

# Church Planting

In some places there is a great need to plant new churches. Ralph Winter a Missiologist has mentioned that in 100 A.D., for every 1 Christian there were 360 pre-Christians. In 1000 A.D. for every 1 Christian there were 69 pre-Christians and in 1900 A.D. it was reduced to 21 pre-Christian for every Christian, while in 1992 it reduced further to 6.8 pre-Christians. All these new believers must be disciplined and integrated into the local church, hence the need for many more churches.

It is vitally important to recognise that God desires that His church grows (Matthew 16:18). Many Christians who do not see numerical growth, try to comfort themselves in the supposed knowledge that God's concern is primarily in spiritual maturity and not numerical growth. That is the devil's lie, as Scripture is full of the teaching that God desires all people to come to Him. In Ephesians 5:25-27, the church is the *Bride of Christ*, radiant and glorious.

Incidentally, just because an over zealous group plants a church in a town or city, it does not necessarily mean that church will grow from new believers, as unfortunately, there is a lot of church hopping going on where no one church benefits in the long run. They just shift from one church to another when they feel like it. We need to ask; is this church there for the glory of God, or for the building of an empire? I suggest that in some towns we should not be planting churches, as much as working with and supporting those already there. This is a complex issue that needs to be carefully thought through.

## Biblical foundation for planting churches

New Testament Churches were founded in various ways:

- Evangelistic outreaches, with apostolic follow up - Acts 8.
- Apostolic outreach with Peter in Caesarea - Acts 10:24-48.
- Where Paul and company formed a team - Acts 13:1-3 (best method).

## Practical approach to church planting

1. Choose the location carefully and prayerfully.

What are the needs of the city or town?

Is there a church already there which is very similar to the one we would plant?

Visit these churches and express your thinking openly.

Are there many from the Mother church living in the area?

Is it the right timing to establish the church there?

2. Send out your very best people.

e.g. the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabus.

3. Send out a team with one leader.

They need to be there for the long haul.

The team must respect the leader planting the new church.

4. Choose the leader/pastor carefully.

Will he be loyal to you?

Does he have a good spirit or is he proud and insecure?

Is he suitably gifted?

Is his wife supportive of his involvement?

Don't rush in and appoint elders. Function is more important than title.

5. Establish a home group in the area first.

Foster a vision for growth with much prayer and outreach with those in home groups.

Develop a team.

6. Establishment of a church.

After home group has been going 6 - 12 months have a Sunday service.

The leader should now or soon after receive the title of pastor. Not too soon.

7. Accountability to the mother church is important.

It is necessary for prayer for encouragement and protection.

The mother church normally has more experience and wisdom on which to draw.

Initial contact should be weekly.

It is helpful for the new pastor to sit with the elder's of the mother church. It keeps the vision for the daughter church high in the thinking of the mother church.

The Senior Pastor should preach at the new location from time to time to show his support.

8. Church meeting place.

Remember the church is not the building, but people.

The N.T. church met in homes initially. Romans 16:5

A church in a neutral building;

- is often easier for pre-Christians to enter.

- is cheaper than buying a building.

9. Financial support.

The mother church provides wages for 6 months (while the daughter church tithes to the mother church) or

The pastor carries on with secular job or

The pastor works part time with the church supplementing his wage.

A monthly financial statement should be submitted to the mother church. If this proves difficult then the mother church may need to handle the finances.

#### 10. Constitution and statement of faith.

There are some advantages in having a constitution e.g. tax savings but keep the constitution simple. A model constitution is included at the back of the manual.

### **Time for the Constitution to be implemented**

- When the new church has developed sufficient financial responsibility and strength to carry on an adequate programme of work.
- When it has an adequate number of stable leaders who are spiritually mature.
- When there are sufficient adults who will commit themselves as foundation members.
- When those involved sense that the timing is right and it is God's will.

### **Statement of faith**

The new congregation affirms;

- The inspiration of the Bible and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice.
- The true humanity and Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The atonement made on the Cross by our Lord for the sin of the world.
- Salvation by faith in Christ alone.
- Membership in the Christian church for the regenerate.
- The immersion of Believers as the Scriptural form of baptism.

The goal of a daughter church is to grow and to become autonomous. Do not rush into it as the timing may not be right. It can be useful for a new church to first meet as a home group for 1 year, then after that commence Sunday services. After another 2 years, they could become autonomous if the timing seems right. The daughter church does not have to be perfect (is the mother?). Good fellowship should continue between the new church and the mother church and preferably they should continue in a denomination or stream to receive further encouragement, protection and accountability.