

CHURCH PLANTING

LEADER'S BOOK



Service And Leadership Training



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Church Planting

I. Introductory Notes

Someone once asked what a missionary did. Another replied that he was a church planter. The person then asked, "What does a church planter do?" He replied that just as a farmer plants grain, a church planter plants churches.

Of course, that answer may state the situation very simply, but basically it is true. This book is written to answer that man's question more completely, and to give some practical help to those who desire to plant churches.

A. Purposes of Church Planting

Any farmer knows that the purpose of planting grain is not to put seed into the ground. His purpose is not planting but harvesting. What are the basic purposes of a church planter?

1. To plant the Word of God in the hearts of people, thus bringing them to a saving knowledge of the Messiah.
2. To gather people into a New Testament church that will carry the Word to others.
3. To bring churches into a fellowship of churches, for mutual support and work.

A good farmer knows what kind of harvest he wants to produce. The kind of church that a church planter wants to produce is a church patterned after the New Testament. That means it is:

1. A church that is responsible to God and carries out His purpose.
2. A church that is a body composed of members who have had a personal experience of salvation, and who are each gifted, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.
3. A church which looks to Jesus as its Head to supply its spiritual and physical needs as He works through the members of the body.
4. A church which produces its own leaders, reaches out to the lost, and is self-supporting.

The church planter must have two things as he begins to think about planting churches for the Lord. These two things are as follows:

1. A proper theological basis
2. A grasp of practical principles

Let's discuss these two points. First, good theology produces good methodology. As someone once said

Attitudes precede action... or... Motive precedes motion...or...Doctrine precedes doing.

Look at Philippians 2:5 and at Romans 12:2. We see that we should have the same mind and the same attitude that Jesus has. And He, the Messiah, died for the church. In His death, burial and resurrection, He purposed to create and to relate the church (His body) to the Godhead through all eternity.

For some, church planting is easy... get land and a building. That is not the way to do church planting!!

B. The Responsibility for Church Planting

The planting of new churches is the responsibility of every local church. This is God's plan. Congregations that faithfully carry out God's plan discover that God blesses them in the process. Each local church then is responsible to God to evangelize its own area. Central Asia offers unlimited opportunities for evangelism. New believers who live within one kilometer of a church's meeting place, should be brought into the fellowship, discipled and trained for service.

New believers who live more than one or two kilometers from the church's meeting place, should also be brought into the fellowship, discipled and trained for service. However, the congregation should then seek to open new points of outreach in the homes of those new believers, with a goal that they grow and become a church.

Often a group of local churches chooses to put together their resources and work together to evangelize some distant, unreached areas. In that case, they may choose to appoint and, at least temporarily, support a church planter to begin a new church in the new area.

The biblical pattern, given in the Book of Acts, is to begin by evangelizing and planting a church in the chief city of a district. Then the church planter moved to another district, leaving behind a local congregation to continue evangelizing the district, without further help from outside.

It seems amazing that Paul was able to start self-supporting churches so quickly. He was often able to leave a new church behind after being with them for a few weeks or months. His longest stay was three years in

Ephesus, where many churches were planted throughout the district and many new local pastors trained.

Paul and his few associates were able to plant many churches in many different countries and cultures, without foreign funds to provide a meeting place or hire a local pastor, without modern transport, without gospel radio programs, without loud speakers, without the Jesus film, and without even printed Bibles and tracts. Paul also worked in a hostile environment. Count the number of times that Paul was beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, hungry, etc., in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.

What is the difference between Paul's success then, and our lack of success today? Has God changed His plan? Or is it we who have changed God's plan? If Paul succeeded so well, without all of our modern conveniences, should we not accomplish even more with them? Our problem is not a lack of dedication, but rather, a problem of methodology. We tend to trust in financial resources, and in our education, training, literature, etc. to enable us to do God's work. Paul, on the other hand, trusted the Holy Spirit to enable new believers to do God's work and he cooperated with the Holy Spirit in discipling and equipping all believers.

II. Theology of Church Planting

Your theology (what you believe) will shape your methodology (how you try to do church planting.) Proverbs 4:23 – "...guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Matthew 12:34 – "...out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

The strategy you use in church planting will depend greatly upon what you believe. What you believe about the Bible, salvation, sin, repentance, the church, etc... is very important. Your theology is very important, especially in three key areas. Let's discuss these three areas.

Theology of Salvation

- The New Testament church is made up of only saved people... Thus the church planters' view of salvation is of fundamental importance.
- Without Jesus, people are eternally lost in hell. Unless we believe that, there really is no job of church planting. There is no need!!! Love is our motivating factor in sharing the gospel, but hell is a real factor also.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (read Luke 19:10). There is no other means or way of salvation. Not having the name "Christian", but being born again (John 3:1-8). Faith in Jesus the Messiah alone is the means of salvation (Galatians 2:16).

Note: It is also important that the lost person knows that he/she is lost. This takes time. A person usually needs several weeks to understand they are lost

and in need of a Savior. Often, a person hears, agrees, accepts ... but does not understand. Thus, the church planter must do his best to make sure that seekers understand their lost condition.

Our theology of salvation must take sin and repentance very seriously. Probably 6 – 8 hours of good Bible study regarding salvation is necessary before people are ready to make intelligent decisions. To have a rich harvest, there must be some good, consistent seed sowing (Bible study).

Theology of the Church

- The New Testament church is made up of baptized believers.
- These believers are the Body of the Messiah and Jesus is the Head of the church.

Now, a BIG problem is that in most languages, the same word describes..

1. The church
2. Where the church meets

Thus, many think you cannot have a church without a special “church” building. But what is the New Testament concept of church? A good definition of a church is a group of people, the Body of Jesus, who have turned from their sins and placed their complete faith and trust in Him as the Messiah.

Then, these people are:

- Baptized
- Meeting on a regular basis as members of the family of God.
- Having fellowship in prayer and praise
- Studying God’s Word together
- Having a common purpose to glorify God and further His Kingdom on earth.

Theology of Ministry

The good church planter believes that every believer can have a responsible ministry. The good church planter will want to delegate many important responsibilities. He needs to be like Barnabas – an encourager.

He realizes that every person to whom he ministers is a potential minister. The role of a pastor – minister to the ministers!

The good church planter realizes that even small children need food and exercise. Both are essential. Think of a child who does not get the proper food (Word of God) and exercise (ministry).



III. Essentials in Indigenous Church Planting

To effectively do indigenous church planting, four things are absolutely essential. Let's discuss these four things.

A. Absolute dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit –

1 Samuel 12:16, Psalm 44:3 and Zechariah 4:6

As the church planter begins his work with the first contact, the constant working of the Holy Spirit is essential. Church planting strategy and planning is not a substitute for the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Remember that good strategy and planning should be inspired and led by the Spirit. He guides us to the best strategy and leads through that strategy.

Sometimes even a good strategy becomes so methodical that we stop depending upon the leadership of the Spirit. Seed sown without the energizing work of the Holy Spirit lies dormant and does not grow. The Holy Spirit alone..

- opens the hearts of unbelievers
- brings conviction of sin and repentance
- brings conversion and the new birth
- glorifies the only Hope – Jesus the Messiah.

Then, after the church is born, the Spirit's work is still essential. Because....

He lives in every new believer
He gives the necessary gifts to the church.

B. The Gospel Seed (Romans 1:16 – 17 and I Corinthians 1:17 –

18)

In nature, there is a definite relationship between the seed sown and the product that is harvested. Likewise, in church planting, the kind of seed sown is also important if the result is to be an indigenous church. There are a lot of good books that may help a person learn about Jesus, but nothing compares to the Bible.

Key verse – Isaiah 55:10-11

The Bible has the miraculous power to penetrate men's hearts – see Luke 24:32. Now, what happens when you begin to plant the Gospel seed day by day and week after week?

- You see a change in how the people receive and understand the Gospel.
- Gradually, the people began to identify themselves as the sinners for whom Jesus died.

- They learn of the sin problem in their lives.
- They begin to understand the solution to the problem of sin in their lives.

Topical sermon preaching, without much Scripture, is not the best tool to use in church planting. Intellectual discussions and debates also are not very helpful. But the Gospel seed sown in simplicity, with trust that God will work His work in the hearts of the hearers, is absolutely essential.

In the early stages of church planting work, what is the essential message?

- The nature of sin and its consequences.
- The fact of God coming to the earth in the flesh to redeem man from the penalty and power of sin.

[Explain what the Bible is: Old Testament – Gospels – Letters] The church planter must faithfully sow the gospel seed and depend upon the Lord to cause growth and bring forth the fruit.

A church planter can never be too careful when explaining the meanings of repentance and faith, which are based exclusively on Jesus. This is how Christianity is different from other religions. Read Acts 4:12.

Note: be very careful about hybrid seeds. Much hybrid seed is being planted around the world – it is dangerous! Hybrid seed = gospel message + man-made seeds. Paul faced this problem in the Galatian church. There, the hybrid seed was the grace of Jesus plus keeping the law. The hybrid seed has just enough truth in it to really confuse the hearers. If the result is to be a New Testament church, then New Testament seed must be sown in simple, clean purity (Romans 10:17).

C. The Sower (Romans 10:14-15)

All church planting success depends upon God, from beginning to end. And God has designed the plan, and chosen man to participate with Him in redemption. God redeems, but man is thought of as

- The proclaiming messenger
- The ambassador
- The minister
- The servant
- The witness
- The priest

The sower of the seed is the church planter. The task of the sower is great because the salvation of many depends upon him. If he is faithful, many will

come to the Lord and many churches will be born. Seed must be sown before a church can be born, and perhaps God has chosen you to sow.

D. The Soil

Church planting is done in fertile soil...where people are responsive to the Gospel. Just as the farmer goes out to the field, so the church planter (sower) goes out among the people. The field is the world!!! The gospel seed spreads through relationships - people to people.

The seed takes on new life and multiplies only after it comes into contact with the soil. The Holy Spirit sends and empowers the sower. He sows the Gospel seed in the hearts and lives of responsive people. If the soil is fertile....then a new church is born!

IV. TWELVE BASIC PRINCIPLES of CHURCH PLANTING

1. Church planting must be under girded with prayer (the personal prayers of the church planters and the sponsoring congregation).
2. Every aspect of church planting must be totally dependent upon the leadership and enabling ministry of God's Holy Spirit (Who always works in harmony with the Bible).
3. Church planting is to be done among unbelievers, not among believers.
4. Seek to evangelize core people, not the fringe people, and do not use methods that will extract them from their community. (Seek out the decision makers and leaders of the community. Build community relationships).
5. Evangelism must produce New Testament churches, not just converts.
6. Local churches must be nurtured and grounded in God's word.
7. All new believers must be nurtured and grounded in God's word.
8. Local members of new congregations must be trained, enabled, and allowed to serve and to lead. (The way you begin is the product you end with!)
9. Methods used by church planters must be reproducible by the new believers. (Character [being like Jesus] is more important than knowledge and skills).
10. Hindrances to church planting are overcome by trusting God and applying New Testament principles.
11. New churches should reproduce themselves (plant new congregations in other places).
12. New churches should be related to a fellowship of similar churches.

V. Objective of Church Planting: The Indigenous Church

The indigenous New Testament church has three fundamental characteristics: These three characteristics are as follows:

1. Self – governing - administers its own affairs under the Lordship of Jesus.



2. Self-supporting – provides its own financial support from its members.
3. Self-propagating – out of loving concern for the lost, it begins other new churches.

This is the objective, the New Testament pattern. Take away any one of these three and the church is weak and in fact not a true New Testament church. In order to build an indigenous church, the church planter must have a clear strategy or plan or goals. If they are clear, he will know when he has reached them. **The church planter has one main objective – to plant an indigenous church.** To do this, he will have three “smaller” objectives in order to reach his one main objective. These three “smaller” objectives are the following:

1. Immediate objective – the salvation of individuals
2. Intermediate objective – the birth of an indigenous church
3. Ultimate, long range objective – a fellowship of churches

Let's look in more detail at each of these three objectives.

Objective #1

The first objective is to lead individuals to a saving, transforming faith in Jesus. He is the only hope of eternal life. Social or economic change is not the immediate objective of the church planter.

Matthew 6:33 must be preached boldly. As church planters, you know about God's protection and care and love...thus you can assure the unbelievers that God's promises are true and dependable. Jesus accented the need of man's personal salvation through His death and resurrection. Paul's central theme in his preaching (and in his life) was man's saving relationship to the Messiah. [Read Second Corinthians 5:17]

So the first goal or objective is to lead the unsaved to a meaningful, saving faith in Jesus. Then, care must be taken to make sure the objective is actually reached. (Sometimes it is easy to get decisions, rather than disciples!)

Discussion: What is the best way to lead someone to saving faith in the Messiah?

- Big crusade meeting?
- Debate or discussion?
- Weekly Bible study?
- Long term friendship?

The key is prolonged exposure to the Word of God. It may take someone (without much previous knowledge) several weeks or perhaps months before he or she understands enough to make an intelligent decision.

The *ideal method*: Involve people in a weekly, guided Bible study where they hear teaching about sin, repentance, Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, and the necessity of man's response to salvation. With six to eight hours of such study, some may be ready to become disciples of Jesus. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) speaks of making disciples as the immediate objective. Salvation comes before baptism and church family life.

Objective #2

The second objective is to guide the new believers into a family relationship – a local church. It is not good, nor is it Biblical, to leave new believers on their own. It is true that often the church planter will keep moving out to start new work and new churches, but...adequate time must be given to developing indigenous churches. It may be possible that sometimes churches develop without much special guidance, but usually the church planter needs to give guidance and help to the new believers.

Remember, we are talking about Bible studies held weekly with the definite objective of developing indigenous churches. This is not just to help a mother church grow! The goal is many, smaller churches...not just a few, large churches.

Thus, a very good way to plant an indigenous church is through personal witnessing and group Bible study. For each Bible study group, the church planter has two objectives clearly in mind...

- Salvation of the individual members of the group.
- Leading the group to develop into an indigenous church.

This being true, the church planter must continually keep in mind what an indigenous church is, and the strategy that will most easily lead to the birth of such a church. Remember an indigenous church is one that is...

- Self-governing
- Self-supporting
- Self-propagating

Thus, every act, everything done by the church planter, must relate to the beginning of such a church – this is the objective! For example, the church planter's method of leadership will affect the final objective. The church planter's attitude toward the use of money will affect the final objective. The church planter's theology of the church will affect the final objective.

Now, let's look at these three items that describe an indigenous church and begin to briefly discuss each of them:

- An indigenous church is self-governing

From the beginning, of course the newly planted church will be influenced by the church planter. However, the church is the one to make the necessary

decisions at whatever stage of growth it may be. Some may say...the church is too young, too inexperienced, too uneducated to make big decisions! But the church needs to begin making its own decisions as it grows and develops.

The church planter is to act as a helper and a counselor, not as a decision – maker for all of the church's decisions.

- An indigenous church is self-supporting

It should be this way from the beginning. There is no need for outside money to build buildings or to finance programs. A new church does not need to be at the same level as a fifteen-year old church. It is first a baby, then it grows to be an adult. Here the spiritual is like the natural. Spiritually, materially, psychologically...a new church is not ready for all the programs and activities of an older church.

Thus, any new church has, within its own membership, all the money it needs to do all that God has called it to do - AT THAT TIME.

So the church planter desires to plant such an indigenous church – one that will finance its own programs through its own tithes and offerings. And he will convey these ideas in both his attitudes and his practices before the church is ever born.

- An indigenous church is self-propagating

By its very nature, the new church shares its life with others. It will be evangelistic – that is simply being a New Testament church! Every church should be involved in church growth and multiplication. An indigenous church will find it easier to reproduce itself than one born out of total support from believers in another country. It is natural for the child to be like his mother!

Objective #3

The third objective is a fellowship of indigenous churches. Why such a fellowship? It is Biblical! In the first century, there was a special relationship among the churches and there was a special relationship among the leaders. They shared advice and counsel and they even shared material things. Members visited other churches for encouragement, teaching, preaching, discipline and mutual sharing.

These same kinds of relationships are needed today...for example:

- Encouragement between churches is needed when believers face persecution.

- When believers face economic or family problems and if a group down the road has the same problems, there can be mutual fellowship and sharing for encouragement and help.
- Another reason for fellowship is simply sharing the joy of the Savior.
- Later, the churches may want to work together on projects.

It is important to have fellowship of sharing, praise, study, etc. The emphasis should be on informal and voluntary fellowship. There is no need to structure or pattern the fellowship after anything else. It can be simply called a fellowship of churches (the word “association” may have a political meaning).

Again, the church planter should encourage the area’s indigenous churches to get to know each other and to have fellowship, but he must be aware of certain dangers, such as:

- A power structure above the local church (Remember, the indigenous church is self-governing).
- Personal power struggles within the fellowship of churches.
- The church planter becoming like the “boss” of the fellowship of churches. (He can move on to new areas...the churches themselves can plant new churches in their own areas.)

As they plant new churches, the fellowship of churches may choose someone to be like an area missionary to assist the churches in their church planting efforts. Then the original planter is free to go to new regions (Romans 15:20). As he goes, he keeps the same three objectives in mind!

VI. The Church Planter

The church planter is simply one who sows the gospel seed in such a way that a New Testament church comes to life and grows. He can be a pastor, evangelist, missionary, teacher, preacher, businessman, farmer, etc. [Matthew 28:19 – 20]

He should speak the language or the local dialect of the people. The people need to hear the gospel in their heart language. Otherwise, they will be limited in their understanding and ability to pass the seed to others. Speaking the same dialect communicates that you love and care for the people.

The church planter also needs to learn and understand the culture as well as the language. Who is our example in all of this? Jesus. He became “flesh” in order to bring man to God. What Bible verse do you think relates to that?

The church planter needs to practice a thoroughly disciplined believer’s lifestyle...open and honest. He is a genuine person who shares the message of hope heart-to-heart, in simple clarity so the people will understand.

A. The Church Planter's Task: Meeting People Where They Are

The church planter must go to the natural, physical settings of the people and plant seed there. Right exactly where they live. This is where the people are.

- This is where they will live out their new faith.
- If their new faith is valid, it can prosper and grow right where it is first planted.
- Don't build a building away from where the people live and expect them to go off to this chapel and learn about Jesus.
- Maybe here in _____ it is possible to have an evangelical church within easy walking distance of everyone.
- Churches will usually be found meeting in apartments, homes, rented halls or other natural places.

There is no fear of competition. Remember, the objective is to reach all people with the Gospel, and this is best done right in their natural setting.

B. Temptations faced by the Church Planter

Let's suppose that you have led several people to faith in the Messiah. These new believers look up to you. When you began your church planting work, you were totally depending on the Spirit, recognizing Jesus as the Head of the Church. Now you face several unusual temptations. Let's look at some of these temptations.

Temptation #1 – gradually permitting the people to place their dependency upon you rather than upon God. Symptoms of this temptation are as follows:

- The believers begin to think of you as someone other than a brother.
- They give you a title – reverend, doctor, bishop, etc.
- They cease to initiate projects or programs unless they have the church planter's approval.
- They begin to think of the church planter as the "boss."

These signs are all unhealthy...the church should have a strategy that encourages continual dependency upon the Lord, not the church planter.

Temptation #2 – relying upon outside money.

- Money is usually a hindrance. It is not such a great help in trying to produce indigenous churches.
- Often a disciplined, redemptive love must say no to the wants and material needs if the eternal spiritual needs are to be met.
- Give the people their dignity and freedom!

Temptation #3 – not thinking “REPRODUCIBLE” (more about this later in the book)

Temptation #4 – leading the new church “directly” instead of “indirectly”

- If the church planter leads “directly,” the group centers on him.
- The church becomes “leader-centered” instead of “Jesus-centered.” [People capable of being “direct leaders” like this are few in number. Usually they are good speakers. Most of us will not have the talent to plant churches if strong direct leadership is required.]

But “indirect” leadership centers attention on the group. With indirect leadership, the spotlight beams on one person – the Lord.

A church planter is different and his style of leadership needs to be different. The new believers are first led into a family relationship – a church! This church is self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. And the leadership that develops needs to be reproducible leadership where the members are able to govern, support and reproduce themselves. This can be accomplished by “indirect” leadership. Indirect leadership involves:

- Guidance by the leader
- Participation by the group
- The group making decisions together

Caution: If a church planter is very talkative or has a lot of Bible knowledge, he will have to discipline himself in order to be an effective “indirect” leader.

VII. The Self-Propagating Indigenous Church - Reproducibility

The indigenous church can reproduce itself! The way a church is born influences its ability to reproduce itself. A church’s view of reproduction will be learned early. Every action of the church planter becomes part of a lesson learned by the indigenous church. The relationship is often like that of parent and child. Much of our learning as human beings is unconscious.

If the church planter thinks “reproducible” in everything he does, it is more likely that the indigenous church will be capable of reproduction. Remember that the birth of new churches is God’s chosen way of spreading the Good News to all people.

When people are born again, God wants them to belong to a family ...local as well as universal. The family is the unit that provides the nurture and love that is needed. Thus, churches that produce new churches are a necessity – it is the will of God.

Now, let’s think about planting a reproducible church. The church planter must think carefully about three areas, which are as follows:

THREE AREAS WHERE THE CHURCH PLANTER MUST THINK “REPRODUCIBLE”

First Area – The Use of Material Things

The strategy the church planter uses must fit the economy of the local area. It must be possible, once the church is born, for the church to produce and use the same kinds of materials the church planter used. Let's study some examples concerning the use of material things.

- The church planter showed movies – can the new church do that? Do they have the electricity / generator / projector? Do they have the money to buy one?
- The church planter used a big PA system – can the church buy one? Do they really want one?
- The church planter used expensive musical instruments.

Often, what appears to be a material blessing from the church planter ends up stopping the church because it cannot reproduce that same thing. Remember that in poor areas, an accordion or a guitar is ok. The equipment does not have to be expensive.

Everything used by the church planter should be within the power of the people's economy to provide. It is GOOD to let the people provide ALL PHYSICAL NECESSITIES from the beginning. The church planter takes himself, his gospel seed and very little else. The people will provide a place, seating, lights, etc., if the church planter expects them to! Material things such as lights, PA systems, movies, church houses, etc., are NOT essentials in church planting, in starting indigenous churches.

- Remember our four main essentials for church planting:
 1. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit
 2. The Seed (Word of God)
 3. The Sower (the church planter)
 4. The Soil (the people)

So give much thought before using material objects. Some things may be helpful, but if the item cannot be afforded or maintained by the people, it is best not to use it. In this way, you are giving the people their DIGNITY and FREEDOM to depend only upon the Messiah, not upon you, or anything else.

Second Area - In every detail of strategy used

(Strategy – plan of action used in planting the church)

The church planter should not do anything the people cannot do after they are saved. The strategy should fit easily into the local culture. There is never any one strategy that should be used everywhere.

For example, what about the church planting strategy of holding large crusade meetings to start a church?

- Usually this is very expensive; a local church cannot reproduce this method.
- Many “decisions” are not genuine.
- If a new church is formed, no one in the church knows how to do another one!

Another strategy that seems to be very practical, effective and reproducible is the group Bible study. Consider these advantages:

- Simple materials – Bible, pen, tract, small notebook
- Anyone can come
- The way of salvation is made clear over a period of time (not just a 45 minute crusade sermon).
- Later, a new believer can guide a similar class or study though he has little or no formal training.

The strategy must be on the level of the understanding of the people. Remember this: SIMPLICITY has a beauty appreciated by all who are searching for GOD.

Third Area - In the kind of leadership used

- Use transferable leadership methods.
- If your goal is to plant more indigenous churches, then share the leadership responsibilities.
- Practice the principles of “indirect “ leadership.
- Everything the church planter does in leading, teaching, praying, singing, etc., should be reproducible by the group shortly after their salvation and baptism.

When the church planter does these three things, he will have a great sense of fulfillment in seeing the new church strong enough to stand alone. The church will be learning to depend upon the Lord, not upon the church planter.

VIII. Methodology (Application) – Getting Started

Four simple questions to answer: Who – Where – When - What

Our theology is constant but our methods may vary. Before we begin to talk about methodology let's consider four simple questions.

- **Who** can plant a church?

If you are thinking about an indigenous New Testament church, then anyone can plant such a church. Let's look at Romans 16. Where would Paul have

been without all of these other church planters? Anyone, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and who has a real desire, can plant churches.

There is a call and a gift bestowed upon those who desire to plant indigenous churches. The call may come first, with the gift being developed as it is used.

Concerning who can plant an indigenous church, God's standards and man's standards are far apart. Let's study 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. God's gift is the main factor – God may use any of his children to plant churches.

- **Where** should a church be planted?

First, God will open the right door. Sometimes there is a believer living in a village and he or she has been praying for a church. Church planting is best done where people are responsive to the gospel.

In reality, every district, every community and every city need a church. We should think about having many small churches and fellowships, not just two or three large churches. For example, God's Word can penetrate a city more effectively if you have 20 churches with 50 members each that are reproducing, rather than one large 1,000 member non-reproducing church. In many nations, a good goal is to have a church within walking distance of every person. Do you have a goal for your village or your town or your nation?

Getting Started -

Once a general area has been found, get out and talk with people. Stop and visit, give out a few tracts maybe. You may even tell people that you are a Bible teacher and that you are available to lead group Bible studies. Someone may say "I am interested!"

Once the general area has been settled, let the people who are going to make up the study group decide the place of the meeting. Let them decide – put it back upon them. Remember, you want this group to be self-governing even from the very beginning.

Probably they'll decide on someone's home. It should be within easy reach of as many people as possible. It is better to be in a more central spot, rather than out on the fringe of a community. (You may have to drop some hints!!) It's also better to have the meetings at the same place and at the same time. The reason for this is very simple: news spreads and people get interested, and also there is less confusion.

As you begin to build a group, concentrate on adults, not youth and children. You may be tempted to gather a lot of youth or children, but this usually will not result in an indigenous church. Children's programs are good...but those things should come after the indigenous church is planted. First, win the adults – they will bring their children to the Lord.

- **When** to hold the meetings?

Again, let the people decide. Tell them what days or nights you have available and let them decide. Weekends might be better. Once a week is better than every night. This allows people the time to gradually digest the Bible's truth.

One hour of Bible study one night a week, with take home reading material allows time for thought, study and an intelligent decision. For example, after five to seven hours of study, five to seven weeks will have passed and the Holy Spirit has had good time to work on the hearts of the people.

The seed has been planted and it is growing....but the growth process takes some time. First there is planting, then cultivation...then there is the harvest! DO NOT RUSH THE PROCESS!

- **What** seed is to be sown?

What seed will most likely bring the harvest of an indigenous Church? The Word of God.

A Bible teacher teaches the Bible!! The central task of the church planter is to be a Bible teacher. **Above all things, a church planter is a Bible teacher!** People generally respect the Bible even if they don't know it. But now we must ask the important question, what seed [in the Word of God] would be most appropriate for non-believers? Since the Bible is such a large Book, what portion of the Bible is best for church planting?

We must use seed that is designed primarily for non-believers. We know that much of the New Testament was written for believers, so this may not be the most appropriate seed. Look at the following examples:

- 1 John 5:13 – To whom was this Scripture written?
- John 20:31 - To whom was this Scripture written?

The purpose of the Gospel of John was that people might believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. John's Gospel is a picture of the Messiah as He makes contact with sinful man for the purpose of redemption.

Usually, the Gospel of John is available at a low cost. So, if you have 15 study group members for example, simply hand out 15 copies of the Gospel of John. This is much cheaper than giving out 15 complete Bibles. Most church planters cannot finance the giving away of a lot of Bibles. Even if you can, it's wiser just to hand out the Gospel of John first to unbelievers.

People who have never read the Bible will usually not appreciate very much the gift of a whole Bible while they are still unbelievers. Unless there is a personal sacrifice by the one studying, the gift will be of less value. But after receiving Jesus, a new love for the Bible develops. Then the new believer will gladly buy his or her own Bible.

From the beginning, assure the people in the group that personal philosophy and discussion are of little value unless they relate to God's Word. The seed to be sown is the Good News of Jesus, which is clearly seen in a study of the Gospel of John. So, the church planter must have his Bible, and if possible, copies of the Gospel of John to give to those ready to begin study.

IX. A Church Planting Example (not the only approach, but an approach.

A. The First Meeting – Introduction Night

Materials taken by the Church planter:

- Bible
- Ballpoint pen, sheet of paper
- Copy of the Gospel of John
- Copy of a study booklet
- Small songbook or song sheet
- Tracts
- Piece of poster paper – theme song in bold print

The church planter introduces himself: "I am _____, a Bible teacher from _____." Most important is the fact that the church planter is a Bible teacher. The church planter then introduces his purpose.

- Not to debate, argue or talk philosophy (welcome to visit in my home at other times for this).
- "My purpose is to share with you the Good News as found in the Bible, God's Word."

The church planter then moves into a brief Bible study about a man who came to Jesus seeking the truth, the GOOD NEWS. This man was Nicodemus.

A long sermon is not necessary ...this is introduction night. Read John 3:1-18 aloud. What the church planter says is not so important now – people don't really know him yet. They don't know the Bible yet. Go back over the story – point out the basic teachings. [This story is especially good for nominal Christians because they rely upon their physical birth to make them Christians!] Nicodemus was looking for truth, better news!

After this, ask the people "Would you like to hear more from God's Word about this GOOD NEWS? Would you like to hear more news of a new life of peace and joy? How many of you would like to continue next week at the same time?" Then, let them decide.

Up to this point the church planter has used only his Bible. Now he shows the group a copy of the book to be studied: the Gospel of John. The church planter explains to the group that all they will need will be a copy of the Gospel of John (which he will provide), a study booklet and a pen.

B. The First Meeting - Explanation time

- Now, it is important to identify the target group
 - a. Adults
 - b. Teens are welcome, they may participate
 - c. Children are welcome – but no study booklet
- Ask each interested adult or teen to sign his name on the sheet of paper. You need this – you want to know them better and to learn their names. Also, you need to know how many Gospels of John and study booklets to bring the next week. Then the church planter can keep the list and use it as a weekly attendance check. However, if your group is quite small, or if some do not want their names written down – please do not do this.

This list can be used when books are distributed. Their name is called and they receive their booklet. The next item is a songbook or song sheet. This is introduction night and you may want to introduce the idea of learning new gospel songs or choruses.

On this first night, choose a song. Then, each week, ask if they would like to sing a song. Let them decide. Then, show a sample copy of a songbook. Try to use a small, inexpensive songbook (in their language) with maybe 30 – 40 songs.

You may choose a theme song – this can already be printed on the poster paper. Hold it up for the people to see. This theme song should give the heart of the gospel message.

Then, thank the people for coming – invite them to come back next week for the first lesson. As they leave, give each adult and teen a tract. One tract per family is okay – DO NOT OVERGIVE. Do not have a big stack of tracts!

C. The Second Meeting – Begin the Gospel of John

The church planter takes to this meeting only these few, simple items:

- Bible
- Gospel of John
- Study booklets
- Songbooks – enough for each to have or to share
- Tracts – enough for each to have one
- Song poster

Remember that some people will not return to this 2nd meeting; they only came out of curiosity. Of those who come, not all will participate in filling in the answers. Just give the booklets to those who want to participate.

This meeting may require much patience on the part of the church planter. The church planter is introducing a kind of study that requires individual responsibility and participation. Many have never read a Bible and they do not know books or chapters or verses.

In this study, they will learn to do two important things:

- Find the verse
- Find the correct answer

As the meeting begins, distribute the songbooks and sing about three songs. Add one or two new songs each week but repeat the songs so that the people can learn them well. In two or three weeks, begin to transfer the music leadership to group members.

[For example, in the third week, ask if anyone knows a song that you have previously learned. Then invite that person who knows it to lead it. If you expect it, the people will do it! Often a natural song leader will emerge. You do not need to appoint someone. After singing, collect the songbooks. These are not for taking home. Let someone be responsible for collecting and keeping the songbooks until the next meeting.]

Then distribute the Gospels of John and the study booklets. Next, explain that the Gospel of John is the Bible. Then, demonstrate how to use the booklets:

- Read and write the question and the verse [chapter, verse no. only]
- Look up the verse
- Read the verse
- Find the answer
- Read and write the answer

The church planter reads the first question from his own study book that he has already prepared. He then asks the people to write the question down in their study booklet and the Bible verse that they will read. Then, he asks for a volunteer to read the verse – but he must wait until everyone has found it before the verse is read aloud.

The church planter stays alert that no one is left behind. He may move among the people (especially on this first study night) to help them learn to find the verses.

After reading the verse, give time for everyone to think of the answer. Let a volunteer give the answer. The people will then write the answer in their booklet. When everyone has finished writing the answer, read the next question...and so on. Relax... don't worry about silence... Simply move at the pace of the people. If you are sitting in a circle, you may move around the

circle – for example, one person reads the verse, the next person gives the answer, the next person reads the next verse, etc.

Group participation is crucial in the beginning if you expect to see a church born where everyone is a servant and a minister.

From the beginning, even before people are saved, a motto and goal worth remembering is, “The church where everybody is important.” This is more likely to happen if people participate in the group Bible study even before they have received Jesus as Savior and Lord and before a church is born.

Don't preach – let the WORD speak for itself – remember you've already told them the only acceptable authority is the Bible.

At the end of the lesson, the church planter reads through all the answers as a way of quick review. This serves as a good reminder and helps those who may have missed an answer.

Then ask if there are questions about the lesson only! Don't open the door to all kinds of questions. If there are no questions, ask everyone to read through their booklet at least twice during the week and read again the different verses that you studied. You may want to close with a prayer asking God to bless all of the participants and their families. [Some may drop out when they see it's simply the gospel being presented – nothing more. They may have been hoping you would be giving out valuable things freely.]

After the first lesson, the lessons go more quickly and smoothly because the people are learning how to use the materials and how to look up chapters and verses. The procedure is the same each week. You may want to distribute a tract to each family or to each adult after the meeting.

After about six or seven weeks, something may begin to develop in the hearts of some of the group members. The truth begins to get close, making him or her aware of their need. Six or seven weeks of Bible study will usually prepare someone to make an intelligent decision.

The weekly Bible study is gently leading some people to the point of decision. When the Holy Spirit opens the door for the invitation to be given for people to make decisions, the church planter must take time to make sure everyone understands what they are doing. Remember these guidelines:

- Every seeker should pray a sinner's prayer.
- Following the decision and counseling, the church planter should lead the new believers to pray their first prayers.
- Urge each one to pray a short prayer of thanksgiving.
- This is the beginning of natural participation in the life of the future church.

The group will be doing this kind of Bible study from the Gospel of John probably for several months. Now here are some thoughts about the study questions that the church planter will be preparing for each week's session.

- Any church planter could write such a booklet. It should meet the needs of the people with whom he is working.
- It should give a clear understanding of sin, repentance, forgiveness and genuine faith.
- As you use the Gospel of John, then of course all answers should come from the Gospel of John. [Example of using another book]
- The study booklet questions are reproducible – a high level of education is not necessary. Thus, a member of the new church can take it, go to another place, get a Bible study group together, use the booklet and plant a church!
- The booklet should keep the study going in the right direction – it serves as a guide.
- It makes group participation natural and easy.
- When finished, the people have sound theology for personal reference. They can use it in helping others, or to even to teach in beginning another indigenous church.

Remember, this is an example. You may need to adapt from place to place. The Lord will give you guidance – He is your ULTIMATE GUIDE.

X. From a Bible Study Group to a Church

The new church is not a house church. The New Testament churches that met in houses were not called “house churches,” rather they were called “churches.” The place of meeting made them no more or no less a church. Thus, where the Bible study group meets is not a factor in its development into a church. They may or may not continue to meet in the same place.

How many people are necessary to organize a church?

- There is no number given in the New Testament.
- Two or three could be a church...proven quality rather than large quantity determines when a Bible study becomes a church.
- Probably good to have at least ten adult members.
- In times of persecution and hardship, this number would give needed encouragement.

The church planter's strategy – going from a Bible study group to a church.

Remember the three main objectives of the church planter:

- Immediate objective – salvation of group members
- Intermediate objective – planting of an indigenous church

(At the beginning of the Bible study, it is not necessary for the church planter to state all of his goals.)

- Long term objective – a fellowship of churches

A. Teaching the New Believers

A key toward developing an indigenous church is the church planter's willingness to share responsibilities with group members. For example, if he has to have someone "who can preach like he does" before he allows someone to try to preach, then he has become a major obstacle.

After completing a study that has led them to salvation, the people begin to study their new lives as believers. The purpose of this study is to lead the group into a church family relationship.

The church planter will give special emphasis in discussing topics such as

- Baptism
- The Church

The basic requirements to be met before baptism are of course:

- A true born again experience (John 3: 1 – 8)
- A changed life (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- A basic understanding of the gospel (Acts 2:42)
- A desire to share the gospel (Acts 4: 18 – 20)
- A disciple's heart (Luke 14:27)

Before baptism, the church planter should tell the people what they are getting into. The life of the church, its privileges and responsibilities, should be openly discussed. Thus, those who are not serious will not enter into church membership.

These are the three basics to be met in order to become a church member:

- True conversion
- Believer's baptism
- Understanding the basics of the believer's life and the church

Note: When the church planter discusses the nature of the church, he'll talk about the three principles of an indigenous church: self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. The church should be pretty much this way at the time it is born – even though it is a baby!

Concerning the baptismal service - usually the church planter will baptize the first group of believers. However, the next time he may simply assist the new church leader. As the Lord raises up leaders in the new church, they will begin to take on the responsibilities within the church. Later, the church planter may be only an observer. Any member so designated by the church can baptize, even if he has not been ordained.

After the first new group of believers has been baptized:

- The church planter should meet with them to discuss the future life of the church.
- The church planter should take time to discuss the role of the pastor – point out scripture that will help everyone in the group to understand the work of a pastor (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1,2).
- In the interim, it may be healthy for the church to choose one of their members to be the Bible teacher.

Thus, this person has a time of testing and the opportunity to gain experience before he may be recognized as pastor. Much prayer should precede the church's choice of their Bible teacher. After a few months serving as Bible teacher, the church and the teacher will feel certain (one way or the other) of God's ordination of that man for the job of pastor. Then, with or without ceremony, the Bible teacher begins to function as pastor.

B. Establishing Regular Worship Services

As we have already discussed, the church will decide when they will gather for worship. The church planter may give some advice and counsel, but the church will decide when and how they will worship the Lord. The church planter may simply give general instructions that worship includes such things as:

- Prayer
- Singing
- Bible Study
- Offering and giving

Let the people creatively design their worship. Do not hinder them, but give them counsel if they appear to be moving in a direction of error and false worship.

After the church chooses its Bible teacher and any other necessary officers, then some training must be provided. The church planter can give some quick helpful ideas to the song leader, treasurer, etc.

More time is needed to help the Bible Teacher, who will likely become pastor. Initially, the church planter will talk to him about Bible teaching because this will be his most important assignment in the new church.

The church planter will talk to the Bible teacher about choosing a passage that will help the people. During the week, the Bible teacher will read it many times and take notes. He will write down truths that he is learning and listen to what God is saying. Then, at the next time of worship, the Bible teacher will

read the Scripture to the people and tell them as clearly as possible what God wants them to know.

C. Other Helpful Pointers for the Bible Teacher

- Strongly encourage the leader to involve every member in various ways – especially prayer. (Sometimes he needs to personally encourage and teach people to pray publicly.)
- The leader should permit the song leader to be in charge...song leader and teacher should work together to harmonize the worship.
- Many times someone other than the Bible teacher or song leader should preside over the worship service.
- The Bible teacher should have an assistant. This can give relief and increase the number of people doing a valuable ministry.

Leader/pastor training (by the Church planter, if necessary)

- Basic training – Introduction to the Bible, witnessing, work of the pastor, preaching, etc. If possible, work with the new leader at least a half day each week for three months.
- The pastor/leader needs to realize that he is only one of many ministers. Then his load will seem less burdensome, because his job is to minister to the ministers that they might do the work of ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Some Final Thoughts -

There are struggles and hardships in the birth of churches, but victory is possible, because this is God's plan. The concept of church was born in the mind of God. Jesus said, "I will build My church..." – Matthew 16:18.

Satan is fighting and there will always be opposition but Jesus was confident of victory. And so as long as the church planter recognizes that it is HIS church and that He is the Builder, then the birth of churches will go on unhindered. The answer is just like it was in the first century.

The planting of strong, growing, multiplying, indigenous churches is the key part of God's great plan of redemption for mankind.

We have seen a pattern by which a church is born and grows into maturity. A seed is planted, and a group is begun. It must be watered and cared for just like a tender plant. As it grows, it gains strength to stand against the elements, and finally matures to reproduce itself. The farmer is the church planter who tills the soil, then plants, cultivates and harvests.

Just as the farmer does not only plant one stalk of grain each year, neither

does the church planter give all his efforts to one church. He may be working simultaneously with several churches in different stages of growth. He is continually looking for new areas in which to plant. He is training workers to labor with him. He is nurturing young groups to maturity.

The agricultural as well as the spiritual truth that the apostle Paul spoke about in 2 Corinthians 9:6 is so applicable in the life and work of the church planter - "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully."

Let's move with God, in the power of His Spirit, to build His Church. Amen

APPENDIX A - DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLESHIP is an ongoing relationship with Jesus. Among other things it involves acquiring knowledge and understanding, skills, and attitudes.

Possible Topics of Study for New Believers:

[First, seek to discover if they have been born again. This should be done individually, not in a class. Review sin, the Messiah's work on our behalf, repentance, forgiveness, rebirth and then assurance of our salvation.]

- JESUS is my Lord.
- PRAYER is my contact with God.
- The BIBLE is my book.
- The CHURCH is my family.
- The HOLY SPIRIT is my Helper.
- The NEW LIFE is my experience.
- SATAN is my enemy.
- The OLD LIFE (and religion) is my special problem.
- DISCIPLESHIP is my lifelong commitment.
- HEAVEN is my home.

Other topics used in discipling all believers (not a complete listing):

The Bible
Jesus in you
Assurance of salvation
How to face persecution

Creation
Sin
Prayer
Believer's fellowship
Church
Stewardship
Worship
Two natures

New Life in Jesus
Abiding in Jesus
How to face temptation
God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Man
Salvation
Witnessing
Believer's family relationships
Spiritual gifts
Priesthood of believers
Fruit of the Spirit
Three aspects of salvation

The "put off" and "put on" passages:

Paul: Colossians 3:8-17 and Ephesians 4:22 – 5:17
Peter: 1 Peter 2:1-10
James: James 1:21

The "new creation" passages:

Colossians 3:10 –15, Ephesians 4:22-24, 1 Peter 1:22-25 and James 1:18

APPENDIX B - DEFINITIONS

Church –

A local church is a group of people who have turned from their sins to place their full trust in Jesus the Messiah as their personal Savior and Lord. Following their new birth they are baptized. These individuals continue to meet on a regular basis as members of the family of God. They will fellowship in prayer, praise and Bible study for the definite purpose of glorifying Jesus and expanding His Kingdom on earth.

Church Planting –

This is a term often used when speaking of starting new churches. It is the process where a messenger sows the gospel seed among unbelievers and allows the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin and conversion. The new believers recognize themselves as a special family. This family is called a church.

Church Planter –

This is a person who is involved in starting (planting) new churches. We must remember that a church planter who follows Paul's example will not need to buy land or build buildings or necessarily pastor newly planted churches. When the Lord brings about the birth of a new church, He will often use people from within the new congregation to lead the group.

Church Planting Church –

This is a church that starts other new churches. Every church should be involved in starting new churches. One church can plant several churches simultaneously.

Indigenous –

Other terms used to define indigenous are: native, local, homegrown, contextualized and "natural to the area." It is that which springs from and develops within a particular culture.

Indigenous Church Planting–

It is a pattern of church planting and church growth under the leadership of the Holy Spirit that sets people free to be and do all that God wants them to be and do. The church will have New Testament principles with three easily observable characteristics. These three are: self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

Fellowship or Association of Churches –

This is group of churches that has fellowship with one another for the purpose of mutual encouragement, education, inspiration, shared mission outreach and projects.

APPENDIX C – MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

The Church Planter's Preparation

The church planter's awareness must be sharpened concerning:

- God's plan for history
- the lostness of people without the Messiah
- eternal principles of the expansion of God's Kingdom
- methods that work and those that do not work as well in church planting.

The Church Planter's Target

Out of a deep burden to reach people for Jesus through the starting of new churches, **pray** for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct you to God-prepared soil - that is, people who are searching for meaning to life.

Should I focus on the lost or the saved?

Church planting can be done focusing on either, but there is a great need for new churches to be planted where the target is the lost. This will result in greater Kingdom expansion. For some, the easier way is to target believers and gather them into a church. This can be done with no numerical growth in the Kingdom of God. It is best to target the unsaved.

Prayerfully drive or walk through communities, asking the Lord to lead you to responsive people. Spend much time mingling with people. Follow up leads of people who may be interested in hosting a Bible study. Good leads often come where there are friends or relatives in areas with no church. Paul found the Holy Spirit to be the key in finding responsive targets. *"When I arrived in Troas to preach the Good News about the Messiah, I found that the Lord had opened the way for the work there."* [2 Corinthians 2:12]

- Know the Bible study materials you are going to use, the rationale and the technique.
- **Think reproducible from beginning to end – in strategy, use of materials, and style of leadership.**
- Know what you are going to plant – a church, not a building or a set of programs. (Look again at the definition of a church.)
- To broaden the base as much as possible, it is usually best to have a community Bible study rather than a home Bible study. There will be times, however, when the only option will be to

have a home Bible study. The point is to start a new church with more than one family.

Know that you can be successful only if the Holy Spirit is in control. He must have preeminence from the finding of a place to start a new Bible study to the birth and development of the new church. *“So it was that the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord.”* [Acts 9:31]

The Church Planting Process Outlined

From our study, we saw that the church planting process involves three objectives.

1. The salvation of individuals.

2. The birth of New Testament churches that have at least five easily observable and measurable characteristics. [make note of # 3 and #4]

(1) Self-governing – The new church can make its own decisions under the Lordship of Jesus the Messiah. Colossians 1:18

(2) Self-supporting – The new church can provide for its material needs through the tithes and offerings of the members.

(3) Self-expressing - The new church can express itself according to local culture. This has to do with times of worship and ways of expression in worship. All should be within Biblical guidelines and teachings.

(4) Self-teaching – Each member influences and teaches the other members. Romans 15:14

(5) Self-propagating - The new church will be involved in starting other new churches.

Always remember: *“We say this because we have confidence in God through the Messiah. There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God; it is He who made us capable...”* [2 Corinthians 3:4-6]

3. The birth of a fellowship of churches.

Each church will voluntarily relate to other churches that are similar in doctrine and practices. This relationship is for the purpose of mutual encouragement, learning and shared programs of outreach.

APPENDIX D – STUDY QUESTIONS

Monday

- Who has the responsibility for church planting?
- What are the four essentials for effective church planting?
- In the beginning, what is the essential message?

Tuesday

- What is the first and most important principle of church planting?
- What are the three characteristics of the truly indigenous New Testament church?
- What does Matthew 28:19 –20 say is our immediate objective?

Wednesday

- Who can be a church planter?
- What are four temptations faced by church planters?
- What are the three areas where the church planter must think “reproducible?”

Thursday

- Who should decide where the meeting place will be?
- Above all things, what should a church planter be?
- What is the purpose of the Gospel of John?

Friday

- Should the church planter move the meetings along quickly or slowly? Why?
- Should everyone participate? Why?
- How many people does it take to organize a church?
- The church planter will give special emphasis to what two topics as he teaches new believers?