.
15. Acts 8:4.a

16. Galatians 5:6.

Chapter Ten - Mobilizing Workers

1. Acts 19:9, 10.
2. Some have suggested that “this is one of the clearest examples of formalized leadership training we have in the New Testament...a form of systematic ministerial training...to train the pastoral leaders who God had selected and to put special emphasis on church planters” (C. Peter Wagner, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*), 470. This may be overstating the case, but it is clear some form of training was taking place in the lecture hall of Tyrannus that resulted in the mobilizing and sending of workers.
3. Ephesians 4:11.
4. I Peter 2:9.
5. John 20:20, 21.
6. Acts 2:11.
7. Acts 2:21.
8. Darrell L. Gruder, editor, *Missional Church: a Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 187.

Chapter Eleven - Multiplying Churches

1. Acts 13:39. Luke’s account of Paul’s preaching in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia is the longest recorded message in the book of Acts of how the apostle proclaimed the good news to Jews (Acts 13:16-39).
2. “St Paul struck at the centres of Roman administration, the centres of Hellenistic civilization, the centres of Jewish influence, the keys of the great trade routes...(but he) did not select where he would preach simply on grounds like these: he was led of the Spirit, and when we speak of his strategic centres, we must recognize that they were natural centres, but we must also recognize that for missionary work they were strategic centres because he made them such. They were not centres at which we must stop, but centres from which he might begin; not centres into which life drained but centres from which it spread abroad” (Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul’s or Ours?*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962 reprint), 16.
3. Colossians 1:8.
4. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 66.

5. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 21. See Appendix B for the ten characteristics of Church Planting Movements (CPMs) taking place today. Also see Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011) chapters 18 and 19 for adaptation of CPM principles for the church and post-church.
6. Romans 16:5.
7. See Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 91, for a comparative analysis of the pastoral, catalytic and apostolic planters. In her doctoral dissertation, *How Do They Do It? Leadership Development Within Church Planting Practices in Northern Nigeria* (Pasadena, CA: School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary Delinda Higgins, 2015), Delinda Higgins identified these three types of church planters in an indigenous church planting movement currently taking place in Northern Nigeria (130).
8. 2 Thessalonians 3:1.
9. Ephesians 6:19, 20.

Chapter Twelve - Strengthening the Churches

1. Acts 18:10, 11.
2. 1 Corinthians 16:9.
3. 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8.
4. 1 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.
5. 2 Corinthians 11:28.
6. Acts 14:22.
7. Acts 18:23.
8. Acts 20:2.
9. 1 Thessalonians 3:5.
10. 1 Thessalonians 1:3.
11. 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:3.
12. Philippians 1:27, 28.
13. 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2.
14. Ephesians 6:19.
15. Francis Davidson, Alan M. Stibbs, and Earnest F. Kevin, editors, *The New Bible Commentary*, second edition (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1954), 1013.
16. Colossians 4:12; cp. Ephesians 6:10-18.

Chapter Thirteen - Teaching Sound Doctrine

1. Acts 20:20.

2. Acts 20:21.
3. Colossians 2:6, 7.
4. Ephesians 3:16-19.
5. Ephesians 1:3.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
7. Ephesians 1:5.
8. Ephesians 1:10.
9. Ephesians 3:6.
10. Ephesians 3:8.
11. Ephesians 4:3.
12. Ephesians 4:4-6.
13. Acts 20:28.
14. Colossians 2:8.
15. 1 Timothy 1:3, 4.
16. Titus 1:9.
17. Titus 3:11.
18. 1 Timothy 4:11; Titus 2:15.
19. Ephesians 4:14, 15.
20. 2 Peter 3:17, 18. See John L. Amstutz, *Discipling and Multiplying Leaders*, Part One, for a description and illustration of the process of growth in the life of Peter based on 2 Peter 1:3-8.
21. Titus 2:12.
22. Titus 2:14.

Chapter Fourteen - Setting the Church in Order

1. Ephesians 4:1-3.
2. Colossians 1:28.
3. Colossians 1:25, 27.
4. Colossians 2:3.
5. Colossians 2:5.
6. 1 Timothy 3:16. Many believe “the rhythmical and antithetical phrases suggest a quotation from an early creedal hymn” (Francis Davidson, Alan M. Stibbs, and Earnest F. Kevin, editors, *The New Bible Commentary*, second edition), 1069.
7. Titus 1:1.
8. 1 Corinthians 14:40.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15.
10. 2 Timothy 2:1.
11. Acts 2:42; Luke 11:1-4.
12. Acts 3:1; 10:9.
13. Acts 6:4.
14. Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23.

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15. Acts 4:22-31; 7:59; 12:12; 16:25.
16. 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
17. Ephesians 6:18.
18. 1 Timothy 2:1-4.
19. Mark 11:17.
20. See Titus 1:5-8; 1 Timothy 3:1-14.
21. Acts 4:32.
22. James 1:27.
23. Titus 2:10.
24. Galatians 6:9, 10.

Chapter Fifteen - Multiplying Reproducing Leaders

1. Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 160.
2. 2 Timothy 1:14.
3. 2 Timothy 2:2.
4. Philippians 2:20, 22.
5. 2 Timothy 2:3, 4.
6. 2 Timothy 2:5; cp. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
7. 2 Timothy 2:6.
8. Galatians 6:9.
9. 2 Timothy 2:7.
10. See 1 Timothy 1:8-10.
11. 1 Timothy 2:3b-6a.
12. Titus 2:11, 12.
13. Titus 3:8.
14. 2 Timothy 3:14-17.
15. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, second edition, 1986), 38.

Chapter Sixteen - Renewing Established Churches

1. Revelation 1:9-11.
2. Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, third edition reprint, 1908), lxxii.
3. Revelation 2:9; 3:9.
4. Romans 2:29.
5. George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 59.
6. Matthew 16:16; cp. John 20:20-23.
7. Romans 10:14, 15.

8. Revelation 12:11.
9. George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 55.
10. 2 Timothy 3:5.
11. Revelation 3:4
12. Revelation 3:17.
13. John R.W. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), 118.
14. Acts 20:29, 30.
15. Revelation 2:2.
16. 1 John 5:22, 21.
17. Revelation 2:5.
18. W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (New York, NY: Armstrong, 1905), 241.
19. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Waco, TX: Wood Books, 1982), 47.
20. David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1988), 10-14. The recommendation of the researchers was “because of a wide range of dangers to our health, many of us have regular medical checkups. We need spiritual checkups, too” (13).
21. Revelation 2:5.
22. Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

Conclusion

1. Ralph Moore, *Starting a New Church: the Church Planter's Guide to Success* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002), 28-29.
2. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 26.
3. Romans 15:19, 23.
4. Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 25.
5. Robert E. Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God's Heart for Church Multiplication* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006), 57.
6. Colossians 1:6.
7. Colossians 1:23.

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Appendix A

National Church Development

(Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes, pages 27–35. Used by permission.)

An Infinitely Reproducible Pattern: A Life Cycle

Christ's call to "make disciples of all nations" requires an infinitely reproducible way of doing things. Throughout the first and subsequent centuries, the growth and expansion of the Church has been characterized by the development of indigenous national church movements within cultures and countries. Such multiplying movements are characterized by what is infinitely reproducible.

Full development of a national church movement is similar to a life cycle, which moves through the stages of life from childhood to adolescence to young adult to older adult.

Like a **child**, the church is birthed by the Spirit and grows in the way of the Lord.

Like a **youth**, the church is nurtured and matures in unity and love.

Like a **young adult**, the church is fruitful and multiplies and gives birth to other churches.

Like an **older adult**, the church is supportive and sends workers to take the gospel to regions yet untouched with the gospel.

Perhaps the most full-orbed way in which to picture the full cycle national church development is a wheel consisting of four stages or phases. Each stage in the cycle has the goal of reproducing what is infinitely reproducible. The goal of Stage 1 is to develop responsible disciples who reproduce disciples, becoming a local congregation. The goal of Stage 2 is to develop responsible leaders who reproduce leaders, edifying and equipping the congregation. The goal of Stage 3 is to develop responsible congregations that reproduce congregations, becoming a national movement. The goal of Stage 4 is to develop

responsible national movements that send missionaries and reproduce other national movements, becoming an international movement. Such a pattern is infinitely reproducible and is somewhat like a wheel that continues to roll. More specifically, the process could be described in the following way:

Stage 1

From sinner to believer; from believer to obedient disciple of Jesus Christ.

Stage 2

From obedient disciple to contributing member of the body of Christ; from contributing member to equipping leader in the body of Christ.

Stage 3

From reproducing leader to church growth and expansion; from church expansion to church multiplication into a national movement.

Stage 4

From church multiplication to cross-culture involvement; from cross-culture involvement to sending missionaries.

...which initiates another national church movement cycle.

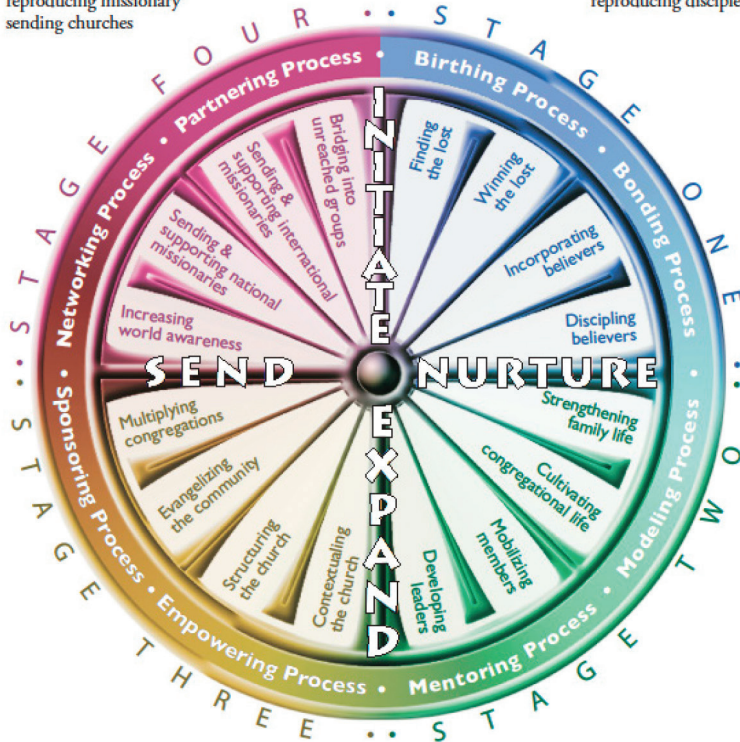
National Church Development – Four Stages

Stage 4 - Send - extending

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing missionary sending churches

Stage 1 - Initiate - evangelizing

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples



Stage 3 - Expand - multiplying

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing congregations

Stage 2 - Nurture - strengthening

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders

Stage 1: Initiate – evangelizing. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples.

We evangelize by winning the lost to Christ and by planting churches. The goal of Stage 1 is to make responsible, reproducing disciples. The task, therefore, is twofold. First, it requires communicating the gospel to people who are without Christ, the lost. Transferring believing church members from one church to another church is not evangelism. Rather, the lost must be sought, found, and won. Like Jesus' methods,

the pattern is one of “go and tell” evangelism as well as “come and see” evangelism. Effective ways must be found to get the gospel to people. Then effective ways must be found to explain the gospel for people so that they can respond and make a meaningful decision concerning God’s gracious offer of forgiveness of sin and eternal life based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The message is authenticated by both the lifestyle of believers showing the love of God and the presence of the miraculous that demonstrates the power of God. This gives the Holy Spirit the opportunity to convict of sin and give new birth, bringing about genuine conversion.

Second, the task of Stage 1 requires planting the church. As with a newborn child, the birthing process must be followed by the bonding process. Those who repent and believe the gospel must be openly identified with and warmly welcomed into the family of God. Therefore, in obedience to Christ’s command, repentance and faith are to be followed by public confession in the waters of baptism and the receiving of the promised Holy Spirit as occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Beginning a local fellowship of believers is essential, for new converts need care and teaching. They need to be integrated into the family and taught to continue in obedience to all Christ commanded, thereby proving to be His disciples. Such responsible disciples will begin to reproduce themselves by winning their families and friends to the Savior. In the case of a pioneer situation, the sending church will seek to avoid incomplete strategies, namely, evangelizing without making disciples, making disciples without planting churches, or merely establishing a “token presence” in a region or country.

Stage 2: Nurture – strengthening. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders.

We strengthen the church by establishing sound doctrine and by training leaders. The goal of Stage 2 is to make responsible, reproducing leaders. Therefore, the task of this stage is also twofold. First, the developing of godly character is essential for a healthy church. The primary arena for shaping such Christ-like character is in the home, which is the church in its simplest and most original form. Here the soundness of doctrine can be put to the test. If the Christian faith is to become truly a part of the culture, it must be modeled by the parents and owned by the children. It must become multi-generational. Thus, parents, especially fathers, need to be trained to lead their families in the ways of the Lord. Since the church is in reality an extended family, the strengthening of family life is foundational to the cultivating of healthy congregational life.

Second, the task of Stage 2 requires training leaders. As with a maturing adolescent, the modeling process must be supplemented by the mentoring process. Training in maturity must be complemented by training in ministry. Growing up must result in giving out. Transforming takers into givers is the challenge. Because each member of the body of Christ has something to give, believers must be helped to identify, develop, and use their divine giftedness for the good of others. Leaders, therefore, are gifted to serve, and they are gifted to equip others to do likewise. Such a releasing ministry is first seen in the home. Mobilizing people for the good of others is initially a family affair. Those who model servant-leadership and lead their families well are those who are to lead the body of Christ. Thus, emerging leaders are identified and developed so that the leadership base can be enlarged and the body of Christ edified and expanded. Making responsible, reproducing leaders is training leaders not only as leaders of followers but also as leaders of leaders. In Stage 2, leadership development and training are high priorities, aiding in increasing both the quantity and quality of leaders in anticipation of the type of expansion required for nationalization in Stage 3. In the case of a pioneer situation, the sending church will seek to avoid overuse of event-centered ministry, one-generational perspectives, edifice mentalities, rigid institutionalism, or excessive indebtedness.

Stage 3: Expand – multiplying. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing churches.

We multiply congregations within a region or nation by structuring for self-expression and self-government and by evangelizing through self-propagation and self-support. The goal of Stage 3 is to make responsible, reproducing congregations who multiply culturally appropriate churches that together become a regional or national church movement. Therefore, the task of Stage 3 is again twofold. First, it requires releasing the church in self-expression and self-government. A church must find a way to fit its environment so that it does not appear foreign and, thereby, erect unnecessary barriers to understanding and acceptance of the gospel. Its style of worship, fellowship, teaching, caring, and outreach must be appropriate to the culture in which it is ministering. Such contextualizing of ministry releases the church to serve its society more effectively and fruitfully. Further, the church must be structured in such a way as to release contextualized ministry. Form must follow and free function. Therefore, church government, organization, and administration should be kept simple, flexible, and practical, empowering the church to carry out its ministry in its community and culture.

Second, the task of Stage 3 requires multiplying into a regional or national movement through evangelizing its “Jerusalem” and multiplying churches in its “Judea.” As with a growing young adult, the empowering process to help them “stand on their own two feet” must be complemented with the sponsoring process to give them meaningful opportunities to “try their wings.” Expansion growth through winning the lost in its own culture requires a church to be involved in continual evangelism that is both sensitive and flexible. A combination of media, and mass and personal evangelistic methods will probably be necessary. Both programmed and spontaneous evangelism will be needed. This involves the witness of the corporate body of believers as well as the witness of individuals to family and friends within their sphere of influence. Extension growth through the starting of new churches within the larger region should follow. Like young adults, young congregations tend to be most reproductive within the first half of their life span. Church planting by local churches may need to be complemented by mobile apostolic type church planting teams that can pioneer churches at greater distances. The development of appropriate regional structures will be essential. Where a sending church has been involved in pioneering another region or country, it will seek to provide affirming and freeing family-type relationships which avoid paternalism while retaining New Testament order. Further, it will seek to avoid politicizing or external ownership while the newly nationalized church will seek to avoid moving from Stage 1 to Stage 3 with inadequate focus on Stage 2.

Stage 4: Send – extending. Goal: to make, responsible, reproducing missionary-sending churches.

We extend the church and advance the kingdom by sending and supporting missionaries and by bridging into other peoples, cultures and languages. The goal of Stage 4 is to make responsible, reproducing missionary-sending national churches who make disciples of the nations in fulfillment of Christ’s mandate. Therefore, the task of Stage 4 is twofold. First, it requires reaching nearby cultural groups. Many national churches have a blind spot when it comes to developing home missions outreaches among “Samaritans” who are culturally different but geographically near. Increasing awareness of the diversity of the world around them and its need for the gospel is best done initially through intercession. As people develop hearts of compassion, they will hear and respond when the Lord of the harvest begins to call laborers into his harvest. The national church will catch a vision

and begin sending and supporting missionaries to culturally diverse groups within its own region and country.

Second, the task of Stage 4 requires reaching distant cultural groups in other countries, and is similar to an older adult who anticipates becoming a grandparent. The networking process of linking together those with common vision must be complemented by the partnering process of actually sharing together in a common task. Sending and supporting missionaries in another nation is a great challenge, especially when working among unreached groups. It frequently requires the expert counsel and the prayer and financial support of another national church. In some cases it may also require coordination and cooperation with missionaries from another national church who are also working within the same country. Sending churches will seek to avoid exporting their culture and methodologies or jumping from Stage 2 to Stage 4 with insufficient attention to Stage 3.

Planting and Multiplying Churches

Appendix B

Summary of Church Planting and Church Multiplication Principles

Church Planting Principles

1. The use of missional teams in planting churches. (Acts 13:2, 3)
2. The reliance on the Holy Spirit for direction and guidance. (Acts 16:9, 10)
3. The contextualized preaching of the gospel of grace for conversion. (Acts 20:24)
4. The focus on reaching the receptive. (Acts 13:46)
5. The demonstration of the power of God in word and deed. (Acts 14:3)
6. The making and gathering together of disciples in communities of faith. (Acts 20:20)
7. The discipling and appointing of leaders to oversee the communities of faith. (Acts 14:23)
8. The multiplication of disciples who live and spread the gospel. (Acts 14:21)

Church Multiplication Principles

1. The consistent focus on spreading the gospel. (1 Thessalonians 1:8)
2. The equipping and mobilization of workers for mission. (Acts 20:5)
3. The planting of reproducing churches. (Acts 19:10)
4. The encouragement and strengthening of churches. (Acts 15:41; 16:5)

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5. The teaching of sound doctrine to ground believers in the faith. (Titus 2:1)
6. The setting in order of the faith and practice of the churches. (1 Timothy 3:15)
7. The discipling and multiplication of reliable, godly, reproducing leaders. (2 Timothy 2:2)
8. The spiritual renewal of established churches. (Revelation 2:7)

Appendix C

Characteristics of Church Planting Movements (CPMs)

Ten universal elements found in 21st Century Church Planting Movements (*David Garrison, Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, pages 195-196)

1. Extraordinary Prayer.
2. Abundant Evangelism.
3. Intentional Planting of Reproducing Churches.
4. The Authority of God's Word.
5. Local Leadership.
6. Lay Leadership.
7. House Churches.
8. Churches Planting Churches.
9. Rapid Reproduction.
10. Healthy Churches.

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Appendix D



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Appendix E

The Expansion of the Christian Movement in the First Three Centuries



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STAGE 3

PLANTING AND MULTIPLYING CHURCHES

LEARNING FROM THE ORIGINAL
CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT



Study Guide

John L. Amstutz

Planting and Multiplying Churches

INTRODUCTION

1. Beginning with the day of Pentecost the growth of the early church was explosive. Why do you think this was so?
2. The apostle Paul became a prolific church planter, but why did he go to the Jews first?
3. Why do you think the Gentiles were more receptive to the gospel than the Jews?

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4. The book of Acts describes (narrates) Paul's missionary journeys and the planting and multiplying of churches. Do you believe we should imitate and try to do what he did? Why?

5. What do you believe we can and should learn from Paul's practices and patterns of planting and multiplying churches? Why?

CHAPTER 1

Sending Teams

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

(Acts 13:2, 3)

Church Planting Principle: The use of missional teams in planting churches.

1. In what sense was the expansion of the gospel in the early church both voluntary and involuntary?

2. In the Old Testament, the nations came to Jerusalem to meet God. In the New Testament, the people of God go from Jerusalem to the nations. Why this change from an inward “come and see” movement to an outward “go and tell” movement?

3. How was the church in Antioch different from the church in Jerusalem?

4. On his missionary journeys Paul always traveled in teams. Why?

5. What were the characteristics of Paul's mission teams?

6. What are the advantages and benefits of ministry teams? What are the challenges?

7. What has been your experience with ministry teams? Have you led any teams?

CHAPTER 2

Following the Spirit

“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

(Acts 16:9, 10)

Church Planting Principle: The reliance on the Holy Spirit for direction and guidance.

1. What is divine-human synergy?
2. How does the call and sending of Paul and Barnabas from the church in Antioch illustrate this synergy?
3. How does Paul’s mission to Ephesus illustrate the significance of closed and open doors?

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4. Do you believe it is possible to be led by the Spirit and be strategic?
Why?

5. Can you find any examples of both strategy and being led by the Spirit from the missionary journeys of Paul? Any examples from your own experience?

6. What has been your experience of “planning your ways but the Lord directing your steps” personally and in team ministry?

CHAPTER 3

Preaching the Good News

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

(Acts 20:24)

Church Planting Principle: The preaching of the gospel of grace for conversion.

1. What is the gospel of grace? Why is it powerful?
2. Paul’s message of God’s grace remained the same, but how did he adapt his methods to his audience?
3. What response did Paul call for when preaching the gospel of grace to both Jews and Gentiles?

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4. Do you believe the preaching of the gospel of grace requires a response? Why? When?

5. What is the connection between Christ-centered evangelism and the planting of a church Jesus builds?

6. What has been your experience in communicating the gospel but adapting your methods?

CHAPTER 4

Reaching Receptive People

“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”
(Acts 13:46)

Church Planting Principle: The focus on reaching the receptive.

1. Some people are more receptive to the gospel than other people? Why?
2. What causes resistant people to become more open?
3. How did Paul discover those who were receptive and those who were not?

4. Why focus on the more receptive?

5. With a focus on the more receptive, what should be our attitude toward the resistant? What was Paul's attitude?

6. What is a "person of peace"? Any examples in Paul's ministry? In Jesus' ministry? In your ministry?

7. What has been your experience with receptive and resistant people? What has been your focus—on the receptive or resistant? Why? Have you seen resistant people become open? Why?

CHAPTER 5

Engaging Spirit-empowered Evangelism

“So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.” (Acts 14:3)

Church Planting Principle: The demonstration of the power of God in word and deed.

1. How did Jesus proclaim the good news of God’s kingdom in word and deed?

2. What did Jesus mean when he told his disciples that they would do “even greater works than these, because I am going to my Father” (John 14:12)?

3. Do you believe that what Jesus “began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1) continued to take place through his followers? Why?

CHAPTER 6

Making Disciples

*“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”
(Acts 20:20)*

Church Planting Principle: The making and gathering together of disciples in communities

1. Why do you believe Jesus included making disciples in his commission to preach the gospel to “every creature” (Mark 16:15)?
2. What is required to “make a disciple”?
3. What is the difference between becoming and being a disciple?

CHAPTER 7

Developing Leaders

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust.”

(Acts 14:23)

Church Planting Principle: The discipling and appointing of leaders to oversee the communities of faith.

1. To make disciples is to develop leaders. Why?

2. What is a servant leader? Why is this type of leader essential in planting and establishing a church?

3. What types of leader are needed for the shepherding, feeding, and leading of a new church?

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4. In addition to a multiplication of believers what else needs to take place for the gospel to have an impact on community? Why?
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5. Do you believe the church is called not only to affect a community spiritually and religiously, but also to bring about social and cultural transformation as well? Why? If so, what kind and how?
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6. What have you observed or what has been your experience of the impact of the gospel on a community or city?

PART TWO

Multiplying Churches

1. What is a pastoral church planter? Any examples?
2. What is a catalytic church planter? Any examples?
3. What is an apostolic church planter? Any examples?

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CHAPTER 9

Expanding Witness

“The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”
(1 Thessalonians 1:8)

Church Multiplication Principle: The consistent focus on spreading the gospel.

1. Is every believer a witness? An evangelist? Why?
2. What should accompany the witness to Christ? Why?
3. What is “church development syndrome”? How did Paul avoid it?

CHAPTER 10

Mobilizing Workers

“He (Paul) was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also (from Derbe), and from the province of Asia Tychicus and Trophimus (the Ephesian).”

(Acts 20:5)

Church Multiplication Principle: The equipping and mobilization of workers for mission.

1. Why did Paul so consistently mobilize workers for his mission teams?

2. Where did he find these workers?

3. How did he train them?

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4. Why (for what purpose) were Christ’s foundational gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers given to the church?

5. What is the relationship between mission-team mobilization and the equipping of the saints in the local church? Should only one be mobilized for mission? Why?

6. Do you believe “the formation of the church was for the sake of the world”? Why?

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4. What kind of churches were planted in Ephesus that made possible their rapid multiplication throughout the region?

5. Why did Paul request prayer from churches such as Thessalonica and Ephesus?

6. What would it take to see such a church planting movement happen today?

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4. What do you believe was the most effective means of follow-up? Why?

5. In addition to what Paul did, what other ways of follow-up would you recommend? Why?

6. What has been your experience in following up new believers and new churches?

CHAPTER 13

Teaching Sound Doctrine

*“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.”
(Titus 2:1)*

Church Multiplication Principle: The teaching of sound doctrine to ground believers in the faith.

1. What is “sound doctrine”? Can you give examples?

2. What is “unsound doctrine”? Can you give examples?

3. What causes “unsound doctrine”? What is its “fruit”?

4. How did Paul deal with “unsound doctrine”?

5. Why is it important to deal with false teaching in a church?

6. What is the answer to false teaching and “unsound doctrine”?

CHAPTER 14

Setting the Church in Order

“I am writing you these instructions so that...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”
(1 Timothy 3:15)

Church Multiplication Principle: The setting in order of the faith and practice of the churches.

1. Why did Paul leave Timothy in Ephesus and Titus on the island of Crete?
2. How does the teaching of God’s rich grace in Christ promote godliness?
3. The early church was a praying church. Why?

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4. What types of leaders need to be appointed to teach and oversee the church so it is “orderly and firm in faith”? If they are not to be recent converts, where are they to be found in recently planted churches?

5. The early church took care of those in need, such as widows and orphans. Why?

6. To grow and multiply healthy, reproducing churches requires churches that are in order in faith and practice. What does this mean to you?

CHAPTER 15

Multiplying Reproducing Leaders

*“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”
(2 Timothy 2:2)*

Church Multiplication Principle: The discipling and multiplication of reliable, godly, reproducing leaders.

1. What is the basis of multiplication? Why?
2. Paul told Timothy to pass on what he had learned to other reliable and qualified leaders. What were the characteristics of such leaders that Paul had encouraged and found in Timothy?
3. Why was the ability to teach essential in such leaders?

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4. Discipling and raising up trustworthy, proven overseeing elders is one thing. But what was needed for them to become leaders who multiplied reproducing leaders?

5. Why should the multiplying of reproducing leaders be fostered and advanced in newly planted churches?

6. How would you encourage and cultivate the multiplication of reproducing leaders?

CHAPTER 16

Renewing Established Churches

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
(Revelation 2:7)*

Church Multiplication Principle: The spiritual renewal of established churches.

1. What evidence is there that the churches in the province of Asia received extensive and ongoing ministry subsequent to their founding during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus?

2. What made the message Christ spoke to each of these established churches so relevant and urgent?

3. For what were the churches commended?

8. The book of Revelation was addressed and sent to these seven churches in the province of Asia. What leads us to believe that the message sent to these churches had a wider audience then and now?
9. What are some of the issues in the established church today that call for renewal and revitalization?
10. What are some of the challenges the established church faces in today's world that must be overcome?
11. Why is the spiritual renewal and revitalization of established churches today important for the ongoing multiplication of churches and the spread of the gospel?

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"I will build my church," declared Jesus, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His cross disarmed the powers of darkness, his resurrection broke the jaws of death, his ascension and exaltation vindicated his triumph. Because he lives, so shall all who confess "Jesus is Lord" and believe in their hearts God raised him from the dead. These are his people, this is the church he is building. We plant, we water. But it is God who gives the growth. *Planting and Multiplying Churches* is a study of the original church planting movement. The rapid spread of the gospel and multiplication of churches after Pentecost was remarkable. What lessons are to be learned? What practices and patterns are evident? What principles are apparent? What is relevant and applicable for planting and multiplying churches today? What we seek is not imitation, but continuation of the dynamic mission depicted in Acts with the goal of the fulfillment of Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations.

Planting and Multiplying Churches mines the book of Acts to unveil the strategies of the Holy Spirit that turned the efforts of a small team into a world-impacting movement. Dr. Amstutz confronts us with the fact that we will never spawn a movement if we do not make disciples. And if we do not plant or multiply churches we may miss the entire point of the book of Acts, or Jesus' call to make disciples. This is the most insightful book on Acts that I have ever read.

Dr. Ralph Moore

Church planter, founder of the Hope Chapel movement, Honolulu, Hawaii

This biblical study on *Planting and Multiplying Churches* is extremely useful in training our church planters. It enlarges our understanding of the biblical narrative and trajectory of the Spirit-formed church. It reveals the timeless practices and principles of the "missionary Holy Spirit" who empowers God's missionary people toward the formation of multiplying communities of faith that embody and give expression to the gospel in all the world.

Dr. Gabe Barreio

North Pacific District Supervisor, The Foursquare Church

Don't read *Planting and Multiplying Churches* as a 'manual of step by step procedures.' Read it, as I believe Dr. Amstutz intended it--a resource to make the Holy Spirit central in all you do. From the birth of the church by the Spirit, to establishing churches by Spirit-empowered wholistic ministry, to reviving atrophied churches by hearing what the Spirit is saying, it boils down to one central precept. Follow the Holy Spirit!

Dr. Ted Olbrich

Missionary church planter, Southeast Asia church planting movement

Dr. Amstutz' book is a guided tour of biblical church planting. He keeps the subject interesting, makes it simple, and clearly identifies relevant and practical principles. The focus is all about planting and multiplying churches by the Spirit's power, a prelude to impacting the whole world.

Dr. Daniel A. Brown

Church planter, founder of The Coastlands, Aptos, CA



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Editorial
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