

# *Omega Course:*

Practical Church Planter Training

## **Manual One**

By

*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*

In cooperation with

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries

**Omega Course:  
Practical Church Planter Training  
Manual One**

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Tel: (800) 334-7017 E-mail: [info@BibleLeague.org](mailto:info@BibleLeague.org) [www.bibleleague.org](http://www.bibleleague.org)

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*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*, H-1111 Budapest, Budafoki út 34/B III/2, HUNGARY,  
Tel: +(36-1) 466-5978 and 385-8199 Fax: +(36-1) 365-6406 E-mail: [SCPAlliance@compuserve.com](mailto:SCPAlliance@compuserve.com).  
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For more information about their respective ministries, please contact:



P.O. Box 843  
Monument, CO, USA 80132-0843  
Toll-free: (800) 649-2440  
E-mail: [Contact\\_USA@AllianceSCP.org](mailto:Contact_USA@AllianceSCP.org)  
[www.AllianceSCP.org](http://www.AllianceSCP.org)  
Europe Field Office E-mail: [SCPAlliance@compuserve.com](mailto:SCPAlliance@compuserve.com)



Project 250  
P.O. Box 496, 1415 Hill Avenue  
Wheaton, IL, USA 60189  
Tel: (630) 462-1739 Fax: (630) 690-2976  
E-mail: [RMUSA@ASR.ru](mailto:RMUSA@ASR.ru)  
[www.russian-ministries.org](http://www.russian-ministries.org)

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David & Lisa Bromlow	<i>Christ For Russia</i>
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Don Crane	<i>Greater Europe Mission</i>
Bea Crane	<i>Greater Europe Mission</i>
Hunter Dockery	<i>World Harvest Mission</i>
Mike Elwood	<i>Greater Europe Mission</i>
Jeff Geske	<i>United World Mission</i>
Dave Henderson	<i>C B International</i> <i>—Project 250 of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries</i>
Bob Mackey	<i>United World Mission</i>
Bob Martin	<i>United World Mission</i>
Paul Michaels	<i>Grace Brethren Intl. Mission</i>
Norie Roeder	<i>United World Mission</i>
Ki Sanders	<i>World Team</i>
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Edith Bond	<i>The Alliance Regional Resource Team</i>
David Gál	<i>The Alliance Regional Resource Team</i>
Nell Harden	<i>Retired English Professor</i>



# MANUAL ONE

## Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>ABOUT <i>THE ALLIANCE</i>.....</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>THRESHOLDS.....</b>	<b>XII</b>
<b>CURRICULUM OVERVIEW.....</b>	<b>XV</b>

### SCP VISION

<b>LESSON 1: “Z” Thinking.....</b>	<b>3</b>
What Is “Z” Thinking? .....	3
Saturation Church Planting.....	4
Some Essential Steps To Get To “Z” .....	5
“Z” Thinking Results In “Z” Action.....	6
<b>LESSON 2: The Great Commission and Church Planting .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Understanding The Great Commission .....	9
The Great Commission And Saturation Church Planting .....	12
<b>LESSON 3: Church Planting Cycle .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Phase I—Foundations .....	19
Phase II—Winning.....	20
Phase III—Establishing.....	21
Phase IV—Training.....	22
Phase V—Multiplying.....	23
Phase VI—Movement.....	24
<b>Appendix: Church Planting Models.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>LESSON 4: Principles of Research.....</b>	<b>29</b>
What Is Research? .....	29
Where Should Research Be Done? .....	31
Who Should Do Research? .....	31
When Should Research Be Done?.....	31
Why Should Church Planters Do Research? .....	32
How Should Research Be Done? .....	33
<b>Appendix: Understanding Your Target Area.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix: Sample Questionnaires.....</b>	<b>39</b>

## THE CHURCH

<b>LESSON 1: Biblical Foundations For The Church .....</b>	<b>47</b>
God's Plan For The Ages .....	47
The Establishment Of The Church .....	48
The Role And Nature Of The Church Today .....	51
<b>LESSON 2: The Purpose of the Church .....</b>	<b>55</b>
The Purpose Of The Church .....	56
Paradigms For Understanding The Purpose Of The Church .....	57
<b>Appendix: Great Commission Worksheet.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>LESSON 3: Form and Function.....</b>	<b>65</b>
Form And Function Illustrated .....	65
Form And Function In The Church .....	66
Evaluating Form And Function In The Church .....	67
Principles Regarding Form And Function.....	68
Implications Of Form And Function For Church Planters.....	70
<b>Appendix: Form and Function Applied .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>LESSON 4: Defining The Local Church.....</b>	<b>73</b>
The Difficulty Of Defining The Church .....	73
Examples Of Church Definitions.....	74
Guidelines For Defining The Church .....	75
Writing Your Definition Of The Church .....	76

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

<b>LESSON 1: Justification by Faith.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Justification Is Not... ..	81
Justification Is .....	82
The Crucial Issues Of Justification By Faith .....	84
<b>LESSON 2: Living by the Gospel .....</b>	<b>87</b>
Distractions From The Gospel.....	87
The Dangers Of Self Reliance.....	88
The Centrality Of The Gospel In Personal Spiritual Growth .....	88
The Centrality Of The Gospel In Ministry.....	89
Learning To Root Our Faith In Christ .....	89
<b>LESSON 3: Christian Growth .....</b>	<b>91</b>
What Is Spiritual Growth?.....	91
The Role Of The Cross In Spiritual Growth .....	92
Hindrances To Christian Growth .....	93
<b>LESSON 4: The Transforming Power of the Gospel .....</b>	<b>97</b>
The Grace Of God And The Practice Of Sin .....	97
Baptized Into His Death—Raised In His Resurrection (Ro 6:3-10) .....	98
The Power Not To Sin .....	99
<b>LESSON 5: Keeping a Spiritual Journal.....</b>	<b>103</b>
Why Keep A Spiritual Journal? .....	103
Daily Time With God (Figure 5.1) .....	104
Daily Journaling (Figure 5.1).....	104

## PRAYER

<b>LESSON 1,2: Concert of Prayer .....</b>	<b>109</b>
How To Plan And Lead A Concert Of Prayer .....	109
A Concert Of Prayer .....	111
<b>LESSON 3: How to Facilitate Prayer .....</b>	<b>113</b>
Prayer—A Vital Aspect Of Evangelism And Church Planting .....	113
How To Integrate Prayer With Evangelism And Church Planting .....	114
Research: Gathering Information For Prayer .....	117
<b>Appendix: Prayer Triplets .....</b>	<b>119</b>

## BIBLE STUDY METHODS

<b>LESSON 1: Introduction to the Inductive Bible Study Method .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Inductive vs. Deductive .....	124
Steps Of Inductive Bible Study .....	126
Building A Solid Pyramid .....	127
<b>Appendix: How We Got the Bible .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>LESSON 2: Observing God's Word .....</b>	<b>133</b>
Observation—What Does The Text Say? .....	134
Sample Observation .....	137
<b>Appendix: The Language of the Bible .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>LESSON 3: Observation Workshop .....</b>	<b>143</b>
Workshop Format .....	143
Group Work .....	144
<b>LESSON 4: Interpreting God's Word .....</b>	<b>149</b>
Interpretation—The Second Stage Of The Inductive Method .....	149
The Process Of Interpretation .....	150
The Basic Rules Of Interpretation .....	151
Sample Interpretation .....	153
<b>Appendix: Bible Charts .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>LESSON 5: Interpretation Workshop .....</b>	<b>159</b>
Workshop Format .....	159
Group Work .....	159
<b>LESSON 6: Applying God's Word .....</b>	<b>163</b>
Application—The Third Stage Of The Inductive Method .....	164
Process Of Application .....	164
<b>LESSON 7: Application Workshop .....</b>	<b>169</b>
Workshop Format .....	169
Group Work .....	169
<b>Appendix: Ephesus—An Inductive Bible Study .....</b>	<b>173</b>

## EVANGELISM

<b>LESSON 1: Introduction to Evangelism .....</b>	<b>177</b>
The Nature Of Evangelism .....	178
The Need For Evangelism .....	179
The Motive Of Evangelism .....	181
The Place Of Evangelism In An SCP Strategy .....	182
<b>Appendix: The Bridge.....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>LESSON 2,3: Developing Your Personal Testimony.....</b>	<b>185</b>
The Nature Of A Testimony.....	185
The Value Of A Testimony .....	186
Examples Of Testimonies .....	186
The Preparation Of A Testimony.....	187
The Sharing Of A Personal Testimony.....	188



# PREFACE

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MATERIAL

Church planters are often recruited and sent out with little or no training for the task that is before them. Church leaders who are overwhelmed with ministry difficulties often lack a clear vision of what God desires to accomplish through them. Both church planters and church leaders need training and vision, but Bible schools and seminaries are not realistic options for many.

This material is designed to provide not only vision for the church planter and church leader, but also the biblical foundation and practical ministry skills in order to see that vision become reality. It is not an educational "program." Rather, it provides necessary biblical and educational foundations, as well as practical ministry skills, which are required for church planting. Although the *Omega Course* was designed for Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, we've been encouraged by reports that it is already being found useful when adapted for use in other contexts.

This curriculum has been designed to accomplish two goals:

1. To provide the necessary training for churches to be planted.
2. To encourage mobilization in the whole Body of Christ toward a church planting movement.

Today we see church planting movements taking place in many countries throughout the world, including Brazil, Romania, the Philippines, Nigeria, and others. We believe that the local church is God's primary instrument for world evangelization, and that church planting based upon multiplication principles is the most effective means of working towards the completion of the Great Commission. New churches must be planted with a vision for multiplication and the ability to plant other new churches. When this happens, there is potential for a movement of churches which is able to sweep across a nation and transform the lives of people throughout the land.

A church planting movement needs people involved in all levels of the church planting task, from young believers who are excited about their new faith, to leaders of denominations. Church planters by themselves can never be the catalysts for a church planting movement. This material is applicable and has much benefit for all levels of church workers and church leaders who can directly and indirectly support the efforts of church planters as they strive to fulfill the ministry to which God has called them.

## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

This manual is one of five manuals, each of which contains approximately 26 one-hour lessons. In order to accomplish the goals stated above, the curriculum covers a wide range of subjects that are necessary for the church planting task. These include SCP vision, cell group ministry, discipleship, Church, evangelism, inductive Bible study, leadership, prayer, spiritual character and more.

The curriculum was divided into five manuals in order to provide an ever-expanding approach to the learning process. As each participant completes a manual, he or she spends time before the next manual putting into practice the principles that have been learned. Therefore many of the later sessions build upon principles and skills which have been learned and practiced in earlier lessons.

In other words, the curriculum has been designed to be learned and used in parallel with the actual planting of churches. As the participant actively works towards starting a new church, he or she will need certain skills and knowledge, and will encounter various problems along the way. The skills and knowledge needed at the beginning of the church plant are provided in the first manuals, while the activities and principles needed at a later stage in a church plant are presented in the later manuals. Each manual has been designed to provide skills, answer questions, and discuss potential problems that relate to the corresponding phase of church planting in which the participant is actively working. After this Preface you will find a list of key development activities or "thresholds" that trainees are prepared for and expected to apply between training seminars.

The lessons are grouped by subject, and each of the five manuals includes lessons from some subjects. Some of the themes, such as "vision" and "church" are included in all five of the manuals. Others, such as "discipleship" occur later in the curriculum, when the participant is at the point in his or her ministry when these themes are necessary. A curriculum overview containing a list of the lesson titles for each of the five manuals is included later in this section.

## **USING THE MATERIAL**

### **Advice for the Participant**

Much time, prayer and effort has been put into the preparation of all five of the manuals in this curriculum. Each manual is designed to address specific ministry skills and knowledge that are required during the process of starting a new church. Therefore it is highly recommended that you begin with the first manual, and not with one of the later manuals. In the same respect, each lesson has been carefully chosen and crafted to be useful, applicable and indispensable for the church planting task. It is to your benefit not to skip lessons.

Be aware that real learning takes place when you apply the concepts presented in these lessons to your personal life and ministry. Most lessons include an action plan at the end. These action plans are designed to help you apply the ideas in the lesson and should be completed before you begin working with the next manual. It can be extremely helpful to have a mentor to encourage and advise you as you apply yourself to church planting. A mentor can also serve your need for accountability as you apply the concepts being learned to your life and ministry. Having someone to come alongside you is not only effective pedagogy, but many church planters testify to the help this provides in their life and ministry. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to prayerfully seek some form of mentoring to enhance and strengthen your church planting ministry.

### **Advice for the Trainer**

This material can be used in a variety of settings such as a Bible school, seminary or a church-based seminar. However this is not primarily educational material. It is training material. Education focuses on knowledge and information. The intent of the material is not merely to impart knowledge, but to motivate toward action employing biblically sound ministry skills. This manual is for 'doers.'

Although the method you choose to teach the lessons for each manual will depend on your particular context, each manual can be taught in a weeklong seminar. From this ideal, many training locations have successfully used other arrangements that fit better with the flow of life and existing ministries. They have sometimes opted for two intensive weekends or regular weekly sessions. It is recommended that the action plans at the end of each lesson be emphasized so that they are completed before the next seminar. Four to six months is a reasonable time to expect between seminars. The advantage of this type of training method is that it combines principles learned in the seminar with hands-on practice between seminars.

During seminars it is not necessary to teach every point of every lesson since participants can read the material on their own. Sometimes having trainees read the lesson and interact on how it relates to their own experience is a good method. At other times, a lecture from someone who is an expert in the subject being covered may be the best way to impart the concepts. But **DO NOT DWELL ON THE LECTURE APPROACH**. Be creative as you try various methods to convey the principles and skills contained in the lessons. Other trainers have found variations such as discussion groups, workshops and role playing to be helpful and interesting.

You have a sacred trust. The Lord of the Church wishes to disciple the nations, and leaders are needed. You have the awesome potential of helping to equip many who could foster church planting movements and to facilitate others in ministries of church multiplication.

### **Further help**

Do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance to you in spreading the vision of saturation church planting or practically equipping church planters.

Jay Weaver, General Editor  
Budapest, Hungary, January 2000  
JayWeaver@compuserve.com

## ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

This curriculum has been prepared by *The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting* in cooperation with Project 250 of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries. *The Alliance* is a partnership of churches and mission agencies committed to mobilizing believers to saturate each country in Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union with evangelical churches. Saturation Church Planting is a strategy that seeks to establish local churches in every town, village and neighborhood so that those who accept Christ will have a local fellowship in which to grow in Christ and be equipped for ministry. *The Alliance* is built on the premise that joining forces will increase effectiveness, reduce duplication, and demonstrate unity within the body of Christ.

### WHAT WE BELIEVE:

- The local church is God's primary tool for evangelism and discipleship.
- Partnership with churches and mission organizations is crucial for the multiplication of local churches and the development of saturation church planting movements.
- Training leaders is essential to church planting and church growth.
- The Lausanne Covenant is the statement of faith for *The Alliance*.

### WHAT WE DO:

#### Church Planter Training and Mentoring

*The Alliance* provides skill-based training in seminar fashion with practical ministry assignments geared towards starting reproducing churches.

#### Information Gathering

Accurate information leads to good decisions in the church planting task. *The Alliance* can help with training and consultation for your information gathering needs in the areas of church planting and church growth.

#### Prayer Movement Consulting

A church planting movement starts with vision, which is discovered and refined through seeking God's heart in prayer. *The Alliance* can help you better understand the role of prayer movements in the church planting task, and how you can facilitate a prayer movement in your region.

#### Vision Casting

What does God want for your country? He wants churches everywhere! *The Alliance* can help foster a vision for new churches with conceptual seminars on the principles of saturation church planting.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*  
Regional Resource Team  
H-1111 Budapest  
Budafoki út 34/B III/2, HUNGARY  
Tel: +(36-1) 466-5978 or 385-8199  
Fax: + (36-1) 365-6406  
E-mail: SCPAlliance@compuserve.com

# THRESHOLDS

## For the *Omega Course* Church Planting Curriculum

**Thresholds** are concrete ministry activities which have been incorporated into this curriculum. Each threshold can be thought of as an individual stepping stone within the larger process of starting new congregations. The thresholds provide concrete action points which help the trainee to practically apply the concepts contained in the *Omega Course*. They are both milestones that indicate progress, as well as signposts which help give further direction. Following is a list of thresholds and emphases in the *Omega Course*.

### **MANUAL ONE: Emphasis On SCP Vision, Purpose Of The Church, Inductive Bible Study, and Research**

#### **Specific action items:**

- Examining the purpose of the Church in light of the Great Commission
- Developing an overall ministry strategy based on "Z-thinking" vision
- Investigating "form and function" in the early Church and in today's Church
- Learning and practicing inductive Bible study
- Writing and sharing a personal testimony
- Initiating prayer support groups for evangelism and church planting
- Completing a comprehensive research project for the target area

### **MANUAL TWO: Emphasis On Evangelism and Cell Groups**

#### **Specific action items:**

- Sharing of findings from the research project with others in the target area
- Writing a church purpose statement
- Developing a philosophy of church planting ministry
- Developing a personal evangelism strategy, including one-on-one evangelism
- Beginning cell groups with an emphasis on evangelism
- Using inductive Bible study personally and in the cell groups

### **MANUAL THREE: Emphasis On Discipleship, Spiritual Warfare, Teams and Teamwork**

#### **Specific action items:**

- Identifying and training potential leaders for cell groups
- Spending time in prayer and fasting
- Evaluating the worldview of the church planter as compared to the biblical worldview
- Using scriptural truths to withstand spiritual attack in the life and ministry of the church planter
- Creating individual disciple making plans for the people involved in the church planting ministry
- Performing team development and evaluation activities
- Analyzing the spiritual gifts of the church planter and the church planting team

### **MANUAL FOUR: Emphasis On Leadership and Stewardship**

#### **Specific action items:**

- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the church planter's leadership style, with an emphasis on methods of personal interaction with others
- Incorporating principles of servant leadership into the life and ministry of the church planter
- Tracking the use of time in the life and ministry of the church planter, setting priorities, making schedules
- Evaluating the financial giving of the church planter, as well as that of the church plant itself
- Reviewing the biblical roles of a husband and wife and the responsibilities that church planters have to their families
- Leading existing cell groups through the process of multiplication
- Preparing a strategic plan for working towards saturation in the church planting ministry

### **MANUAL FIVE: Emphasis On Multiplication, Mobilizing Others, and Promoting SCP Movements**

#### **Specific action items:**

- Initiating ministry cooperation with other evangelical groups in the target area
- Planning and implementing a supervisory structure for cell groups that will promote ongoing growth and multiplication
- Teaching people to pray for saturation church planting; mobilizing prayer at a city, regional, and national levels
- Developing and implementing a plan for the church planter to train and mentor new church planters
- Empowering and releasing new leaders for church planting ministry
- Promoting a vision in new churches for missionary involvement not only in their target area, but also to "the ends of the earth"



## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

### MANUAL ONE Overview

Addresses primarily the **FOUNDATIONS** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Bible Study Methods (BS)	Evangelism (EV)
<b>Lesson 1:</b> "Z" Thinking  <b>Lesson 2:</b> The Great Commission and Church Planting  <b>Lesson 3 (3A):</b> Church Planting Cycle 3A: <i>Church Planting Models</i>  <b>Lesson 4 (4A,4B):</b> Principles of Research 4A: <i>Understanding Your Target Area</i> 4B: <i>Sample Questionnaires</i>	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Biblical Foundations for the Church  <b>Lesson 2 (2A):</b> The Purpose Of The Church 2A: <i>Great Commission Worksheet</i>  <b>Lesson 3 (3A):</b> Form And Function 3A: <i>Form &amp; Function Applied</i>  <b>Lesson 4:</b> Defining The Local Church	<b>Lesson 1 (1A):</b> Justification by Faith  <b>Lesson 2:</b> Living by the Gospel  <b>Lesson 3:</b> Christian Growth  <b>Lesson 4:</b> The Transforming Power of the Gospel  <b>Lesson 5:</b> Keeping a Spiritual Journal	<b>Lesson 1, 2:</b> Concert of Prayer: Praying for Revival  <b>Lesson 3 (3A):</b> How To Facilitate Prayer 3A: <i>Prayer Triplets</i>	<b>Lesson 1 (1A):</b> Intro to the Inductive Bible Study Method 1A: <i>How We Got The Bible</i>  <b>Lesson 2 (2A):</b> Observing God's Word 2A: <i>The Language of the Bible</i>  <b>Lesson 3:</b> Observation Workshop  <b>Lesson 4 (4A):</b> Interpreting God's Word 4A: <i>Bible Charts</i>  <b>Lesson 5:</b> Interpretation Workshop  <b>Lesson 6:</b> Applying God's Word  <b>Lesson 7 (7A):</b> Application Workshop 7A: <i>Ephesus - an I.B.S.</i>	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Introduction to Evangelism  <b>Lesson 2, 3:</b> Developing Your Personal Testimony
4	4	5	3	7	3

Numbers in brackets ( ) refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **WINNING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

## MANUAL TWO Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Bible Study Methods (BS)	Evangelism (EV)
<b>Lesson 5:</b> Biblical Foundations of Saturation Church Planting  <b>Lesson 6:</b> Research Workshop  <b>Lesson 7:</b> Mobilizing Resources through Research	<b>Lesson 5:</b> The Nature of the Church  <b>Lesson 6 (6A):</b> Corporate Functions of the Church 6A: <i>Baptism in the New Testament</i>  <b>Lesson 7:</b> Developing A Church Purpose Statement  <b>Lesson 8 (8A):</b> Philosophy of Church Planting Ministry 8A: <i>Developing a Philosophy of Church Planting Ministry</i>	<b>Lesson 6:</b> Living Like Sons Instead of Orphans  <b>Lesson 7 (7A):</b> Learning to be Sons 7A: <i>Orphans vs. Sons</i>	<b>Lesson 4:</b> Concert of Prayer: Worship and Meditation	<b>Lesson 1 (1A):</b> Biblical Principles of Leadership 1A: <i>Leadership Case Studies</i>  <b>Lesson 2 (2A):</b> Profile of a Leader 2A: <i>The Leader</i>	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Functions and Benefits of Cell Groups  <b>Lesson 2 (2A, 2B):</b> Principles of Cell Group Leadership 2A: <i>Cell Grp Ice Breakers</i> 2B: <i>Sample Activities</i>  <b>Lesson 3 (3A):</b> Starting a Cell Group 3A: <i>Planning Worksheet</i>  <b>Lesson 4 (4A):</b> Cell Group Evangelism 4A: <i>About "Oikos"</i>  <b>Lesson 5:</b> Cell Group Demonstration  <b>Lesson 6:</b> Philosophy of Cell Group Ministry	<b>Lesson 8 (8A):</b> Various Ways to Use Inductive Bible Studies 8A: <i>Biographical Study - Barnabas</i>  <b>Lesson 9 (9A, 9B):</b> Leading Inductive Bible Studies 9A: <i>Study of Mt 20:17-28</i> 9B: <i>Study of Lk 15: 1-7</i>  <b>Lesson 10,11 (10A):</b> Workshop Leading Inductive Bible Studies 10A: <i>Passages for IBS</i>	<b>Lesson 4 (4A):</b> Evangelism and Church Planting 4A: <i>Evaluating Evang Strategies</i>  <b>Lesson 5 (5A, 5B):</b> Barriers to effective Evangelism 5A: <i>"A Church in Every People"</i> 5B: <i>Answering Common Objections</i>  <b>Lesson 6, 7 (6A, 6B, 6C):</b> The Process of Conversion 6A: <i>Profile of persons to Evang</i> 6B: <i>Three Principles</i> 6C: <i>Examining Jesus' Approach</i>
3	4	2	1	2	6	4	4

Numbers in brackets ( ) refer to appendices



Addresses primarily the **ESTABLISHING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

## MANUAL THREE Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Evangelism (EV)	Disciple Making (DI)	Spiritual Warfare (SW)
<b>Lesson 8:</b> The First Advance  <b>Lesson 9:</b> Elements of Church Planting Movements	<b>Lesson 9, 10:</b> The Church and Spiritual Gifts  <b>Lesson 11:</b> Social Dynamics of the Church	<b>Lesson 8,9:</b> The Law and The Gospel  <b>Lesson 10 (10A):</b> Repentance as a Way of Life 10A: The Sinner's Place	<b>Lesson 5:</b> Prayer and Fasting  <b>Lesson 6, 7:</b> Concert of Prayer: Praying to Spread the Gospel	<b>Lesson 3:</b> Spheres of Leadership  <b>Lesson 4:</b> Introduction to Team Work  <b>Lesson 5:</b> Team Development	<b>Lesson 7 (7A):</b> Cell Group Discussion Dynamics 7A: Discussion Questions  <b>Lesson 8:</b> Caring for People in a Cell Group  <b>Lesson 9:</b> Training New Cell Group Leaders	<b>Lesson 8:</b> Relational Evangelism	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Introduction to Disciple Making  <b>Lesson 2(2A):</b> Your Role in Making Disciples 2A: Character-istics of Christian Love  <b>Lesson 3(3A):</b> Know Your Goal, Know Your People 3A: Faith, Hope & Love  <b>Lesson 4(4A):</b> Helping Disciples Grow Spiritually 4A: Spir Grth Need Evaltn  <b>Lesson 5(5A):</b> Forms for Disciple Making 5A: Disciple Making Plan	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Understanding Worldview  <b>Lesson 2 (2A):</b> Dynamics of Spiritual Warfare 2A: Study of Eph. 4:17-5:21  <b>Lesson 3 (3A, 3B):</b> Spiritual Battles 3A: Bible Study 3B: Case Studies from Around the World
2	3	3	3	3	3	1	5	3

Numbers in brackets ( ) refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **TRAINING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

## MANUAL FOUR Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Disciple Making (DI)	Stewardship (ST)	The Family (FA)
<b>Lesson 10 (10A,10B):</b> Strategy Components for a Church Planting Movement <i>10A: Faith and Obedience Vs Fear and Unbelief</i> <i>10B: Things that Promote Natural Growth</i> <b>Lesson 11:</b> Signs of a Movement <b>Lesson 12:</b> Shepherding within a Movement	<b>Lesson 12:</b> Dynamics of the Emerging Church <b>Lesson 13:</b> Characteristics of Growing Churches <b>Lesson 14:</b> Church Government And Church Offices	<b>Lesson 11:</b> Love as the Foundation for Ministry <b>Lesson 12:</b> Understanding the Father's Heart <b>Lesson 13:</b> Grace is for the Humble	<b>Lesson 8,9:</b> Concert of Prayer: Praying Biblically	<b>Lesson 6 (6A):</b> Servant Leadership <i>6A: The Leaders Checklist</i> <b>Lesson 7:</b> Leadership Dynamics <b>Lesson 8:</b> Styles of Interaction <b>Lesson 9:</b> Leadership Needs <b>Lesson 10 (10A):</b> Training New Leaders <i>10A: Qualities to Encourage in a New Leader</i>	<b>Lesson 10:</b> Discussion of Cell Group Questions and Problems <b>Lesson 11:</b> Cell Group Multiplication	<b>Lesson 6:</b> Disciple-making Workshop	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Introduction to Stewardship <b>Lesson 2:</b> Financial Stewardship <b>Lesson 3:</b> Time Management <b>Lesson 4:</b> Strategic Planning Process <b>Lesson 5:</b> Strategic Planning Process Workshop	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Biblical Roles in the Family <b>Lesson 2:</b> Parenting
3	3	3	2	5	2	1	5	2

Numbers in brackets ( ) refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **MULTIPLICATION & MOVEMENT** phases of the Church Planting Cycle

## MANUAL FIVE Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Preaching (PR)	The Family (FA)
<b>Lesson 13:</b> Vision and Telescoping <b>Lesson 14:</b> Mobilization <b>Lesson 15:</b> Next Steps <b>Lesson 16:</b> Training As Part Of A Church Planting Movement <b>Lesson 17:</b> Mobilizing Leaders Through National Initiatives	<b>Lesson 15:</b> Church Discipline <b>Lesson 16:</b> Corporate Worship In The Local Church <b>Lesson 17:</b> How To Lead Corporate Worship <b>Lesson 18:</b> The Local Church and the Bigger Body of Christ <b>Lesson 19:</b> The Historical Impact of the Church in _____ (History of the Church in country context)	<b>Lesson 14:</b> Reconciliation Ministry <b>Lesson 15:</b> Moral Integrity of Church Planters	<b>Lesson 10:</b> Facilitating Prayer for a Church Planting Movement <b>Lesson 11, 12:</b> Concert of Prayer: Thanking God for His Faithfulness	<b>Lesson 11:</b> Releasing Leaders <b>Lesson 12:</b> Movement Leadership 12A: <i>Movement Leaders</i>	<b>Lesson 12:</b> Cells That Saturate Through Local Churches <b>Lesson 13 (13A):</b> Supervising Cells 13A: <i>Final Step</i>	<b>Lesson 1:</b> Biblical Preaching I: Understanding the Message <b>Lesson 2:</b> Biblical Preaching II: Understanding the Audience <b>Lesson 3:</b> Biblical Preaching III: Understanding Yourself	<b>Lesson 3:</b> Ministry to the Family
5	5	2	3	2	2	3	1

Numbers in brackets ( ) refer to appendices

**TOTAL CURRICULUM HOURS: 127**



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# SCP VISION

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SCP VISION

1

LESSON

# "Z" Thinking

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to emphasize the role that vision plays in the church planting cycle.

### ☛ Main Points

- "Z" Thinking involves considering what God wants to see accomplished for His glory in any region.
- Saturation church planting is completing the Great Commission through church planting in such a way that every man, woman and child has a chance to accept or reject the Gospel through the witness of a local church.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Have a vision for reaching the world, their nation, their region, city, village and neighborhood with the Gospel.
- Know that it is God's will that every man, woman, and child hear and understand the Gospel and have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
- Do church planting with "Z" thinking, or end-result vision.

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

"Z" Thinking communicates the idea of a vision for what God *ultimately* wants for a nation, region, city, village, or neighborhood; that is, that every man, woman, and child hear and understand the Gospel and have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Consider how to most clearly communicate the idea of end-result vision in your cultural context.

## INTRODUCTION

If Christian leaders were to ask themselves the question, "What is the ultimate end toward which God is working in history?" or "What does God want for the people in the place where I serve Him?"... how would it affect the way they minister there? The answers to these questions should describe the vision and define the tasks of their ministries.

### I. WHAT IS "Z" THINKING?

What is the ultimate end toward which God is working? The answer can be called "Z"—the end result of what God ultimately wants for a nation, region, city, village, or neighborhood. To work towards that end means knowing clearly what "Z" is. The Bible makes it clear that God's love is for the whole world (Jn 3:16). In writing to Timothy, Paul emphasized the need to pray for all men because "This is good and pleases God our Savior, Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:3-4). Peter also writes concerning this, "He [the Lord] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9).

If God wants all people to come to repentance, shouldn't this be our desire as well? Can we possibly be used by God to mobilize others toward this end? What would happen if all the Christians in a country, region, city, village or even a neighborhood were completely convinced that God wanted everyone there to know Him and see Christians living like Jesus in their midst? (1Pe 2:12).

The balance of Scripture indicates that not all will be saved. Our sovereign God alone knows who will be saved. The task of the Church is to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Before going further, ask yourself these questions:

- What does God want for \_\_\_\_\_? (my nation, region, city, village, or neighborhood). Write the answer in one paragraph.

- How does my answer above affect my ministry? Does what I am currently doing reflect what I believe God wants?

It is easy to see how "Z" thinking can effectively describe the vision and define the tasks for any ministry.

## II. SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING

In order to see "Z," saturation must happen. By "saturation" we mean that it is the church's ministry to reach out to "every person," "anyone," "and everyone" as stated in 1 Timothy and 2 Peter. These passages make it clear that God wants every man, woman, and child to hear and understand the Gospel and have the opportunity to believe in and fully obey Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. An important part of the Christian life is being a part of a local church where God's Word is believed and taught.

Saturation church planting (SCP) is thoroughly biblical. It is completing the Great Commission through church planting in such a way that every man, woman and child has a chance to accept or reject the Gospel through the witness of a local church. SCP is the vision, strategy, and ministry of filling nations, regions, cities, villages, and neighborhoods with churches that will take the Gospel to every person in their language and through their culture.

Saturation church planting is completing the Great Commission through church planting in such a way that every man, woman and child has a chance to accept or reject the Gospel through the witness of a local church.

### A. Is It Realistic to Expect "Z" from God?

Besides the fact that God wants "Z" more than we do, it is exciting that Scripture clearly promises that "Z" will happen. The promise that God will saturate the world with knowledge of Himself and His glory is stated in Isaiah 11:9, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John saw visions of heaven from which we learn about the ultimate result of all God's work in the world, the "Z" towards which all history is moving. John reports seeing multitudes of people from every nation, tribe, people and language worshipping the Lord (Rev 7:9)! Yes, it is realistic to expect "Z" from God.

### B. What Does God Say about "Z"?

In one of his most intimate moments with the Father, Jesus prayed that there would be unity among those who believe in Him, ". . . to let the **world know** that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me" (Jn 17:23b). Jesus desired that the world would know who He was! This is the "Z"! He repeated this request twice (Jn 17:21-23). Imagine! God the Son in conversation with God the Father discussing "Z"! "Z" is clearly important to God.



### **C. Jesus Taught the Disciples about "Z"**

Jesus taught the disciples "Z" thinking, promising that " . . . the Gospel must first be preached to all nations" before His return (Mk 13:10). He also promised that the Gospel would saturate the nations in Matthew 24:14 and Luke 24:45-47.

## **III. SOME ESSENTIAL STEPS TO GET TO "Z"**

"A" through "Y" are the things we do in ministry so that "Z" may happen. Scripture gives us some essentials for the "A" through "Y" stage that must take place before "Z" can effectively happen. Notice that these all deal with the elements of "Z." Having "Z" always in mind allows us to make strategic choices as we do "A" through "Y."

### **A. Prayer**

In numerous ways, prayer is clearly an essential part of seeing God's desires fulfilled on earth. Notice the following references:

- 2Ch 7:14 If God's people pray the way they should, "Z" will happen.
- Mt 9:38 God's people are commanded to pray so that workers may participate towards "Z."
- 1Ti 2:1-4 God's people are to pray so that conditions for "Z" may exist. Paul told Timothy that churches should pray for leaders in society to create favorable conditions for the spread of the Gospel.
- Rev 5:8-10 "Z" is the result of "the prayers of the saints."

### **B. Love and Unity**

When Jesus said, "By this all men will know," He referred to love among Christians (Jn 13:35). He made it clear that "Z" requires quality relationships. Only when believers love one another will people know that we belong to Christ. Growing in numbers only causes the world to see us as another religious movement if we lack love.

"That the world may know that you are My disciples" requires that believers be united as Jesus and the Father are united. As Jesus talks about His unity with the Father, He always points to a love relationship and an inseparable connection. He prays that our unity would be a model of that unity between Jesus and the Father, and that we should maintain an inseparable connection with Him (Jn 17:21,23).

### **C. Vision**

As the verses below show, "Z" is a global task and includes all people of all nationalities from all places. "Z" thinking for any one area requires seeing the whole world as God does.

- Because God loves all people, He sent His Son so that " . . . whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).
- Jesus is the atoning sacrifice " . . . for the sins of the whole world" (1Jn 2:2).
- The Holy Spirit " . . . convict[s] the world of guilt" (Jn 16:7-11).
- The Holy Spirit gives Christians power to witness " . . . to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8).
- Jesus commands his followers to " . . . go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:18-20).
- Jesus promised that many are ready to receive Him "The harvest is plentiful..." (Mt 9:37).

### **D. Evangelism**

For 'Z' to be realized, the church must send evangelists where there are few or no believers. "Z" requires that people go to those who have not heard the Gospel and deliver the message of salvation. As Paul writes, " . . . how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Ro 10:14-15).

Christians must continue to discover where the Gospel has not been preached, and who has not yet heard, in every village, city, region, and country. As believers spread the Gospel and plant churches in and among those places and people, "Those who were not told about Him will see and those who have not heard will understand" (Ro 15:21).

## E. Church Planting

For "Z" to happen, the church has to be everywhere, on display to everyone. Through the church, both the invisible (the spiritual realm) and the visible world will know the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:8-11). As the body of Christ, the church is the literal presence of Jesus Christ on earth. As Jesus Christ takes first place in the life of the church, the world will know that He is "head over everything" (Eph 1:22-23).

For "Z" to happen,  
the church has to be  
everywhere, on  
display to everyone.

By "the blood of the cross," people are reconciled to God. In His Church, Jesus Christ brings people together who would otherwise be separated by a "dividing wall of hostility." Among people who formerly lived in hate, "His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace . . ." (Eph 2:13-16).

In the same way that the love and faithfulness of a husband and wife can be witnessed by others in the community in which they live, the relationship between Jesus and His church is on display (Eph 5:22-23).

In the church, as in a body, members are joined to serve "as each part does his work." The work of the body is always for the purpose of making Jesus known. When this happens, the church "grows and builds itself up" (Eph 4:11-13). The full-grown body is one that has members from every nation (Rev 5:9-10).

## IV. "Z" THINKING RESULTS IN "Z" ACTION

### A. "Z" Giving

"Z" thinking requires "Z" giving. Paul quotes Jesus' words when he exhorts the Ephesian elders at Miletus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Ac 20:35). Giving is an important ministry of the church. As Paul, speaking with apostolic authority, commanded the church in Corinth, " . . . see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2Co 8:7).

The giving church not only heaps for itself credit in a heavenly account, but God provides the church's present needs "according to His glorious riches." By blessing the act of giving in heaven and on earth, God will release the "Z" thinking church to provide the finances for the task (Php 4:15-19).

### B. "Z" Strategy

The great revival leader, John Wesley said, "In every act reflect on the end." Applying "Z" thinking ministry has a tremendous impact. Unfortunately, many servants of God go about their ministry without ever considering the effect of their efforts toward God's "Z." When this happens, it is easy to get into a 'rut' and miss God's blessing. However, the ultimate question "What does God want for the place where we serve Him?" can have an inspiring effect on God's servants. When it is answered, it inspires faith and leads to increased ministry for God.

#### ***An Example of "Z" Thinking in Romania.***

Nelu Sofrac, a church planter in Romania, saw that God wanted more for his county, called Alba Iulia, than the four churches he had planted. He could have been occupied and secure in accomplishing the remarkable feat of planting, leading, and pastoring these four churches but "Z" thinking spurred him on.

He realized that it was impossible for him to reach his county alone, but he knew God wanted to fill Alba Iulia County with churches that preach the Gospel and teach the Scriptures. To accomplish this

effectively, 500 churches needed to be planted in Alba Iulia. Nelu began training fifteen young people from his home church and the new churches he planted. His wife Dorina began a prayer group with three women. He shared his vision with other pastors who were reluctant to accept his message at first. With persistence, and believing that because God wants "Z" for Alba Iulia, He would be with Nelu to work for this end, Dorina now leads fifteen cell groups of women who are praying for new churches, and Nelu leads a multi-church interdenominational outreach called EVANGALBA. This outreach is growing and planting new churches in the county of Alba Iulia by mobilizing existing churches to get involved. Their main activities are prayer, training and evangelizing, and church planting.

The congregations of Alba Iulia are praying, uniting in vision, growing in love, sending evangelists and planting churches in their county. The issue of giving is beginning to take its place and though they see themselves as very poor, some are committed to giving as well.

Nelu's "Z" thinking has given him a nationwide platform. He trains church planters and infuses Christian leaders in other counties of Romania with vision for saturation church planting. He also hopes to be sent out as a cross-cultural missionary outside of Romania.

## CONCLUSION

Saturation church planting is the focus of "Z" thinking because only through the church can the other tasks of praying, lovingly uniting, vision, evangelizing, and giving happen all over the world. Because the church must reach everyone, saturation church planting must drive "Z" thinking. God wants "Z," and when the church works in accordance with God's will, the work of saturation church planting will accelerate. The saturation or filling of nations with churches works toward the goal of all people hearing the Gospel.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What is the difference between a "Z" thinking church planter and other church planters?
- Do you pray for whole nations? Regions? Cities? Villages and neighborhoods?
- Do you pray for more workers for God's harvest? If Jesus commanded us to pray for this, will He be faithful to answer if we are faithful to pray? Why are there too few workers?
- Are you willing to work with and love brothers of different denominations and opinions in non-essentials toward "Z"? Will Jesus' prayer for unity be answered or did He pray in vain? Will you be a part of the answer to His prayer?
- Do people on the outside see your church as just another denomination or religion, or as people who love?
- Is your vision to plant one church or to be part of a movement that will fill the world with Gospel-preaching churches?
- Do you excel at financial giving? Does your church excel at giving? Do you teach on giving? If not, since giving is taught in Scripture, why do you not teach it?
- Is the goal of your evangelism only to make your church bigger, or is it also to plant new churches?

## ACTION PLAN

- Begin thinking about a strategy for saturation church planting that includes prayer, unity and love, vision, evangelism, and church planting. Write down some initial ideas and share them with your mentor or the trainer of this session.
- Think about your neighborhood, village, city, region, or country. Consider your answer to the question, "What does God want for \_\_\_\_\_?" List three things that you will do to help see "Z" happen in your area.



SCP VISION

LESSON 2

# The Great Commission and Church Planting

## SATURATION DISCIPLE MAKING

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to communicate the vision for the mobilization of saturation church planting movements, in obedience to the Great Commission.

### ☛ Main Points

- Understanding the Great Commission is crucial to saturation church planting.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know why Matthew 28:18-20 is known as the Great Commission.
- Understand how the church will go and make disciples of all nations as it multiplies.
- Understand how church planting fulfills the Great Commission.
- Develop a vision for a saturation church planting movement in his or her nation.

## INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 28:18-20, we learn that there is an ambitious task facing us. The Great Commission is a command that is to be obeyed by every generation of Christians. With this command, Jesus promises His presence until the task is completed. This command is called the *Great* Commission because of the magnitude of the task Jesus commissions His followers to fulfill.

## I. UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT COMMISSION

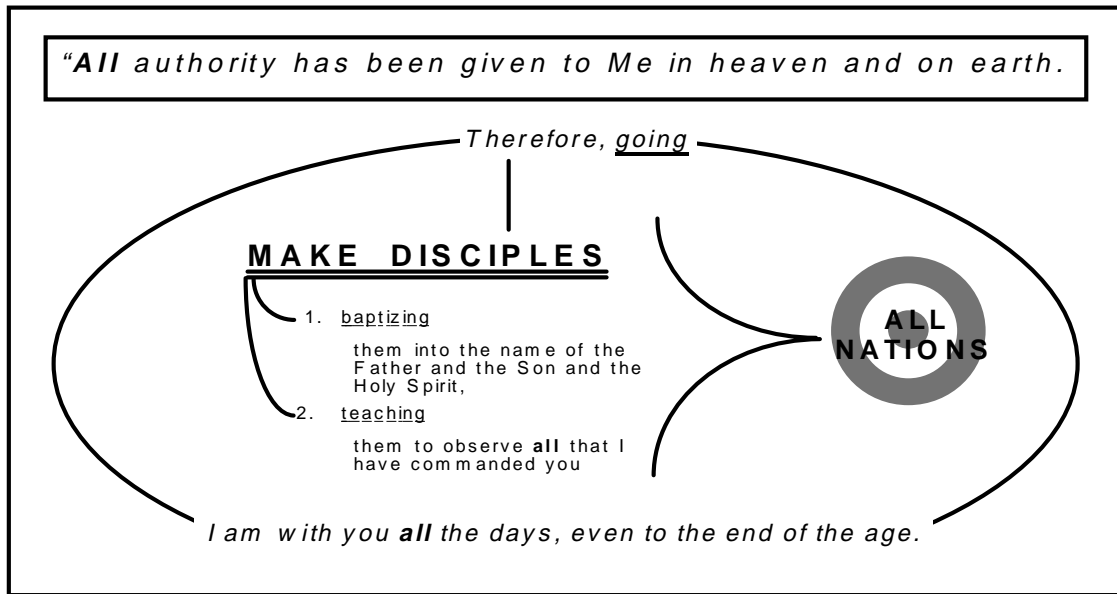
In the Great Commission, Jesus makes clear His purpose for His Church until His return. These words are very important and deserve careful reflection. Below is a literal translation of Matthew 28:18-20 from the original Greek:

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, going, make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **all** that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you **all** the days, even to the end of the age" (a literal translation of Matthew 28:18-20).*

In the Great Commission, Jesus makes clear His purpose for His Church until His return.

The central and most important word in the Great Commission is "make disciples." As the only imperative verb in the Great Commission, it carries to the greatest extent the desire Jesus has for his followers. Making disciples then is the heart of the Great Commission. Two other verbs, both participles, "baptizing" and "teaching," with their complete phrases, expand and explain the main action "make disciples." The act of making disciples through baptizing and teaching has an object expressed in the phrase "all the nations." The command assumes that the one making disciples is "going." Furthermore, the promise that Jesus is with those who are doing these things "and I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age" surrounds the entire command.

**Figure 2.1 The Great Commission**



#### **A. The Assignment: Make Disciples**

The main emphasis of the Great Commission is on the central command to "make disciples." The main task of the Church then, is to make disciples, not just converts. Two subordinate participles reveal important aspects of the disciple making process.

##### *1. Baptizing - 'turning to Christ'*

Baptism is the public testimony concerning conversion, an indication that someone has been evangelized. In order for a person to become a follower of Jesus Christ, he or she must repent and believe (Mk 1:15; Ac 20:21). Baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration, of forgiveness of sins and of new life in Christ (Tit 3:5; Mk 1:4, Ro 6:3-4).

The Great Commission indicates that baptism is 'into' the Trinity. From this we learn something of the nature of the disciple's new identity. One of the amazing qualities of the Trinity is the community the Father, Son and Spirit share. In a similar way, a believer is baptized into the church community; the community which Jesus desires to have the same kind of unity (Jn 17) as the Trinity.

##### *2. Teaching - 'becoming like Christ'*

Upon conversion, new disciples must be trained concerning whom they have determined to follow. Conversion involves a relationship with a personal God. We are commanded to train converts to be "followers," or "learners" of Jesus, by teaching them to obey His commandments.

It is the task of the church to teach obedience to Christ. Note carefully that the verse does not say the goal is to teach commandments, rather, the goal is to **teach obedience** to all that Jesus commanded. This means churches must teach obedience to the whole will of Christ, leaving nothing out. Partial obedience, which can so easily become the norm, is not sufficient. Rather, we must constantly search the Scriptures, asking ourselves, "Have we obeyed everything that is written here?" And "How can we obey each command more faithfully?" The teaching of full obedience is an ongoing process. Note that it is not a temporary act that *precedes* baptism, but in the text, it *follows* baptism and *continues* throughout the life of the believer.

## B. The Scope: ALL

The Great Commission was not a temporary plan only for those who originally heard it. The reoccurrence of the word "All" indicates its far-reaching application.

### 1. *The basis for the command is Christ's authority.*

Jesus declared His supreme rank in the universe before commissioning His disciples. When someone with authority declares his rank before giving an order, it is to emphasize the importance of the command. Therefore, all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ's authority must obey the Great Commission.

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 1:22-23). Those people who acknowledge His headship comprise His body, the Church. The task of discipling the nations is not only the task of the evangelist; it is the task of all who submit to the sovereign authority of Jesus. The Great Commission gives believers a great sense of purpose.

### 2. *The posture of the command is "going."*

The original Greek for the 'going' could easily be translated 'as you are going' or 'having gone.' It assumes that those who obey the Great Commission are "going." In contrast to "coming" to the Jerusalem temple to see God's glory, we go with God's glory within us (2Co 3:18). Jesus did not make disciples in the sterile isolation of a classroom, but in the context of going about life. The ministry of the church ought also to be active—going into the world instead of the world coming to it.

Jesus made it clear that He intended the good news to reach all nations (Mt 24:14). In parallel Great Commission passages (Lk 24:47 and Acts 1:8) we read that the spreading of the Church would begin at Jerusalem. However, since the apostles whom Jesus commissioned remained in Jerusalem, it seems the early church had very little missionary vision until Acts 8. The early church, it appears, only understood the words, "beginning at Jerusalem" and not the words "to all the nations."

- All Authority
- All Nations
- All Things
- All The Days

#### *Going due to persecution*

Jesus will use His sovereign authority to cause the church to go to the nations if necessary. After a time of persecution and the martyrdom of Stephen, the Church began to take the Gospel further out. Acts 8:1 records, "*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.*" Acts 11:19-20 says, "*Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message. . .*" Jesus allowed persecution to cause Christians to do, in response to a crisis, what they should have done on His command.

#### *Going due to obedience*

In Acts 13:1-3, the church in Syrian Antioch was obedient to the Great Commission. As instructed by the Holy Spirit, they sent Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus, where "*they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues*" (Ac 13:4-5). From Cyprus, Paul and his companions traveled extensively before returning to Antioch (Ac 13:6ff).

God has given the Church the responsibility of proclaiming the Good News. As Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2Co 5:18-19). Like the church in Syrian Antioch, the Church should reach out to the nations in obedience, but if the Church is not obedient, Jesus has used crises to accomplish His work.

3. *The target of the command is "all the nations."*

The phrase "all the nations" stands in direct contrast to the last record of Jesus sending out His disciples, at which time the target was the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 10:5,6). Here we are called to take the Gospel to all the nations since Jesus purchased with His blood men "*from every tribe and language and people and nation*" (Rev 5:9). The apostle John had the privilege of seeing this command fulfilled in his vision of heaven that included people from every nation worshipping the Lord (Rev. 7:9).

What is a nation? The Greek word for nations in this text is the word *ethnos*<sup>1</sup>. This is the word from which "ethnic" comes. An ethnic group is a people group united by their language, culture, and customs. A country may contain several ethnic groups within its borders. In order for a saturation church planting movement to be successful, often several nations (*ethnos*) must be reached within a single country. Every ethnic group must be reached in its own language and according to its own culture and customs if we are to obey the Great Commission by taking the Gospel to 'all the nations.'

4. *The duration of the command is "to the end of the age."*

With the words "to the end of the age," Jesus shows that these instructions are for the whole Church until He returns, not just for the twelve disciples. We are to persevere in these three things "to the end of the age," i.e. until Jesus returns for His Church. At which time, Christ will have been "*preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations*" (Mt 24:14).

### C. The Promise

Making disciples of all nations may seem overwhelming. However, as we go to make disciples, we can go with confidence. We are assured of our ultimate success because Christ now has **all authority** and has promised to be with us in **all the days** to the end of the age. Christ Himself is the guarantee of success, as we abide in Him, depending on His authority and presence (Jn 15:4-17). Jesus gives His Church both her main assignment until He returns and the promise upon which her success is guaranteed!

Jesus gives His Church both her main assignment until He returns and the promise upon which her success is guaranteed!

In the remainder of the New Testament, we see how the early church lived out its obedience to this command. The Apostle Paul, sitting in jail, wrote with assurance to the Philippian church (Php 1:6) "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Because He recognized that God was at work and that God's Spirit was resident in believers and the believing fellowship, he knew his work was not in vain. That's good news for us as we consider how to fulfill the Great Commission.

## II. THE GREAT COMMISSION AND SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING

Saturation church planting fulfills the directives and goals of the Great Commission. According to Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10, Luke 24:45-47 and Acts 1:8, the Great Commission will be fulfilled when there are disciples in every nation. As churches are planted in every nation, disciples are made in that nation.

### A. The Great Commission and The Purpose of The Church

Fulfilling the Great Commission is the task of the CHURCH. The Church does not exist to serve itself, or perpetuate its own programs but to take the Gospel to "all the nations." The outreach of the church is not just one of many ministries; it is its reason for being. The Church should grow through evangelism and multiply itself through church planting so that more and more people will become disciples of Jesus. Programs and ministries of the Church should be evaluated and

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developed according to how well they serve this purpose. Do they result in the kind of disciple making that Jesus intended when He gave the Great Commission?

Church leaders should empower members to fulfill the Great Commission by training them to share their faith with the lost, by exposing them to missions realities, and by giving them a vision to pray and to give financially toward the harvest. Church leaders often become so preoccupied with carrying out a ministry themselves that they neglect to train others to do it. However, through training, the ministry can be being carried out by many rather than by only one. Remember that Jesus entrusted His message and His ministry to His disciples, and in doing so, multiplied the impact of His work.

## B. The Great Commission and Church Planting

If the heart of the Great Commission is making disciples of the nations, then we must continually search for the best methods to accomplish this. After all, many have devoted their lives to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is prudent to compare several ministry methods to fulfill the Great Commission. Do they each reflect the principles demanded by the Great Commission? Do they honor all of the intentions of the Great Commission? Which methods best make disciples according to the Great Commission? To help answer this question, we will look at three methods of ministry to see how they compare in the accomplishment of the Great Commission.

The first method for comparison will be the established church. For purposes of this lesson, an “established” church will be defined as one that is more than 10 years old. The second method is called “non-church outreach.” Non-church outreach is a term used to describe any non-church oriented evangelistic effort such as traditional crusades, radio evangelism, etc. The key idea is that it is a type of evangelistic outreach that does not originate in the church and is not oriented (necessarily) towards a local church. The third method we will explore will be a new church plant. By church planting, we mean making contacts, leading people to repentance, instructing converts, baptizing them, and beginning worship services resulting in congregations that fulfill the New Testament functions for followers of Jesus.

**Figure 2.2 The Great Commission and Church Planting**

<b>GREAT COMMISSION</b> <i>Principles:</i>	<b>EVANGELISM</b> <i>“Baptism” Turning to Christ</i>	<b>TEACHING</b> <i>“Teaching Obedience” Becoming like Christ</i>	<b>Result:</b>  <i>“MAKING DISCIPLES”</i>
<b>Established Church</b>	<b>NOT ALWAYS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>MAYBE...</b>
<b>Non-church Evangelism</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NOT ALWAYS</b>	<b>MAYBE...</b>
<b>Church Planting</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES!!</b>

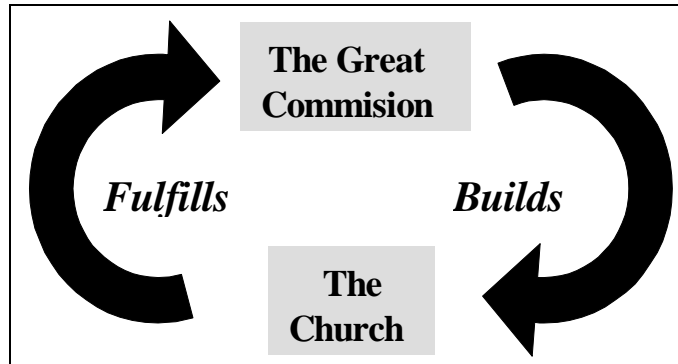
As seen on figure 2.2, comparing these three methods reveals that church planting best fulfills the Great Commission. Established churches often emphasize discipleship without effectively making new converts, while non-church evangelism produces converts but often without sufficient emphasis on teaching (certainly there are exceptions in both of these cases). Church planting, however, combines both of these elements, making new converts and then providing a natural environment for their discipleship.

Obviously, many methods are used to fulfill the Great Commission, any of which could be compared to church planting. The examples listed above were used simply to highlight the fact that church planting

Church planting deserves ever-increasing priority due to the fact that it best embodies the Great Commission given by our Lord.

completely fulfills both the principles and intentions of the Great Commission as new disciples are made through evangelism and discipleship. Other methods are available, but church planting deserves ever-increasing priority due to the fact that it best embodies the Great Commission given by our Lord.

**Figure 2.3 The Great Commission and the Church**



## CONCLUSION

The Great Commission is a command to make disciples as we baptize new converts and teach them obedience to Christ. Our task involves going out into the world to make disciples in all ethnic groups, not waiting for them to come to us. Our authority and assurance is in Christ Himself, who promised to be with us until the task is completed.

The Church exists to make disciples in all nations and thereby fulfill the task that Christ gave. All ministry programs and efforts should in some way contribute towards this goal. The Great Commission will be completed as the Church recognizes the authority of Jesus Christ and is obedient to the task He has given.

A new church plant fulfills the command to “make disciples” through evangelism of new converts, followed by ongoing discipleship and training of the new believers. Churches that understand their purpose and reason for existence will start new churches with this same reason for being, and in doing so will provide the means to reach “all the nations” with the Gospel. Church planters and all who are involved in starting new churches are in a very unique and strategic ministry, since it so completely embodies the principles taught in the Great Commission. To put it simply, church planting is the best method for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Our task involves going out into the world to make disciples in all ethnic groups, not waiting for them to come to us.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- Have you accepted the authority of Christ by carrying out the Great Commission? Does your church understand the authority of Christ’s command to “go and make disciples of all nations?” Are they driven by this purpose?
- How can you help mobilize your church to fulfill the Great Commission?
- Does your church respond to the Lord’s authority by discipling your nation and other nations?
- Will Jesus still use persecution, economic crisis, and/or obedience to fulfill the Great Commission?
- Have you chosen to “go” out of obedience, or are you waiting for a crisis?
- Are you focusing your church planting work on making followers of Jesus, or growing your denomination?
- Do you and those you train have a vision to reach all the nations?
- Do you train people for practical obedience, or is your teaching mostly theoretical?

## **ACTION PLAN**

Develop and disciple a group of people to pray for your nation and for other nations, start giving money to national and foreign missions, and begin the first steps of church planting with a vision for reaching all the nations.



SCP VISION

LESSON 3

# Church Planting Cycle

## GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the “Church Planting Cycle,” emphasizing the critical phases involved in a local church plant and a church planting movement.

### ☛ Main Points

- The church planting cycle should not be a haphazard series of events.
- The church planting process includes laying a foundation, winning the lost, establishing believers into fellowships, training them in ministry, and multiplying congregations, resulting in a movement of new churches.
- The goal of church planting is not just one church but a movement of churches in the target region.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the course of church planter training and the church planting process.
- Be able to identify six critical phases in the reproduction of churches.
- Understand that the goal of saturation church planting is not just one new congregation, but multiple churches and a church planting movement in each country.

### ☛ Appendix

3A Church Planting Models

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Make a transparency or poster from figure 3.1 and refer to it at the beginning of each training session to remind church planters where you are currently in your instruction and where you are headed in the church planting process.

Discuss with the trainees the various church planting models described in Appendix 3A. Which of these models have proved successful in their context and which have not? Which ones seem to lead more readily to church planting movements?

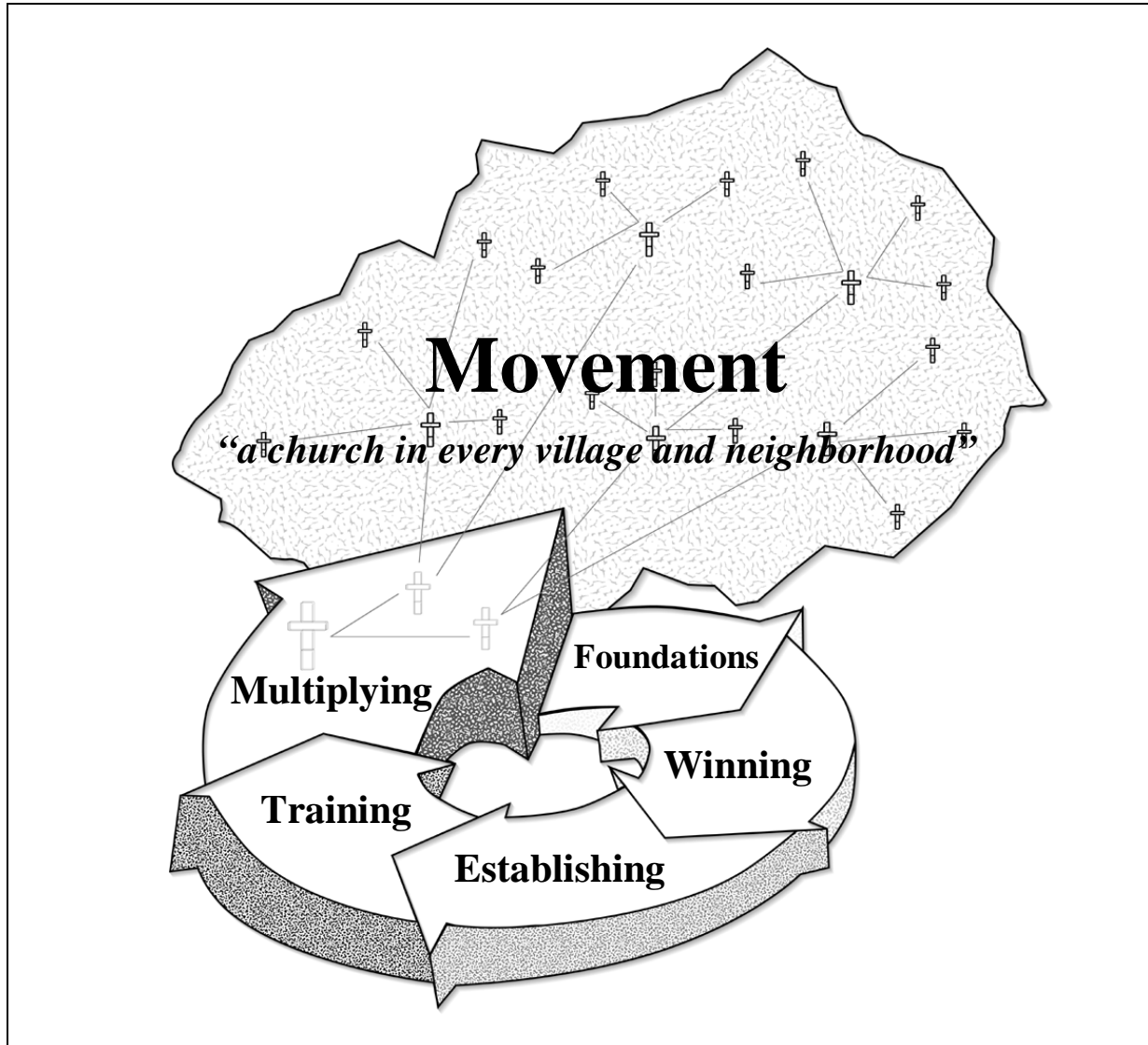
## INTRODUCTION

Engineers often use models to communicate an idea. A blueprint is an example of a model an engineer might use. By looking at a blueprint, an engineer is able to see how the various aspects of a building work together and relate to one another before the building is actually constructed. It is also used as a guide for how to construct the building. It allows the engineer to more easily visualize in what order the separate components of the building should be assembled.

In the same way, saturation church planting is not a haphazard series of events. It is a goal-driven process. The goals of the saturation church planting process can be stated on several different levels, depending on the vantage point to the process. People must be won to faith in Christ and nurtured and established in local communities of believers. Leaders must be trained to assume the direction and development of the church. Maturing churches must multiply themselves through new church planting efforts. The result of all this is that your region and nation be filled with vibrant, reproducing churches. Indeed, the ultimate goal is that the bride of Christ be prepared for eternity with Him.

The “Church Planting Cycle” (Figure 3.1) is a diagram of the church planting process that visualizes, from a particular point of view, the interrelationship of the key principles and practices at work within that process. Appendix 3A contains different models of ways in which this process has been applied to plant churches.

**Figure 3.1 Church Planting Cycle**



## I. PHASE I—FOUNDATIONS

The beginning can be critical in any complex process. Church planters begin the church planting process by developing the personal walk with Christ needed to be a minister of the Gospel. The apostle Paul warns against building on any other foundation other than Jesus Christ (1Co 3:11). Taking this for granted only leads to ministry failure.

Not having a clear picture in mind of the church to be planted can stifle the church plant. Therefore, clarifying vision and making strategy plans for the church plant are crucial at this level. Research is an important part of this. Strategic information about the harvest force and the harvest field will help shape strategy. The goal of the research is to gain understanding of those people the church planter desires to reach... and also to learn what resources are available to reach them.

### A. Key Scripture Verse

*"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Co 3:10-11).*

### B. Activities and Goal

#### **Activities:**

- Establish the vision with prayer.
- Research the target population.
- Develop personal confidence in your faith.
- Develop personal confidence in Bible study.
- Begin to determine church planting strategy and methods.

**Goal:** Prepare yourself, your vision and the direction for the church planting mission.

### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- What is the mission of God on earth? How does the church fit into that mission?
- What is my personal harvest field? What does God want from me in my area?
- What are the unique aspects of the calling and vision that God is giving me?
- What kind of church is able to meet these needs? Should it be reproducible?
- What are the main hindrances to reproductive church planting?
- Who is going to help? Who is the harvest force? How do we do research?

## II. PHASE II—WINNING

Evangelism never stops in the church, yet this distinct stage is a period when the church planter focuses almost exclusively on evangelism. The church planter's example during this phase will be key in being able to lead and equip others to do evangelism in later stages.

It is impossible to plant a church without evangelizing. Too often, church planters focus on finding other Christians to be in their new church, rather than on focusing on personal evangelism. Not spending necessary time relating to non-Christians, and just hoping that God will send them to the new church, rarely yields evangelistic fruit.

Church planters should start evangelistic groups that focus on building relationships, and include discussions on how the Bible applies to life situations, prayer for personal needs, and encouragement. If people are not used to sharing on a personal, open level, this must be developed over time. Spending time individually with members of the cell groups will deepen relationships and improve the fellowship. Cell group leaders should seek to develop group leaders as soon as possible. Meetings should be kept simple so that they will be reproducible. If they are dependent on the leader, his style, or knowledge then it will be difficult to find leaders later.

### A. Key Scripture Verse


*"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men. so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1Co 9:19-23).*

### B. Activities and Goal

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**Activities:**

- Contact key leaders and build relationships.
  - Evangelize the lost.
  - Start evangelistic group Bible studies.
  - Model ministry for the converts.
  - Disciple new converts in obedience to Christ.
- 



**Goal:** Contact and evangelize key members of the target population.

### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- What evangelistic methods are most effective for us to reach our goals?
- How do we make contacts with key leaders? Who are they? How do we find them?
- How do we train new converts to be witnesses to their friends and family?
- How do we begin to disciple them and prepare them for ministry? What and how do we teach them?
- How do you discover their network of friends and begin evangelizing them?
- How many cell groups should we start before we gather them in a larger meeting?



### III. PHASE III—ESTABLISHING

Though it may take a year or more to get to this phase, many church leaders consider this to be the place where the church is officially and formally 'born.' Establishing the group as a local church has its own set of unique dynamics. By this phase, cell groups should be growing and multiplying and can begin gathering together for celebration services, even initiating regular public worship. If it is appropriate, a hall may be rented for this, but be aware that this is often done too soon. Church planters should have several strong cell group meetings with about 30-40 people attending before renting a hall. Cell groups continue even after the large worship gatherings have begun and are still the foundation for nurture and growth of the church.

The discipleship focus continues throughout the life of the church. But during this stage, the church planter especially emphasizes discipleship in the lives of the new converts, thereby setting a pattern for future on-going discipleship. A common problem during this phase is not adequately understanding new Christians. Some church planters expect new converts to need exactly what everyone else needs, or they are not prepared to give new Christians a step by step approach to spiritual growth. Others may be too hard on new Christians, enforcing rules and legalistic practices without grace, or seeking maturity too quickly from spiritual babes. Acceptance and patience are key attitudes in helping young Christians.

#### A. Key Scripture Verse

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25).*

#### B. Activities and Goal

##### **Activities:**

- Disciple converts.
- Mentor emerging leaders.
- Expand evangelism efforts through the network of friends.
- Multiply cell groups.
- Begin ongoing regular worship.

**Goal:** *Gather converts and all participants for celebration services.*

#### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- How will new cell group leaders be trained and released?
- When do we baptize converts? When and who gives them communion?
- How do you establish new converts in the assurance of their salvation?
- How will you establish 'body life?' How will new believers be assimilated into it?
- When we gather, where do we meet? How do we invite people?
- What forms will we use to reach our intended purpose? What style of worship will we use?

#### IV. PHASE IV—TRAINING

During the first three stages of the new church, the mission worker often takes the bulk of responsibility for the church, much like parents have to do the bulk of the work in a family with young children. In the same way that children need to take on more and greater responsibility as they grow, so the converts need to take greater responsibility as they mature. During this phase, the church planters pass on the responsibility for evangelism, discipleship and new leadership roles.

Through first trusting in the Lord, the church planters must have enough confidence in others to prepare them to lead ministries of the church. God has gifted every believer, and all have a responsibility to serve. If the church planter does not take the time to delegate responsibility, provide training and release others into ministry, then the church will not grow beyond the capacity of one to pastor and minister to others. He is stretched beyond his limits, and new Christians simply cannot find a home in the new church. People in the church can grow disillusioned too, without significant responsibility for ministry to motivate them to stay involved. They become spectators. Poor models in the culture allow for this in Eastern Europe.

If the church planter does not take the time to delegate responsibility, provide training and release others into ministry, then the church will not grow beyond the capacity of one to pastor and minister to others.

##### A. Key Scripture Verse

*"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" (2Ti 2:2).*

##### B. Activities and Goal

###### **Activities:**

- Build a profile of leaders needed in each area of ministry.
- Identify the spiritual giftedness of all members.
- Train cell group leaders.
- Assign and release leaders to ministry.
- Organize the structure and ministry positions you envision for the ministry.

**Goal:** Train leaders and church workers to train others.

##### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- How do we get new converts to discover their spiritual gifts? Who will train them?
- What are the areas of training that are needed? Where and how will this training be provided?
- Who are the potential key leaders? What are their gifts and abilities? Are they faithful, serving people?
- Where will those trained have a ministry? What are the basic needs and issues in that area? When will their ministry in that area begin? To whom will they report? What is their job description?

## V. PHASE V—MULTIPLYING

For the Great Commission to be fulfilled, multiplication should be a normal part of church ministry at every level. A good Bible teacher does not seek to produce only students, but more Bible teachers. The mark of a good leader is not only followers, but also new leaders. The ministry of an evangelist does not result in only new converts, but in new evangelists. In the same way, once a church has been established, multiplying and producing daughter churches should become the norm.

Rather than multiply, many new church leaders are tempted to focus on maintaining or adding to what they already have. They may become satisfied with the size of the church, and not really press on to do the work of multiplication. The desire to build a building as part of being “a church” is often overwhelming by this phase.

These leaders need to realize that there is a limit to growth. In nature, all living things sooner or later plateau, and even die, while their fruit or offspring live on. The principles are similar in church ministry. In a sense, the true ‘fruit’ of a church is not a new convert, but a new church. The most effective way for a church to have a wider impact is through reproducing itself, planting daughter churches. The best leaders for the daughter churches come from within the church itself, rather than from a distant place such as a seminary or Bible school. Leaders need to encourage vision for multiplication so that more churches can be established in the city and region.

### A. Key Scripture Verse

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Ac 1:8).*

### B. Activities and Goal

#### **Activities:**

- Coach leaders to form church planting teams.
- Train workers for several levels and various ministries.
- Research new regions where you feel led to start ministry.
- Plan and conduct strategic evangelistic efforts.
- Establish and appoint leaders for the organizational part of the ministry.

**Goal:** Establish a base of leaders to form church planting teams.

### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- What research needs to be done? Who will do it? Are there ethnic populations nearby that are still unreached with the Gospel? Are there potential leaders among them that can be trained?
- What goals need to be set and published? Who is heading up the prayer effort to support this ministry?
- Who assigns and oversees all new ministries? Who will train them in continuing education?
- Are there other ministries that could be included in this effort? Who should invite them to join forces? What special contribution will they make to the overall mission effort?
- Do we need any higher education ministries to train different levels of leadership for this movement? Who will do the training? How will it be financed?

## VI. PHASE VI—MOVEMENT

The goal of church planting is not just one new congregation, but multiplying churches in each and every region. A church planting movement can be described as the planting and growing of churches in a particular region in an unusually rapid fashion under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Church planting movements are characterized by the unity, training and mobilization of the whole body of Christ, and common vision and goals.

Paul, the Apostle and church planter was used by the Holy Spirit to lead a church planting movement in Asia. Having planted a church in Ephesus, he spent two years there training disciples in the hall of Tyrannus. He worked in such a way that *"all the Jews and Greeks in Asia heard the word of the Lord"* (Ac 19:10). The Churches that were planted in Asia (Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, Myra, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyratira, Sardis, Philadelphia, etc.) give evidence to this church planting movement and were the basis for Paul's statement that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Church planters and leaders should establish their ministries with vision for a Church planting movement. Modern examples of this are available as the Gospel is being spread through church planting movements in several countries around the world today. Through studying these movements in light of biblical ministry principles, church planters can begin with the end in mind, greatly increasing the impact.

### A. Key Scripture Verse

*"...for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9).*

### B. Activities and Goal

#### **Activities:**

- Cover all ethnic pockets of the population.
- Establish guidelines for the propagation of the movement.
- Determine cross-cultural mission projects the groups will sponsor.
- Conduct prayer and praise rallies.
- Set regional and/or national goals.
- Establish higher levels of training for key leaders of the movement.

#### **Goal:**

*Churches multiplied to saturate the region, nation and beyond.*

### C. Key Issues To Consider In This Phase

- Is the movement self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing? If not, what needs to be done to make sure that it is?
- What regions or peoples are still unreached? What mission projects is the Lord leading us to initiate?
- What kinds of training are needed for the movement? How will it be supported?
- Who are the "apostle type" leaders for the movement? How do we work together with them? How can we encourage and support them? What are their needs?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What seems like the most difficult phase for you and your church planting situation?
- How does the church planter's role change over the course of the process?
- Why is it important that the church multiply itself?
- How long do you suppose it will take to get to the movement phase in your context?
- Are there ministry efforts in your region (evangelism, discipleship, training) that are not part of the church planting cycle? How could these ministries become part of the church planting cycle?
- Consider the various church planting models described in Appendix 3A, "Church Planting Models." Which of these have been tried in your context? Which ones have been successful and which ones have not?

## **ACTION PLAN**

Together with those you are working with in your church planting effort, answer each of the questions listed for each of the phases of the cycle. At this point in the church planting process, it is understood that you cannot realistically answer all the questions. However, answering them as best as you can will be very good preparation for later ministry.

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APPENDIX

3A

# Church Planting Models

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*There are many ways to plant churches; context usually determines what works best. Below are several models. Undoubtedly, your church planting situation could include elements from several of the models described here.*

## I. THE DAUGHTER CHURCH MODEL

This daughter model is probably the most widely used and is usually the one that comes to mind when the subject of church planting is raised. This model offers the greatest likelihood of a healthy, growing church plant since the mother church provides resources, support and accountability from the beginning. There are three common situations that stimulate the planting of a daughter church.



### A. Members Come From Another Geographic Area

If a number of people participating in a particular church travel from outside the area that the church primarily serves, the church may see that as an opportunity to plant a new church by sending out a group from the mother church.

### B. There Is A Need For Different Styles Of Worship

It is possible that the style of worship in the mother church works well for many, but there are others in the church and in the community who would respond better to another style of worship. If the new style cannot be introduced into the church without causing disruption, then a daughter church in the same building or nearby is a good option. The daughter church may attract unchurched people who enjoy the new style of worship.

### C. There Is A Desire To Reach Other Socio-Economic Groups

Even when a church is growing and reaching new people in a given area, it still might be failing to reach certain groups of people in the region. Difference of class, race or age can be such that some would not feel comfortable worshipping in a particular church. The needs of these groups may call for a new church that will accommodate their cultural norms and minister to them more successfully.

## II. CHURCH PLANTING ON THE 'STRAWBERRY RUNNER' PRINCIPLE



In nature, a strawberry plant will send out stems, or shoots, above the ground a short distance from itself. This stem is called a 'runner.' A new daughter plant often develops at the end of the runner. In time, the daughter plant will send out runners itself to start other plants so that there are several individual plants, but they are all interconnected by runners.

Some mother churches plant new congregations which are not intended to become independent churches, but which have a measure of independence and a degree of continuing relationship. Such congregations are close enough geographically to the mother church so that they can meet together for joint services weekly or monthly. Thus, for example, the various congregations might meet separately for morning worship and have a joint evening celebration.

## III. CHURCH PLANTING BY ADOPTION

Sometimes an existing group (prayer group, cell group, or Bible study group) invites a congregation or denomination to take over their work. The adopted group looks to their chosen mother church to supply vision, direction, leadership and sometimes additional resources of money and/or people so that they can begin to function as a church.

## IV. MODELS FOR PLANTING CHURCHES AT A DISTANCE

### A. Church Planting by Colonization

The colonization model is where one or a number of couples are sent out to a location some distance from the sending church to begin a new work. In such a situation the distance involved is often so great that the mother church does not send out a large group of members because this model requires the pioneers to have new homes and possibly employment in the area of the new church plant.

### B. Planting Using an Evangelistic Mission Team

Some denominations and agencies use mission teams to provide leadership and assistance during the church planting process. A small team of two to five might stay for a year in a particular region to evangelize, lead cell groups and launch a church. They may receive backup from short-term teams during this year.

### C. Planting a Church by Means of a Special Event

Some groups use crusades or the Jesus film as a means of planting churches. This may start with a small group of strong believers in an area where there is no church. Ideally, a part-time pastor or evangelist may lead the group to develop new contacts. Wherever possible, new converts are made so that a group of at least twenty people is formed before the evangelistic crusade takes place. Volunteers from elsewhere may publicize and help lead the event, which can last from one week to a month. The goal might be, for example, to see at least fifty new converts totaling seventy people with a pastor already in place, in order to create 'an instant church.'

## V. PLANTING WITH AN INDIVIDUAL

### A. Planting with a pioneer

Some individuals are, by nature, pioneers. They simply have to start churches! It seems that even if they were marooned in the desert with no one around them, somehow they would discover water and cultivate an oasis in order to draw people to them. Such people can often see the potential for a church in places where nobody else even imagined one. Pioneers are all different. Some are able to work with a large denomination or a church planting agency. Others are so active that they find it difficult to fit into organizational structures and so work best on their own. Pioneers may start many churches in their lifetime. Once a congregation is established, it is time for pioneers to move on. To stay would be detrimental to what they started because they do not have the giftedness to maintain things.

### B. Planting with a founding pastor

Often, those with pastoral gifts, when moved by compassion and vision, also plant churches. They may not have all of the gifts needed to plant a church. But the gifts that they do not have will be evident in the lives of the members of the broader team. These church planters lead the team over a long period of time so that, once the church has been established, they stay on as the long-term pastor.



## SOURCES

Robinson, Martin and David Spriggs. *Church Planting, The Training Manual*. Oxford, England. Lynx Communications, 1995.



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4

LESSON

# Principles of Research

## INFORMATION FOR STRATEGIC PURPOSES

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the role of gathering and analyzing information for developing effective church planting strategies.

### ☞ Main Points

- Research is gathering information for strategic purposes.
- Research is a biblical concept.
- Church planters can use research to develop strategy and mobilize resources.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Be able to identify, train, and empower researchers to collect and use information to fuel vision and compassion for the church planting task.
- Be able to initiate a research project in a church planting target zone.
- Know the need for and potential of research to motivate and prepare people for church planting.

### ☞ Appendices

- 4A Understanding Your Target Area
- 4B Sample Questionnaires

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

If possible, have a sample survey, a map and a local case study. These visual aids will help to encourage research. Also, students will be required to do the research assignment contained in Appendix 4A. Allow time to discuss this assignment with the participants.

## I. WHAT IS RESEARCH?

### A. Research Is a Way of Gathering Information

Research is a tool that helps mobilize churches toward fulfilling the Great Commission. It helps agencies and churches know where churches need to be planted, and which methods of evangelism are successful / unsuccessful among various people groups. Research also helps Christian workers understand the big picture of what God wants to do in their nation or people group, helps them to stay focused on the task of fulfilling the Great Commission, ensures that their strategies remain flexible and effective, and helps them to know when the job is complete.

As the people of God prepare to do a task in an unknown place, information is a bridge from the known to the unknown. Information helps them make the difficult first step of faith.

Before entering into the unknown venture of missionary church planting, Paul and Barnabas went to Cyprus, Barnabas' home, where he knew and understood the situation firsthand (Ac 13:4-5). The more familiar people are with any area, the more confidence they will have working there. Research gives knowledge, which can become a bridge from the known to the unknown. When

doing research, it is advisable to practice our research techniques in a familiar place before moving on to study unknown places.

The goal of research is not to determine whether to plant churches, but simply how to plant churches most effectively. Jesus plants His church through those who venture to do church planting. Since He has commanded His church to grow and multiply, His church must obey in the most realistic and responsible manner, working from realistic and clear data.

Research of the **harvest field**, the area where church planting will be done, and the **harvest force**—those who will be active in church planting—leads to a conclusion. This conclusion can be called, the “call to action.” It is the sum of what research has discovered, interpreted from God’s perspective. For example, the “prophetic word” for Joshua was “take possession of the land” (Jos 1:1-11).

## **B. Research Has a Biblical Basis**

Often when God called people to new ministries, He first led them to take stock of the situation around them. In each of the cases described below, research was part of God’s plan to do His work in a specific time and place with specific people.

- In the book of Numbers, God commanded Israel to fight. Numbers 1:1-46 is an account of available men to fight in the army. God promised Israel victory, but He still demanded that they count the available soldiers to carry on the fight. This allowed Israel to organize their people for possessing the land. For church planting, information obtained from research about those who are available to do the task is a necessary tool for organization.
- God commanded spies to go out and collect firsthand information on the land that Israel was to possess and saturate as recorded in Numbers 13:1-14:38. Through the spies’ observations, Israel was able to see the land that they would possess and determine what kind of strategy to use and what obstacles they would need to overcome as they invaded the land. For church planting, good research of the area where church planting will take place can indicate what type of people the churches will contain, how to approach these people, and what obstacles will need to be overcome.
- Nehemiah researched the condition of Jerusalem before ever beginning the task of rebuilding the walls of the city (Ne 1:3-4; 2:1-6). He wisely evaluated the morale of the people who would do the work as well as the physical condition of the wall. With this information, he could see what practical steps had to take place to accomplish the task, and he was able to prepare himself for the hard work ahead of him. For church planting, these same principles apply.
- Jesus went among the people and saw their needs before sending His disciples out to work among them (Mt 9:35-10:1). As He walked among the people and saw their overwhelming needs firsthand, He felt a deep compassion for them based on personal experience. This observation also motivated Him to mobilize people for prayer and ministry. For church planting, firsthand research generates compassion, mobilized prayer, and ministry.
- In John 4:35, the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to “look at” or “investigate” (which is the Greek meaning) the harvest of men’s souls. Sometimes we forget how God looks at people. How do we look at people? Do we just overlook them, or do we see them as obstacles? We often get caught up in our own work, solving our own problems. It is easy to forget that God wants us to go out to people and bring them to Him. He uses the analogy of the harvest, the time when the reapers go out into the fields, harvest the ripened fruit, and bring it in to the owner of the land (Jn 4:35-38).
- As the Lord added to their numbers, the early church kept track of the numerical growth of the churches and reported it (Ac 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 9:31). This kind of information gives a clue as to where and how God is working in the lives of people in any region.

## II. WHERE SHOULD RESEARCH BE DONE?

Researching a region where church planting will take place can bring into focus all that God is already doing and help clarify how to minister. The first and most important step toward researching an area is to first define the target region also known as "the circle."

Find or draw a map of the target area, and find out everything possible about who and what is in the circled zone. Begin with a manageable area for a prototype. Beginning with a smaller area builds confidence to repeat the task in greater portions and numbers. Once you have drawn your circle, the following steps will help you actually do the research:

- Learn as much as you can about the harvest force and the harvest field in the circle.
- Map out the area.
- Modify the map to show important data such as where the churches are located and what types of churches they are, as well as other places important to the task (for example: religious centers, political centers, markets, historical places, etc.).

## III. WHO SHOULD DO RESEARCH?

Any one can do basic research for the ministry that God has called them to. Though the term 'research' may sound technical and complex, it does not have to be that way. Simply put, those who do research collect information and then share it with others.

### A. Those Who do Research Collect Information

People who love gathering facts in a thorough manner make good researchers. They should know how to ask questions that get information. Researchers need to be able to organize and categorize their data in a way that reflects the goals of saturation church planting.

### B. Researchers Must Present the Information Collected

Good researchers know how to abbreviate research data and explain it to others so that they will get an accurate picture of the harvest field and harvest force. They present this in such a way that it inspires compassion and builds confidence for what God wants to do. The presenter should be positive and optimistic and avoid being stuck on details. They must find and point out facts that will grab the attention of church planters and encourage their church planting efforts.

Those who do research collect information and then share it with others.
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Remember Numbers 13. Only Joshua and Caleb were qualified to present the research even though all 12 of the spies made observations. They all spoke from the facts, but 10 of the spies saw from a negative perspective and focused on the obstacles, forgetting God's promises. Caleb and Joshua recognized the challenges and problems but never doubted that God was going to accomplish His will and presented a positive picture of what God would do from the facts.

- Those who present research should look for significant facts that will correspond to what church planters are thinking.
- The research should address the negative realities to inspire compassion and organize efforts to overcome the barriers.

## IV. WHEN SHOULD RESEARCH BE DONE?

There are at least three places in the church planting cycle where research should be conducted (see SCP Vision lesson 3, "Church Planting Cycle").

### A. The Foundational Phase: In Preparation for a Specific Church Plant

When planting a church, it is necessary to gather concrete data about people, their history, geography, and current situation, and why they think, believe, and act as they do. Learning about the worldview and felt needs of people living in the 'circle' can help to determine evangelism and

church planting strategies. Research at this level can also help to determine available church planting resources that may be mobilized to help with church planting efforts. The research must find the open doors that God has allowed in that zone for people to talk about Jesus.

## **B. The Establishing Phase: Evaluating Church Effectiveness**

Once the church has been planted, it is necessary to evaluate the growth and effectiveness of the ministry. Growth can be measured by charting the number of new small groups and keeping records of attendance. Charting ministry activity will help to discover how people respond to the methods used to reach them.

## **C. Multiplying and Movement Phases: Getting the Big Picture**

A regional (or even national) research project can help to mobilize churches within the given region to evangelize the lost and fill that region with churches. This kind of research may be necessary to discover the socio-economic levels, ethnic groups, age groups, and religious backgrounds of those who have accepted the Gospel and how they compare to the population at large. The general picture of the status of Christianity within a nation can be presented at regional conferences. This kind of research challenges national and local leaders with the need for church planting and reaching the lost.

# **V. WHY SHOULD CHURCH PLANTERS DO RESEARCH?**

## **A. Information Stirs Up Compassion For The People Within The Circle**

Jesus made the region of Galilee His circled zone. When Jesus went among the crowds, He saw their physical and spiritual condition, and He had compassion on them because they were “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:35-37). Both firsthand information and reporting from personal experience helps mobilize believers in existing churches to plant new churches.

Reports that contain **real life stories** of people's need for the Gospel help bring about unity based on love for lost people. God has given us feelings which, when touched, often motivate us to pray, give or in some other way get involved in ministry. Demographic or statistical information does not always produce the same results as real live stories. Stories almost always come from firsthand experience of going among the people.

*What type of things have you seen that can motivate compassion in others to reach the lost?*

## **B. Information Generates Prayer**

When Jesus saw the needs, He asked for prayer before anything else. Information causes people to cry out to God and depend on Him to do His work in the circle. Jesus commanded His followers to “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Mt 9:38).

- Is the command, to pray for more workers, for spiritual giants only, or for all followers of Jesus?
- When your church prays, what do they usually pray for? Does your church ask God to raise up workers for the harvest? If not, why?

## **C. Information Inspires Vision to Plant Churches**

Good data mobilizes the people God has called to the harvest force in response to prayer. After Jesus commanded His disciples to pray, He sent them out to reap the harvest that was waiting for the workers (Mt 9:36-10:1). In another mission, He sent out seventy-two of His followers with the same command to pray (Lk 10:1-2).

- Do the people in your churches have a sense of the needs of the people in their area?
- Are they inspired to follow that vision?

#### **D. Information Equips The Harvest Force To Be More Effective**

A realistic account of the resources, people, and conditions we have available provides the basis to begin working with intelligence. Research helps the harvest force discover what it has available and what it lacks for the field (Lk 14:28-33). It helps us count the cost and make realistic plans, believing that God will supply what is lacking.

- What was the task in John 6:5-14?
- What available resources were revealed as a result of research?
- What did research show to be the number of people in the target population?
- What did Jesus do with the resources for the target population?
- If Jesus already knew what He wanted to do, why was research necessary?

### **VI. HOW SHOULD RESEARCH BE DONE?**

Research should use all means possible to get information. Different types of information can give different perspectives. Below are several examples of kinds of research.

It is best not to attempt to do research alone. Recruit helpers to work with you. Research done with others is usually more thorough and the analysis is better because you are drawing on more than one point of view. Also, each of us has our own prejudices. Often times, one person will uncover a significant piece of data, which had been overlooked or “not seen” by another person.

#### **A. Observation**

Firsthand information and observation has the greatest impact and should be the most accurate. After personally going to the circled zone, researchers can talk to people, count church attendance, see conditions as they are, observe ceremonies, customs, and cultures, and especially ask questions.

A key to good firsthand research is knowing what questions to start with and what follow up questions to ask. Questions that start with who, what, when, where, why, and how (especially how many and much) get clearer answers. Asking for explanations of what you observe may give an even clearer picture. This type of research is also an excellent tool for developing relationships.

#### **B. Interviews**

Interviews of others who have firsthand knowledge of the target zone are very helpful. After comparing the results of several interviews, it is possible to get a panoramic picture of how people perceive the situation there. It also helps to pick up some details that an outside observer might miss. This also requires skill in relationships.

When interviewing people, know what information you are looking for and be prepared with questions concerning the harvest field and harvest force. Ask these questions naturally in conversation. This makes people feel that you value their opinion. Reading written questions may cause some people to feel that they are being given an exam or are under investigation. They may also feel intimidated being read to from a list of questions.

#### **C. Surveys and Questionnaires**

Written surveys and questionnaires can provide an overall picture of what people think and especially how they believe things are (or would like them to be). However, the data obtained should be verified by firsthand observation. For example, ask ten pastors what their average Sunday attendance is. Then go to their church and actually count the people. How big do you think the difference would be among those you know? Would they tend to report more or less? Sample questions are located in Appendix 4B.

#### **D. Official Demographic Data**

Official demographic data depends on the accuracy of the methods used to gather the data. It also depends on what the intention was for collecting the data by the agency that collected it. It is very valuable, however, and provides a general idea of how to compare the situation in your circle with how the data shows the greater population to be.

#### **E. Literature Review**

If others have done similar research projects, either from the past and especially recent work, it is a tremendous help. When you find important facts that relate to church planting, it is possible to check them and focus research to be more effective because of what others have discovered. Libraries may have books about the region; encyclopedias and even university research projects can give valuable data.

### **CONCLUSION**

Research is an important part of church planting. It reveals different kinds of people living in a target area, what their needs, hopes, fears, and spiritual beliefs are. This gives insight into practical ways and means of sharing the Gospel. Research will also reveal what other people God has working in your target area, churches, mission groups, service groups and how they might cooperate in seeing the target area filled with living churches. In later phases of the church planting cycle, research can help determine the effectiveness of current ministries and give insight into where new churches need to be planted.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What do you think your research will discover about your target area?
- What are the advantages of taking time to do research in your target area? How will research make your church planting efforts more effective?
- What are five or six pieces of information you feel you need to know about your target area which will increase your church planting effectiveness?
- Do you know people who would do well at research after you train them?
- Are those in your harvest field ready to hear the Gospel? What are some observations you have made that indicate to you that people are open or resistant to the Gospel?

### **ACTION PLAN**

Appendix 4A contains a practical skills assignment in researching a target area. Review the assignment in this appendix and complete it by the next training session. Ask God to use this assignment to give you greater awareness of and compassion for the people in your target area. Ask Him to use this research to give you good ideas in where and how to begin your church planting ministry in this target area. You may want to adapt the sample questionnaires in Appendix 4B to use as part of your research.

### **SOURCES**

- Wingerd, Ray A. Jr. *DAWN Research Handbook: Principles of Research for a DAWN Project*. Pasadena, CA: DAWN Ministries, 1992. A copy may be obtained through DAWN Ministries, 7899 Lexington Dr., Suite 200-B, Colorado Springs, CO 80920 USA. Tel. 1-719-548-7465, Fax. 1-719-548-7475
- *Kui Kristlik on Eestimaa?* (How Christian is Estonia?). Research project of the status of Christianity in Estonia. For information, contact Merike Uudam, Kungla 16, Tartu, EE2400, Estonia Tel/Fax: +372-7-428898. Email: merike.u@online.ee
- *Introductory Research On The Slovak Evangelical Churches And Their Progress Towards Evangelizing Slovakia*. Banská Bystrica, Slovakia: New Eastern Europe For Christ, 1997. A copy may be obtained from *The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*, Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: scpalliance@compuserve.com.



# Understanding Your Target Area

## RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

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*The purpose of this assignment is to give you experience in practical research as a tool for effective church planting. You should attempt to do all components of the assignment. You may find certain activities in the assignment easier than others. Whether easy or difficult, God will have things to teach you about the people and region you are trying to reach, through each activity of this assignment*

*You do not have to do this assignment by yourself. You can work with others. In fact it is recommended that you work with others if at all possible. Be prepared to share your research findings with your coach, mentor and others. This assignment is due when you receive Manual Two training.*

*Note to translator: consider making Appendix 4A and 4B into a separate handbook so the participants can put all their research information in one place.*

### STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AREA

Obtain or make a map of your city, oblast, or region. Get the most detailed one you can find which has all the population centers, street names, and transportation routes. Draw a circle around your target area. This is your area of ministry, the region in which you believe God wants you to make His name known, and where He wants to plant churches.

### STEP 2: GATHER THE HARVEST FORCE DATA

As described in lesson 4--"Principles of Research"--the **harvest force** is all of God's resources already at work in your target area. Determine what resources are available in your circle by studying the following:

#### 1. Existing Local Churches

- a. Mark every local church in your region on your map. Indicate what denomination they are.
- b. If possible, list their adult attendance.
- c. Indicate the year the church was planted or reopened.
- d. Determine the people group each church is reaching (e.g. gypsies, youth, children, homeless, elderly, internationals, etc.) How successful have they been in their efforts?
- e. What relationships exist between the churches in the circle? Are they unified or divided?
- f. Are people meeting together to pray for the lost in their community or for missions outreach?

#### 2. Mission and parachurch groups.

- a. List all mission and parachurch groups in the target region.
- b. Briefly describe the ministry each has (literature, prison, Muslim ministry, youth, etc.)
- c. Are they interested in cooperating with you or others in evangelism and church planting efforts?

#### 3. History of Christianity.

- a. When did Christianity first come to the area and how was it brought? Was it forced upon the people or did they receive the Gospel voluntarily?
- b. Describe the history of each denomination's entry into the area.
- c. What other major religions have had an impact in your target area? What other religions/cults are existing in your area today and how successful are they in winning followers?
- d. How does this history affect your church planting strategy?

### STEP 3: GATHER DATA ABOUT THE HARVEST FIELD

The **harvest field** is the people group among whom you will work and the place where you will plant your church. The following activities will help you to learn about the harvest field in your target area.

#### 1. Demographic information.

- a. Total population
- b. Number and percentage of population who are men, women, youth, children
- c. Number of working adults... include occupation information and income level
- d. Number of retired and elderly, and disabled/handicapped
- e. Percentage and location of ethnic minorities. What languages do they speak?

#### 2. Geographic information

Geographic markers can have a significant impact on church planting strategies. They play a role in how and where people live and relate to others. For example, railroad tracks run through the neighborhood of a city. On one side of the tracks, the people are much wealthier than the other side. People do not readily cross the railroad tracks. Therefore, the tracks are an invisible barrier and people on one side of the railroad tracks are not likely to attend church on the other side of these tracks. Another example may be that because a city is surrounded by beautiful mountains, people usually go out of the city on Sundays and so may be less likely to attend a Sunday morning church service.

- What elements divide the region (rivers, railroads, roads, etc.)? How do these divides impact travel patterns, wealth, etc.?
- Is the city surrounded by mountains? Are there lakes, beaches, parks or other places for outdoor recreation?
- If your target area is a city or town, note on your map the location of industrial and residential areas. Are there special shopping districts? Do people live near work or have to commute a long distance? Also note major modes of transportation. Do most people travel by car, bus, metro?
- Where do people go for leisure and recreation? Do they stay in the city and go to parks? Do they spend most weekends at a garden home or dacha?

#### 3. Sociological and cultural information

By learning about people's worldview and their felt needs, we can gain insight into ways in which they can be meaningfully shown the love of Jesus Christ. The best way to learn about people is to ask them questions and observe their behavior. Go out into your target area and talk with at least 15-20 people. Try and learn the following:

- Views about God  
Do people believe in God? What do they believe about God? Have they heard of Jesus? What do they know of Him? Do they believe in heaven or hell? Do they believe in angels or demons or Satan? When they are sick, where do they turn for help? Do they believe in luck? Do they believe they can control their future or make their lives better for their children? What do they believe sin is? Do they attend church regularly? If yes, how often? If no, why do they not attend church?
- What are major celebrations or holidays in this area? How do people celebrate them?
- What do they like best about their life? What one thing would they change?
- What do they see as one or two major social problems in their community? (alcoholism, orphanages, lack of adequate medical care, elderly without care, etc.)
- What are three of their favorite proverbs? Through proverbs it is often possible to discover ideals and values they hold as well as their outlook on life.
- Who are recognized leaders in the community? Why are they seen as leaders?
- Who are considered heroes?
- List five things people value in others? (honesty, cleverness, generosity, etc.)



#### STEP 4. DATA ANALYSIS OF THE HARVEST FIELD AND HARVEST FORCE

Once you have gathered all of your information, written your summaries and annotated your map, take time to review and reflect on this data. Ask God to give you His compassion for the people in your target area. Ask God to give you creative ideas in how to share His love with these people. As part of this process, analyze your data answering the following questions:

How many churches are needed so that every man, woman and child in this target will be able to see, hear and understand the Gospel message in a culturally relevant way?

- How many churches are needed to fulfill the Great Commission in your target area? How many churches are needed so that every man, woman and child in this target will be able to see, hear and understand the Gospel message in a culturally relevant way? Begin praying and asking God to lead you in doing what He wants done.
- Determine your share: How many of these churches does God want you to believe Him for in your ministry?
- Select your starting location: Where will you begin? Where are the people most responsive? Paul usually found the receptive people first in the synagogue. Then he worked out from there through the network of relationships.
- Select your methods: What were one or two of the greatest needs of the people in the community? What methods will you use to meet the needs of the people? What methods are working with good results in other churches in the area? What resources are available to you for these methods? What are you gifted and able to do?
- Determine your resources: What resources are available and share the same vision? Are there others you can share this vision with and cooperate in the goal being reached? What labor, finances, and gifted individuals are available to you? Do the churches in the area have a desire for evangelism and church planting? Are they open to working together or with you in your efforts? Are they open to pray for evangelism and church planting efforts and for God to make Himself known in the lives of people in their communities?
- Do people have an understanding or belief in God or Jesus Christ? At what point will you have to begin your sharing of the Gospel message? (e.g. Can you start with Jesus Christ or do you have to begin with the existence of a supreme, creator God?)

#### STEP 5. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Evaluate your experience in doing this research assignment. What did God teach you through the research assignment about yourself, your desire to be involved in church planting? What struggles did you have doing the research? How did you overcome them? What was easy about the research? If you were to repeat this assignment, what would you do differently?

#### STEP 6: SHARING RESEARCH RESULTS

At the next training session, be prepared to give a report of your research results. Your report should be approximately 10-15 minutes in length and contain the following information:

##### 1. Part One—Basic Data Gathered (5-7 minutes)

- Describe your target area.
- How did you gather your information (surveys, informal interviews, observation/mapping, library research, etc.)?
- Discuss any significant problems or difficulties encountered and how they were overcome. What would you do differently next time?

##### 2. Part Two—Analysis of Research Data (5-8 minutes)

The remainder of the presentation should be focused on results of your research. The presentation should answer the following key questions:

- What was the most interesting information you learned about your target area and the people living there?
- Was there any information that surprised you?
- What specific things did you learn that will help you in determining your strategy for church planting in your target area?
- What one important fact for church planting did you confirm that you already knew about the harvest field?
- What new discovery that is important for church planting did you make about the harvest field that you previously did not know?
- What opportunities did you find as open doors for the Gospel?
- What obstacles did you find and how should they be overcome?
- What further research do you need to do in order to develop a comprehensive evangelism and church planting strategy for your target area?

SCP VISION  
APPENDIX

4B

# Sample Questionnaires

*This appendix contains two sample questionnaires: a local church survey, and a questionnaire for researching a target area. These are only examples and can be modified to suit your own purposes.*

*Note to translators: These questionnaires may be more appropriately published in quantity (perhaps as booklets) in order to make multiple copies available for church planters OR for other church leaders throughout your language group.*

## LOCAL CHURCH SURVEY

### A. PROFILE

1. Name of the church \_\_\_\_\_
2. Denomination (Confession) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Church Address / Location \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where the church meets: Owned by church \_\_\_\_ Rented \_\_\_\_
5. Date Founded \_\_\_\_\_ Date Registered \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name of church pastor/leader \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does the pastor / leader work in another profession? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
8. Main language spoken in the church \_\_\_\_\_ Other? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Present number of members \_\_\_\_\_
10. Average number of attendees \_\_\_\_\_

### B. PEOPLE

*Try to fill in the number of people who fit the following categories:*

	Attendees		Believers		Members	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Age 0-10						
11-17						
18-24						
25-30						
31-55						
55+						

*Assumptions:*

- All attendees are not believers and / or members.
- The number of attendees should be higher than believers and members.
- A person can attend and be a believer, but not necessarily be a member.
- A member must be a believer.

- The number of believers should be less than the number of attendees and higher than the number of members.
- Number of baptisms: 92\_\_\_ 93\_\_\_ 94\_\_\_ 95\_\_\_ 96\_\_\_ 97\_\_\_ 98\_\_\_ 99\_\_\_ 2000\_\_\_
- Number of families (husband/wife) who attend the church: \_\_\_\_\_

### C. PROGRAMS

*Check all the activities provided by the church and note participation in them*

Activity	Church Provides	Number Who Participate
Sunday School (by age groups)		
Worship		
Youth groups		
Children's groups		
Women's group		
Men's group		
Missions		
Evangelism		
Discipleship training		
Home Bible study group		
New believer training		
Leadership training		
Teacher training		
Prayer Meeting		
Choir		
Army ministry		
New church ministry		
Literature ministry		
TV/radio ministry		
Prison ministry		
Drug/alcohol ministry		
Hospital ministry		
Orphanage ministry		
Elderly care ministry		
Prayer ministry		

**D. PLAN**

1. Are there specific ministry plans for this year? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

2. What are these plans?

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3. Have plans been started for next year? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

4. What are these plans?

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5. Is there a leadership team that plans for the church? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

6. Does the church have a purpose statement? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

7. Does the church have a financial plan? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

8. Does the church have a spiritual growth plan for believers? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

9. Does the church cooperate with other churches? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

10. Does the church cooperate with other denominations? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

## TARGET AREA OR "CIRCLE" SURVEY

### A. WHO?

1. Are there any special groups of people in the church's "circle of influence?"

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2. Is there any one class of society that predominates in the "circle?" Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

3. If "yes", which one?

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### B. WHAT?

- What are the outstanding characteristics of the church's "circle?"

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- What special events, local holidays or celebrations do the people in the "circle" practice?

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- What are the most pressing needs of the people within the "circle"?

Economic\_\_\_ Spiritual\_\_\_ Moral\_\_\_ Social\_\_\_ Educational\_\_\_ Cultural\_\_\_ Family\_\_\_  
Religious\_\_\_

- What types of religious groups are present within the church's "circle"?

Orthodox\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Baptist\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Pentecostal\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Roman Catholic\_\_\_  
#\_\_\_ Lutheran\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Other Protestant\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Nondenominational\_\_\_ #\_\_\_  
Moslem\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ Foreign mission groups\_\_\_ #\_\_\_ (please note what groups these might  
be:\_\_\_\_\_)

- Is the church trying to address the needs of the people? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If so, what specifically is the church doing to minister to the needs of their "circle?"

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- Does the purpose statement of the church indicate a desire to address the needs of their "circle?"  
Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

- Does the church's ministry plan show a concern for ministering holistically to their "circle?" Yes\_\_\_  
No\_\_\_

### C. HOW?

1. Does the church identify with its "circle?" Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

2. If "yes," how?

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3. If "no," what can the church do to begin identifying with its "circle?"

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4. Are the church's activities designed to reach out to its "circle?" Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

5. How does the church relate to other evangelical Protestant churches within its "circle?"

Relates well with all\_\_\_\_

Relates well with some, but not very well with others\_\_\_\_

Does not relate well with any\_\_\_\_

### D. RESOURCES

- What kinds of resources are available to the church in its "circle?"

TV/Radio\_\_\_\_ Literature\_\_\_\_ Publishing houses\_\_\_\_ Official permission for "helps" ministries\_\_\_\_  
Other evangelical Protestant Christian groups to partner with in ministry (other local churches\_\_\_\_  
foreign mission agencies/organizations\_\_\_\_ clubs\_\_\_\_ centers\_\_\_\_ associations\_\_\_\_  
educational institutions\_\_\_\_)

- What groups does the church presently partner with in special ministry projects?

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- Have efforts been made by the church to talk with other churches within the "circle" about reaching the unsaved within the "circle" for Christ? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
- Would the church leadership be willing to work with the other churches and organizations to reach everyone within the "circle" for Christ? Yes\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_
- If "yes," when will they try to gather the "circle resources" to talk about fulfilling the Great Commission within their "circle?"

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- If "no," why not?

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# THE CHURCH

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THE CHURCH

1

LESSON

# Biblical Foundations For The Church

## THE CHURCH IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

### Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to show how the biblical foundations for the Church relate to God's Kingdom and redemptive purposes.

### Main Points

- The Church was God's plan from eternity past.
- Unlike Israel, the mission of the Church is to GO and be salt and light among the nations.
- The Church is God's instrument for spreading the Gospel to everyone.

### Desired Outcomes

When the contents of this lesson have been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the place of the Church in the light of God's Kingdom and redemption program, and consider foundational concepts regarding the Church.
- Be grateful to God for His Sovereign plan for the ages, and for his own personal participation in this plan.
- Consider the role his church planting work has in the bigger picture of God's purposes.

## I. GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

### A. God's Eternal Kingdom (Ps 10:16; 103:19)

The Bible describes God as the Eternal King, sovereign over all creation. God's Kingdom can be described as the realm over which He rules, exercising sovereign and kingly authority. The display of His glory in His rule was the supreme good (Ps 29:10; Da 2:20-21; 4:34-35; 5:21).

### B. The Cosmic Rebellion

All of God's creation was good, but at some point, sin entered into creation. When and how this happened is not clearly stated in the Bible, but certain passages seem to allude to this fact (Isa 14:3-21, Eze 28:11-17).

The prophet Isaiah, in addressing the king of Babylon, seems to be making an analogy between the pride of the king of Babylon and that of a fallen 'morning star' (Isa 14:3-21). This morning star tried to make himself like the Most High. Many biblical scholars see this as a reference to the fall of Satan, a created angelic being who wanted to be like God.

A related passage is found in Ezekiel 28:11-17 where the King of Tyre is being addressed. The description seems to go beyond him to address a guardian cherub who was on the mount of God and was blameless in all his ways. Because of his pride, he was cast down.

### C. The Earthly Rebellion

When God created the earth, authority to rule over it was delegated to Man (male and female) (Ge 1:26). Man, created in God's image to have fellowship with Him, had freedom of choice (Ge 1:28; 2:7). Because true fellowship involves moral choice, the man and woman were tested by being forbidden to eat a certain fruit in the garden. Tempted by Satan to be like God, they chose

deliberate disobedience over compliance. By this deliberate act, Man declared his independence from and opposition to the will of God. Results of Man's sin were:

- Fellowship with God was broken.
- The image of God in the man and woman was marred.
- Man experienced physical and spiritual death.
- The woman would experience suffering in childbirth.
- The man would experience painful toil.
- The ground (nature) was cursed (Ro 8:21-22).
- Fellowship between the man and the woman was broken.
- Rule over the earth was usurped by Satan who became 'the god of this world.'

#### **D. God's Redemptive Plan**

Since the fall of man, God has been working throughout history to restore fellowship between God and man. He chose a man (Abraham), who gave birth to a nation (Israel) among whom was born a messiah (Jesus) to conquer the work of Satan and restore man's true fellowship with God. God's ultimate redemptive plan includes:

- The redemption of Man, restoring him to the image of Christ (2Co 3:18).
- The restoration of fellowship between God and Man and between men (1Jn 1:3-7).
- The restoration of God's reign over the earth (Rev 11:15) and man's reign with him (Rev 22:5).
- The creation of a new earth (Rev 21:1).

God announced His solution over sin with His judgment of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. God's solution to man's sin is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Col 1:20; 2:9). In Jesus Christ, God is reconciling people to Himself, restoring their relationship with Him (Eph 1:9-10). This ministry of reconciliation He has given to His church. In fact, the establishment of the church is the most recent step in God's redemptive plan (2Co 5:19).

## **II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH**

### **A. The Background For The Church: Israel**

The Church is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Paul refers to it as a 'mystery' (something previously unrevealed—see Eph 3:9-10; Ro 16:25-26; Col 1:25-26). Much discussion has centered on the relationship between the Church and Israel. Some emphasize their similarity, viewing them as one people of God in different times. In this sense, Israel is a 'spiritual' people, and the Church is the New Israel. Others view Israel and the Church as distinct phases in God's kingdom and redemptive programs, with both being the people of God. Regardless, it is important to understand the difference between Israel and the Church, as it relates to church planting and evangelistic strategy.

#### **1. The Nation of Israel**

In Genesis 12:1-3 God promised Abraham that through him He would build a great nation and that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The nation He had promised was Israel. One of Israel's kings, David, was promised that his kingdom would be eternal (2Sa 7:8-16). The New Testament declared that Jesus was the 'son of David' through whom these promises would be fulfilled.

One of Israel's purposes was to be the bearer of the Messiah (King). Paul summarizes it like this: "... the people of Israel. *Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!*" (Ro 9:4-5).


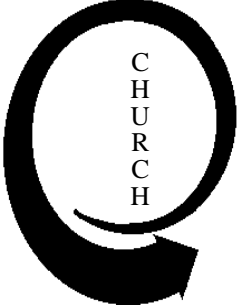
## 2. The Church

The period of time between the first and second coming of Christ has been called 'the Church Age,' or the time when God is at work to accomplish His Kingdom and Redemptive purposes through His Church. The Church is not a plan 'B' after Israel's 'failure' to accomplish a plan 'A,' or an afterthought in the mind of God. He *planned* for it in eternity, provided for it by the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus (Eph 1:19-23). Christ *prepared* for its formation and development by instructing His followers as to their mission (Jn 16:5-15; Mt 28:18-20). He *created* it on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1-13) and *empowered* (Ac 1:8) it with His forever indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Church is the instrument of God chosen to bear the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. *'Through the church the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord'* (Eph 3:10-11). The Church is God's plan to reach the world today, to manifest His progressive victory over Satan, and to enfold those who would be part of the people of God.

## 3. Comparison between The Nation Of Israel And The Church (Figure 1.1)

**Figure 1.1 Israel and the Church**

The Nation of Israel	The Church
<p>The orientation of the 'Nation' was <i>centripetal</i>. God's plan placed Israel as a light to the nations, to which the nations would <b>COME</b> to see and hear of His glory. To participate in His glory meant to come to the Nation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth by addition (birth, take by force, God-fearers)</li> <li>• Centralized plan 'when they come to this House'</li> <li>• God's glory temporarily residing in Jerusalem (1Ch 28; 2Ch 6-7)</li> </ul>	<p>The orientation of the Church is <i>centrifugal</i>. God's plan places the Church as a Light to the nations. The people of the Church are to <b>GO</b> and be salt and light among the nations (Mt 5:13-14; 28:18-20).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth by multiplication (conversion, church planting)</li> <li>• Decentralized plan '... into all the world'</li> <li>• Released and empowered by the eternally indwelling Holy Spirit (Ac 1-2); God's glory residing in the hearts of men (2Co 3)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>NATION</b></p> <p><i>Growth through attraction (centripetal)</i></p>	 <p><b>CHURCH</b></p> <p><i>Growth through expansion (centrifugal)</i></p>

## B. The Prediction Of The Church: Matthew 16:18-19

Jesus predicts the establishment of the church in Matthew 16:18-19. The following is a review of Matthew 16:18-19 with applications to church planting.

1. *The church is built on the **rock**: “Upon this **rock**”*

The meaning of “the rock” in Matthew 16:18-19 inspires much discussion. The controversy centers on the interpretation of *petra*<sup>2</sup>, the Greek word for ‘rock’ from which the name Peter comes.

*Petra* = ‘large rock, bedrock’ (Mt 7:24-25; 27:60; Mk 15:46)

*Petros*<sup>3</sup> (*Peter*) = ‘a detached stone’ that might be easily moved

*Major interpretations of ‘the Rock’*

- Jesus the Messiah: *Petra* used of Christ (1Co 10:4; Ro 9:33; 1Pe 2:8)
- The confession of faith by Peter about Christ
- Peter himself

Most evangelical theologians have historically interpreted the rock to be the confession of faith by Peter about Christ. In any case, the metaphor of a rock conveys the importance of a solid foundation, a very important lesson for church planters.

2. *The Church belongs to Christ: “I will build **My** Church.”*

Jesus owns the Church. He created it and it belongs to Him. He gave Himself in death on the cross, that the Church might be born (Eph 5:25; Jn 12:24). He purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He calls His Church out of the world, fits its members together, and sanctifies it in preparation for its final presentation and purpose (Eph 5:26-27). In the future, Jesus will glorify His Church in the presence of the Father and the holy angels (1Th 4:13-18; Rev 4-6).

Paul said he was given authority by Christ to build His Church, not tear it down (2Co 10:8). Though church leaders ought to feel the deepest sense of obligation and participation in their ministry, no pastor or church planter ever owns his ministry. Jesus, not the church planter or pastor, is the head of the church.

3. *Jesus builds His Church through us: “I will **build** my Church.”*

Building the Church is Jesus’ major mission on earth today. Jesus uses born again people as His building material (1Pe 2:5). Jesus will fit and build these living stones as God’s building (1Co 3:9), a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:21-22). Jesus uses gifted leaders to equip His people to build His Church (Eph 4:11-12; 1Co 3:12).

4. *The Church will be triumphant: “the gates of hell will not prevail against it”*

This important phrase spoken by Jesus is packed with meaning and is the basis for the overcoming faith and hope that church workers should possess. It tells us that Christ is building His Church as a military force to storm the gates of Hell and be victorious over the powers of evil. Even though we struggle now, someday the Church will be completely victorious (Ro 16:20). Until then, we are to put on the armor Christ has provided and depend on His strength for leadership and victory (Eph 6:10-18; 2Co 2:14). The analogy of the soldier is especially appropriate for the church planter (2Ti 2:3-4; Php 2:25). Paul said he fought the good fight (2Ti 4:7) and so should we.

## C. The Birth Of The Church: Acts 2

The prediction of Jesus came true in Acts 2 when the empowering Holy Spirit was poured out on people from many nations giving birth to the church. The miracle of tongues on the day of Pentecost symbolized that this new event in God’s redemptive plan would reach the entire world, uniting men and women of every tongue into the Church. The church then is international from its birth.

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<sup>2</sup> πέτρα

<sup>3</sup> Πέτρος

### III. THE ROLE AND NATURE OF THE CHURCH TODAY

#### A. The Church—A Called-Out People With Both A Local And A Universal Manifestation

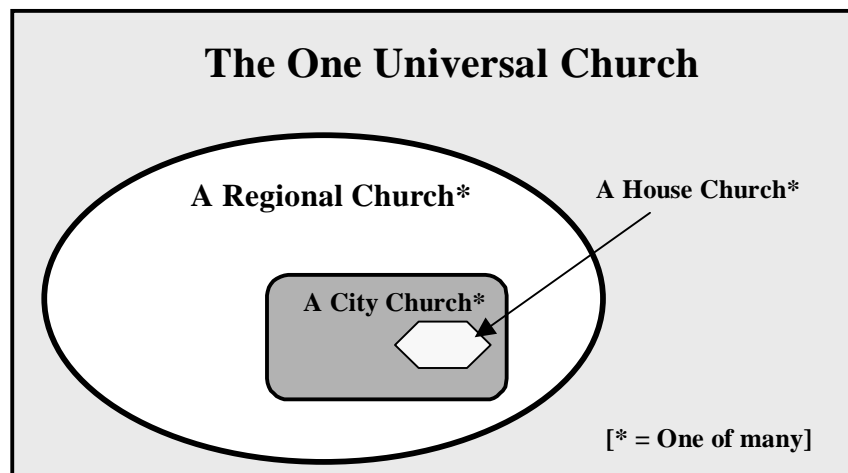
Ever since the fall of mankind, the ultimate purpose of God has been to call out a people unto Himself in what today we call the church (Eph 1:10). The Greek word, *'ekklesia'*<sup>4</sup>, is commonly used to describe the church in the New Testament. *'Ekklesia'* means *a society or assembly of free citizens called out of their homes or businesses to assemble together and give due consideration to matters of public interest* (Ac 19:39). The idea of a 'called out people' has its roots in the Old Testament (Ru 4:11; Jer 33:7), with Israel as the called people of God. In the New Testament *ekklesia* is never used to denote a building or a denomination (two of the most common ways we use the word "church" today) but always refers to a group of people.

Of the 109 times *ekklesia* refers to the church in the New Testament, it most often denotes a group of believers in a particular place or 'a local church' (at least 63 times). Believers are responsible to gather in local fellowships (Heb 10:25). In fact, it was the normal pattern of the Apostles to win people to Christ and gather them into new churches.

Note that the local church may be defined in different ways:

- A house church: 1 Corinthians 16:19 (Church that meets in house of Aquila and Priscilla) Colossians 4:15 (Church that meets in house of Nympha)
- A city church: 1 Thessalonians 1:1 (Church of the Thessalonians) 1 Corinthians 1:2 (Church of God in Corinth) Acts 13:1 (Church at Antioch)
- Regional churches: Galatians 1:2 (Churches in Galatia) Acts 9:31 (Churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria) 1 Corinthians 16:19 (Churches in the province of Asia)

**Figure 1.2 One Church and Many Churches**



Ultimately, there can be only one *ekklesia* (1Co 12:13, Eph 4:4-5). Thus, (at least 27 times) we see *ekklesia* denoting the universal Church which is that body of believers in Jesus Christ, living and dead, from every tribe, language, people and nation. Being part of the universal Church and not being involved in a local church is a concept that is not found in the New Testament. On the contrary, the universal Church is made visible through local churches everywhere.

As 'called out people,' the church is not simply a group of people united by religious faith. It is a creation of God through the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> ἐκκλησία

## **B. The Church Is The Body Of Christ**

The church is described as His body several places in Scripture (Ro 12:4-5; 1Co 12:12-31; Eph 1:22-23; 4:4-16). When Christ works in the world today, he does so through His Body, the church, us! (Eph 1:22-23; 3:10-11). Note the following implications of this metaphor:

### *1. The Body Is Interdependent*

As the body of Christ, the church has many parts that work together in a very complex and interdependent way. The parts do different things but have the same ultimate purpose, much like the various parts of a human body (Ro 12:3-8, 1Co 12:12-31). The church needs all the parts to function according to their design in order to properly do what God desires.

### *2. The Body Has One Head*

Christ is the head of the church (Col 1:18). Like a body the church cannot have more than one head. No pastor or church planter is truly the head of the Church he serves. All the parts of the body, including the leaders, are subject to the headship of Christ. The body does not function well otherwise.

## **C. The Church Is God's Number One Instrument For Spreading The Gospel**

The Church is the instrument of God chosen to bear the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Before the cross the *nations* were separated from the hope of salvation (Eph 2: 11-13). But after the death and resurrection of Christ, the church has the responsibility to take the Gospel to the *nations* (Mt 28:19-20). It is clear from the New Testament that the early Church took this responsibility very seriously, for it is impossible to separate the spread of the Gospel and the expansion of the Church in the book of Acts. It was the mission of the Church to take the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Today it is unfortunate that we talk about churches and missions as if they are separate. In the New Testament, the mission was the church and the church was the mission.

Evangelistic strategies that are not connected to the church are misguided from the beginning. Follow-up and long-term growth, for example, are common problems when people are evangelized through non-church initiated efforts. God has established the Church through which the nations are to be discipled. The Scripture declares: *'Through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord'* (Eph 3:10-11). The Church is God's plan to reach the world today, to manifest His progressive victory over Satan, and to enfold those who would be part of the 'people of God.'

## **CONCLUSION**

In Jesus Christ, God is reconciling people to Himself, restoring their relationship with Him (Eph 1:9-10). God has given this ministry of reconciliation to His church (2Co 5:18-20). So that the Church is God's plan to reach the world today, to manifest His progressive victory over Satan, and to enfold those who would be part of the people of God.

The establishment of the church with this purpose is the most recent step in God's redemptive plan. Involvement in establishing and strengthening the church is no small task. It is an essential activity for every believer and yields eternal results. Never underestimate your role concerning planting or leading the church!

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What are the implications of the Church as centrifugal?
- How does an Old Testament (centripetal) understanding of the Church affect its vitality? When is such an understanding of the local church appropriate? Why?
- What is the foundation of your church ministry? What happens when Christ is not the foundation of a new church work?



- The Church exists for the world (Eph 3:1-10). What are the implications?
- Christ is the head of the Church. What are the practical implications of this? (Eph 1:23; Col 1:18). How do we let Him be both Lord and Master on a practical level?
- Can a believer be part of the universal church and not part of the local church?
- What does it mean for the church to be indigenous?
- Study some of the metaphors used to describe the church (Eph 2:15, 19, 21; 1Pe 2:9-10). Which of these is most meaningful to you personally?

## ACTION PLAN

How is God at work in your country to fulfill His promises? What has God done in the past year, 5 years, or 50 years, that reveals His faithfulness to build His Church? Write at least 10 observations to show God's faithfulness in your country context.

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THE CHURCH

LESSON 2

# The Purpose of the Church

## WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to describe how the Church is intended to be a force for the propagation of the Gospel in the world.

### ☞ Main Points

- The Church has three purposes—ultimate, outward, and inward.
- The Church is the agent for mobilization rather than the object of ministry.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Be aware of the biblical purposes for the Church.
- Recognize that the Church's purpose as an agent for reaching the world requires church planting and ministry.

### ☞ Appendix

2A Great Commission Worksheet

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Be sure that participants can clearly articulate the inward and outward purposes of the church. It would be good if you can use big visuals to impress upon trainees the various paradigms of church purpose. You could make drawings on poster paper. Or, in your context, perhaps a chalkboard or an overhead projector might be more appropriate.

## INTRODUCTION

'Purpose' might be described as *'the end to which our efforts take us.'* Any organization has a purpose. A business exists to make money through the sale of goods or services rendered. The government of a country exists to protect its citizens and rule its people.

The Lord Jesus serves as a great model in the area of purpose. He knew why He came to earth and where He was going. He had a great purpose. 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor' (Lk 4:18-19).

For churches to be truly effective in today's world, they must have a clear sense of purpose. Without it, church leaders and workers can waste energy and resources doing things they have not been called to do. Every church planter should understand the biblical purpose for the Church and think through this purpose in the light of his own church planting work and mission.

A clear understanding of biblical purpose can make a church:

- purposeful and expectant.
- faithful and flexible, innovative yet true to Scripture.
- gracious and relational, emphasizing God's love and forgiveness.
- joyful and celebrative (people are looking for this).

- vital and dynamic, equipping people for real life ministry.
- growing and reproducing, planting new churches.

## I. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

Jesus has established His Church with a purpose in mind. It is a wonderful purpose, fixed in eternity past, destined for a glorious future. We could summarize the purpose of the church by saying *the Church exists to glorify God through edifying the believers and evangelizing the lost*. Figure 2.1 shows this three-fold purpose of the Church.

**Table 2.1 The Three-fold Purpose of the Church**

ULTIMATE PURPOSE	OUTWARD PURPOSE	INWARD PURPOSE
Exalt the Lord	Evangelize the lost	Edify the laborers
The Church exists for the Lord	The Church exists for the World	The Church exists for itself

### A. Exalt the Lord

The Bible teaches that there is an ultimate purpose to which all creation moves; it is God's own glory. God's glory represents all that is true of Himself: His nature, attributes, character and actions. God's own glory is His chief aim for eternity and man's chief purpose for existence. He is working out His eternal purposes toward this end. God's own glory is the final purpose of the Church (Ro 15:6,9; Eph 1:5ff; 2Th 1:12; 1Pe 4:11).

God is glorified (revealed, made known) when we worship Him (Jn 4:23), offer prayer and praise to Him (Ps 50:23) and live a godly life (Jn 15:8). 'Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1Co 10:31). This is true for individual Christians and for His Church.

- What does it mean for you to glorify God?
- How does the Church glorify God?
- How is God glorified in our midst?

### B. Evangelize the Lost

The Bible clearly teaches that there is an outward purpose for the Church, to be accomplished in this age. It is a purpose that places the Church's focus and efforts outside itself. It is the reason Jesus came to reach a lost and dying world (Lk 19:10). Jesus said, 'As the Father has sent Me, so I now send you' (Jn 20:21). This outward purpose of the Church is outreach to the lost—evangelism and mission.

Perhaps no portion of Scripture better states the outward purpose of the Church than the 'Great Commission' passage of Matthew 28:18-20 (See Appendix 2A, "Great Commission Worksheet").

### C. Edify the Laborers

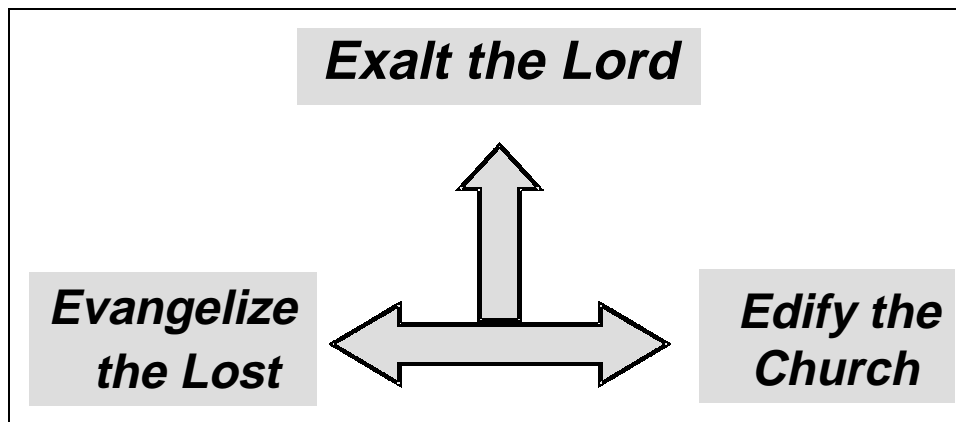
The Bible teaches that the Church also has an inward purpose. It is the edification or building up of its members. The bulk of the New Testament epistles were written to believers to strengthen them in their Christian life and ministry so that they could accomplish the outward purpose of reaching a lost and dying world.

Ephesians 4:11-16 best explains the inward purpose for the Church. The church exists to edify the believers. The training and equipping of God's people as a gathered community (in worship, teaching, fellowship and nurturing functions) leads to the accomplishment of the outward purpose, making disciples.

- Leadership is given (v. 11) to equip the saints for ministry (v. 12), not just to do the work of ministry themselves. What are the implications of this vital truth for your church planting work? How will this affect how you do what you do?
- What observations do you make from this passage about planting a church? Write them now.

The purposes of the church can be simply stated as exaltation, edification and evangelism. The people of God gather for worship and edification, in order to scatter to do the work of evangelism. These are interrelated purposes. None of them should exist apart from the others. The inward purpose (edification) serves the outer purpose (evangelism) and both purposes serve to glorify God (worship). As followers of Jesus gather for the inward purpose of edifying one another (Eph 4:11-16), loving one another (Jn 13:34-35), and practicing the functions of the New Testament church (Ac 2:42-43), they are better equipped for the outward task of outreach and ministry to the lost world.

**Figure 2.2 Three-fold Purpose of the Church**



## **II. PARADIGMS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH**

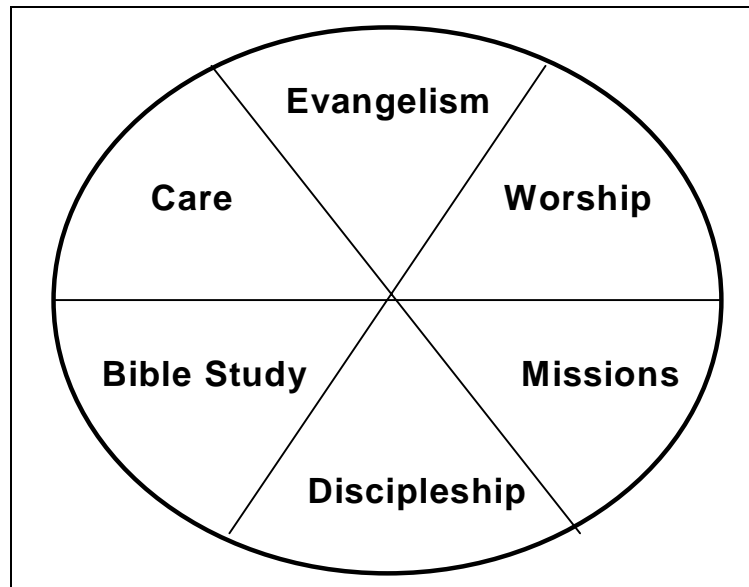
A paradigm is simply a way of looking at something. A paradigm provides rationale and explanation for how a particular system, process or object is and ought to be. The following sets of contrasting paradigms are ways of looking at the church in light of its nature and purpose.

### **A. The Program-Centered Church Compared To The Great Commission Church**

#### **1. *Program-Centered Church***

Churches often struggle in practicing their multifaceted purpose. Failing to integrate all that God has called us to do can lead to a program orientation consisting of various components, each component competing for resources and participants (See Figure 2.3). In this program-centered view, the church may resemble a secular training institution or small business in its structure and organization. Over time, the church becomes more concerned about itself and less concerned about the lost, becoming irrelevant to the society in which it exists.

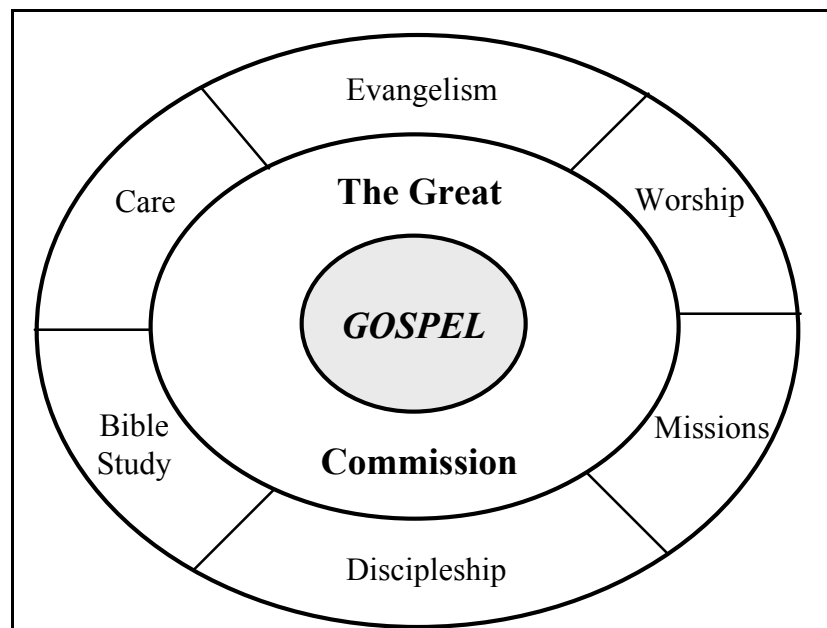
**Figure 2.3 The Program-Centered Church**



2. *The Great Commission Church*

The biblical view of the Church, shown in Figure 2.4, places the Great Commission at the heart of the Church's purpose, and from it proceed programs and equipping ministries. In this model the elements and programs of the gathered church community serve to prepare the believer for the outward task or purpose—evangelism and Great Commission work. The needs of the believers are still taken care of but in their proper perspective in light of God's purpose to bring the lost to Himself.

**Figure 2.4 The Great Commission Church**



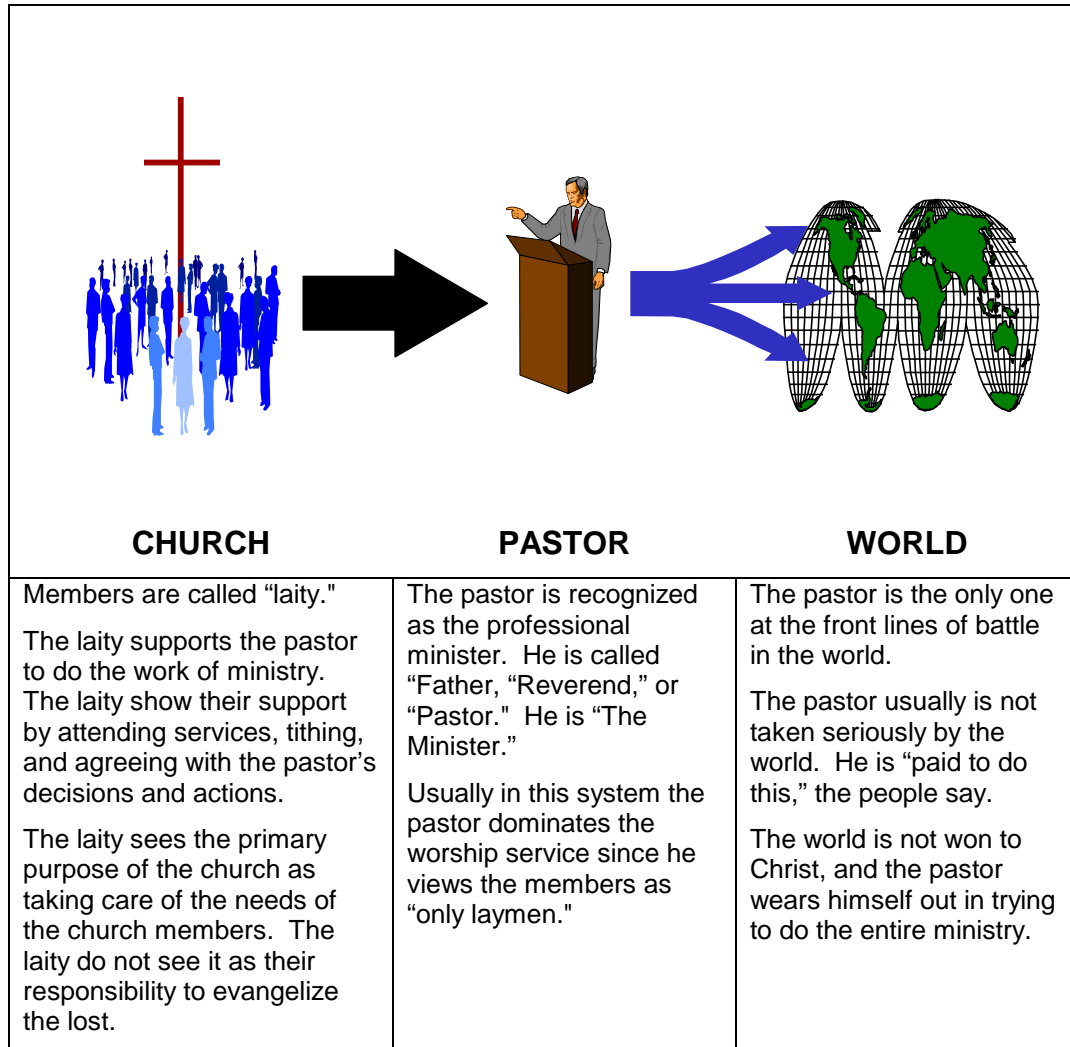
- What are the ramifications for these two approaches to church structures? The mobilization of church members for 'church work'? Leadership development?
- What happens to a church when it recognizes that its 'reason for being' is to spread the Gospel?

## B. The Church as an 'Object of Ministry' Compared to the Church as an 'Agent for Mobilization'

### 1. The Church as an Object of Ministry

Some believers think of the church as a gathering place to be with other believers and to be ministered to by the pastor (see figure 2.5). This is perhaps the most common paradigm for viewing the church. This paradigm is partly true. Church is indeed a gathering where we enjoy fellowship as well as receive spiritual nourishment from spiritual leaders. However, this paradigm fails to put the outward purpose of the church in proper perspective and supposes a non-biblical clergy / laity distinction.

**Figure 2.5. The Church as an Object of Ministry**

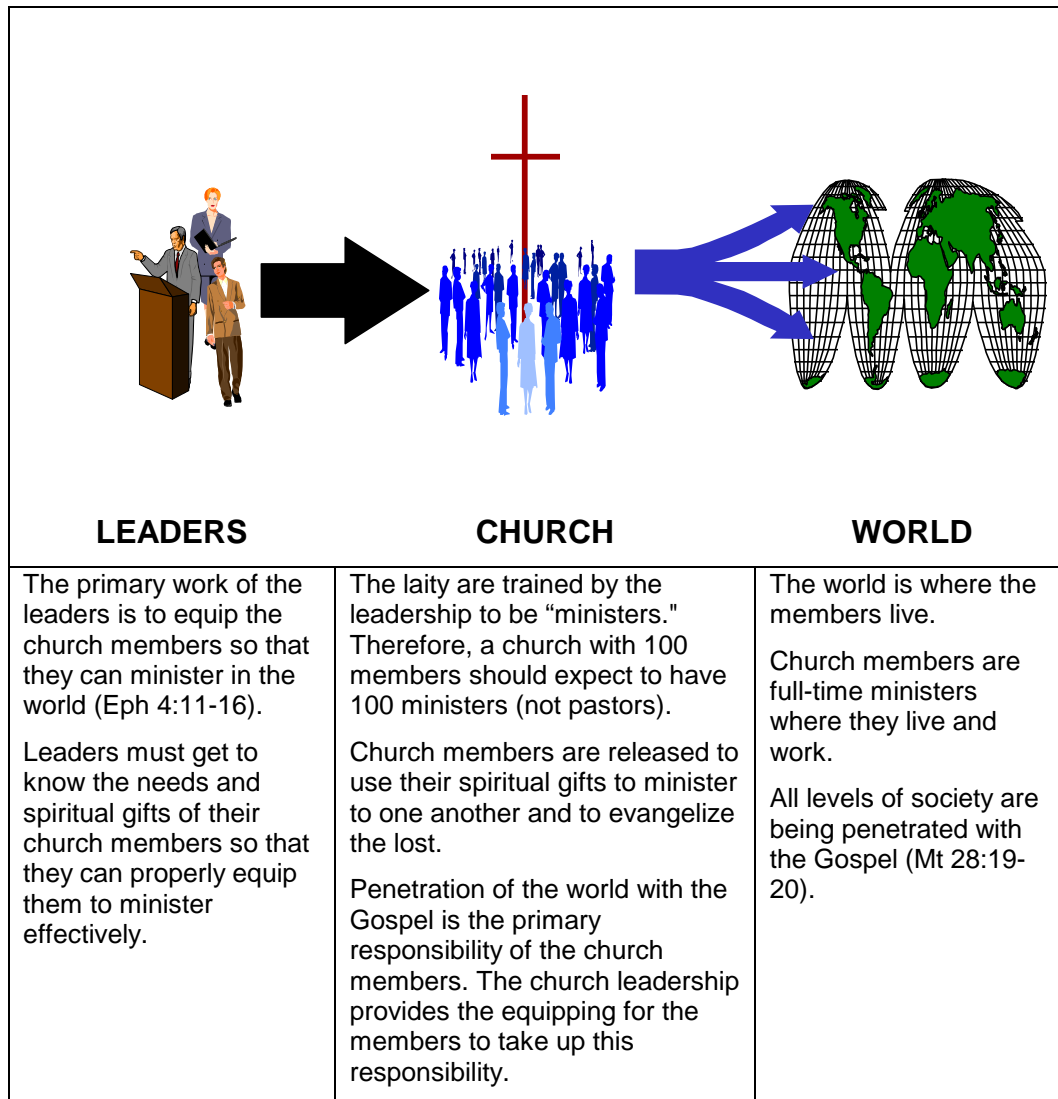


*adapted from Brock p. 66,67*

### 2. The Church As An Agent For Mobilization

The church is not an object of ministry, but rather an agent of mobilization for the Gospel into the world. As shown in the figure 2.6, the role of leadership in the church is to equip (to train and to empower) church members for service in the world. This is the edification purpose of the church. Believers gather together to worship the Lord, to grow in their faith, to learn God's Word, to encourage, pray for, and practically help one another. These church members develop the spiritual character and servant skills needed to evangelize the lost (the outward purpose of the church). Fulfilling the Great Commission is not just the pastor's job, or the job of a few individuals in the church, but it is the function of the entire body of Christ (the church).

**Figure 2.6. The Church as an Agent for Mobilization**



*adapted from Brock p66,67*

## CONCLUSION

A clear sense of purpose helps the church to be effective. Without understanding its purpose, church leaders and workers can waste energy and resources doing things they have not been called to do. Every church planter should understand the biblical purpose for the Church and think through this purpose in the light of his own church planting work and mission.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- Why is it important that the church understand its purpose? What happens when churches do not understand their purpose?
- How would you summarize the purpose of the church?
- Why should the church reach out to the lost? Who is responsible to evangelize?
- How does the Great Commission relate to the purpose of the church? What other passages in the Bible help us understand the purpose of the church?
- Why should the church be a force and not just a field?



- Do the churches in your region have a clear understanding of why they exist as a church?
- What is the role of leadership in a purpose-driven church?

## **ACTION PLAN**

Reflect on the purpose of the Church by doing the worksheet contained in Appendix 2A, "Great Commission Worksheet."

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- Morris, Linus. *The High Impact Church.* Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1993.
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# Great Commission Worksheet

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*Read and meditate on the following five Great Commission passages. Then, answer the questions given for each passage.*

## **Matthew 28:18-20**

1. What comfort is there in the truth that "all authority" has been given to Christ?
2. Since He is the Sovereign Lord, what has He asked us to do?

## **Mark 16:15-20**

1. What warning do you find here for the unbeliever?
2. What will be the evidence that follows believers?
3. How did the Lord reveal Himself after His ascension into heaven?

## **Luke 24:45-53**

1. What things are the disciples to give witness to?
2. What promise was Christ making to them?

## **John 20:19-23**

1. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Peace be with you"?
2. How does this relate to his statement in vv. 22-23?
3. What does it mean to be sent?

## **Acts 1:1-11**

1. What is the natural result when we have the Holy Spirit working through us?
2. How far will the results of the Gospel reach?

## **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

- What fears do I have that need to be overcome by the realization of the sovereign authority of Christ? How can I best "make disciples?"
- How can the Gospel be proclaimed in "all the nations" in my country?
- Do I minister with the power of God on me? How can I allow His power to grow greater for His glory?
- How concerned am I for the state of the lost? How will this affect how I lead the church I plant? What difference does it make?

## GREAT COMMISSION PARALLEL PASSAGES

	PREAMBLE	COMMAND	PROMISE
<b>MATTHEW 28:18-20</b>	All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me (18).	Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (19) (20).	And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (20).
<b>MARK 16:15-20</b>	(The testimony of the resurrection) (9).	Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (15).	Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned (16).
<b>LUKE 24:45-53</b>	This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day (46).	and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (47-48).	I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (49).
<b>JOHN 20:19-23</b>	"Peace be with you!" After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord (19) (20).	As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (21).	Receive the Holy Spirit (22).
<b>ACTS 1:1-11</b>	After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive (3). "It is not for you to know times or dates the Father has set by his own authority (7).	and you will be My witnesses, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (8).	You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (5)... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you (8).



THE CHURCH

3

LESSON

# Form and Function

## A BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE



### Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain the important concept of form and function in the church, from a biblical and cultural perspective.



### Main Points

- Biblical function is *what must be done*—it was given by God and should not be altered.
- Biblical form is how *we do the function*—it is cultural and should be adjusted as needed.



### Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand the concept and issues of ‘form and function.’
- Recognize how cultural dynamics and personal experience affect the expression and forms of the local church.
- Be motivated to establish church forms based on biblical function and cultural relevancy.



### Appendix

3A Form and Function Applied: Inductive Study of Acts 2

## INTRODUCTION

An understanding of form and function is fundamental to church planting. Our experience largely shapes our understanding of, and dedication to, the forms our churches take. We must be challenged to ask why we do what we do to accomplish the mission God has given His Church. This lesson will provide an opportunity to rethink ministry ‘forms’ and give guidance for establishing more relevant and effective forms.

## I. FORM AND FUNCTION ILLUSTRATED

In society, a function is *an activity that needs to be performed*. This activity can range from one as difficult as getting food or raising children, to something as easy as sleeping. These are things that need to be done. A form is *the method chosen to carry out* that function.

An example could be how you get food. In the primitive days, you could hunt or you could grow crops. These are two very different methods, but both fulfill the function of getting food.

The question is: how do you decide which is the best form for you? Some of the factors for the decision come from internal sources, such as abilities and preferences. Do you have a good eye and don’t mind being alone for long periods of time? Then you might do better as a hunter. If not, stick with farming. Some of the factors are external, depending on your environment. Do you live on or near good productive land? If so, you might do well to be a farmer. Some of the factors are cultural, depending on the ideas of the society you are in. Are farmers prized because they add to the amount of crops in the village, or are hunters prized for their skill in case of war? Some of the factors may be moral. Is the killing of animals looked upon as immoral? Another factor is tradition. What did your parents and their parents do?

- ◆ **Function** = an activity that needs to be performed
- ◆ **Form** = the method chosen to carry out the function

Forms depend on many factors and can also change with time. Your field may no longer produce, or the game may become sparse. With time, new inventions may change your ability to carry out your profession, or make you choose a new profession that had not been available before, such as a shopkeeper.

Transportation is another example of the principle of form and function in society. Transportation is a function that can be fulfilled through many possible forms such as: bicycle, subway, auto, and horse & cart. The question is:

- What will determine the means of transportation you use? Why?
- What makes one way better than the others?
- Can you come up with an example of form and function in your situation?

## II. FORM AND FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH

Form and function can be defined broadly as in the examples above, or it can focus on a particular area. For example, there are also *biblical forms and functions* described in both the Old and New Testaments. However, in order to understand the importance of this concept in church planting, we will focus the definition even more tightly, and look only at *church forms* and *church functions*.

### A. Church Functions

The New Testament includes many commands, laws, instructions, precepts, prohibitions, and principles that the church must carry out. These functions are timeless and supra cultural. They do not change and are mandatory for all believers, regardless of race, culture, age, or language.

Examples: Worship, fellowship, the ordinances, prayer, evangelism, discipleship, giving, teaching, communion (Lord's Supper).

**A Church Function**  
is an activity that the Lord has commanded His church to carry out.

### B. Forms

Church forms include all the structures, traditions, methods, and procedures that the church chooses in order to carry out the functions in a particular age, culture, or situation. These forms can and do vary greatly among local churches—resulting in many acceptable forms for every church function.

Examples: Offerings for the Jerusalem saints, the Jesus Film, greeters at the front door, paid preachers, Wednesday (e.g. “once-a-week”) evening Bible study.

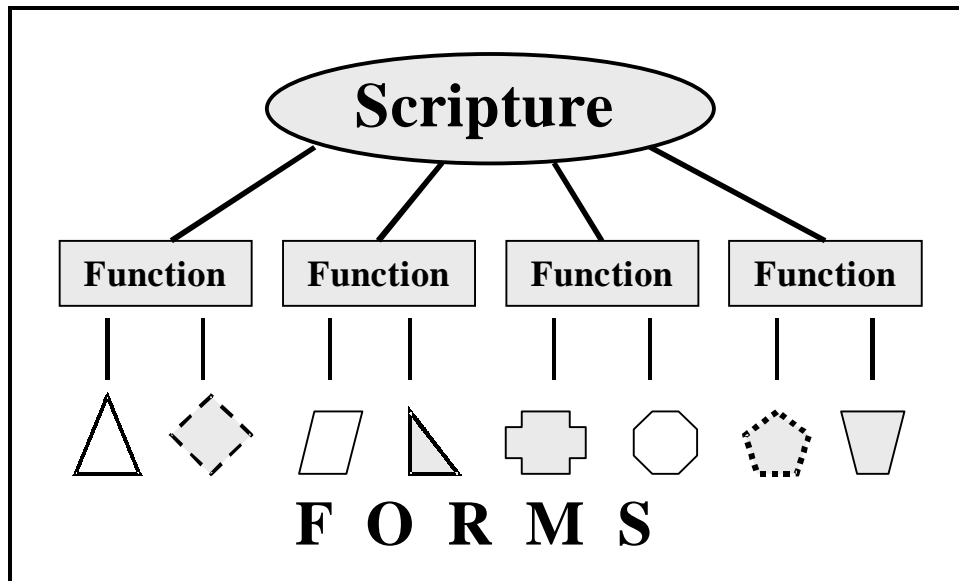
**A Church Form** is the method the church uses to carry out a church function.

### C. Form and Function Together

The life of any local church cannot be taken out of its particular cultural / historical context. Our ‘experience’ of church is not based solely on biblical teaching. The way we ‘do’ church is based upon a mix of historical traditions, cultural (and sub-cultural) practices, and biblical convictions. When we speak of biblical functions (such as worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching, sacraments, evangelism and ministry), it is difficult to do so without describing the forms, traditions, methods, structures and organizations in which these functions find expression and life.

The task of the church planter is to forge church forms first from a biblical basis, then in the light of culturally relevant practices. In Figure 3.1, we see that there are a number of church functions that are mandated by the Scriptures. These do not change with time or culture. However, the bottom row of the figure demonstrates that each local church may need to adopt completely different forms to fulfill these functions in their context. The forms need not resemble those of other churches—they must only fulfill the church functions.

**Figure 3.1 Form and Function**



### III. EVALUATING FORM AND FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH

It can be difficult to distinguish between forms and functions in the church unless we take the time to analyze. In the following chart, a number of functions are listed on the left, and some of the many possible forms of each are on the right.

**Table 3.2 Forms and Functions**

Biblical Function	Possible Forms
Pray	Kneeling or Standing
	Silently or Aloud
	Small Group or Individual
	Before Meal or At Close of Service
	Confession or Supplication
Teach the Word	Sunday School
	Sermon
	Small Group Bible Study
	Family Devotions
Evangelize	Friendship Evangelism
	Crusade
	Invitation during Service

Please note that the list of forms on the right side of the chart is not exhaustive—there are many, many other possibilities. Is one form better than the others are? No. All of them may be appropriate or inappropriate in a given circumstance and cultural setting. None of these forms are commanded in the Bible as the *only* method. Only the *functions* are commanded. We must choose the form as needed.

In the table below, two sample biblical *functions* are listed. Take a few minutes to fill in possible *forms* on the right side. Then compare your ideas with other trainees.

**Table 3.3 Function vs. Form**

Biblical Function	Possible Forms
Give	
Worship	

In the table below, a number of *forms* are listed on the right side. For each *form*, decide what biblical *function* it fulfills and write that in on the left side. Then compare and discuss your responses.

**Table 3.4 Forms vs. Functions**

Function	Form
	Youth Camp
	Church Prayer Meeting
	Church Choir
	Passing an Offering Plate
	Church Building
	Special Music in Service
	Children's Church
	Order of Church Service
	Reciting Poetry in Church

#### IV. PRINCIPLES REGARDING FORM AND FUNCTION

##### A. The Function Is More Important Than the Form

In the Bible, functions are stressed. Jesus was more interested in function than in form. Those who gave Christ the most resistance were those who were addicted to form, rituals and traditions.

- See Matthew 9:14-17. How does Jesus' teaching on clothing and wineskins relate to form and function? What does it mean to start a 'new wineskin' kind of church?
- What do 1 Samuel 15:22-23, Hosea 6:6, and Matthew 12:1-8 contribute to this issue?

Forms are not usually prescribed in the Bible. There is the exception of the temple service, where the design of the tabernacle and its furnishings are spelled out in some detail, but this was done for a different purpose. They were used to teach about God, His work and His attributes. It is not a



form that has been carried over into the New Testament Church because the knowledge already exists.

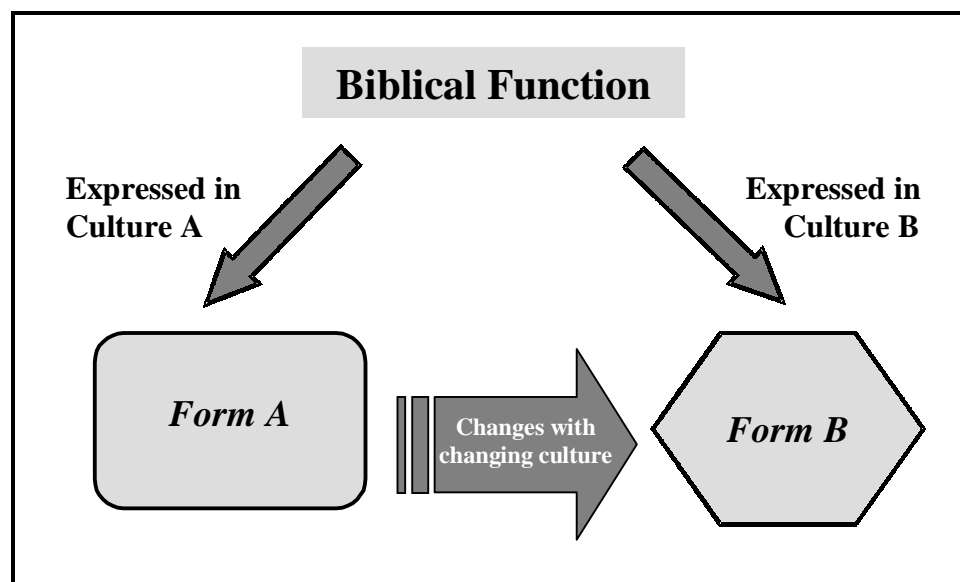
## **B. Functions Are Absolute and Trans-Cultural; Forms Are Non-Absolute and Variable**

When forms are described in the Bible, we see changes being made in them. The Passover was a reminder of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt. Jesus changed this at the Last Supper and used it to highlight the deliverance that God was about to accomplish in the death of Jesus. In the first century church, this again changed and became the Love Feast. But this began to be misused (1Co 11:17-34), so the practice was reduced to the sharing of the cup and bread. But even this takes on many different forms. Some use a common cup and some use individual cups. Some use wine and some use grape juice. The form may be different as long as the function is served.

The forms that are described in certain passages are changed or left out in others. They vary from situation to situation.

- Stewardship (1Co 16:1-2; 2Co 8-9)
- Spiritual gifts (1Co 12-14; Ro 12; Eph 4)
- Discipline of church members (Mt 18; 1Co 5; 2Co 2)
- Baptism (Mt 28; Ro 6; Ac 1)
- Day of Worship (Ex 20:8; Ac 20:7)
- Church government (1Ti 3; Tit 1; 1Pe 5)

**Figure 3.5 Changing Forms**



How would this principle affect the way you develop forms in your new church, based on Scripture?

## **C. People Often Identify More with the Forms Than with the Function**

It is unfortunate, but people tend to get attached to the form and miss the function. They can perpetuate forms that have lost vitality in their respective cultures (e.g. the way a worship service is run). There is an old story told about a newlywed bride who cooked her first roast for her husband. When she served the roast to him, the prime pieces on both ends were cut off. He asked her why. She replied her mother always cooked the roast this way. When the new husband asked the mother-in-law why she did it this way, her reply was, "I don't know. Mom always did it that way." When the husband asked grandma why she cut off the ends of the roast, her response was, "The pan was too small for it." You get the point.

When people believe there are absolutes governing form, they tend to become legalistic in their approach. Often, resistance to the changing form is caused more by insecurity and fear of change than from theological truth. This can be a form of idolatry. An understanding of form and function can help people see that change is not always threatening.

#### **D. Forms Should Not Be Changed Carelessly**

It is not unusual for a young man, just out of seminary or Bible college, with no real pastoral experience, to become the pastor of a church and think that he knows exactly how everything should be done. He has an idea of what the perfect forms are and is determined to change everything to fit his ideas. He has no idea of what the people are like, nor does he know what they want to do. He may not even know whether the ideas have been tried before and the results. This can lead to a situation in which the people begin to feel that their pastor does not value them but sees them as part of an experiment and come to resent him. They also feel as if the church no longer fits them and either the pastor must go or they will.

Forms should be changed only to highlight the function. One time, in order to highlight worship (a function), a pastor started the service with a hymn (as usual) and then gave the sermon. The sermon was normally at the end of the service after the special music, extended singing, greetings and announcements, but this pastor chose to speak about God and His wonderful works, then invited the congregation to worship and thank Him through prayer, singing praises (hymns) and the Lord's supper. The change was very effective. This does not mean that he did it every Sunday. It was done that one time in order to get people to stop and think in a new pattern about the worship part of the service. They then returned to the usual form.

#### **E. When Forms Freeze, Churches Die**

The purpose of the church is to glorify God through the edifying of the members and the evangelizing of the lost. This is the eternal, unchanging purpose. The functions are how we accomplish this purpose. They are also given by God, who has told us how He wants us to glorify Him. They are also eternal and unchanging. A form is only one of many acceptable ways to fulfill a particular function. Forms can change because they are an expression of society.

There are times when the importance of forms can grow to be so great that people will not let them be changed. When forms become so important that they cannot be changed, the church will soon die because the society will change and the church will appear irrelevant. If the church cannot change its expression of the eternal functions, then the church will become irrelevant to that society.

There was a church that chose to reach out to a certain ethnic group in its neighborhood. The congregation was very comfortable with the forms that grew up for this group. But the forms became too important. The neighborhood changed and there were fewer and fewer of this ethnic group in the neighborhood. By the time the church realized that they needed to change, it was too late. They were known as a church that had nothing to offer to the people of that neighborhood and the church building was closed and the remaining membership disbanded.

### **V. IMPLICATIONS OF FORM AND FUNCTION FOR CHURCH PLANTERS**

Church planters must think very carefully about form and function. Many of the forms established at a church's birth can become interwoven in the life and fabric of the church. They may be difficult to change later; and if they are ineffective, they may just have to be tolerated. Furthermore, if church planters do not exercise flexibility concerning form, then the church planting process can become very slow, expensive, and difficult.

Church planters tend to go to one of two dangerous extremes in their ministry. They may:

- Use only traditional church forms so that the approach to preaching, style of music, and methods of evangelism are the same as the existing churches in the region. The result may be that the church will reach the same kind of people instead of the target people.

If church planters do not exercise flexibility concerning form then the church planting process can become very slow, expensive, and difficult.
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- Adopt only imported forms that are difficult to reproduce in that culture. When church planters assume that certain programs, equipment or styles of music are necessary because they are effective in some other situation, then the church can have a foreign appearance from the beginning. In your region, 'westernization' or a large population of foreign missionaries may contribute to this problem.

The forms that you choose will largely influence what section(s) of your society you will attract. Forms should emerge naturally from the culture so that the target people can understand what they mean with little or no explanation. Part of research is looking at who lives in your target area, who is not being reached by churches already present, and finding out how to attract them to your church by choosing forms that will be meaningful to them and faithful to biblical functions.

## QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, CONSIDERATION AND APPLICATION

- Why is 'form and function' so important to church planting?
- How have the forms in your church developed? How have they been maintained?
- Do the forms in your church experience serve a purpose / biblical function?
- How could you improve the forms in your church to fit the culture better?
- Which forms are a hindrance to bringing the Gospel to the lost? To bringing a new convert into the life of the church?
- What kind of resistance would you face if you sought to establish a new church with forms different than other churches in your culture?
- In what ways are your forms strange and foreign to new converts?
- How could you develop forms that would be more comfortable to new converts without compromising biblical principles? Describe how these forms are relevant to your target group culture in worship, fellowship, sacraments, tithing, and biblical instruction
- For additional study, read Acts 6:1-5, and see how the early church leaders dealt with a structural problem, and how they were able to adjust form to create a structure to better serve the need.
- When are forms sinful? Why? Give examples and validate with a biblical principle.

## ACTION PLAN

- Do the inductive Bible study contained in Appendix 3A, "Form And Function Applied: Inductive Study of Acts 2."
- Determine the function behind forms in your local church.

## SOURCES

- Thompson, Paul. *Planting Reproducing Churches; A Basic Course*. Toronto, Canada: World Team Institute of Church Planting, 1992.
- Webster, Robert D. *Growing Churches for God's Glory*. Workbook written for BEE International, 1995.



# Form and Function Applied

## INDUCTIVE STUDY OF ACTS 2

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### I. OBSERVATION

Read Acts 2:42-47 and note the primary activities and actions of the believers. List each of these activities in the left column of the chart below.

### II. INTERPRETATION

Decide which of these activities is “form” and which is “function” and write your answer in the column on the right. If you decide that an activity is a form, decide what the corresponding function would be and write that in the column with the form. What were the circumstances that led to the choosing of that particular form?

ACTIVITIES	FUNCTION OR FORM

### III. APPLICATION

- Look again at the functions behind each of the forms noted in the table above.
- List at least one other form that could have been used.
- What form does your church use for that function?
- Are there other appropriate forms that could fulfill those same functions today?
- How would you go about introducing a change of form to a congregation or in a cell group? What are important issues to consider when trying to introduce change?

THE CHURCH

LESSON 4

# Defining The Local Church

## “WHAT ARE WE PLANTING?”

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the definition of the local church in the light of the church planting task.

### ☞ Main Points

- An inadequate definition of the local church will hinder church planting.
- Biblical functions are key to a definition of the local church.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the contents of this lesson have been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the importance of developing a biblical definition of the local church.
- Know how personal understanding of what a local church is can enhance or hinder the church planting process.

## INTRODUCTION

No matter what we are doing in church work, whether we are church planting or leading an existing church, we must have a clear conviction about what the church is. This basic question, “What is a local church?” cannot be taken for granted. To be sure we are on track, we must ask it often. How would we define it?

Perhaps the following illustration will demonstrate why this lesson is important. Before World War II, Switzerland made and produced almost 90% of the world's watches. By 1970, the Swiss still had 60% of the market, but by the early 1980's, their share dropped to below 10%. What happened? The quartz watch was introduced in the late 1960's and the Swiss did not utilize this technology while other watchmakers (Seiko and Texas Instruments) did. The Swiss watchmakers rejected the quartz because of their understanding of what a watch was. They could not imagine a watch without gears, springs and wheels. Since the quartz watch did not use these, they rejected it. In summary, we could say they lost sight of the function of watches (to tell time) and instead defined watches by the forms they were familiar with. Thus they missed out on a great marketing opportunity.

Just as the Swiss' working definition of watches resulted in their missing of a great opportunity, so the definition of the church can affect the success of the church planting process dramatically. The definition of the church reveals what the church planter is expecting to produce and determines strategies and forms he uses. The definition will be the reference point, the measuring stick for his sense of success or failure. If the church planter starts with a poor definition of the church then it may lead to failure.

## I. THE DIFFICULTY OF DEFINING THE CHURCH

Churches can be very different from one another. Note the following observations:

- Some churches meet in large buildings. Some churches meet in small buildings. Some churches do not meet in any building. Some churches meet in homes.
- Some churches meet one time a week. Some churches meet two times a week. Some churches meet three times a week. Some churches meet just about every day of the week.

- Some churches have a man who preaches. Some churches have a man who just talks. Some churches have a man who teaches like in school.
- Some churches seem to be fun to be in. In some churches no one smiles.
- Some churches have active services, with people moving around and responding verbally to everything that happens. Some churches have very quiet services in which most of the people sit quietly and listen.

With all these variations, how is it possible to describe the core elements that must exist before a group can be called a church? Are there some basic norms that should be true of local churches in any time and in any culture? And if so, what do we consider to be those core elements?

*Take several minutes and talk in groups of three or four and answer these questions –*

1. When is a group of people a church?
2. What are the criteria for deciding whether it is a church or not ?
3. Respond to the following situations. Is each a church? Why or why not?
  - Eight believers in Aimesville meet every Tuesday night for Bible study and fellowship. They have no official pastor although one man facilitates the gathering. They have been doing this for years. Some of the participants also attend a church on Sunday.
  - In a medium-sized city, there is a beautiful historical church building with a rich history of great preachers and community involvement. On tours of the church which are offered twice a day, one can learn about the unique architecture and history.
  - An evangelist has led 10 young people to Christ in the past year. He would like to see these new believers assimilated into an existing church but the nearest one is 50 kilometers away. Instead, they meet in his apartment every Sunday evening for worship and Bible study.
  - A man and his immediate family are the only believers in their city. The family takes time every Sunday morning to worship the Lord.

## **II. EXAMPLES OF CHURCH DEFINITIONS**

*In groups of 4 or 5, discuss the following definitions and answer the related questions.*

### **A. Example #1**

The following definition is an attempt to define the church by using only specific references from Scripture that describe how God's people are to relate to one another. This definition emphasizes the relationships that should exist between believers.

*"A church is a group of people who are devoted and give preference to one another (Ro 12:10), accept one another (Ro 15:7), care for one another (1Co 12:25), carry each others burdens (Gal 6:2), forgive one another (Eph 4:32), encourage and build up one another (1Th 5:11) spur each another on to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24), confess their sins to one another (Jas 5:16), pray for one another (Jas 5:16), serve one another (1Pe 4:10), and love one another (1Jn 4:11)."*

- How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?
- What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?
- Is this definition adequate? Why or why not?

### **B. Example #2**

*"A New Testament local church is an organized assembly of baptized believers, in which the unique presence of Jesus Christ dwells; who gather regularly for worship, instruction, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and baptizing new believers, under the obedience to the Word of God, supervised by elders who are assisted by deacons putting into action the equipping gifts that God has given its members to build up that local congregation, resulting in a Gospel witness locally and world wide."*

- How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?
- What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?
- Is this definition adequate? Why or why not?

### **C. Example #3**

The following definition is much more traditional and may be the definition you would hear from the average non-believer on the street.

*"The local church is a building where people gather to receive religious services from professional ministers who have been specifically trained to lead meetings each Sunday morning as well as the other activities for the people such as weddings and funerals."*

- How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?
- What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?
- Is this definition adequate? Why or why not?

### **D. Example #4**

*"A local church is an organized body of baptized believers, led by a spiritually qualified shepherd, affirming their relationship to the Lord and to each other by regular observance of the Lord's Supper, committed to the authority of the Word of God, gathering regularly for worship and the study of the Word, and turned outward to the world in witness."*

- How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?
- What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?
- Is this definition adequate? Why or why not?

## **III. GUIDELINES FOR DEFINING THE CHURCH**

### **A. Avoid prescribing forms, structure and programs in the definition of the church**

There is a tendency to focus on forms and structure rather than on biblical functions when defining the local church. When church planters do this, they can become like the Pharisees, concentrating on the outward appearance of spirituality and not on the internal spiritual reality that reflects a right heart towards God and right relationships toward others, both in and outside of the church. Forms, then, can become a false reference point for success, suggesting that a local church equals such things as choirs, hymnbooks, a piano, a sound system, a building with pews, a Sunday school program, a constitution, etc. While there is nothing wrong with these things, they do not define the church as a spiritual people.

When forms, structures and programs are part of the definition of the church, it severely limits the church's ability to be a dynamic force of change, witnessing to a constantly changing society of God's saving and unchanging love. When biblical functions are key ingredients in the definition of the church, we are on solid ground for designing ways and means for church ministries that are indeed winsome.

### **B. Stress the biblical functions that the church must perform**

The most helpful definitions of the local church focus on the functions of God's people as revealed in Scripture instead of the particular forms the church follows. The church is a collection of God's own children. The relationships of God's people to God and to one another then should be the point of reference out of which congregational programming flows. Beginning church planting with a focus on programs can result in structures that do not meet relational needs. It is wiser to focus on biblical relationships and let the organizational structure and programs develop accordingly.

For example, a church planter determined that a Wednesday night prayer time was important for every church. Early in the life of the church which he had planted, he initiated a Wednesday night prayer time, but there was little interest since community commitments kept many church members busy at that time. This was very discouraging to the church planter because he interpreted the poor response as a lack of interest in prayer. However, if he had allowed the function of prayer to take a different form, then perhaps there would have been a greater response.

Another church planter was convinced that a beautifully adorned church building was necessary for worship. After one year of church planting ministry, with 15 believers committed to his church, he decided to establish a building. This required permission from the city officials, raising funds, purchasing land, hiring a construction company to build, etc. This project consumed all of the church planter's time so that he was unable to focus on ministering to the 15 believers in his flock. Furthermore, funds were very difficult to come by and city officials seemed to be doing everything possible to hinder the building process. He wondered if he would ever see the church established.

#### IV. WRITING YOUR DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH

To prepare to develop your definition of the church, read the following passages looking for principles that explain what the church is. Write the principles in the space provided. Use other biblical references if you believe they are helpful.

Ac 2:42-47

Ac 11:26

Ac 14:23

Ac 20:7

Ac 20:28

1Co 1:2

1Co 12:28

1Co 14:33

Eph 1:22

Eph 4:11-16

Eph 5:27

1Ti 3:15

Heb 10:24-27

Other:

*In the space below write your definition of the church.*

*Consider the following questions concerning your definition:*

- Is your definition understandable?



- Is it compatible with Scripture?
- Is your definition basic enough to describe all churches everywhere and at all times?
- Does your definition allow for a church that is reproducible?

Share your definition with others and carefully note their reactions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Church planters should realize that they do not plant fully developed churches, but sow seeds which grow into mature churches (1Co 3:6). The first converts to become leaders should have some say in the forms, structures and programs. Why? So that the new church will be appropriate to the culture and needs of those whom it will serve.

If we expect to participate with God in the establishing of a church planting movement in this region, then the definition of the church should resemble a 'seed' and not a fully developed 'tree.' It should grow and adapt in order to best reach the lost around it.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What unnecessary items are typically added to people's working definition of the church?
- When are buildings necessary for church planting? How can buildings help or hinder the growth of the church?
- Why is it wrong to focus on forms when defining the local church?

## **ACTION PLAN**

With your church planting team, develop and agree upon a definition of the church that will inform your church planting process. Share your definition with other church planters, your trainer or mentor.

## **SOURCES**

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- Julien, Tom. *The Essence of the Church*. Evangelical Missions Quarterly. Vol. 34, No. 2, 1998.



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# SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

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SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

1

LESSON

# Justification by Faith

## THE FOUNDATION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

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### Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the church planter how to be set free from guilt, denial, and a life compelled to maintain his or her reputation, as Christ's righteousness becomes the foundation for Christian living.



### Main Points

- Justification is an exchange of our nature with the nature of Christ.
- Justification by Faith is the foundation for our relationship with God.



### Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know what justification by faith means.
- Have a deep appreciation and assurance of God's grace that is rooted in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

As believers, our relationship with God is the focal point of our lives. Nothing matters more than how we relate to God and how He relates to us. But in this relationship we have many questions:

- How can we know God intimately?
- Does God truly accept us?
- Where does our acceptance before God come from?
- How can we live a life that is pleasing to Him?
- What happens when we sin?

To answer questions like these, we go back to the very beginning—to the Gospel, the foundation of our relationship with God. The New Testament describes salvation as a matter of “justification by faith.” In this lesson, we will consider what justification by faith means and how this foundation, built upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is the only sure foundation for our relationship with God.

## I. JUSTIFICATION IS NOT...

Simply stated, justification means being declared righteous. There are at least two errors that people make concerning this great doctrine.

### A. Justification is not by works

The great philosopher Aristotle believed that **people could become good (be justified) by practice**. Many have agreed with him. In Jesus' day, it seems the Pharisees would have agreed with Aristotle. For them, the way to be good, to be acceptable before God was by practice—specifically by living according to God's law. The well-known theologian Thomas Aquinas agreed with Aristotle; thus a system of salvation by works remains a cornerstone of many followers of Aquinas.

Those who follow Aristotle's view could be classified as following religion. Here, we are defining religion as *an attempt to reach God*. The Gospel however, teaches something entirely different about how we become good. According to the Bible, the only way to be justified is to accept by faith the salvation provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel, including justification by faith, stands in direct contrast to all other religious systems of acceptance before God.

**Table 1.1 The Gospel and Religion**

<b>Gospel</b>	<b>Religion</b>
<i>(God's supernatural attempt to reach man)</i>	<i>(man's natural attempt to reach God)</i>
Grace	Works
Faith	Obedience
Unconditional love	Judgementalism
Transforming Holy Spirit	Personal effort
Grace leads to obedience	Obedience leads to grace

Bible-believing Christians will quickly understand that the Gospel is true and that religion is false. We do not want to replace the Gospel with religion, but we are tempted to mix the two. But when we mix the Gospel with anything, we destroy it (Gal 1:6-7).

Someone may be quick to say, "We do good works." True, but we do not receive God's favor by it. Rather we have received God's favor and therefore we do good works.

## **B. Justification is not a pardon**

Many believers correctly understand that justification before God is by faith and not by works, but they incorrectly conclude that justification is really simply a pardon in which God chooses to overlook our sin. This is a great mistake. God does not simply choose to ignore our sin. His holiness prevents that possibility. Sin must be paid for. Justification is an act by which someone is declared righteous. We are declared righteous on the basis of the fact that Jesus paid the price for our sin.

Those who think of justification as merely a pardon fail to realize the great price that was paid on our behalf and can tend to take their salvation for granted. However, our justification came at a great price that should inspire us to live out of gratitude for what God has done.

## **II. JUSTIFICATION IS ...**

### **A. The Righteousness of God: Romans 3:21-24**

Romans 3:21-24 is one of the clearest passages concerning justification by faith. Studying the passage phrase by phrase reveals many of the various aspects of justification by faith and how Christ's righteousness forms the foundation of our relationship with God.

#### **1. "apart from law"**

The righteousness of God is not obtained on the basis of our obedience to God's Law. Why not? Because not one of us keeps the Law of God perfectly—which is what God requires if we are to be justified by our obedience to the Law (Gal 3:10).

#### **2. "a righteousness of God ... has been made known"**

The righteousness of God expresses His "perfect purity." Righteousness for us is exact conformity to this perfect purity of God. If we take the context into account and the fact that

justification by faith is being explained here, the "righteousness of God" means a perfect purity that comes from God or is given by God.

3. *"to which the Law and the Prophets testify"*

In the Hebrew mind, the two primary divisions of the Old Testament were the Law and the Prophets. In both we find God's revelation speaking of this righteousness obtained apart from our obedience. In other words, the whole Bible testifies to this profound truth.

4. *"this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe"*

Faith is the means by which we obtain this righteousness. The object of our faith must be Jesus Christ, because He is the One who died in our place, paying the penalty of sin. He alone was able to pay for our sin in full, because He is the perfect Son of God. This is why it is essential to put our faith in Him.

5. *"for there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*

All of us need this righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. There are no exceptions, because we have all sinned and our sin has caused us to fall far short of God's perfection that reflects His true glory.

6. *"being justified freely by his grace"*

The perfect righteousness required to be right with God is imputed to us when we believe. It is a gift given because of the gracious character of God, not because we deserve it. It is a gift in the truest sense; not deserved, not expected, but accepted.

7. *"through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus"*

In love, God wanted to impart this gift of forgiveness and righteousness to us, but His holiness required that the penalty of sin, which is death, be paid. So Jesus Christ came and died in our place, paying our penalty. As a result, He fulfilled the righteous requirement for God to forgive us and to declare us as righteous in His eyes. The redemption from sin was the price paid to purchase our justification.

## B. The Great Exchange

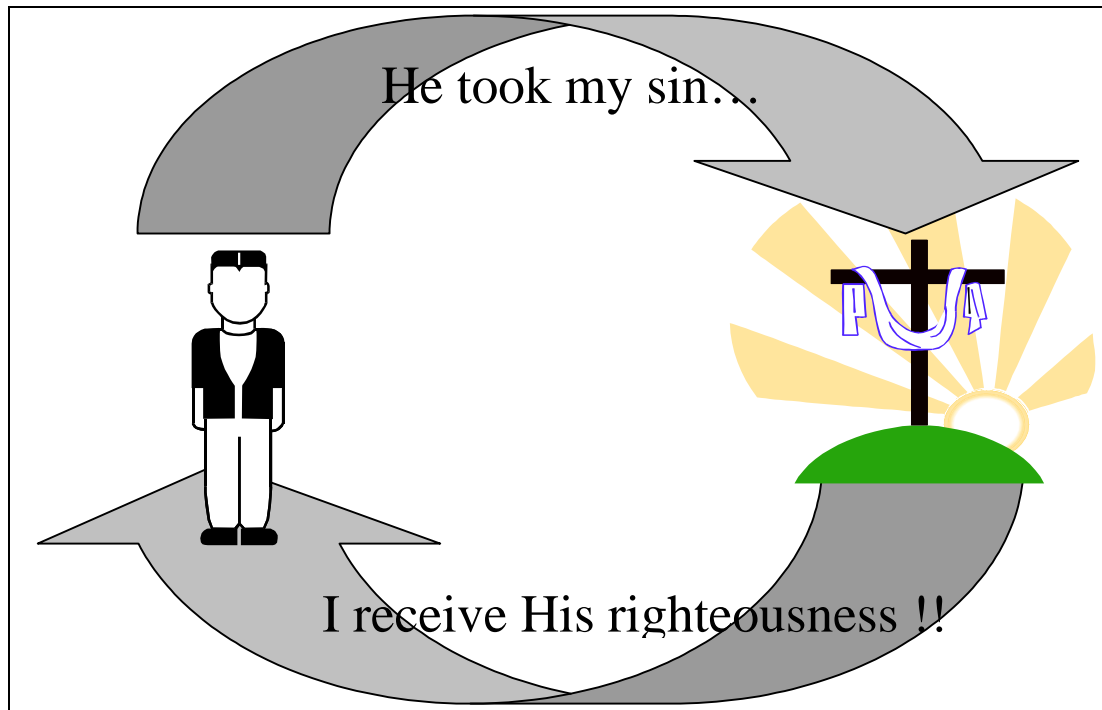
In summary, justification is **the gracious act of God in which He causes a great exchange to take place**. As a sinner approaches God in repentance and faith, God removes the guilt of his or her sin and gives it to Christ. He also takes Christ's perfect righteousness and gives it to the new believer. The result is that the new believer's sin is completely forgiven and he or she receives from Christ the perfect righteousness needed to stand righteous before God (2Co 5:21, Is 61:10, Ro 4:3-5, 8:1, Eph 4:22-24).

Revelation 20:12 speaks of a day when God will open the books that contain the records of our lives and He will judge us according to our deeds. What do you think we will find in our books? The prophet Isaiah explains that under the judgment of a holy God, "all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). Most people will be surprised to discover that their books contain long records of sin. However, when we look at Jesus' life, we see that He was perfectly obedient to God for he lived a righteous life without sinning (Hebrews 4:15).

When we repented of our sins and accepted, by faith, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God took away our sins and gave them to Christ. He then took Christ's righteousness and gave it to us. The result is that our record of sin was given to Christ, and Christ's record of righteousness was given to us. **Justification can be pictured as the exchange of our "record of sin" for Jesus Christ's "record of righteousness."**

The Great Exchange illustration (Fig. 1.2) helps us understand justification by faith.

**Fig. 1.2 The Great Exchange**



### III. THE CRUCIAL ISSUES OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

#### A. We Cannot Justify Ourselves

Observing these key aspects of justification as a whole, there is an important truth that is woven through these ideas. When we are told that justification is a righteousness given apart from our obedience to the Law, that it is given through faith in Jesus Christ, that it is given to sinners by God's grace, and that it is paid for by the redemption of Christ... all of these ideas express the truth that man has nothing to do with this righteousness.

Explaining the true nature of justification, Martin Luther has rightly described it as "**passive righteousness**", because we have nothing to do with producing it. Jesus Christ earned this righteousness for us and we may only receive it by faith. This truth is the foundation of man's **justification before God and this is where true Christianity finds its great difference with all other religions, as well as with the false forms of Christianity.** This is also where we have the greatest difficulty ourselves, because justification by faith expresses to us the degree of our true sinfulness and our infinite need for grace. It tells us that to be righteous before God, we must look outside ourselves because we do not have this righteousness, and we must humbly accept the only means through which we may be right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the key issue of justification. If we think that we can stand righteous before God by anything other than the provision of Christ, then we grossly miscalculate the true holiness of God and the depths of our own true sinfulness. How can we think that we are worthy in ourselves to have peace with a perfectly holy God? This is the worst kind of arrogant presumption because it reduces God to the level of sinful man and lifts up corrupt man to the level of a perfect God.

#### B. We Cannot Take Credit for What God has Done

In giving his life, Jesus paid the penalty for all lawbreakers. Because of who Jesus is, we can trust God to justify us. Not fully trusting in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as the basis of our forgiveness and our relationship with God is insulting to God to say the least.



**Example:**

Consider a man who has done a terrible crime, and is awaiting the penalty of death. As he is waiting, one of his friends goes to the judge and asks for his pardon. The judge replies, "I will let him go, if you give me your son to die in his place." The friend says, "This is ridiculous. How could I ever do this?" But the judge says, "This is the only way that I will let him go free." After much agony, the father decides he will sacrifice his son for the friend...knowing it is the only way. In obedience, the son goes to the judge and agrees to die in the place of his father's friend. The next day the judge executes the son and sets the man free.

Soon after this, the father happens to overhear a conversation between the released prisoner and a friend. When asked, "How were you set free from your penalty of death?" the released man replies, "Well, while I was in prison I kept myself clean, behaved well, and did what the guards asked. Then they let me go because of my good behavior."

How do you think this man responded to what his friend said? How could this man think that his behavior had anything to do with his release after his son had given his life for him?

It is not because of our behavior, or even the greatness of our repentance, that God forgives us of our sins. Even though God's Word teaches that true faith will be demonstrated by our love for and obedience to God, we should not confuse this with the truth that God has pardoned our sin solely because He is loving and gracious, giving His only Son to die in our place on the cross. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sin, and it is His sacrifice that bought our freedom from God's wrath.

### **C. We Must Trust God Completely**

Those who believe in religion, and therefore in justification by works, build their relationships with God on their obedience to Him. The problem then is, their conscience keeps telling them that they aren't doing a very good job of obeying Him, and therefore it convicts them that they have no right to believe that God overlooks their sin or will pardon it without justice. This creates a crisis, in which they either conclude that they are not so bad (searing the conscience), or that if they do something that pleases God, God will overlook their sin (compromising the true righteousness of God).

Even Christians face this problem. Our conscience tells us that we do a poor job of pleasing God. **At this point, we are tempted to turn to false cures to soothe our conscience and solve the problem of sin.** Sometimes we try to soothe it by thinking that we are not as bad as someone else is; therefore, we must not be very bad. Or we seek to do much better, trying to make up for our failure. This is a very subtle error because resolving to obey God better is not wrong. But what we are inclined to do is base our relationship with God on our performance, on religion instead of on the Gospel. We commit a critical error when we shift the basis of our trust in salvation away from the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and onto our performance or obedience. This wrong thinking can cause us to hide from our real sinfulness or become discouraged, and even depressed.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we live the Christian life, we cannot move our faith away from the forgiveness and righteousness Jesus Christ earned for us. The death of Jesus on the cross paid the penalty and allows us to stand just before God. Justification by faith must remain the foundation of our relationship with God. The cross is our only hope for peace with Him. There is no other place that sinners, even justified sinners, can meet God except at the cross.

Building our life upon justification by faith in Jesus Christ should set us free to serve God in bold ways, not because we always obey God perfectly, but because we have the confidence that our relationship with God is built upon Christ's work for us. Justification is not a matter of our own personal effort—but instead is by grace through faith. Justification by faith puts grace before our obedience, which is the way God relates to us in Christ. As we learn that our relationship with God always has been and always will be—based upon His grace, and as we trust in the finished work of His Son, we realize how truly great His love is. We have been saved by grace, and we can only live by grace.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- Can you simply, yet clearly, define justification by faith?
- What does it mean when we describe justification by faith as a “passive righteousness”?
- In our daily walk with the Lord, why is it so hard for we who began in grace to continue in grace, trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross?
- How does justification by faith affect the way you relate to God and the way you think He relates to you?

## **ACTION PLAN**

Teach someone else the meaning of justification by faith, and then have him write out the definition on his own. Bring what they have written to the next training session.

SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

LESSON 2

# Living by the Gospel

## REJECTING SELF RELIANCE

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the church planter see the importance of faith rooted in Christ as the means for spiritual growth.

### ☛ Main Points

- The Gospel is central in personal spiritual growth
- We must reject depending on ourselves for our growth in Christ and our success in ministry.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each church planter should:

- Know how understanding the Gospel effects on-going Christian growth.
- Be more aware of his need for Christ and grow in humble dependence upon Him.
- Understand the difference between living by his own strength and living by faith in Christ and His accomplishments on the cross.

## INTRODUCTION

Most Christians clearly understand that our justification before God is by faith alone. But what does that doctrine mean in our lives from that point on? What should the Gospel mean to those who received it long ago? Many Christians are confused on these points. Many consider concepts related to salvation such as justification by faith to be of little value once one has been a Christian for many years. They may even be tempted to replace these very important teachings in ways that exalt rule keeping and self-reliance. In this lesson, we will explore how the Gospel impacts even a mature Christian while looking at the biblical warnings against replacing the Gospel with anything else.

## I. DISTRACTIONS FROM THE GOSPEL

One of the earliest epistles that Paul wrote was to the churches he planted on his first missionary journey in the region of Galatia. These Christians were confused about how they were justified before God, as well as about how they grew as Christians, also known as sanctification. In addition, they had lost their sense of joy in Christ (Gal 4:15), and were attacking one another (Gal 5:15).

Certainly Paul was sad about the condition of these newly planted churches. Paul opened his letter to them with a strong rebuke for what had happened. He says, "I am astonished at how quickly you turned away ... to a different gospel" (Gal 1:6-7). Later, Paul wonders if he wasted his time on them (Gal 4:11). In Paul's frustration, he even calls the Galatians "foolish" (Gal. 3:1,3).

Paul understood that the Galatians had stopped living in dependence on Christ. He says that they had become "bewitched" (Gal 3:1). This word expresses the idea of "being fascinated" with something. They had been led to believe that they were justified by observing the law. They had turned the Christian life into a stage performance rather than a living dependence on Christ (Gal 4:10-11). They had begun to seek God's favor through obedience to the law and not through the Gospel (Gal 3:1-5). In doing so, they were cutting themselves off from their true source of strength. They had been drawn away from Christ.

This is the reason Paul rebuked the Galatian Christians. They were confused about how growth took place in their lives. They became "bewitched" by the rules and rituals of a religious life and their focus

came off Christ and onto themselves. They had turned to attaining justification through good works, which is really self-reliance, and thus they did not understand their ongoing need for Christ.

## II. THE DANGERS OF SELF RELIANCE

Like the Galatians, we can be drawn away from Christ and the cross. Our lives often reflect a lack of dependence on Christ coupled with an underestimation of the power of sin. For example, we may turn the Christian life into a performance. We attend all the prescribed weekly church services and outwardly, everything looks good, at least in the eyes of others. But even as we participate in these activities, we can become bored with the preaching of God's Word and our worship can become mere lip service. Inside, there is little faith and love for God, but what is really alarming is that we hardly notice this change taking place within us.

This is the subtle and fatal danger that Paul was directly confronting in Galatians 3. It is deadly, because our life becomes a surface Christianity in which we are concerned only about appearances while we are dying inside. It is like a man who has cancer but does not know it, and the cancer cells are spreading and killing everything that they come in contact with. One day he starts to feel bad and he goes to the doctor only to find out that it is too late.

Another example is wrongly thinking that we can handle sin in our own strength. For example, a man may think that he can entertain lustful desires in his heart. "After all," he tells himself, "desires do not dictate behavior." He convinces himself that lust is a minor offense that he can afford... unlike adultery, a sin he would never commit. He believes that he has mastered the sin within him, but the reality is that entertaining a sin, *any* sin, separates him from closeness with God. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus clearly states, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Like cancer, sin is a deadly disease. We should not be foolish and think that we can ignore this disease or overcome it through self-effort or by outward conformity to the commandments we find in the Bible. If we continue to rely upon these weak means to overcome sin, it will kill us.

## III. THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL IN PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

It is through our failure to live the Christian life in our own strength that we discover our weakness and the importance of walking by faith in Christ. Several times in Galatians 3:2-5, Paul uses the preposition "by" to express the means through which something is obtained. First, he refers to the beginning of the Christian life and the promise of the Holy Spirit, and he asks, "Did you receive the Spirit *by* observing the law, or *by* believing what you heard?" (Gal 3:2). In other words, how did we receive the Spirit? How did our Christian lives begin? According to Paul, it was "by faith" in the Gospel (Gal 3:8). He then moves on to how the Christian grows, also referred to as the doctrine of "sanctification." He asks, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Gal 3:3). In other words, if we could not begin the work ourselves but had to believe God and trust in the work of His Spirit, why do we think that we can now perfect the work by our own effort? Then he asks a final, very poignant question. "Does God give his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" (Gal 3:5). We must think about this last question carefully, because the Bible clearly teaches that in our obedience we experience God's blessings.

Notice the contrast Paul is making. He contrasts *obedience* with *faith* as the means through which God works. We were not saved by obedience, but by grace through faith. Furthermore, not only is faith the means through which we are justified; it is the means through which we are sanctified. We grow through faith in the Gospel and as we accept Christ's accomplishments for us and in us through faith. In both our justification and our sanctification we are called to live by faith.

Trusting in our own resources is perhaps the best practical description of unbelief, but we are called to stop depending on our own resources and to live by faith. God calls us to abandon the pursuit of self-righteousness. We do not have any righteousness but that given to us through our union with Christ. Faith humbly admits our need and looks outside ourselves to Christ and accepts the forgiveness and perfect righteousness He has to offer.

**Example:**

During the Protestant Reformation, Luther and Erasmus were debating about what best portrays our salvation and our need for grace. Erasmus admitted that sin had made man sick, but he went on to say that our need for grace is more like a young toddler who is learning to walk. A person is able to take some steps to God, but sometimes he also needs His heavenly Father to catch him and help him along. Luther was repulsed by such a little need for grace and told Erasmus that he was most assuredly wrong. He said that our salvation is more like a caterpillar that is completely surrounded by a ring of fire. Unless someone reaches down and rescues the caterpillar, it will certainly perish.

Our need for grace in salvation is absolute. God's perfect holiness demands justice upon man who is full of sin. We must completely abandon any hope in our own righteousness and cling to Jesus Christ or we will surely perish. God must rescue us like the caterpillar. But God also calls us to this same abandonment in our sanctification. We have to keep going to the truth of the Gospel and finding our righteousness in Christ if we are going to draw near to God. His holiness will keep exposing our sin to the core, and if we don't believe that we stand justified before God because of our faith alone in the righteousness of Christ given to us, we will be devastated with God's holiness. And if we think that we can cure this disease of sin inside of us by our own strength, we are deceived in measuring the power of sin. Faith is the complete abandonment of our own resources, because we see our woeful weakness. As we sense our great need, faith clings to Christ and all the benefits He alone can provide for us. The more we grow in faith, the more we will seek to attach ourselves to Jesus and seek the life and power which He alone can give.

#### **IV. THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL IN MINISTRY**

How does this apply to the way God relates to you in terms of ministry to others? Many believers live with the idea that the results of their ministry depend on our how well they perform or how much of God's favor rests on them at any given moment. Reasons for ministry success or failure are numerous. But because of the way that God loves us and because of the nature of the Gospel, success in ministry depends more on God's power than on our performance.

As example, let's compare two days in your life. One Saturday you get up and go to a prayer meeting as is your custom. On the way out, you have a brief but pleasant conversation with your neighbor. You go on to have a wonderful day in which God's presence is obvious in many ways. On the way home, you have an opportunity to share the Gospel with someone, and so you share Christ and His salvation with him. The next Saturday is quite a bit different. You wake up late, miss the prayer meeting, and speak unkindly to your neighbor on your way out. In general, the day is filled with confusion and God does not seem to be near. You begin to feel badly about what you have done, but to your surprise, you have another opportunity to share the Gospel with someone. The question is, would you pass by the opportunity because you feel like you are unworthy to share the Gospel with this person? Do you think that it is possible for God to bless you on a bad day? If not, then why not?

Our worst days are never so bad that we are beyond God's grace, and our best days are never so good that we are not in need of God's grace.

We often think that while we are saved by grace, we either receive or lose God's blessing based upon our performance. But we must understand that if justification by faith in Jesus Christ is the basis of our relationship with God, our worst days are never so bad that we are beyond God's grace, and our best days are never so good that we are not in need of God's grace. We are always in need of grace.

#### **V. LEARNING TO ROOT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST**

God's solution to our inability to please Him in our own strength is not that we try harder. His solution is that we believe more strongly the truths of the Gospel. By believing these truths, we begin to root our lives in Christ.

Often, when we face a barrier in life or some difficult responsibility, we begin to strategize and think of ways in which we can accomplish the task. We often avoid difficult situations, because we cannot imagine how we can do something. The whole concern here is with our own ability.

What happens to us when we are surprised one day with the true sinfulness of our heart? Although we may prefer that our sin remain concealed, God is working to expose our sin. Now and then, even we are shocked by the greatness of our sin. What do we do when this happens? We might want to do a couple of weeks of penance. Or we might start hating ourselves because of our sinfulness. Not until we have suffered awhile do we go to God and confess our sin to Him.

Do you see what is happening? We are trying to atone for our sin through suffering. This is the principle behind penance. We try to make ourselves worthy of God's forgiveness. When we do this, we are resorting to our own resources.

**Example:**

On August 21, 1544, Martin Luther wrote to one of his faithful and trusted friends, George Spalatin. Spalatin had given some advice that he later came to regard as sinful. When he reached this conclusion, he was immersed in grief and guilt. He was convinced that he should have known better and that he, of all people, should not have made this mistake. He could not be consoled. When Luther learned of his condition, he wrote to offer him comfort, saying, "... my faithful request and admonition is that you join our company and associate with us, who are real, great, and hard-boiled sinners. You must not by any means make Christ to seem paltry and trifling to us, as though He could be our Helper only when we want to be rid of imaginary, nominal, and childish sins. No! No! That would not be good for us. He must rather be a Savior and Redeemer for real, great, grievous, and damnable transgressions and iniquities, yea, and from the greatest and most shocking sins; to be brief, from all sins added together in a grand total..." From: *Martin Luther Companion to the Contemporary Christian*.

Have we become small sinners who only need a small Savior or are we real sinners who need a real Savior? Faith connects us to Jesus, and to be connected to Jesus means that we are disconnected from everything else. We cannot add to what Christ has done for us. As one man has said, "Anything we add to Christ's work pollutes it. It becomes like the smell of a skunk at a beautiful sunset. It is a nice scene, but you just don't want to be there."

This is especially true for those with whom we live and who see our real selves. If we try to add our righteousness to Christ's, we become self-righteous and impatient with others. If we live by our own strength, our relationships are very self-serving. We never truly change.

## CONCLUSION

The Gospel must remain central in our walk with Christ. Replacing the Gospel with some other system of justification destroys the value of our salvation. Jesus Christ's accomplishments on the cross fully benefit only those who forsake all other systems of justification and become men and women of faith rooted in Christ. Shifting our confidence from Christ's accomplishment to our own accomplishments and rule keeping, or to anything else, only produces a false righteousness.

The problem is that we too often do not sense our need. Where there is no sense of need, there is no faith. And where there is no faith, there is no dynamic connection to Christ, and His life in us begins to evaporate. Our growth comes as we learn how to abandon our own resources and begin to walk with a faith that is rooted in Christ. It is then that we discover what God so wants us to see: that we need Christ far more than we imagine. It is through our need for Christ that God stimulates our faith.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- How had the Galatian believers fallen away from the Gospel?
- Are you losing your sense of joy in Christ? If so, why?
- How does the Gospel apply to us as believers?
- What is the difference between self-effort and faith?
- How does living by faith impact our daily thoughts and actions in life?

SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

3

LESSON

# Christian Growth

## MAKING CHRIST THE FOCAL POINT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to see that the cross must become the focal point of our lives if we are to truly grow.

### ☛ Main Points

- There are many misunderstandings concerning spiritual growth.
- The cross plays a critical role in spiritual growth.
- Our misunderstandings hinder growth.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Be a Christian who glories in Christ.
- Know that to grow, he must focus upon the cross- relating all of life to the work of Christ.
- Lay his self-reliance at the feet of Christ and, by faith, claim the power that only his risen Savior can provide.

## INTRODUCTION

In this spiritual character track, we seek to build a foundation for dynamic Christian living. This critical area cries out for attention as we see church leaders become spiritually shipwrecked because of one sin or another. How can we ourselves keep from being shipwrecked? How can our love for God grow strong and not become cold? How can we grow in our faith, so that we have a vital, living relationship with Jesus Christ?

We would like to present a picture of how a Christian grows to have a greater love for God and a living faith that enables him to spiritually lead the Church of Jesus Christ. Specifically, we will learn how to make the cross of Jesus Christ the focal point of spiritual life.

## I. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

**Spiritual growth is the continuing work of God in the life of the believer, making him or her actually holy.** The word holy means here "bearing an actual likeness to God." As we grow as a Christian, our moral condition is brought into conformity with our legal status before God (as believers, we are declared righteous). Spiritual growth is a continuation of what was done in salvation, when a new life was conferred upon and instilled within the believer.

Notice the several facets of our growth. The Holy Spirit regenerated us so that we might become transformed into the likeness of God. But this transformation is an ongoing process, and this process is advanced through a cooperative work between God and the Christian. We are told in Philippians 2:12-13, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, to will and to act according to His good purpose." Here we see the partnership we must enter into with God. We cannot be passive and think that God alone will produce His likeness in us. We must be active as well. We must "work." But this work is not to gain God's acceptance; rather it is the expression of our understanding and grateful acknowledgment of the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ and our adoption as children of God.

Many illustrations and diagrams have been used to explain the process of spiritual growth.

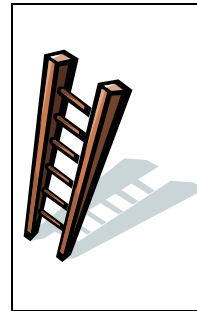
### A. The Ladder or Stairs

Many believers view spiritual growth as a ladder or as a set of stairs that we climb. When we are really spiritual, we consider ourselves to be high on the ladder. However, when we are not spiritual, we are low on the ladder.

### B. The Dying of the old self

Others view spiritual growth as a process of exchanging the old sinful self for the new man created in Christ. As the old man dies, the new man comes into being. When that happens, the person grows spiritually.

Diagrams such as this are not necessarily wrong, but as we will see, there is a better way to understand spiritual growth.



## II. THE ROLE OF THE CROSS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

### A. Growing in Knowledge of God's Holiness

The first part of the growth process involves growing in knowledge of God. The Lord declares through the prophet Jeremiah, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for in these I delight, declares the Lord" (Jer 9:23,24). In John 17:3 Jesus says, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent."

Knowing God is the purpose and meaning of eternal life. The chief pursuit of the Christian life should be to know God in truth. Therefore, when we continually grow to know Him in all His greatness, we grow to be like Him. The key to knowing God is understanding His holy character. We learn to feel as the Apostle Paul did when he said, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Php 3:8a). This is part of the sanctification process.

### B. Learning to Recognize Our Sin

As we grow in our knowledge of God in all His perfection, we grow to know ourselves as well. In particular, we come to know our sinfulness in contrast to the perfect character of God. The nearer we draw to God, the further we see that we are from Him. The more glorious we understand He truly is, the more terrible our sin becomes to us.

Growing in understanding one's own sinfulness can be illustrated in the life of Paul, the apostle. In AD 55 Paul described himself as "the least of the apostles" (1Co 15:9). Later in AD 60 Paul describes himself as "the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). Still later, in the end of his life in AD 64, he describes himself as "chief of all sinners" (1Ti 1:15). Did Paul become a greater sinner as he matured? It certainly does not seem that way. But, it does seem that he developed more and more humility and sensitivity concerning his sin throughout his life. As he matured, he came to realize that some of his own attitudes that did not bother him previously were actually sinful. This is part of the spiritual growth process.

### C. The Resulting Gap

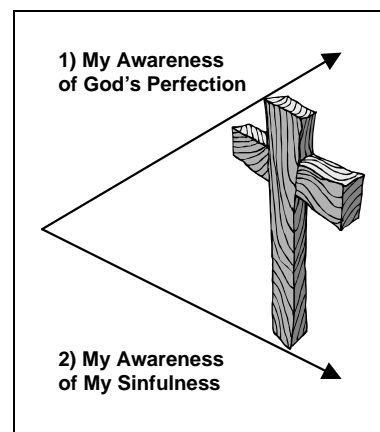
Realization of the gap that exists between sinful man and Holy God was, of course, what brought us to faith in Jesus in the first place. The cross fills the gap whenever a person is saved (figure 3.1).



But even after we come to know Christ as Savior, we should still continue to grow in our knowledge of God's holiness and in the awareness of our own sinfulness. This can be a very fearful experience. To know God and His holiness is to invite self-exposure, and this is a terrifying experience for those who wish to hide their faults and shortcomings. However, for the growing Christian, the gap shows the continued need for Christ and the magnitude of what He has done on the cross.

So the cross continues to increase in importance to us as we grow to know God in His greatness. The greater we know God, the more we feel unworthy before Him. As this knowledge grows, we see the significance of our forgiveness and reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. As we discover the greatness of God, (as Isaiah did when he saw the glory of the Lord in the Temple, or as the nation Israel did when they met God at Mount Sinai), we discover the true glory of our Savior. His blood washes sinners clean and clothes us with white garments so that we may draw even closer to this God of glory.

**Figure 3.1**



### III. HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Having at some point accepted the fact that Jesus paid the price to bridge the gap, we strive to move on in our Christian growth. Many Christians have one of two basic problems growing in their faith.

#### A. Phariseeism—the problem of pride

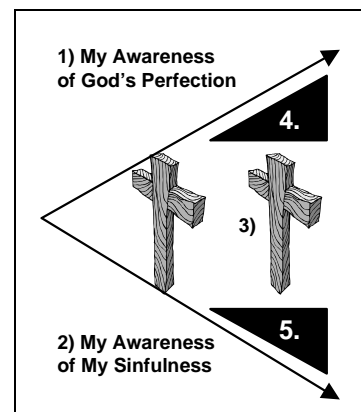
Many believers get caught up in actions and thus fall into the trap of seeking to gain acceptance from God and others through performance. Often, the focus shifts off of the work of Christ on the cross onto their service to God. Like the Pharisees in New Testament times, they live as if the Christian life consists only of what we do for God.

The problem here is that they don't realize that there are other, even more important aspects of the Christian life than service, such as knowing God and having a personal relationship with Him (Lk 10:38-42). Modern day Pharisees falsely believe that they can close the gap that exists between themselves and God with their own good works. Pride, or a desire to look good in the eyes of others, may motivate this. Performance becomes the foundation upon which these people build their reputations.

Sin also influences the modern Pharisee in other ways. He/she may think that his sin does not matter to God (*notice wedge number 4 in figure 3.2*). In such a case, the importance of the cross is diminished. What he is actually doing here is reducing God in his mind to be less than He truly is. Others may think, "I'm not really *that* big of a sinner!" These people put a wedge (*number 5 in figure 3.2*) in the bottom space beneath the cross. Isn't it much easier to see someone else's sin than our own sin? Why is this? Is it true that we have less of a problem with sin than others do? If we think this, we are deceiving ourselves. Because we think too highly of ourselves, again the importance of the cross diminishes.

In order to avoid the pharaseeism, we must grow in understanding of the true holiness of God and the true sinfulness of our own hearts. Seeing this will humble us and reveal our need for God's grace.

**Figure 3.2**



## **B. Despair—Lack of belief**

Others have a different struggle. They recognize God's holiness, and thus their own sinfulness, and they despair because they do not know what to do about it. They try to fill the gap with good works, but they feel that they can never do enough good works to really please God. They may strive to spend time in God's Word each day, but on days that they fail, they feel terribly defeated about their walk with God. They try to keep their tongues in check, but when they fail, they wonder how God could really love them. Because of all their failures, they conclude that they can never please God. Thus they despair.

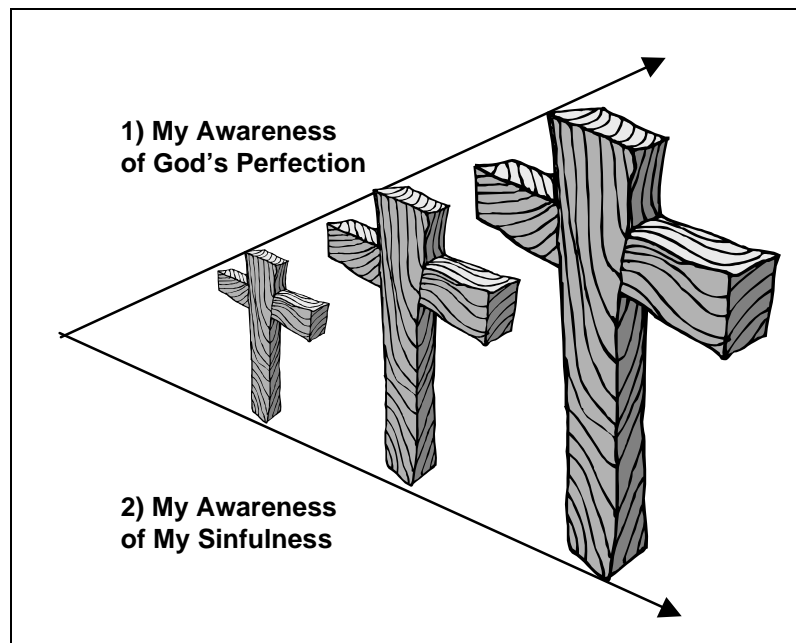
The problem here is a lack of faith in what God has done. God has provided all we need to be acceptable before Him in the sacrifice of Christ Jesus (Heb 10:14). We cannot add to what he has done.

## **C. The Answer: The Cross must grow**

The two problems described above are really similar to one another. The Pharisee incorrectly believes he can earn God's favor with his own works while the one who despairs correctly knows he cannot earn God's favor by his works. But in both cases the standard is wrong. The focus on earning God's favor is the foundational problem.

Since the problems are similar, the solutions are quite the same. Basically, in order for the gap to be closed, the cross must grow. Nothing we do can bridge the gap. As Paul said, "But God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14a). Jesus Christ and His work on the cross become more and more important to us.

**Figure 3.3 - The Growing Cross**



We must believe the new realities of our life in Jesus Christ. Though we are still prone to sin, God is gracious and forgives our sin. We stand perfectly righteous in Christ only because of His work on the cross. We have become children of the living God and are loved by Him. He delights in us and is committed to making us into the image of Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

The cross is our only hope for peace with Him. There is no other place that sinners, even justified sinners, can meet God except at the cross.

In order to grow spiritually, our focus should be on understanding more fully the realities of Christ's accomplishments on the cross rather than on trying harder. Day by day, and moment by moment, we must remember what Christ has done for us on the cross by taking away our sin and giving us new life. In this view of sanctification, we understand that our flesh remains evil until the day we die. But we also recognize the life of Christ in us.

As we grow in knowing God, we are also being changed more and more into His image. Our inability to do this on our own becomes clear and we develop total dependence on Christ. The Gospel becomes much more relevant to us, and our need for Christ becomes much greater. We understand more deeply what we first believed. We remind ourselves of the truths of the Gospel. By faith we are making the accomplishments of Christ's death and resurrection more of a reality in our lives.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What is spiritual growth? How is it related to salvation?
- How do you grow in holiness? Describe the process in daily terms and how you have learned that the accomplishments of Christ apply to this process.
- What is your greatest difficulty concerning your spiritual growth?
- List the accomplishments of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Write a description of how you can make these accomplishments more of a reality in your lives.

## **ACTION PLAN**

Describe to one other person what you have learned about growth in holiness and explain to them how you apply the accomplishments of Christ to your daily life. Give a specific example of changes in your life as a believer as a result of your understanding of sanctification.



SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

LESSON 4

# The Transforming Power of the Gospel

## FREEDOM FROM THE MASTERY OF SIN

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain how we were set free from the mastery of sin as we were united to Christ, in His death and resurrection, so that we might experience the power of the Gospel in our lives as we walk by faith in this new reality.

### ☞ Main Points

- Our salvation means we have been transformed internally.
- Because of our new nature in Christ we have the power to overcome sin.
- God wants us to walk in the Spirit so that we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the significance of union with Christ and the power available to render the flesh dead, no longer mastered by sin.
- Walk by faith in the personal, spiritual death and resurrection experienced in Christ and in salvation from the power of sin.

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson makes many references to Romans 6:3-10. Carefully studying these passages in preparation will enable you to teach this lesson effectively.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gospel is the foundation of our relationship with God. From God's perspective, our relationship is built solely upon Christ's forgiveness and perfect righteousness given to us by faith. This truth should bring the ability to conquer sin in our lives resulting in profound personal transformation. Yet most of us still struggle with sin and sometimes wonder how we can be transformed today. Why do believers sin? And, what can be done about it? How can we be truly transformed according to the Gospel?

## I. THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE PRACTICE OF SIN

### A. Can We Go on Sinning?

If God's grace truly abounds beyond all our sin and we are justified by faith apart from our obedience, can we go on practicing sin? If God's grace is offered to those who don't even deserve it but receive it because of their faith in Jesus Christ, it is only natural to ask this question. May we go on sinning and expect God's grace to cover it?

The apostle Paul anticipated this question in his letter to the Galatians when he said, "Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature" (Gal 5:13). And this is the very question Paul responds to in Romans 6 when he asks, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Ro 6:1b, 2).

## B. The Biblical Answer

The answer to this question is clearly "no", we shall not go on sinning. We understand this and try hard not to sin. Self-discipline and rules become the norm for the serious Christian who wants to avoid sinning. But the real corrective for sin is related to the inner transformation of the believer.

As we study Paul's answer in Romans 6, we understand not only why we cannot go on practicing sin, but also discover the new freedom we have from the power of sin. This is a vital part of victorious Christian living. In our salvation, God has provided the solution to our two most fundamental needs: He has delivered us from the penalty of sin, reconciling us to Himself, and He has delivered us from the power of sin, that we might live in true freedom to love Him. Romans 6:1-2 instructs us that we cannot continue in the practice of sin, as we did before we were Christians, because we have "died to sin."

In our salvation, God has provided the solution to our two most fundamental needs: He has delivered us from the penalty of sin, and He has delivered us from the power of sin.

## II. BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH—RAISED IN HIS RESURRECTION (RO 6:3-10)

In his letter to the Romans as he answers the question concerning sin, Paul uses baptism to illustrate the change that takes place when a person becomes a child of God. Read Romans 6:3-10 carefully.

### A. Our Death with Christ

#### 1. *How did we die?*

In Romans 6:2-5 Paul explains how we died to sin. We were united with Christ and we were baptized into His death. Before we consider our baptism into Christ's death, we ought to focus on the real issue that brought about our death to sin. It happened through our union with Christ. There are several action statements in this passage, which express the union between Christ and ourselves. In verse 3 we see that "all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized *into* His death". In verse 4, "we were . . . buried *with* Him". In verse 5, "we have been united *with* Him," and in verse 8, we have "died *with* Christ."

All of these statements make it clear that through our union *with* Christ in His death we have died ourselves. If we want to be free from the sin nature within us, we have to experience death in our inner man. When God supernaturally united us to Christ, He put to death the inner man even though the outer man continues to live.

The term "united" (*sumfutoi*<sup>5</sup> in Greek) in verse 5, ". . . *we have become united with Him* . . ." is a term that was used to describe the grafting together of two separate plants. When a foreign branch was grafted to a tree, at the time it began to take life from the tree it was said to have been *sumfutoi*, "united" with it. This was a living, organic union. This is the kind of living union that takes place when we believe in Christ. We are supernaturally united to Jesus Christ, and His life gives life to our inner man. But before we can live in freedom, we must first die, so that our inner man can be separated from the sin nature. So we are united to Christ in His death.

So, our death with Christ caused the separation between our inner man and the sin nature, which resulted in our freedom from the mastery of sin. Though the sin nature still exists, and is a very evil force within us, its mastery over us has been broken and we are no longer chained to its power. This is our certain, new reality and we must believe its truth if we are to successfully live the Christian life.

#### 2. *What happened because of our death with Christ?*

Romans 6:6 tells us what happened as a result of our death with Christ: our "old self" was crucified. The old self is simply the inner man that existed before we believed in Jesus Christ and were given new life by Him. It is the old man that was enslaved to sin. However, when we

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<sup>5</sup> συμφυτος

were united to Christ in His death, this inner man was crucified with the result that our body of sin was “done away with.” The Greek word *katarge*<sup>6</sup>, “done away with,” does not suggest annihilation, as though sin has been eliminated from within us. However, it does mean, “to render inoperative or invalid,” in that something is made ineffective by removing its power of control. Paul uses the same word in Romans 3:3 when he says that man’s unbelief does not “render inoperative” the faithfulness of God. In Romans 7:2, he says that a woman is “released” from her husband if he dies. This is the meaning in our context. We have been released from the mastery of sin because its power to control has been removed. The chains of sin have been broken and we are no longer slaves to it.

## **B. The End Result: New Life with Christ**

There is one final idea communicated in this passage that explains the transformation our inner man has gone through. We are told that we are not only united with Christ in His death, but also in His resurrection. We have not only died, but we have also been resurrected to new life. Through our union with Christ, because Christ lives, our inner man now lives. Romans 6:4 tells us that as the power of the Father was demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead, so we are made to walk in newness of life as a demonstration of this same power. The same power that raised Christ from the dead has now also raised us from the dead.

The result of all this is that something very powerful and supernatural has happened to us, and our inner man is no longer what it used to be. The old man has died and a new man lives. What kind of new man is this? In verses 6 and 7 of Romans 6 we learn that this new inner man is free from sin and no longer a slave to it. This is who we now are in Christ.

## **C. Reckoning by Faith Our New Life in Christ**

It is imperative for Christians to bring these truths into their everyday lives. We all know that sin still exists within us, and as we continue in our earthly struggle with sin, we can lose sight of our new life that truly exists in Christ. There are times when we don’t feel very free from sin, and we wonder if anything supernatural has happened in us at all. We can agree with the Apostle Paul who said, “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Ro 7:19).

This is why Paul’s closing words in Romans 6 are so important to us. Three times in this passage Paul has commanded us to “know” this truth (vv. 3, 6, 9). He wants us to understand what has truly happened to us in Christ. Then, in verse 11, Paul concludes, “*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” In this verse, the Greek word *logizomai*<sup>7</sup>, “count,” was a mathematical term used when someone was calculating a problem or counting numbers. It is used figuratively in this passage to “fully affirm” the truths that are taught here. We are being exhorted by Paul to put our confidence in and fully believe this fundamental truth about us. The old man no longer lives within us. He was a slave to sin, but he has been crucified as we have been united to Christ in His death and resurrection, and we are now transformed into new men and women. We now must affirm and believe that we have been made alive in Christ and that we have been made new creatures inside.

Our Christian life is a life in which we walk by faith in this truth. Even though we don’t perfectly experience this all the time, it does not change the reality of what has happened. We must continue every day to repent of our sin and believe that we are one with Christ, and that we now live in union with Him.

## **III. THE POWER NOT TO SIN**

According to Romans 6, because we are united to Christ, we died and were resurrected with Him. His victory over sin was our victory over sin. Sin is no longer our master. But this great Christian reality

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<sup>6</sup> καταργεω

<sup>7</sup> λογίζομαι

does not mean that sin no longer seeks to enslave us. Sin is not our master, even though it is always striving to regain its authority and power over us.

You might be thinking, "But I constantly struggle with sin. How can I beat it?" Be sure that no list of rules or self-discipline alone can lead to a victorious Christian life. We can try and try in the power of the flesh and we will eventually fail because our flesh is prone to sin. The real corrective for sin is related to the inner transformation of the believer. We fight sin by strengthening our awareness of who we are in Christ.

#### **A. Understand the New Nature**

When you became a Christian, you didn't add a divine nature to your old sinful nature. You exchanged natures—you became a new creation (2Co 5:17). You were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, when you became a child of God. "Our old self (old nature) was crucified with him" (Ro. 6:6). The old nature is powerless!

If we have a new nature, why do we sin? There's a Greek word used many, many times throughout the New Testament as a source of sin in the believer's life. It's the word flesh. What is the flesh? It's the part of our mind, emotions and will that has been conditioned or trained to sin. Habits and patterns of thinking are passed on to us by the world, by ungodly teachers, and by Satan's direct attacks. Our worldly experiences programmed our brains to live independent from God and according to the world's ways.

#### **B. Live in the Spirit**

Romans 8:5-7 contrasts those who live according to the flesh with those who live according to the Spirit. There you find that it's the mind that's set on either the flesh or the Spirit. Your flesh, which was trained by the world, generates worldly thoughts and ideas leading you to sin. As believers, we are no longer to be in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Ro 8:9, Gal 5:16). But it's possible for us to walk according to the flesh (Ro 8:12,13). Unbelievers have no choice—they walk in the flesh because they live in the flesh. But we are not obligated to the flesh... we have a choice. We must learn and choose to walk by the Spirit, not the flesh. As Paul says: "live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal 5:16).

#### **C. Identify Yourself as a Child of God**

Before knowing Christ we were sinners, but when we became God's children we became 'saints.' Are we saints or are we sinners? The answer can be difficult. But if you think of yourself as part saint and part sinner, part light and part darkness, you will continue to struggle and to live a defeated life. Having come to understand the transformation that has taken place, believers should strive to maintain the awareness of who they are in the resurrected Christ. When we face sin, we should think of ourselves as children of God. If we think of ourselves as sinners, we will tend to live like sinners. We must see ourselves as saints, as children of God, in order to live like children of God.

#### **D. Renew Your Mind**

Many sinful patterns begin with bad thought life. Sinful patterns of thinking must be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Ro 12:2). The mind is the focus of the battle against sin. 2 Corinthians 11:3 indicates that just as Eve was deceived by Satan, our minds can be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Satan influenced the minds of David, Solomon, Ananias, the Christians in Corinth, and he can influence your mind as well. He can bring his thoughts into your mind and deceive you into thinking they are your thoughts, or even God's thoughts. But we "take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ" (2Co 10:5).

#### **E. Know the Truth**

Where is sin's power? Satan, according to John 8:44, "is a liar and the father of lies." When we are tempted to sin there is always a lie behind it. But Jesus says in the same chapter, "and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:32). Our defense against sin is the



truth. By knowing our true, victorious identity as believers in Christ, we find freedom from the power of sin.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Gospel is the foundation of our relationship with God. From God's perspective, our relationship is built solely upon Christ's forgiveness and perfect righteousness given to us by faith. This truth should bring the ability to be honest about our sin before God, and the assurance of His abundant grace toward us. It should inspire us to live as righteous ones not because we have made ourselves righteous, but because that is what God, by His grace, has declared us to be.

What is truly important concerning victory over sin is a growing, dynamic faith in Christ, a faith that is founded on Christ's accomplishments on the cross, so that His power mightily works in us revealing sins and weaknesses more clearly. This faith understands and appreciates the grace of God more deeply and leads us to know God more intimately.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- How do you allow your feelings instead of your faith in God's Word to affect the way that you view your life in Christ?
- When fighting against sin, which brings more power into your life: trying harder or believing more?
- How is "count" in Romans 6:11 related to faith?
- What has happened to your sinful nature according to Paul's letter to the Romans?
- How can you live by the Spirit?



**SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER**

**5**  
**LESSON**

# Keeping a Spiritual Journal

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce journaling as a practical tool that can help believers focus on personal spiritual growth and ministry growth.

## ☛ Main Points

- Why keep a spiritual journal?
- Daily time with God
- Daily journaling

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Be able to use a journal as an effective tool to record personal devotional insights, prayer requests and answers, ministry contacts, cell group and notes, and daily reflections.

## ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

You may want to make or order a journal to hand out to participants to use during the training seminar. The Church Planter's Daily Journal from The Bible League is a very simple and useful journal (see Sources for address information).

## INTRODUCTION

In the fast pace of life, few people find the time and place to meditate upon God and his Word, and the application of it to their lives personally. Since a disciple has a desire to grow and change, he continually evaluates his life. Like King David, he asks the Lord to examine his heart and life to reveal all of his faults and sins so he may change and grow (Ps 139:23-24). There is a great need for us to take time to be still before God each day and break the bonds of busyness (Ps 46:10; 37:7).

Keeping a journal will be a great help to you throughout the church planting process. The following lesson describes elements of a church planter's daily journal that you can use in your own journal keeping.

### I. WHY KEEP A SPIRITUAL JOURNAL?

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, God commanded them to take twelve stones from the river and to build a memorial. The purpose of that memorial was to serve as a reminder to the current and future generations of Israelites of God's faithfulness and power in their midst (Jos 4:1-9).

In a similar way, when we record lessons the Lord has taught us, or experiences we have had, or prayer requests and answers, they, too, serve as reminders to us of God's love and faithfulness in our lives when we face struggles or discouragement. Keeping a regular journal is one of the most effective ways for developing accountability in our spiritual growth and ministry life. A journal forces us to reflect on our lives and adjust priorities. It also helps us to grow in faith by seeing how our knowledge and understanding of God has grown over time, as well as seeing how God has answered our prayers.

Over the centuries, Christians have learned much from the journals of famous Christians such as Jonathan Edwards, Hudson Taylor, and Amy Carmichael. They have been a written testimony of how God has lived in relationship to a particular person and an encouragement of the intimate relationship we can have with Him as well.

In addition to being a record of our personal spiritual growth, a journal can be an effective tool in developing our ministry. If God is calling you to plant a church or be part of a church planting team, you will be involved in particular tasks—evangelism, discipleship, small group development, etc. A journal can be helpful for recording contacts made with people, insights and goals for cell group meetings, questions and concerns you want to discuss with your mentor, etc. It serves as a visible reminder of your ministry and also allows you to see how God uses you in specific ways to bring people to Himself and establish a church. A journal also provides a record that you can review with your trainer or mentor.

## II. DAILY TIME WITH GOD (FIGURE 5.1)

Figure 5.1 is a sample form for recording reflections from your daily devotional time in God's Word and then prayer requests and answers to prayer. Note the following on the form:

- **Today's Passage:** Note the Bible passage you are reading during your devotions.
- **Personal Insights:** Read the Bible passage, take time to think and pray about it. Note any insights the Holy Spirit gives you about this passage. What does the passage say? What do you observe? How can you apply this passage to your own life today?
- **Promises to Claim:** Are there any promises in this passage? Note them and thank God for these truths.
- **Commands to Obey:** Does this passage note any commands you need to obey?
- **Prayer:** List any prayer requests for which you have a particular burden and also answers to previous requests. Be as specific as possible. This will help you see God at work through your prayers.

## III. DAILY JOURNALING (FIGURE 5.1)

Figure 5.1 is a sample daily journal entry. The daily journal helps you to monitor the progress of your church planting ministry. Note the following topics you can record in your daily journal:

- **Action Plans:** Note any work you have done on your action plans. List activities accomplished for an action plan or work in progress.
- **Contacts:** List your evangelistic contacts for that day. Note the results of your time together. Did you share your testimony? How did they respond? Are they open or closed to the Gospel?
- **Meetings:** Make notes concerning any cell group, home group meeting or special function. When and where was the meeting held? Who led it? What did you do (Bible study, prayer group, showed Jesus Film to friends)? How many people attended? How many are regular attendees? Visitors? Did anybody make a commitment to Christ? Note any problems or special concerns needing further attention.
- **Reflections:** Take time to think about the day. Is there anything that stands out to you? Did you learn or observe anything about your personal life or ministry you want to note? These reflections are personal notes you make about your own life. **They do not need to be shared with anyone.** They help you to put your day in perspective and note anything the Holy Spirit is teaching you.

Figure 5.1. Daily Devotions and Daily Journal

DAILY DEVOTIONS									
<b>Today's Passage:</b> <u>1Corinthians 13</u>	<b>DAILY DEVOTIONS date:</b> _____								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Personal Insights:</b> <u>All my actions must be motivated by love. I demonstrate my love by my actions. Love always perseveres. I need to persevere in my love towards others. I need to be others-centered and not self-centered.</u></li><li>• <b>Promises to Claim:</b> <u>Now we are imperfect, but in heaven we will be perfect and will see God face to face as He really is. Now we only understand in part.</u></li><li>• <b>Commands to Obey:</b> <u>Demonstrate love according to the attributes listed in this chapter, make sure my actions are motivated by love, otherwise they are meaningless.</u></li></ul>	<b>Action Plans:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Established prayer triplet</u></li><li>• <u>Identified target area</u></li><li>• <u>Began inductive Bible Study of John 17</u></li></ul>								
<b>PRAYER</b> <b>Prayer Requests and Answers to Prayer</b>  <b>R:</b> For opportunity to share my faith with Dr. M.  <b>R:</b> For a ministry team to develop  <b>A:</b> My mother's health is much better	<b>Contacts</b> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Name</th><th>Comments</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td><u>Dr. Miller</u></td><td><u>Shared Testimony</u></td></tr><tr><td><u>Aunt Sally</u></td><td><u>Showed Jesus Film</u></td></tr><tr><td><u>Mrs. Jones</u></td><td><u>Shared testimony, Repented!</u></td></tr></tbody></table> <b>Meetings</b> <b>(cell groups, home meetings, specials)</b>  <u>Jane's house 7 p.m. Prayer triplet met. (Jane, Mary and me) Prayed for 2 hours. Agreed to meet weekly at Jane's house.</u>	Name	Comments	<u>Dr. Miller</u>	<u>Shared Testimony</u>	<u>Aunt Sally</u>	<u>Showed Jesus Film</u>	<u>Mrs. Jones</u>	<u>Shared testimony, Repented!</u>
Name	Comments								
<u>Dr. Miller</u>	<u>Shared Testimony</u>								
<u>Aunt Sally</u>	<u>Showed Jesus Film</u>								
<u>Mrs. Jones</u>	<u>Shared testimony, Repented!</u>								
	<b>Reflecting on the day</b>  <u>I am so happy about the prayer triplet. I have never really prayed consistently with others and for unbelievers before. I am excited about how God will use our prayers.</u>								

## CONCLUSION

If your trainer or mentor does not have a journal for you to use, adapt a blank exercise book to suit your purposes. The important thing is that the journal helps you to reflect on what God is teaching you through His Word and prayer and to record progress and lessons learned in your church planting ministry.

## ACTION PLAN

Throughout the church planting training cycle, keep a daily journal for devotions and ministry progress based on figure 5.1. You may want to transcribe the example in 5.1 into a notebook for your own personal use. Be prepared to show this journal to your mentor or trainer.

## SOURCES

*The Church Planter's Daily Journal.* The Bible League, 16801 Van Dam Rd., South Holland, IL 60473 USA.  
E-mail: bibleleague@xc.org



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# PRAYER

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PRAYER

LESSON 1,2

# Concert of Prayer

## PRAYING FOR REVIVAL

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### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain the concept of a concert of prayer, and to demonstrate how to use it in praying for revival.

### ☞ Main Points

- Church planting begins with revival of the believers.
- Prayer is a key element in revival.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the form of a concert of prayer.
- Be convicted about the role of personal revival in church planting.

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This is a two-hour lesson. Use it as an outline for the first concert of prayer. The majority of the lesson should be spent in actual prayer, using section II of the lesson as a guide.

## INTRODUCTION

Prayer is a vital ingredient of church planting. Without God's blessing and direction, all our best efforts will fail. For that reason each of the seminars includes a concert of prayer. The word "concert" brings to mind the idea of an organized presentation of music—whether instrumental, vocal or both. A concert always consists of more than one song but is usually arranged according to a particular theme—whether according to composer, musical type, instrument, holiday occasion, or an endless variety of relationships.

A concert of prayer is also organized to focus on a particular theme. It might involve many prayers and many people, but there is a common direction. The audience for a concert of prayer is God Himself. Therefore, it should be based on biblical themes that will be pleasing to Him.

## I. HOW TO PLAN AND LEAD A CONCERT OF PRAYER

Often Christians are stirred to prayer by participating in a dynamic prayer event that takes them beyond their previous experience. By praying with a large group of other Christians from various backgrounds and churches, believers realize that they are not alone and isolated but part of a great movement of God. They see that prayer is not a boring exercise but something exciting, faith building, and power releasing. On all five major continents of the world, prayer concerts have stimulated prayer on a large scale, promoted unity among Christians, and fueled evangelism and church planting efforts.

Concerts of prayer focus on two main biblical concepts:

- Prayer directed *inward*—asking God to reveal to His church the "fullness" of Christ as Lord in her midst. This is the idea of revival, renewal and awakening of the church.
- Prayer directed *outward*—asking God to "fulfill" His purpose through His church among all the nations. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission—world evangelization, local church evangelism, and saturation church planting.

Concerts of prayer can be organized for a local church or on an area basis involving many local churches with an emphasis on unity and working together. The following is a suggested model for a Concert of Prayer that can be adapted to your local situation. The important thing is to pray regularly and corporately.

The following are suggested elements that should be included in a concert of prayer. Plan on 2-3 hours for the prayer concert, such as an evening or afternoon. The length of each element depends on the particular goals for each concert of prayer. However, it is important to have all of the elements as part of the concert of prayer. This ensures that the concert stays focused, balanced and flows well.

#### **A. Theme**

It is helpful to develop your concert of prayer around a particular theme. This will help the concert of prayer to stay focused and allow prayers to be specific. For example, in the capital city of Kazakhstan, a concert of prayer was held around the theme of reconciliation. The celebration focused on God as the reconciler of people to, and on Christians as agents of reconciliation. During the prayer times, both Russians and Kazaks asked forgiveness for past wrongs done to each other. This prayer concert helped to create a spirit of unity and common purpose among the Russian and Kazak churches in the city.

#### **B. Agenda**

Welcome everyone and use Scripture to present the topic of the concert of prayer. What does the Word of God say about that theme? Introduce the basic components of the concert of prayer format. Explain the flow of the concert, why each component is important and how each fits. Give suggestions about being sensitive to each other—how long their prayers should be, how loud, etc.

#### **C. Celebration**

Praise God for His faithfulness, His Kingdom, His Son Jesus Christ, etc. Be sure that praise focuses on God's character. Use this time to highlight important issues in spiritual awakening and world evangelization. Provide a good mixture of hymns and choruses, making sure to tie each song into the major theme of the concert of prayer. This can be done by just a few brief comments to introduce each new item, being careful not to preach but to lead others into worship and praise.

#### **D. Confession and Preparation**

Have participants reaffirm their readiness to hear God's voice and their desire to serve the Church and the world through this ministry of intercession. Lead them in prayer for confession of any known sin, that they might be clean and ready to pray. This does not mean that the confession has to be out loud. Ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit and His leading in all that is prayed. Spend time quietly waiting on God to hear what He is saying in Scripture or through the Holy Spirit.

#### **E. Small Group Prayer**

Have participants form small groups of 2-6 people and pray about the topic as it relates to local, regional, national and international level. After the designated time for small group praying, lead in prayer for a growing prayer movement. Pray that God will daily keep all participants consistent and persistent in prayer. Pray for the emerging prayer movement in your city or town or locality. Pray for God to raise up concerted prayer in the church nationwide.

#### **F. Presentation**

Information and materials may be used throughout the prayer time to help focus and motivate those praying. Maps showing areas of need can be great visual aids. Local maps can be made showing where churches exist in the area and where there are none at all. Also maps showing where there is high unemployment, single parent families, etc. can help inspire breakthrough prayer.

## **G. Praise and Worship**

Conclude with a time of praise and worship of God for His wonderful ways. Offer yourselves to be answers to your prayers and live accordingly.

## **II. A CONCERT OF PRAYER**

The theme for this concert of prayer is revival. Revival is a renewal of the spiritual life of a believer. Revival involves a supernatural awareness, abhorrence, and confession of sin. It results in turning to God with a deeper love for Him and greater obedience to His commands.

During times of spiritual revival of the church, there is an accompanying spiritual awakening among those who have not been born again. Individuals and groups of individuals come to vital faith in Christ, new churches are born and the society is changed. This means that revival of believers is necessary for church planting.

Use the remaining lesson time to pray through the following material on revival. Allow enough time for participation on each point before moving on.

### **A. The Conditions for Revival**

Revival takes place as the Spirit of God moves in the lives of His children, convicting them of sin and calling them to repentance. Read the following verses to help each trainee remember that: "Revival starts in a heart: MY HEART."

#### *1. Loving God with All One's Heart and Total Obedience to His Commands*

- Read Deuteronomy 30:1-10.
- Sing songs of worship and praise that declare your love for the Lord.
- Have silent time for individuals to ask the Lord to show them areas of their life that are not in total obedience to His commands.

#### *2. Humbly Seeking the Lord*

*"If My people who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2Ch 7:14).*

- Together as His people, humbly seek His face.

#### *3. Acknowledging One's Sin and Guilt*

*"Return...declares the Lord, I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful. I will not be angry forever. ONLY ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR GUILT you have rebelled against the Lord your God...and have not obeyed me" (Jer 3:12-13).*

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23,24).*

- Have time for individuals to quietly confess to the Lord any known personal sin and to ask Him for cleansing (1 Jn 1:7,9).

### **B. The Role of Leadership in Revival Movements**

God has placed leaders in the Church to guide His people in paths of righteousness. Pastors and church planters should be an example to the people that they lead.

#### *1. Leaders Set an Example by Personal Repentance.*

*"Put on sackcloth, O priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God" (Joel 1:13).*

#### *2. Leaders Call God's People to Repentance.*

*"Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly; summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord" (Joel 1:14).*

- Divide into small prayer groups to pray for all of the people in that group. Pray that they might be kept from the evil one so that they may minister to the Lord in holiness. In a spirit of love and without criticism, pray for their denominational leaders, pastors, elders and deacons by name. Thank the Lord for them and ask Him to bless their personal lives, their family lives and their ministries.
- Ask God to help leaders know the steps to take in calling their people to repentance.

**C. What you can do to see a Revival / Awakening in your Land**

- Still in small groups, ask God to show you what you could and should do to begin the process of revival in your church, city and nation.
- Ask God that as He works reviving His church, He would also work in the hearts of unbelievers to bring many to repentance and faith.

**D. Praise God for His faithfulness**

- Join together again into one large group and spend the remaining time praising God for His faithfulness to accomplish the Great Commission through His Church and thanking Him for the privilege of serving Him in that task.
- Close the time concert of prayer with a hymn or chorus that reminds you of God's faithfulness.

## **ACTION PLAN**

Do an inductive study of Ezra 9:1-10:17. Include answers to the following questions:

- What was the specific sin of the people? (Ezr 9:1-2)
- What was the response of Ezra and the other leaders to this sin? (Ezr 9:3, 5; 10:1)
- What was the attribute of God on which Ezra based his hope? (Ezr 9:15)
- What was the response of the people who saw Ezra's repentance? (Ezr 10:1-4)
- How did the revival penetrate the society? (Ezr 10:9-17)
- Remember to include the application to your own life, your church and your society.
- Organize a concert of prayer for your church or small group using the pattern you have learned in this lesson.

PRAYER

3

LESSON

# How to Facilitate Prayer

## HOW TO MOBILIZE PRAYER FOR YOUR CHURCH PLANT

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help church planters understand the strategic role of prayer in church planting and to give them practical ideas on how to mobilize prayer for their church planting ministries.

### ☛ Main Points

- Prayer plays a strategic role in the church planting process.
- There are many ways to facilitate prayer support for church planting.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand how to mobilize prayer for church planting.
- Know the principle of the strategic role of prayer in church planting.
- Participate in praying and mobilizing prayer for his/her specific church planting efforts.

### ☛ Appendix

3A Prayer Triplets

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

This is a workshop lesson. Review the key verses identified in section I and then talk with students about ideas for mobilizing prayer for church planting. What strategies have they tried in mobilizing prayer for their own ministries? Share experience from your own personal or ministry life, showing how prayer undergirds church planting.

## I. PRAYER—A VITAL ASPECT OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING

The apostle Paul believed that prayer was a vital aspect of evangelism and church planting. He prayed and encouraged the early Christians to pray for the advance of the Gospel. We see examples throughout the New Testament Scriptures:

- In talking about his desire for the Jews to receive the Gospel, Paul tells the believers in Rome, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved" (Ro 10:1).
- When Paul warned the Ephesian Christians of the spiritual battle they were to engage in, he told them to put on the whole armor of God and to stand against the devil's schemes. Standing against the devil's schemes involved understanding God's truth about salvation, using the Word of God as a sword, and continuous prayer. Paul urged the Ephesian believers 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" (Eph 6:18).
- In regard to the advance of the Gospel, Paul specifically asked believers, "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given to me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel... Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should" (Eph 6:19-20).
- Paul wrote a similar message to the believers in Colossae: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains" (Col 4:2-4).

- Paul also told the church in Thessalonica, "...pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th 3:1-3).

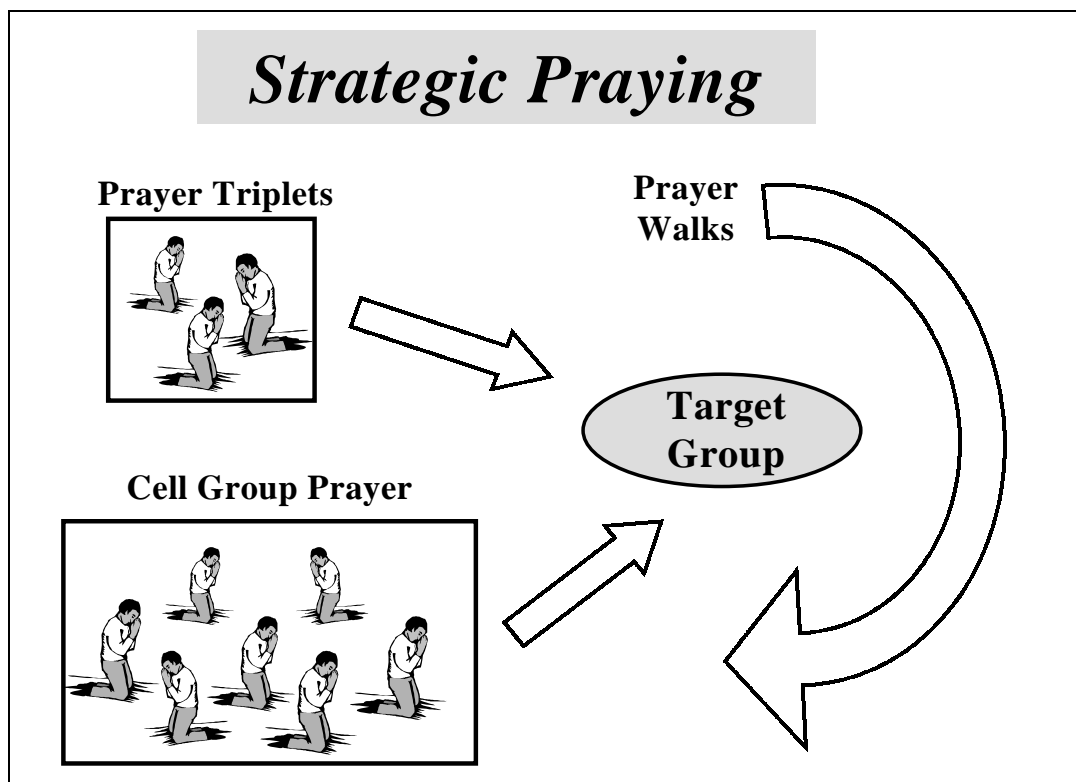
It is clear from these passages that the early Christians prayed strategically for the spread of the Gospel and against the evil influences which hinder the Gospel from advancing.. These same prayer needs still exist today. In developing and implementing a church planting strategy, **take prayer seriously**. Do nothing without prayer. Your saturation church planting ministry must be born out of prayer and then continuously be bathed in prayer from start to finish.

## II. HOW TO INTEGRATE PRAYER WITH EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING

In the previous section, we saw that the apostle Paul viewed prayer as a vital aspect of evangelism and church planting. What are practical ways in which you can involve believers in praying for your church planting ministry? Several ideas are discussed in this section. The essential points for mobilizing prayer for church planting are:

- Ask God to lead you to people with a burden for your target area.
- Be committed to good information dissemination between your church planting work and your prayer team.
- Encourage regular, specific, concentrated prayer *for* the Gospel to penetrate the hearts of people living in your target area and *against* evil influence which keep people in bondage to Satan and which hinder the advance of the Gospel in your target area.

**Figure 3.1 Forms of Strategic Prayer**



### A. Cell Group Prayer

As will be discussed in the cell group lessons, cell groups are a place where people can encounter Christ in His Word and in the lives of believers in the cell group. Cell groups are intended to grow and multiply and at each cell group meeting, time should be spent praying for non-Christian friends,

relatives and colleagues of cell group members. Cell groups may also want to prayer walk in their community and pray for special evangelistic events. Cell group leaders can keep people informed of special events for which to pray (Refer to Manual 2 Cell Group Lesson 4, "Cell Group Evangelism").

## **B. Prayer Triplets**

A prayer triplet consists of three individuals or three couples committed to meeting regularly together (weekly or every two weeks) to pray for nine non-Christian friends, colleagues or neighbors they would like to see become Christians. Ideally, those prayed for should be people whom the praying individuals frequently see or speak to. Prayer triplets are discussed in more detail in appendix 3A.

Prayer triplets are ideal when the church planter has a nucleus of believers in his target area who are seeking to help him plant a church. They are an excellent way to involve new believers to pray for their unsaved relatives and friends. In addition, prayer triplets are very effective for involving existing churches in evangelism of their own communities.

## **C. Prayer Walking**

Prayer walking is not a new idea. In Europe, many famous walks were created by monks who used to walk and pray on pilgrimages from cathedral city to cathedral city. Prayer walking enables the participants to get out to see and be where the needs are. When we are shut up in a room, we do not have the same understanding as when we are face to face with real life situations and needs. Walking around a neighborhood in prayer gives a totally different perspective on that neighborhood and its needs than just taking a pleasant stroll through the same neighborhood.

In church planting, prayer walking is a tool that can help to break up the fallow ground and prepare the soil of people's hearts to receive the Gospel. Prayer walking should be done by the church planting team or others with a burden for the particular area being targeted for church planting. The prayer walkers will need to walk and pray around, through and in the target area repeatedly. They should do this with sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer walking should be followed by strategic evangelism. Evangelism must be preceded and accompanied by prayer. If you and your church planting team are going to distribute literature, show the Jesus film, feed the poor, or utilize any other type of evangelism activity, a key part of that outreach should include prayer before and during the event. Prayer walking has the effect of breaking up the fallow ground and preparing hearts and homes for the sowing of the seed of God's word. Streets that have been prayed over in this way are much more fruitful than those streets that have not been prayed over.

Prayer walking can be done in various ways: individuals, large groups or small groups. The following two case studies are real-life examples of how prayer walking was used as part of a church planting ministry.

### **Case Study 1:**

A neighborhood known to contain a large number of problem families was being targeted for a church plant. Social problems like unemployment, family breakups, drug addiction and crime were very common. In the early part of the church planting effort, a prayer walk was planned for every street in the neighborhood. As they walked and prayed, they recorded the insights the Holy Spirit gave them. Many other prayer walks followed the initial one. Some prayer walks took place around the local school, some in and around the shopping area, and some around the circumference of the neighborhood. One prayer walk took place in the woods overlooking the neighborhood. In these woods, known to be a place where drugs were handed out, witchcraft symbols were found on the trees. The prayer walk team spent time praying against these evil influences. In the three years since the neighborhood was targeted for church planting, social problems have diminished, crime has decreased by 40%, and a church of 70-80 people has been planted. There is now a spiritual influence to challenge the pervading evil, and God is at work in many lives (DAWN Europa Prayer Manual, August 1994, pg. 13).

### **Case Study 2:**

A church planter and his family moved into an apartment block in the city in which they desired to see a church started. Late one evening, the family walked through the apartment block together. They stood in front of each apartment door and each family member prayed for the people in the apartment. The young son prayed that each person in the apartment would ask Jesus into his or her heart. One daughter prayed that the family's financial needs would be met, another daughter prayed for good family relationships. The mother prayed for the health of the family members and the father prayed for the blessing of God to be on that household. After the prayer walk, the church planter and his family saw 14 people in that apartment block come to Christ and a small church formed.

#### *Practical Considerations for Prayer Walking*

- Determine the area to prayer walk. You will need to decide whether to take quite a small area and regularly prayer walk it (e.g. once a week) or to take on a larger area bit by bit. This decision should be made together with the church planter or team so that prayer walks can be tied in with evangelistic activities.
- **Set a specific time for the prayer walk.** Prayer walk in small groups of twos or threes. This is less threatening for people to see two or three strolling along, apparently in conversation with each other rather than a large group or a single individual. Set a time limit for the prayer walk.
- **Decide on a particular focus of prayer,** such as protection of children, prayer for the poor, conversions to Christ, racial harmony, etc. (Paragraph E below contains a list of suggested topics). Decide on a particular passage of Scripture to focus your prayers around. For example, you may want to use the different phrases of the Lord's prayer to guide your prayers. Or, you may choose to pray through the verses of a psalm.
- **Walk at a leisurely, but steady pace, taking in the surroundings as much as possible, without obviously staring.** Pray with your eyes open and in a conversational manner, talking to the Lord about the needs of the people around you, the homes you pass, the schools, shops or factories, etc. Pray silently some of the time, particularly when you pass other people.
- **At the end of the prayer walk, share briefly together.** Write down these thoughts and impressions in your spiritual journal. Set a date for the next prayer walk.

### **D. Prayer Support Team**

Each church planter or church planting team should try and develop a prayer support team. These are people from your own church or other Christian friends or family who have a burden to pray for the you, your team, your families and your church planting ministry. Ask people to pray for you regularly, such as once a week, daily, or monthly. Write your prayer supporters' names on a calendar and the days that they have committed to pray for you. This will help you to remember who is praying for you and when they are praying for you so that you will know whom to contact with urgent prayer requests.

Your prayer support team may choose to meet together to pray corporately for you and your ministry—once a month or even more frequently. One person on the prayer support team should take responsibility for contacting the church planter or church planting team for updated prayer requests and answers to prayer. The prayer support team needs to be kept informed of answers to prayer and new prayer needs so that they can rejoice in what God is doing and also be encouraged to keep on praying.

### **E. Topics for Strategic Prayer**

Cell groups, prayer walkers, and prayer support teams all need specific topics on which to focus their prayer efforts. The following are examples of topics for prayer that can be used during prayer walking or by prayer teams. Through your research, you will have learned about other specific things to pray for as well as those listed here.



- For families, that they might be strengthened and blessed, and acknowledge the Lord.
- For the unemployed, that they may be able to get jobs.
- For churches and individuals, that they might have a hunger for God.
- For schools, that the teachers and students may know peace, harmony and the love of Jesus.
- For shops and banks, that righteousness might prevail in money matters.
- For local government offices, to become places of righteousness where good decisions are made and power used rightly.
- Pray for God to reveal the gatekeepers, those who are influential in their community and if won to Christ will open the way for the advance of the Gospel.

### **III. RESEARCH: GATHERING INFORMATION FOR PRAYER**

One of the first activities you did as a church planter was to research your target area (Manual 1, SCP Vision Lesson 4 "Principles of Research"). Use that research now as a prayer guide.

You began your research by locating the churches and mission groups working in your target area. Pray for each by name; for their spiritual growth; for their outreach in the area; for any problems you might know of that they are having. Has the Church been perceived as making a positive or negative contribution to the area? Is there a history of division or cooperation? Is the Church growing? Where? Pray as Jesus prayed in John 17:23, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent me and have loved them even as You have loved me."

As you continue praying, remember the different groups you identified in your harvest field research. Are there areas that have always been known for their poverty, wealth, prostitution, persecution, etc.? Ask God to show you how you might reach people in the different groups. Are there physical needs that you should be helping to meet in the name of Christ? Are there any new age, occultic or satanic groups or centers? Pray for God to deliver His people from the influence of the evil one through these groups (Mt 6:13). Pray by name for government leaders and people of influence in the community. Ask God to give you divine appointments with people who can open doors for the Gospel.

The information you gained in your research should be a part of your daily prayer for your target community. Continue to use it to determine areas that should be targeted for prayer walks and to give you insight into potential evangelistic ministries. Share this information with your prayer team and others with a burden for your target area.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is a saying among Christians that the "army of God advances victoriously on its knees." This word picture captures the strategic role of prayer in the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth. Church planting is a spiritual activity, involving spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness (Eph 6). As church planters, our work must be born in prayer, preceded by prayer and accompanied by prayer. Only then will it bear the fruit that God intended.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- How do you devote yourself to prayer (Col 4:2-4) or pray at all times (Eph 6:18) as Paul exhorted the early Christians to do?
- Have you ever been on a prayer walk? Describe your experience. What did you do? Where did you go? What kinds of things did you pray for? How did it impact your ministry in that area?
- What are some other ideas to help facilitate prayer for your church planting ministry?
- What are ways in which you can keep your prayer support team informed of prayer needs and answers to prayer?
- What types of information do you feel would be appropriate to share with a prayer team and what kinds of information would be inappropriate?

- Give examples of how you have seen prayer linked with evangelism. What were the results?

## **ACTION PLAN**

- If you have not already done so, develop your prayer support team. Ask at least three other believers to pray weekly for your ministry. How will you keep them informed of prayer requests and answers to prayer?
- Do at least one prayer walk in your target area with your church planting team or others with a burden to see that area reached for Christ. Discuss this experience with your mentor or trainer.

## **SOURCES**

- Livingston, Glenn. *Prayer that Strengthens and Expands the Church*. South Holland, IL: 1999. (This *Alliance for Saturation Church Planting* publication is available from The Bible League, 16801 Van Dam Road, South Holland, IL, 60473 USA. tel 1-800-334-7017. Email: BibleLeague@xc.org)
- Mills, Brian. *DAWN Europa Prayer Manual*. Birkshire, England: DAWN Europa, 1994.

PRAYER  
APPENDIX

3A

# Prayer Triplets

## I. WHAT IS A PRAYER TRIPLET?

It is a simple convenient way to win people to Christ. You just link up with two other Christians and pray together regularly for the salvation of nine friends or relatives who do not know Jesus personally. Then rejoice as you see Matthew 18:19-20 fulfilled: *"Again, I tell you that if two or three of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."*

## II. HOW TO MAKE A PRAYER TRIPLET WORK

- A. Choose two Christian friends or relatives to make your "triplet."
- B. Each of you choose the names of three people who do not know Jesus as personal Savior and Lord.
- C. Agree on a time to meet once a week to pray together for your nine. You can meet in your home, workplace, school or before church.
- D. Pray together for the nine people by name to accept Christ as personal Savior. Include their personal needs and family members.
- E. As much as possible, as God leads, involve yourself with your "three" in a friendly, helpful way. Look for God to give you opportunities to share the Gospel message with these people. Pray for each other as you seek to do this.
- F. When the people you have been praying for become Christians, continue to pray for them as God leads, but in your triplet choose other friends and relatives to pray for who don't know Jesus. The focus of the prayer triplet should be friends and relatives who do not know Jesus personally. *Note: You may want to pray as a family using the "Prayer Triplet" concept!*

## III. PRAYER TRIPLET WORKSHEET

- A. My prayer triplet partners are:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- B. We are praying for:

List the names of nine unsaved friends for whom your prayer triplet will pray regularly:

My List:	List 2	List 3



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# BIBLE STUDY METHODS

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BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

1

LESSON

# Introduction to the Inductive Bible Study Method

## LETTING THE BIBLE TEACH US

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the inductive Bible study method, and explain why it is superior to other methods of Bible study.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the difference between deduction and induction.
- Be convinced that the inductive method is a better method than the “common” approach to studying the Word.
- Know the three stages of the inductive method.

### ☞ Main Points

- Deduction and induction move in opposite logical directions.
- The inductive method is the best method for learning something new from the Word.
- The steps of the inductive method are: Observation, Interpretation, Application.
- When the inductive method is not rushed, it provides a solid foundation for understanding the Bible.

### ☞ Appendix

1A How We Got the Bible

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the most important book ever written. It claims to be the very words of the almighty, infinite God, given to reveal Himself to finite man. The Bible is also the most important tool for the modern church planter or pastor. The “living and active” Word of God is able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Lord. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as a standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, tradition, and every other book. History, tradition and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God. Its teaching is always correct. Its prophecies always come to pass. Its words help us to win the lost and to resist the devil. The Bible is indispensable to our Christian life and ministry.

Since we believe that the Bible was given to us by God for our instruction, we need to approach it carefully and handle it accurately (2Ti 2:15). The divine nature of the Scriptures demands that we read it with the intent of *learning from it*, rather than *making it say what we want to hear*. How can we be sure we rightly understand the Word? The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the teaching of the Word of God. This lesson will introduce this simple and effective method, and following lessons will describe each step in more detail.

The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the Word of God.

## I. INDUCTIVE VS. DEDUCTIVE

Deduction and induction are two kinds of logic or reasoning. Both deal with the general and the specific. They are both methods of arriving at a conclusion. However, they do so in exactly the opposite manner. Deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific, and inductive goes from the specific to the general. Both methods are used by Christians to study the Bible, but usually they are not aware of how each method affects their study and conclusions.

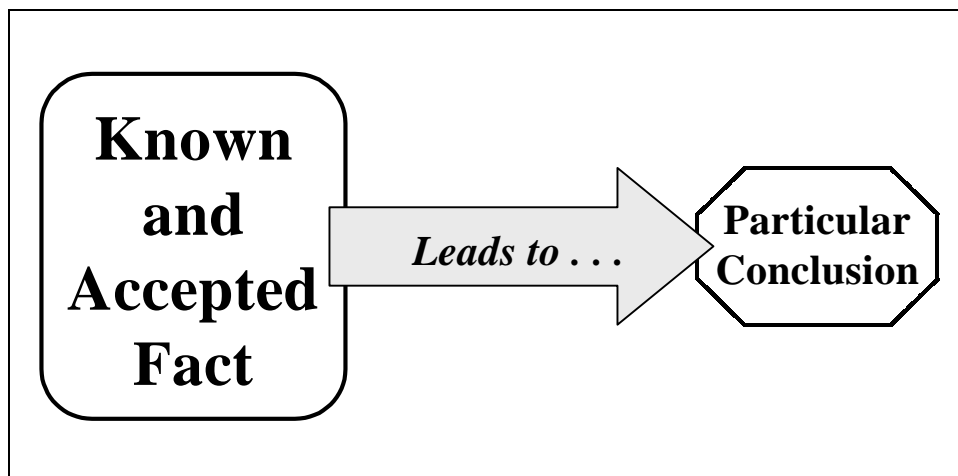
### A. The Deductive Approach

Deductive reasoning is used by people in wide variety of professions. Deduction is a valuable skill, and many books have been written on the subject. The intent of this lesson is not to minimize the validity of deduction, but to suggest that it is an inferior method of Bible study.

#### 1. *Deductive Reasoning*

In general, deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific. That is, it starts with a known and accepted idea or premise. That pre-existing understanding is then compared to a particular situation, and a conclusion is formed. The basis for this conclusion is the fact that the *general idea* is true, and that the specific situation *resembles it*. In other words, the *general idea* controls, or at least strongly influences the way we look at the particular situation. For example, since snow-covered steps are usually slippery, we will approach any set of snow-covered steps with caution—even if we have never slipped on that particular set of steps. Our general experience with snowy steps leads us to this logical and reasonable conclusion. Figure 1.1 shows the direction of deductive reasoning.

Figure 1.1 Deductive Reasoning



Deduction has a major weakness. If our general understanding is wrong, so will be our conclusion. For example, suppose a Russian hears someone talk about a doctor. In Russia, most doctors are women. Therefore, it would be logical for him to deduce that the doctor is a woman. Often, however, he will be wrong. There are also *male* doctors in Russia, and in some countries *most* doctors are men. In this case, the influence of our prior experience can often lead us in the wrong direction. We *assume* we know the answer, rather than continuing to look for other clues to the correct answer.

#### 2. *Deductive Bible Study*

The deductive method can be used to study the Bible, but its weakness limits its usefulness. When we study the Bible, it is important to understand what *God is saying*, rather than to impose our understanding on the text. There are occasions when we cannot understand a difficult verse, and we rely on our general understanding of the Scriptures to deduce what it "*probably means*." However, this should be a "last resort." Our first step should be to pray, meditate on the verse, and continually reread it in order to try to understand what it wants to



say. If we quickly “give up” and assume it is “just like the other similar verses,” we may seriously distort the Word of God. For instance, ten of the eleven times the New Testament uses the word “yeast,” it refers to sin. It would therefore be reasonable and logical to assume that the eleventh time (Mt 13:33) also refers to sin. It would, however, be wrong. An examination of the context of Matthew 13:33 shows that in that verse, it refers to the Kingdom of God!

### 3. *The “Normal” Method*

Unfortunately, deduction is probably the most common method of Bible study. As a result, few learn very much from the Bible. Since they come to the Scripture with their *preconceived understanding of what it means*, they are not able to notice and learn from the details of a particular text.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say beforehand, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding. The Word of God is then used to prop up *our message*, rather than being allowed to communicate the ideas that *the Lord intended* for it to say.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding.

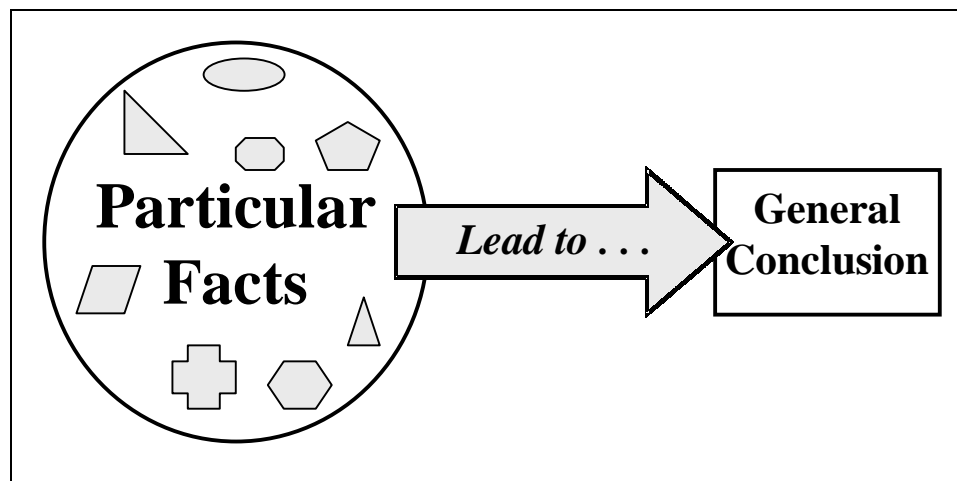
## B. The Inductive Approach

The inductive method is in many ways the opposite of the deductive method. It examines the particulars of a situation, and then attempts to form a general principle from them. It is normally used in those situations where we do not have a general principle that seems to fit, and are therefore unable to use deduction.

### 1. *Inductive Reasoning*

Deduction is essentially the process of using our pre-existing knowledge. Induction, by contrast, is about *learning*. We assume that we do not yet know the answers, and examine the facts closely in order to try to understand *what they mean*. In this method, the emphasis is on the specific details and facts of the situation. Figure 1.2 shows the progression of the inductive method.

Figure 1.2 The Inductive Method



### 2. *Inductive Bible Study*

When we use the inductive method to study the Bible, we come to the Scripture as learners. We acknowledge to God and to ourselves that we do not yet know all the answers. Our purpose is to *gain understanding*. We come with a commitment to carefully examine the text, and allow the Lord to speak to us through it. The deductive method usually leads to a quick sermon—the inductive method leads to spiritual growth.

### 3. *A Better Method*

The inductive method is superior to the deductive method because it makes *the Scriptures* the authority, rather than our understanding. It is also better because it matches the process of understanding and applying biblical principles to our lives. As we study the Bible, we look at how God dealt with people in a particular situation, at a particular time, and in a particular culture. Our task is to take these facts and to form from them a biblical principle. We then translate that principle into our equivalent situation so that we can correctly apply it to our lives. The process of the inductive Bible study method is therefore:

- **Observation** of the facts in the Scriptural context.
- **Interpretation** to find the principle that the passage teaches.
- **Application** of the principle to equivalent situations in our lives.

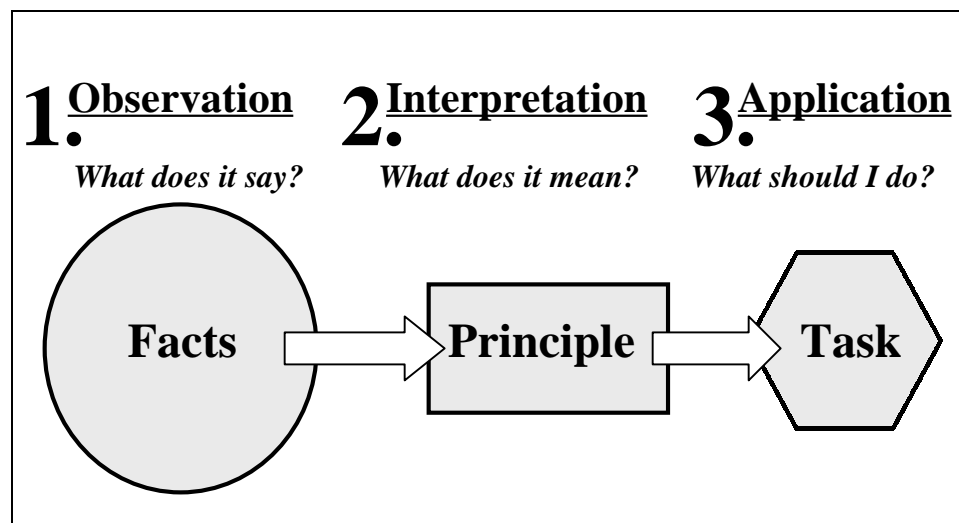
## II. STEPS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

The three steps of the inductive Bible study method are each important. They build progressively on each other to lead us from the Bible text to a correct application to our lives. Essentially, the three steps ask three different questions about the text.

- What does it say? [Observation]
- What does it mean? [Interpretation]
- What should I do? [Application]

The relationship between each of these steps is shown in Figure 1.3. Notice the logical progression through the three steps, beginning with the Bible text and ending with application to our Christian life. If the steps are not completed in the proper order, the result is flawed.

**Figure 1.3 The Three Steps**



### A. **Observation – What Does It Say?**

The first step of the inductive method is observation. It is also the most important step—in the same way a solid foundation is critical to the construction of a house. At this stage, we observe the text, looking for every detail we can find in it, and recording our observations. The key to this step is to ask an endless series of questions such as “Who?, What?, Why?, Where?, When?, etc.” These questions help us focus on *what the Bible says*, rather than bringing our ideas to it. We also look closely at the context of the verse, paragraph, chapter, and book to discover and understand the situation in which it was written. At this stage, it is very important *not to interpret or apply* the text. We must discover all the information first—in the next step (interpretation) we will look at what it means.

## **B. Interpretation – What Does It Mean?**

The process of interpretation has two parts. The first part is to determine *what the passage was intended to say to the original audience*. The second part is to formulate *the message of the passage as a biblical principle* that can be applied to other similar situations.

This is a difficult stage, requiring serious and prayerful thought, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. At this point, we need to compare all our understanding of the original historical, geographical, political, cultural, and religious situation with the facts that we unearthed in the observation stage. Any facts that we have missed in the observation stage will hinder our work here. Now is also the time to compare this text with other similar passages to see if they can help us understand it—being careful that they do not distort the facts of the text we are studying. If the meaning of the passage is still unclear, it might be necessary to return to the observation stage and keep digging for more information.

## **C. Application – What Should I Do?**

The final stage of the inductive method is application. At this point, we take the result of the interpretation stage and decide how the principle might apply in our situation. Since we have carefully looked at the original context, and know the details of it, we can look for similar contexts in our day.

The difficulty of this stage is to determine what situation today is really analogous to the original situation. We can only say “thus says the Lord” if we can demonstrate that this similarity exists. If our situation is truly the same as a biblical passage, then we can assume that the Lord expects us to apply the message to ourselves. In that case, the important task is to state *specifically* and *clearly* “what we should do.”

## **III. BUILDING A SOLID PYRAMID**

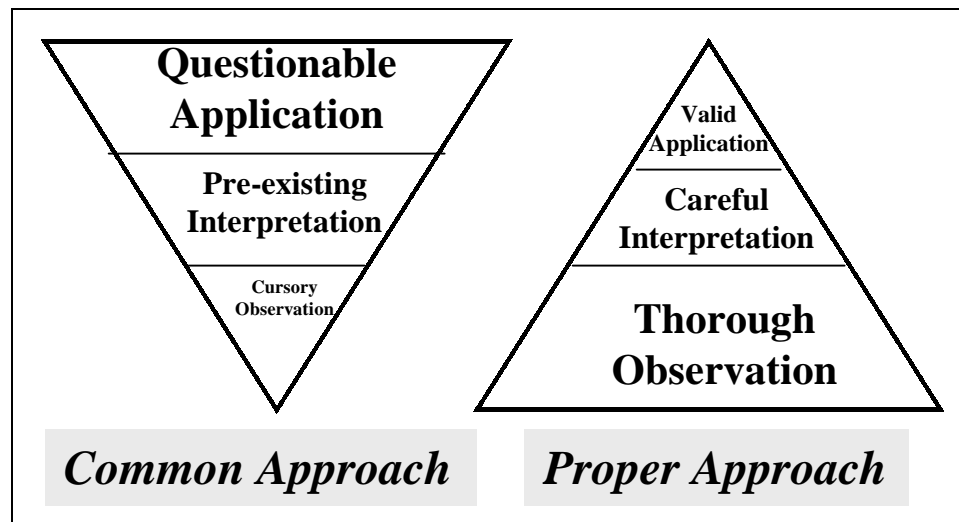
It is important not to skip any of the steps, or to change the order. It is impossible to correctly say what a passage means without first fully observing it, and futile to ask what we should do without knowing what the text means. Therefore, it is critical that we take the necessary time to use the inductive method properly.

### **A. Rushing the Process**

The most common mistake in using the inductive method is to spend too little time on the observation phase. The person studying the Bible takes a quick glance at the passage and assumes that he or she knows what it says. This defeats the learning process. The result is an understanding of the passage that is exactly the same as it was when the process started. The Scripture has not been allowed to speak to us or to teach us. If we approach the Word of God in this way, our biblical understanding will stagnate. The Bible is living and active. We can never fully understand the depths of its teaching. There is always something more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.

There is always more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.

**Figure 1.4 Good and Bad Foundations**



Christian workers often rush the process because they are in a hurry to prepare a message for others. Or, they may be lazy. Either way, the result of this poor preparation is weak preaching, without the power of the Lord behind it. Skimping on the process can be compared to the inverted pyramid in the left side of Figure 1.4. A cursory observation is expanded into a quick interpretation, or a pre-existing interpretation is “hung” on a text that may or may not support it. Finally, a sermon or message is build upon this shaky foundation. Sadly, this may be the most common kind of teaching in churches today.

#### **B. A Solid Foundation**

The pyramid in the right side of Figure 1.4 demonstrates the proper use of the inductive method. Notice that observation is the largest section, followed by interpretation, and that application is the smallest. However, the application is solid and valid—being based on a thorough study of the Word.

The inductive method can be compared to mining for gold. First, tons of gold-bearing rocks are crushed into manageable pieces and washed (observation). Next, the crush rock is sifted to find the gold nuggets (interpretation). Finally, the gold nuggets are melted down and shaped into useable jewelry of other objects for the consumer (application). The process produces only a small amount of gold compared to the weight of the original rock. However, the result is of great value. In the same way, the result of studying the Word using the inductive method is worth all the effort required.

### **CONCLUSION**

The inductive Bible study method is a superior method of studying the Word. It leads to a more accurate understanding of the Bible, and promotes true spiritual growth and learning. As such, it is the best method not only for pastors and preachers, but also for every Christian. We are all to be learning from the Scriptures. Every church planter should not only master this method, but should also teach it to every believer in his care.

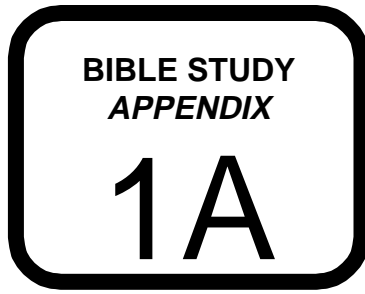
The following lessons will describe in more detail exactly how to use each of the three steps of the inductive method. Time will also be provided to practice and become comfortable with each stage of the process. The effort required will be more than balanced by the resulting new understanding of the Word of the Living God.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What is the basic difference between deduction and induction?
- Why is the inductive method a superior method of studying the Bible, compared to the deductive method?
- What are the dangers of the “common” approach to Bible study and preaching?

## **ACTION PLAN**

- When you next study the Bible, record how much time you spend on observation, interpretation, and application. On the basis of these times, evaluate whether you are using the inductive method, the deductive, or something in between.
- In preparation for the next lesson on observation, pick a sample short passage of Scripture to study (no more than a paragraph or so). Spend at least two hours prayerfully observing the passage and asking God to open your eyes to things that you have not yet seen. Record your observations. What did you learn?



# How We Got the Bible

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## THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE

The Bible has often been attacked, despite its clear teaching about its divine origin and the miracles and fulfilled prophecies that have proven its authority. It is understandable that Satan would spare no effort to undermine our most powerful tool. He wants the Lord's workers to doubt its value, question its accuracy, ignore it, or neglect it. But understanding the origin and transmission of the Bible from God to us helps us to appreciate this wonderful tool and its centrality to the success of our ministry.

Written by more than 40 different authors, in three languages, in a span of more than 1400 years, the Bible is the greatest literary undertaking in history. Yet its unity, consistency and lack of contradiction prove that God Himself is its main author, guiding every human author to assure that the product is exactly as He planned.

## HOW WE RECEIVED THE BIBLE

The Lord has acted, and still acts to bring a reliable Bible to us. This process began with the original authors, and continues when we open His Word today. There are several stages to this process.

### A. Inspiration

The term inspiration literally means God "breathed" or "breathed out," and affirms that the Bible is the product of the living God (2Ti 3:16). Because the Bible is a divine product, it must be approached as such.

The Bible is not merely the product of human thought, but God's Word, spoken through man's lips and written with man's pen. The prophets and apostles all claimed to speak and write the words of another: God Himself. Even Jesus, the Son of God professed that he spoke only those words given him by his Father. According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." It is important to note that it is the Bible itself that is inspired, not the human writers of the Bible. Furthermore, inspiration refers not to the literary quality of that which is written but to its divine origin and character.

### B. Preservation

From the beginning, the unique nature of the Bible was understood. Faithful men have always exercised great care in accurately copying the biblical text. They made very few errors, and the massive number of manuscripts discovered has enabled us to find and fix mistakes that were made. The sections in the Bible where we lack enough evidence to positively know the original text are very few, and none of these sections involve any significant issues or doctrines.

Considering the multitudes of copyists, the thousands of years of copying, the numerous languages into which the Bible was copied, the wide geographical area, and the numerous attempts to destroy the Bible, it is amazing that we have such a reliable, accurate text. God has clearly worked to preserve it for our use.

### C. Canonization

The term 'canon' is borrowed from a Greek word that means rule or standard. The Canon has been used by Christians since the 4th century to identify an authoritative list of books belonging to the Old or New Testament by which all other books were measured.

Many early church fathers and church councils contributed to the task of canonization, with God's help. They examined the witness of the books themselves, the credentials of the author, the agreement of the book with other accepted books, and the books' acceptance by the church. The formation of the Old and New Testament canons was a process rather than an event and transpired under the supervision of the Holy Spirit.

By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament consisted of the law, prophets and writings. By the beginning of the Christian era, all 39 Old Testament books were generally accepted, with the oldest surviving canonical list dating about AD 170. The formation of the New Testament canon, with the current 27 books, was completed in the 4th century. There has been general agreement within the church that the Bible is composed of the current 66 books. The exception to this harmony concerns the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha is rejected by the Protestants, but accepted by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. However, there is a significant difference between the Apocrypha and the other 66 books. The Apocrypha does not claim to be Scripture, contains obvious errors, and was denied canonical status by the Jewish community. However, the Apocrypha has a devotional style that appeals to the liturgical worship of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. The Apocrypha contains several works which the Roman Church found helpful during the Reformation in the struggle against the Protestants, which may have influenced the Council of Trent to include them in the Canon of the Roman Catholic Church in AD 1548.

#### **D. Translation**

Godly men have labored so that each person might hear the Word in his own language. The task is huge, and ongoing. Modern languages and cultures often vary greatly from biblical times, and constantly change. Translators must choose the best words and phrases to carry the meaning of the original languages and still be easy for someone of any age or educational level to understand. No translation is perfect, but modern scholarship, discovery of new manuscripts, and growth in biblical understanding help in this never-ending task. Constant comparison with the original language texts is necessary to ensure that any particular translation accurately carries the meaning of the Word of God. God uses talented, educated, capable men, who depend on His direction and wisdom in this ongoing, vital step.

#### **E. Illumination**

As the Christian reads, studies, and meditates on the Word, the Holy Spirit reveals the meaning to him. The process of illumination is also never-ending, or should be. It is a joint effort. Man cannot learn without the Spirit (1Co 2:11-14; Ps 119:18), and the Spirit does not teach without a man's effort (2Ti 2:15; Ps 119:97-99; Pr 2:1-5).

Teaching God's Word is a special honor (2Ti 4:17) but also a serious responsibility (Jas 3:1). It should never be undertaken without serious, prayerful preparation. And yet, God has made all the necessary provisions for us to have a reliable text in our language, and has enabled us to understand His Word through the Spirit's help. Nothing is lacking other than our decision to handle it correctly, and faithfully use it to develop our own Christian life first of all, and then our ministry to others. What a privilege to be part of this process of bringing the living Word of God to a needy, perishing world!

### **CONCLUSION**

God has supervised the transmission of His Word from the time of the initial writing until we open it to seek instruction for our lives. The copy we have in our hands is reliable for use in both personal growth and ministry. However, it is a living, spiritual book, and can only be understood as we prayerfully and reverently approach it and allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truths contained in it. Thanks to the Lord for this wonderful book to guide us.





BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

LESSON 2

# Observing God's Word

## WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of “observation.”

### ☞ Main Points

- Successful Bible study should be surrounded by prayer.
- Context is extremely important.
- There are six key questions to ask about any passage.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study observation questions.
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

### ☞ Appendix

2A The Language of the Bible

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop that will focus on applying the principles of observation. This lesson includes sample observation questions for Jeremiah 1. You should emphasize the kinds of questions asked, because the trainees will be required to make up their own questions in the workshop lesson.

## INTRODUCTION

All Christians need to be able to study the Bible for their own spiritual growth as well as for the growth of those under their spiritual care. God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to be his or her principal teacher. Let us never forget the importance of our dependence upon God's Spirit to teach us and to empower us to obey what we learn. With God's help, it is possible for every believer to understand the Bible, even if the only book we have is the Bible. In addition, God has given some people the special role of helping His people discover the truths of Scripture and apply them correctly to their lives. It is especially important that a church planter know how to help others discover God's truth through Bible study.

One of the best ways to systematically discover, understand, and apply God's truth is the inductive Bible study method. The inductive Bible study method leads to this process of discovery through three basic steps that are called “observation”, “interpretation”, and “application.” The Holy Spirit teaches us, but God also expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal. We should never choose between studying hard or depending on the Holy Spirit—both are important!

God expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal.

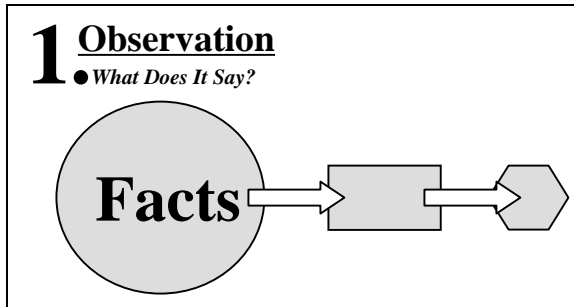
This lesson focuses on the first step of inductive Bible study—observation. As the previous lesson stated, observation is like the base of a pyramid. If we do a thorough and careful job of observation, the resulting interpretation and application will be much more accurate. Our goal should be to understand *exactly* what God wants us to know and do, and therefore observation is a critical step in the process.

## I. OBSERVATION—WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Observation concerns the details and facts that are seen in a selected Bible passage. It answers the question "What does the text say?" It clearly shows the people, places, events, circumstances, objects, time, relationships, personal opinions, ideas, etc., which were in the writer's mind and the context when the text was written.

Students of secular classical literature have spent countless hours trying to decipher the meaning of great texts written by men. In many cases, this process has continued for hundreds or even thousands of years since the writing of the texts, with new understanding constantly emerging. Take a minute to think about some of the great classical authors of your country, and the search for the meaning of their writings. If this effort is warranted, how much more we should strive to understand the living, active, bottomless Word of the Almighty God. To quickly read a Bible passage, and assume that we understand it completely is utterly foolish. There is always more to understand.

Figure 2.1



### A. Prepare for Observation

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we cannot approach it like any other book. There are several factors that will affect whether or not we understand it.

#### 1. *Belief*

The Scripture says that a "man without the Spirit" cannot understand the things that come from God (1Co 2:14). Since only those who have repented of their sin and trusted Christ for salvation have the Holy Spirit, an unbeliever cannot fully comprehend the Bible. This does *not* mean that only believers may be involved in a Bible study. It *does* mean that when unbelievers are present, they are limited in what they will be able to understand. The Holy Spirit desires to show them the truths of sin, righteousness, and judgment from the Word, in order to lead them to salvation. Therefore, a Bible study for unbelievers should focus on the basic truths of the Gospel.

#### 2. *Prayer*

Proper Bible study will always be surrounded by prayer. Before starting the study, we should pray and confess any sin or other obstacle that prevents us from learning from the Word. We should also pray for enlightenment (Ps 119:18; Eph 1:18). During our study, it is also helpful to pray for clarity whenever we see something that we do not understand. And finally, when we have finished the study, we should pray about how God would have us apply what we have learned to our own life and to the lives of others.

Proper Bible study  
will always be  
surrounded by prayer.

#### 3. *Readiness to Obey*

James tells us that we must not only listen to the Word, but also obey it (Jas 1:22-25). Jesus also said that putting His words into practice was like building a house on a rock (Mt 7:24). Not obeying them, however, was like building on sand (Mt 7:26). In fact, Jesus seems to say that giving spiritual truth to those who are not willing to obey it is as foolish as giving pearls to pigs (Mt 7:6). God is very serious about how we respond to His Word. The more we know, the more severely we will be judged.

#### 4. *Self-examination*

It is true that a pastor or church planter is responsible to teach the Word to others. We are told to “feed the sheep” (Jn 21:17). But this does not excuse him from first applying it to his own life. Every good cook samples the food as it cooks to determine whether or not it is ready to serve to others. At the very least, we should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others. However, it is even more profitable if we also partake heartily of the meal, rather than just sample it.

We should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others.

The student of the Scriptures should never feel that he or she has reached the point of understanding the Word fully—this is not possible. It is much better to be a “learner,” growing daily through study of the Word and prayer, than to masquerade as an “expert.” A teaching ministry will be more rich and rewarding if the teacher is sharing out of the abundance of truth that he or she is learning from the Lord on a daily basis.

#### 5. *Willingness to Learn*

Approach the Scriptures with an open mind. Be willing to let God teach you what His Word really says. Always be willing to expose your personally held belief to the light of God's Word. Don't be afraid of changing your viewpoint if God's shows you the truth about an issue.

### B. **Take Enough Time**

There are some proven principles for understanding the general focus of the passage. If the process is rushed, the result will be a shallow understanding of the text. It is important to exercise the patience and determination to keep working until the text is understood.

The first step is to **read the text over several times** to get an overall understanding of the passage. This takes time, but bears much fruit. There are many passages where it is easy to get bogged down in details unless you can discern the general theme through several readings. A good understanding of the passage's overall focus will help you to keep a proper balance and divide your time appropriately for the different parts under study.

### C. **Look at the Context**

The term ‘context’ refers to the verses that surround the passage being studied. Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study, and yet it is often ignored. When we look at the context, we are seeking to understand what is the theme or subject of the book, chapter, and paragraph of the verses that we are studying. Looking at the context means examining.

- What do the preceding and following verses talk about?
- What is the theme of the paragraph?
- What is the theme of the chapter?
- What is the purpose and theme of the book?
- Is the passage in the Old or New Testament and what does this mean?

A good example of the importance of context is Philippians 4:19, where Paul promises that God will “meet all your needs.” Many understand this to be an unconditional promise to everyone. Many would recognize that since Philippians is written to believers, this promise is only for Christians. However, a more in-depth study of the context reveals that Philippians is a “thank-you letter” to the Philippian church for the gift they sent to Paul through Epaphroditus. The context of chapter four is specifically talking about this generous gift that they had sent to Paul out of their poverty. The context of verse 18 shows that God was pleased with this gift. Therefore, the context indicates that verse 19 is a promise to those who have sacrificed to financially support a missionary church planter (Paul) who was preaching the Gospel to the lost (in Rome, at that time).

Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study.

Some Bibles have notes before each book that explain what the particular book is about. These can be helpful. There are also other commentaries and books available that discuss the setting and background of a particular Bible book or chapter. However, it is better to limit the use of these resources until the interpretation stage. There is no substitute for reading the Scriptures yourself and allowing them to speak to you with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. During the observation stage, focus on what *you* see in the passage and the context. Take the time to listen to God before you move on to the commentary of men, even if they might be gifted teachers or authors.

Observing the context involves reading more than just the passage being studied—it includes the surrounding verses, chapter, or book. We step back and look at the passage from a distance before we move in for a closer look. Insights and notes about the context should be carefully recorded. They will be of major importance in the interpretation stage.

Step back and look at the passage from a distance before moving in for a closer look.

#### **D. Examine the Structure**

Having looked at the passage from a distance, it is now time to look more closely. Read the passage several times, looking for and recording any of the following details of the structure:

- Key words - Note any word or words that are repeated. Often this indicates the theme.
- Comparisons or contrasts - Is something the same as something else, or the opposite?
- Progression of an idea - Does one thing build upon another? Are they linked to other ideas like a chain?
- Verbs – Is there some kind of action? Is there a command we must obey?
- Conjunctions - Is something equal to something? Often the conjunction “but” appears in contrast, and the words “like” or “as” may indicate comparison.
- Illustrations - Visualize in your mind the thing or action that is being described.
- Kind of literature – A passage may be history, prophecy, allegory, didactic truth, logic, parable, or many other possibilities. Appendix 2A lists many more of these. Noting the type of literature in the passage will also affect the interpretation in the next stage, so it should be recorded carefully now.

#### **E. Ask Questions: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How?, and Why?**

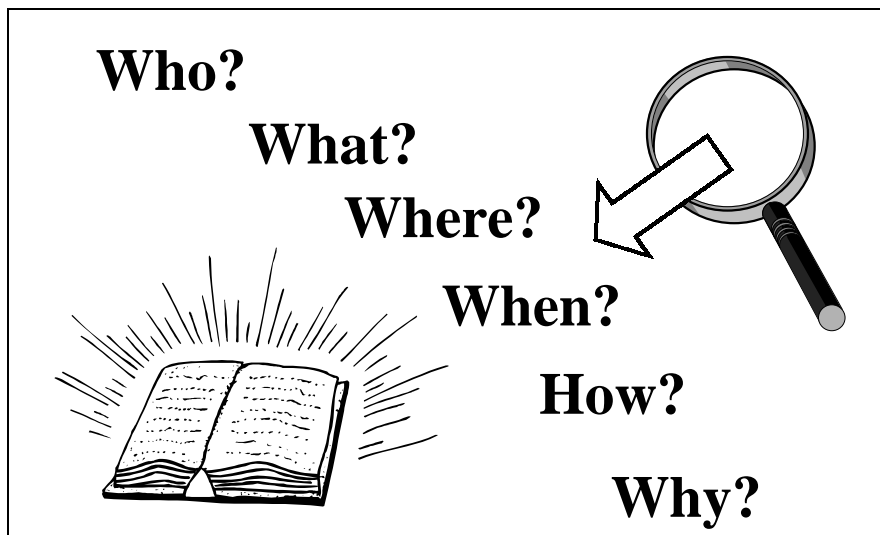
The best method of discovering the content and meaning of a passage of Scripture is to ask key questions about it, and record the answers. Figure 2.2 shows the six key questions that should be asked and answered. There are, of course, other possible questions, but these are the most important ones. Other questions tend to be variations of these six.

Ideally, you should ask every form of these questions that you can think of (the more the better). Sample variations of these questions are shown in the next section. As you ask questions, carefully record the questions and the answers on a sheet of paper. You will need to refer to them in the interpretation stage.

If you ask a question and cannot find the answer, note the question and come back to it at a later time. Do not disregard those questions. They may be important. Instead, pray about them, meditate on them, and ask God to show you the answers. Be prepared for this to take time and effort, but it will be worth it when you arrive at a clearer understanding of the passage. Only then will you be able to apply it with confidence in your own life, and teach “thus says the Lord . . .” to others.

If you cannot find the answer to a question, come back to it at a later time.

Figure 2.2 Key Observation Questions



## II. SAMPLE OBSERVATION

We are going to use the six questions to see what we can discover about God's truth in an Old Testament passage about a young man called to serve God. As we study this passage, it will become very clear that he was being called to take a stand that was radically different from his contemporaries. No doubt some of you will be able to identify with the struggles this young man had to face as he responded to God's call. The passage is found in Jeremiah 1.

Open your Bible to that passage, pray for enlightenment, and then look for the answers to the following questions. Take special note of the *kinds of questions* that are asked. In your own study later, you will need to make up similar questions to ask of other passages as you study them. Write the answers next to each question.

### A. Who?

- To **whom** is this part of Scripture attributed (verse 1)?
- **Who** are the persons mentioned in this passage (verses 1-2)?
- **Who** are the kings noted in verses 2-3?
- **Who** are the people God is summoning to bring disaster on the land (v.15)?
- Verses 18-19 list Jeremiah's main opposition. **Who** will these people be?
- (Other?)

### B. What?

- **What** special event is noted at the beginning of verse 2?
- Is it possible to deduce **what** Jeremiah's role was from verse 2?
- If so, **what** was that role?
- According to verse 2, **what** event took place at the end of the reign of Zedekiah?
- **What** happened to Jeremiah in verse 3?
- **What** was the "word of the Lord" that came to him (verse 5)?
- **What** are the four specific actions attributed by God to Himself in verse 5?
- In verse 5, **what** was to be Jeremiah's role?
- **What** was the extent of Jeremiah's role? Limited to the nation of Israel, or much broader?

- **What** was Jeremiah's response in verse 6?
- **What** was God's response to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** are the two imperatives God gives to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** options does Jeremiah have according to verse 7?
- **What** is Jeremiah's emotion that God addresses in the first part of verse 8?
- **What** two reasons are given to Jeremiah for not being afraid (verse 8)?
- **What** does the Lord do to Jeremiah in verse 9?
- Verse 10 describes Jeremiah's task. **What** were the elements of that task?
- **What** is the progression noted in verse 10?
- **What** were the two things God showed Jeremiah in verses 11-16?
- **What** does verse 12 describe God doing?
- According to verses 14-16, **what** is about to happen to the people of God?
- **What** are the specific reasons God is bringing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- **What** are the instructions God gives to Jeremiah in verse 17?
- **What** commands have been repeated from earlier?
- **What** is the new promise (verse 17)?
- **What** will the people of verse 18 do to Jeremiah (verse 19)?
- **What** is the promise God gives Jeremiah for the battles ahead (verse 19)?
- (Other?)

**C. Where?**

- **Where** is the setting of this passage according to verse 1?
- **Where** is this located?
- **Where** will the people described in verse 15 come from?
- (Other?)

**D. When?**

- **When** is the time period described for the overall contents of this book?
- In verse 5, **when** did God know (choose) Jeremiah?
- In verse 5, **when** did God set Jeremiah apart for ministry?
- **When** did the action in verse 18 take place?
- (Other?)

**E. Why?**

- **Why** is God "watching" in verse 12?
- **Why** is God pronouncing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- (Other?)

**F. How?**

- **How** is Jeremiah described in verse 1?
- **How** is his father Hilkiah described?
- **How** does Jeremiah address God in verse 6?
- **How** does Jeremiah respond to God's word in verse 6?
- **How** does God describe Jeremiah in verse 18?

Use the space provided below to list any other observations you made concerning Jeremiah 1:

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What does 'context' mean?
- What are the six key questions to ask a passage?
- When, during a Bible study, should we pray?

## **ACTION PLAN**

If you did not have time to complete the observation of Jeremiah 1, do so before the next lesson. See if you can ask other appropriate questions of the same passage. Save these questions and answers for use in Lesson 4.

BIBLE STUDY  
APPENDIX

2A

# The Language of the Bible

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When we study the Word of God, we are looking for its intended, literal meaning. We want to understand the message that the Lord desires to communicate through it. But it is important to realize that, like all great literature, the Bible writers often used figures of speech to communicate truth. In addition, they used many different kinds of literature in their writing. Studying the Bible accurately requires that we recognize these differences, and treat each passage according to the kinds of language and literature used.

## I. KINDS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE

### A. Simile

A simile compares two dissimilar things, using words such as “like,” “as” or “than.” Psalm 1 compares the righteous man to a tree planted by streams of water. Both bear fruit and prosper.

### B. Parable

A parable is a simile in a longer story form. Jesus helped the disciples understand His kingdom by telling a parable about workers who were paid equally though some had worked longer than others had. He begins with the words, “For the kingdom of heaven is *like* a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard...” (Mt 20:1).

### C. Metaphor

A metaphor compares two dissimilar things without using obvious words such as “like” or “as.” In Jeremiah 1:18, the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...”

### D. Allegory

An allegory is a long metaphor. In Judges 9:7-15, Jotham tells a story about a worthless thorn bush being king over the other productive trees to describe a corrupt political leader.

### E. Hyperbole

A hyperbole expresses something in extreme terms to make a point. When Jesus says that a judgmental person has a log in his eye and doesn’t know it, he is saying something that is physically impossible. His point, however, is that a person who is unaware of his own sins is totally unable to evaluate another person’s sins.

### F. Sarcasm

Sarcasm criticizes by using undeserved or ridiculous praise. Paul criticizes the Corinthians’ pride by writing, “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings – and that without us!” (1Co 4:8).

Deciding when the biblical writers were using language figuratively or literally is serious work. It would be a grievous error to ignore one of God’s commands by claiming it to be figurative language. On the other hand, to say that every verse in the Bible should be interpreted literally leads to some perplexing problems. When the Lord referred to Jeremiah as “a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...” He obviously wasn’t speaking in a literal sense (Jer 1:18). The same is true when the



Lord said he was appointing Jeremiah to “uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow...” (Jer 1:10).

How can we know the difference between literal and figurative language? You can ask some simple questions like these:

- Does the passage state that it is figurative? (“Listen to another parable...” Mt 21:33).
- Does the passage become absurd or impossible if it is interpreted literally? (“I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north... from the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land...” Jer 1:13-14).
- Does the passage describe God, who is Spirit, as if He had a physical body and other strictly human qualities? (“Then the Lord reached out His hand and touched my mouth...” Jer 1:9).

If the above questions don’t apply, then the verse can most probably be interpreted literally.

## **II. KINDS OF LITERATURE IN THE BIBLE**

### **A. History**

The Bible is full of historical accounts and biographies. For example, the book of Judges tells the history of Israel between the time of Joshua’s conquest of the land and King Saul’s reign. The book of Nehemiah is Nehemiah’s diary of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The Gospels are Jesus’ biographies and include His teachings. The book of Acts records the significant happenings in the early history of the Church.

### **B. Instruction**

Throughout the Bible you will find guidelines, commands, principles, proverbs, doctrines and practical advice. The major part of the book of Leviticus contains detailed instructions for the Israelite priests. Proverbs gives advice on finances, relationships, and work. Paul’s letters to specific churches are full of both doctrine and practical guidelines for the Christian life.

### **C. Prophecy**

Most prophetic literature is a written account of sermons originally preached to God’s people. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the larger prophetic books, are collections of sermons spanning the careers of these prophets. These books were not meant to be read from start to finish as a single unit. The secret to understanding these books is finding the beginning and ending of the individual sermons and reading from one sermon to the next. Nearly all the sermons dealt with the historic periods of the writers. Some of the sermons dealt with the future beyond the lifetimes of the prophets.

### **D. Poetry**

In the poetic literature of the Bible every human emotion is expressed. Many biblical books contain poetry. The Psalms and the Song of Songs are entirely poetry and many of the prophetic books are predominately poetic.

### **E. Apocalypse**

Some prophecy is written in a special kind of literature known as apocalyptic. The word apocalyptic means “unveiling” because it reveals events that will take place in the future. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are good examples of this literature. Apocalyptic passages are highly symbolic and it is necessary to understand the symbolism in order to interpret the message. The central message in apocalyptic literature is the second coming of Christ and his ultimate victory over Satan. Typically, the whole of creation is involved in the coming events. (Compiled from Inch and Bullock, eds., 1981. *Literature and Meaning of Scripture*. Baker Book House.)



BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

3

LESSON

# Observation Workshop

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to give the trainees opportunity to practice forming and answering inductive Bible study observation questions.

## ☛ Main Points

- There are always more good questions to ask.

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Be able to prepare inductive Bible study observation questions.
- Know the importance of studying a passage as a group.

## ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

It is important to bring the groups back together for the 15-minute time of comparing results. This should show that there are many possibilities of questions that might normally slip past individuals, or even a small group. It also underscores the validity of studying the Scriptures together in a group rather than having only one person “preach” what they see in the text.

Have extra paper and pencils available for the groups to use. Also, you will need a posterboard, chalkboard, or something equivalent to record the questions and answers when the groups come together at the end of the session.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

The passage we will use for our workshop is Acts 17:1-10a. The format for this workshop is as follows:

- Divide into groups of 3-4 people.
- Take 35 minutes to read the passage, develop **observation** questions, and record the answers.

Use the last 15 minutes of the workshop to regroup and compare the questions and resulting answers. Make a master list of these questions and observations from the lists of each group. Then choose the *best question* for each of the six sections. These are the questions that are most helpful or revealing, and that you would use if you were to lead others through this study.

## STEPS

Use the following steps that were outlined in Lesson 2:

- Pray for enlightenment.
- Read the passage several times.
- Examine the context and record your observations.
- Examine the structure and record what you see.
- Ask every variation of the six key questions that you can think of, and record the answers that you find. Not every question will apply to this passage, but record the ones that relate to it.
- Select the *one best question* for each section for use if you were to teach this passage.

## GROUP WORK

Use the tables below to begin recording your questions and answers. Use extra paper as needed.

<b>CONTEXT</b> <i>The theme of subject of the verses surrounding the passage being studied.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preceding verses –</li><li>• Following verses –</li><li>• Paragraph / section -</li><li>• Chapter (17) -</li><li>• Book (Acts) –</li><li>• New Testament –</li></ul>

<b>STRUCTURE</b> <i>The structure of the passage relates to the grammar and kind of language.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key words –</li><li>• Comparisons or contrasts –</li><li>• Progression of ideas -</li><li>• Verbs -</li><li>• Conjunctions –</li><li>• Illustrations –</li><li>• Kind of literature -</li></ul>

## KEY QUESTIONS

*Ask and answer all possible variants of the six key questions.*

Your Questions:	Your Answers:
<b>Who?</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. <i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i>	
<b>What?</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. <i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i>	

Your Questions:	Your Answers:
<b>Where?</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. <i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i>	
<b>When?</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. <i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i>	
<b>How?</b> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. <i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i>	

Your Questions:	Your Answers:
<p><b>Why?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li><li>4.</li><li>5.</li><li>6.</li><li>7.</li><li>8.</li><li>9.</li><li>10.</li></ol> <p><i>[circle the question you found most helpful]</i></p>	





BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

LESSON 4

# Interpreting God's Word

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of "interpretation."

### ☞ Main Points

- The importance of careful interpretation.
- Common errors in interpretation.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Know the basic principles for interpreting the Scriptures
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

### ☞ Appendix

4A Bible Charts

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop to develop skills in interpretation of a passage.

## INTRODUCTION

Apart from the Holy Spirit and prayer, the Bible is the most important resource we have as a church planter. The living and active Word of God is alone able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Kingdom of God. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as the only standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, or tradition of the Church. History, tradition, and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God.

It is important, therefore, for us to know how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." Our enemy Satan has spared no effort to undermine the Bible and its truth. Over the centuries, many different controversies have been created by a false understanding of what the Bible says. You don't want to be guilty of adding to or supporting those false understandings of God's Word.

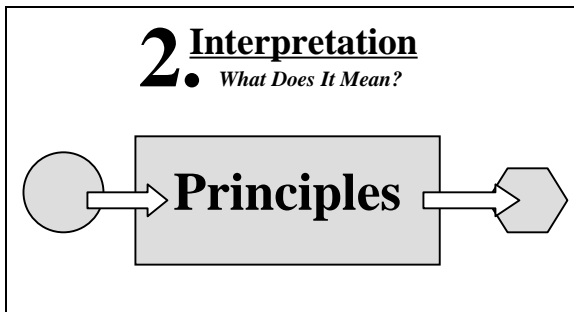
## I. INTERPRETATION—THE SECOND STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

Interpretation answers the question "What does the text *mean*?" This session presents some guidelines for discerning what the Scriptures are really saying. This is not intended to be a full treatment of this subject, only an introduction. We also want to take the same passage we have been dealing with in Jeremiah chapter 1 and apply these principles to gain a clearer understanding of that passage.

The interpretation stage follows the observation stage of inductive Bible study. This seems obvious, but all too often those who study the Bible rush ahead to this stage without doing a thorough job of observation. As a result, their interpretation is often faulty, since they do not have enough facts to accurately interpret the passage.

The stages of observation, interpretation, and application can be compared to the process of building a house. Observation would be the *collecting of the materials*. Interpretation is the stage where the owner actually *constructs the house* from the materials. Application is the stage where the owner moves into the house and *lives in it*. Every stage is equally important, and they are all interdependent. If the materials are lacking (observation), it will not be possible to complete the house. If the house is not constructed carefully (interpretation), living in the house will be dangerous. If no one lives in the house (application), then building it was a waste of time.

Figure 4.1



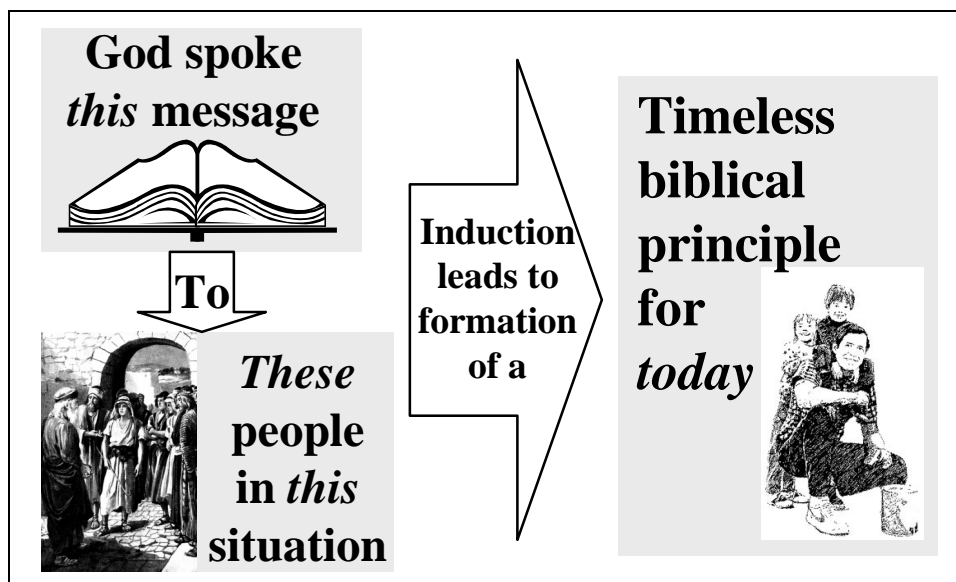
With this analogy in mind, it should be clear that interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. If at any point you find that you do not have enough facts to decipher the meaning of the passage, you should return to the observation stage and ask more questions. Actually, this is normal. Rarely do we note everything important in a passage, any more than a builder never runs out of material and has to get more.

Interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

## II. THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we seek to clearly describe the original biblical situation, and to state the message that God communicated in that situation. We can then carefully and prayerfully assume that God would speak in a similar way to a similar situation—resulting in a general biblical principle.

Figure 4.2 Using Induction to Discover the Biblical Principle



Therefore, interpretation involves:

- Understanding the original, biblical situation and people
- Identifying the message communicated to those people at that time
- Formulating a principle that summarizes these facts, and which would apply to a similar situation in any era—especially today.

The principle that results from interpretation might be a warning, a promise, a challenge, etc. The important thing is to understand the original situation clearly enough that we can say "thus says the Lord" with confidence when we apply it to our own lives and the lives of others.

#### **A. Sift through the Observation Facts to Find the Key Ones**

Interpretation is more of an art than it is a science. That is, it is more than a matter of following certain rules—although rules and guidelines do exist. Practice, prayer, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading are necessary in order to develop the ability to sift through all the facts from the observation stage, identify the most important ones, and understand the main message of the passage.

#### **B. Determine the Author's Main Point**

When we refer to the author of the passage, we have in mind both the human writer, and also God who directed the writing. With the exception of some prophecies that the human writer did not understand, the writer's point and God's point should be the same.

In some cases, the main point may be clearly stated in the passage. Usually, however, it will be necessary to look for the clues and key observations. The context is normally the most important indicator of the topic or main point. Repeated word or phrases are also valuable clues. Each passage will be different, but you will be looking for the following information:

- What subject is the author writing about?
- What is he saying about that subject?

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize these two things in a concise sentence. This may take quite a few attempts before it is right. Continuing the analogy of building a house, this is like laying the foundation properly. The fuller description of the message of the passage will be built on this statement, as will the application.

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize the point of the passage in a concise sentence.
--

#### **C. Determine the flow of thought in the passage**

Once the main point of the author has been stated, the next step is to describe how he builds that point in the passage. What style does he use? Why? What method or what logic? Why did he choose this way of presenting it? It should be possible to note both the content of the passage, and also the attitude or emotion being communicated. Texts might be encouraging, sarcastic, angry, confronting, soothing, pleading, challenging, etc.

### **III. THE BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION**

Although interpretation is essentially an art to be developed through practice, there are some basic rules that should be followed. The rules described below assume that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that God intends for us to read and understand it. Not everyone agrees with those assumptions, and this is the source of many of the religious disagreements in the world, as well as the source of many of the cults.

#### **A. General Principles of Biblical Interpretation**

1. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.
2. The Bible is its own best interpreter, reflecting the character of God.
3. Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to understand the Scripture.
4. You should interpret history, actions, attitudes, personal experience, etc., in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of these things.
5. The primary purpose of the Bible is not to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.

6. Every Christian has the right, the responsibility, and the privilege to investigate and interpret the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## **B. Grammatical, Historical, and Theological Principles of Biblical Interpretation**

1. You should interpret words according to their meaning in the historical and cultural context of the author. Always think about how the original hearers would have understood and reacted to the message.
2. It is important to understand the grammar of a passage before trying to understand the theological truth that it teaches.
3. Figurative language normally has one main point. Do not try to read too many things into that kind of passage. (See Appendix 2A "The Language of the Bible" for a description of different kinds of figurative language.)
4. You should be no clearer on a subject than the Scriptures are clear. Don't add your own thinking or church tradition to what the Bible says, for you or others could come to believe those thoughts are actually Scriptural.

## **C. Common Interpretation Errors to Avoid**

Three common errors in interpretation happen because of the failure to remember key attributes of Scripture.

### *1. Springboard*

This kind of error takes its name from the springboard that gymnasts use to help them jump higher. The springboard is not central to their performance—it only helps them get started. This error occurs when the interpreter already knows what he wants to say, and is not particularly interested in discovering the meaning of the text. He briefly looks at a passage and "jumps" from there to some other topic or teaching that he really wants to discuss. This insults the Lord, Who wrote the Word to communicate truth to us.

### *2. Allegory*

This method is also very common, but just as unacceptable. It involves ignoring the clear meaning of Scripture and trying to find some hidden message. There are indeed some passages that are very difficult to understand. However, most passages make sense when we look carefully and the words and grammar. We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly. Even in the case of a difficult passage, it is better to admit that we don't understand it than to try to fabricate some kind of meaning that is hard to support.

We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly.
---

### *3. Ignoring Progressive Revelation*

It is impossible to understand a passage if we forget the progressive nature of Scripture. God sometimes changes the way He deals with men. For instance, in the Old Testament, God required a series of literal animal sacrifices. However, these sacrifices were only temporary. When God's perfect Lamb died on Calvary, He fulfilled all the Old Testament requirements (Heb 9:12). No sacrifice of any kind is required in the New Testament. If someone were to sacrifice a lamb for his sin today, it would be an insult to Christ. Therefore, interpretation decisions must be made with care, and with the broader teaching of the Word in mind.

## **D. Use "Helps", But Use Them Carefully**

There are many tools and helps that assist in the process of interpretation. These include commentaries, Bible handbooks, Bible notes, Bible cross-references, dictionaries, atlases, and many other books. As helpful as these are, they should not replace personal effort to understand the passage. They are meant to *help*, not to *do the work for you*. Use them as needed to understand things that are not clear to you. Be especially careful with Bible cross-references.

Often, they only refer to another verse that has the same word or phrase in it. The verse referred to may or may not have *anything* to do with the topic of the passage.

#### **IV. SAMPLE INTERPRETATION**

Refer back to your observation notes on Jeremiah 1, and work through the process of interpretation as time allows. Follow the format shown below.

##### **A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts**

As I look at my observations on Jeremiah 1, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

##### **B. State the Main Point**

The subject of the chapter is:

The thing that Jeremiah is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

##### **C. Describe the Flow of Thought**

Jeremiah develops the main idea of the passage by:

#### D. Some "Meaning" Questions

As you work through the statements above, it might be helpful to consider the following questions about the *meaning* of the text. Perhaps you will think of other good, or even better, questions. These are offered to start you on the process.

##### *Verse 5*

- What does it mean that the Lord "knew" Jeremiah?
- What does it mean to be "set apart?"
- What are some implications of the statement "...before you were born I set you apart...?"

##### *Verse 6*

- Why might Jeremiah consider himself a "child?"
- Why do you suppose Jeremiah responded the way he did?

##### *Verse 7*

- How would you characterize a call from God by what you see in this verse?
- What does your answer to the preceding question say about God and His character?

##### *Verse 8*

- What do the Lord's words say about the response of the people to Jeremiah's future ministry?
- What motivation is there for Jeremiah to face the opposition?

##### *Verse 9*

- How did the Lord "put" His words into Jeremiah?

##### *Verse 10*

- What do you think the phrases "uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant" mean?
- What can you assume about the character of Jeremiah that would enable him to follow through with God's plan?

##### *Verse 12*

- What principle do you find in this verse concerning God's involvement in the ministry of those He has called?

##### *Verse 16*

- What does this verse show about the character of God, even when it comes to judging His own people?
- Was God justified in what He planned to do to the people? Why?

##### *Verse 17*

- What might have been part of Jeremiah's "getting ready"?
- Why do you think the Lord repeated again what he had already said before (verse 8)?

##### *Verse 18*

- What is the meaning and significance of the phrases "fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall?"
- Why would the people of verse 18 be so opposed to Jeremiah and his message?
- How does God fortify and prepare His people today to stand for Him?

##### *Verse 19*

- What does this verse show about God's character and commitment to those He calls?

### **E. The Biblical Principle**

The final step in the process of interpretation is to attempt to state the meaning of the passage as a concise biblical principle. This statement should be very similar to the "Main Point" in section IV.B. above. However, the main point in section IV.B. related to the specific context of Jeremiah 1, more than 2500 years ago. The principle that you want to formulate now should be valid at any time, especially today.

The form of the principle would be something like: "In this kind of situation, we should..." or "When this happens, God will..." The exact wording of the principle for a particular passage will vary, of course. Also, the principle should be as specific as possible. This process is not easy, but it is important. And with God's help, it is possible.

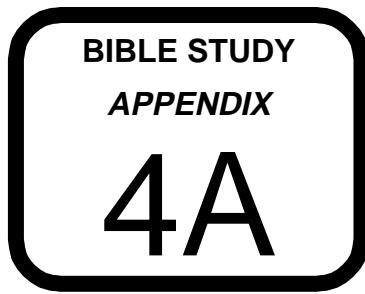
From my study of Jeremiah 1, I find the following timeless biblical principle (record):

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION.**

- What are three common errors in interpretation?
- What question does interpretation answer?

### **ACTION PLAN**

- Finish any remaining questions in this lesson that you have not yet completed.
- Begin to work through the interpretation process using Acts 17:1-10.



## Bible Charts

---

On the following pages are two charts that may help be of help to you:

- Figure 4A.1 gives the big picture of God's eternal plan through the Old and New Testaments.
- Figure 4A.2 shows the historical periods of the Bible.



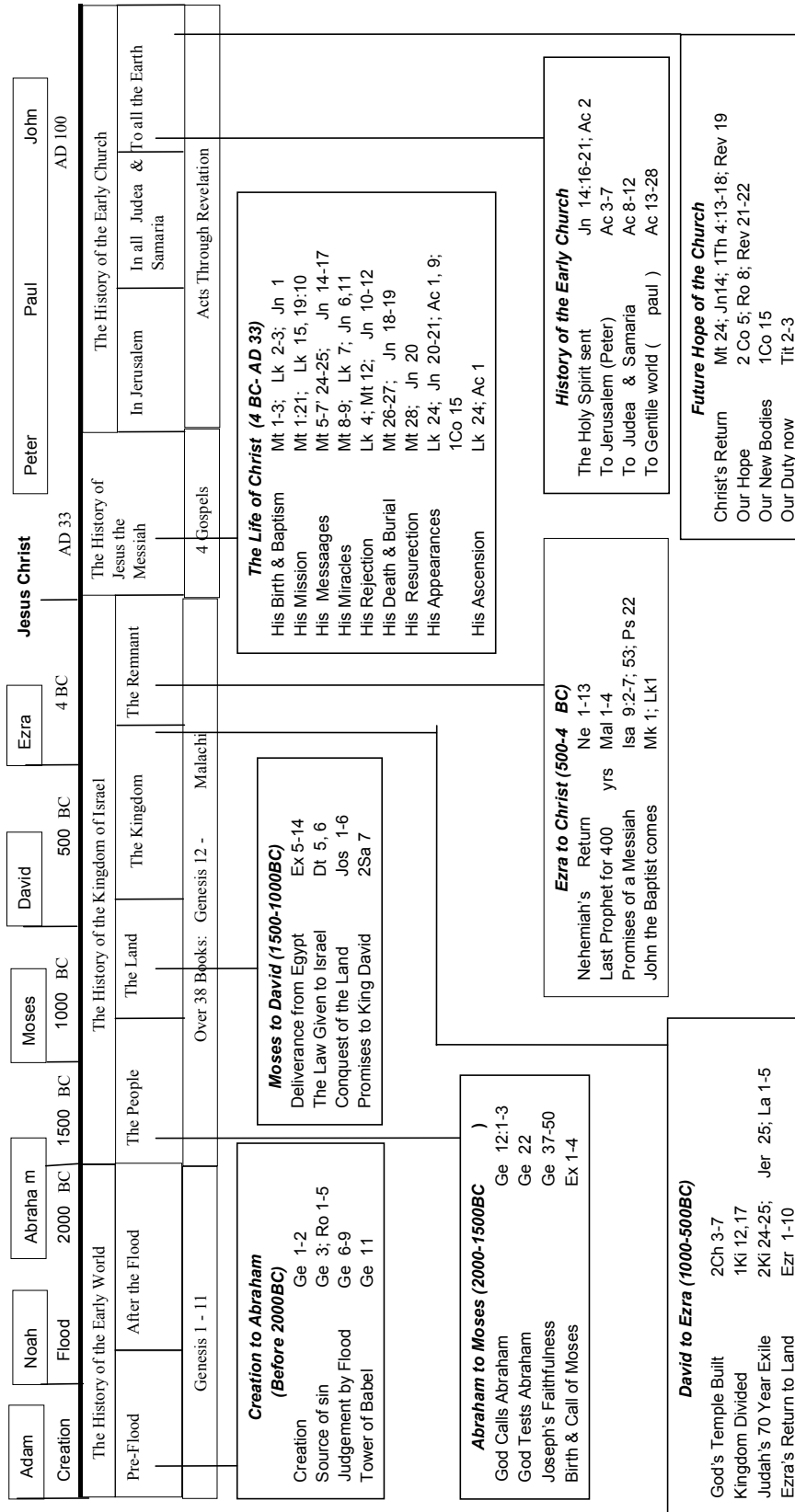
**Figure 4A.1: Redemptive History of the World in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT)**

The chart below is intended to give the BIG PICTURE of the Bible by showing that the Old and New Testaments are united in declaring God's eternal purpose. Beginning in Genesis, God created Man (male and female) to have a relationship with Him. When Man sinned, that relationship was broken. The account of how God began rebuilding that relationship begins in Genesis 3:15 and ends in Revelation 22. In fact, the Bible is primarily the history of God's redemptive plan.

OT	Creation: Ge 1, 2	Fall/Sin: Ge 3:1-14	Promise of a Redeemer: Ge 3:15, 21	Promise repeated to Abraham: Ge 12	Sacrificial System initiated under Law of Moses/Blood Atonement: Exodus	A chosen people to be His Witness throughout the World
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Man (Male &amp; female) created in IMAGE of God 1:27</li> <li>- to have relationship with God, 3:8</li> <li>- to have relationship with each other, 2:24</li> <li>- to reproduce, 1:28</li> <li>- to rule over earth, 1:28</li> <li>- to receive God's blessing, 1:28</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Image Marred</li> <li>- Relationship with God broken</li> <li>- Pain and suffering</li> <li>- Try to rule over each other</li> <li>- All under a curse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The "offspring" of the woman would strike the heel of the serpent.</li> <li>- God made garments of skin for them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I will bless you</li> <li>- In you all nations of the earth will be blessed</li> <li>- God chose one nation to be His people &amp; to make Him known throughout the earth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Isa 53:7</li> <li>- Ex 12:13 A lamb to be sacrificed for sin. (Picture of the Lamb of God that would take away sins of the world).</li> <li>- Leviticus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jos 2:8-14; 4:24</li> <li>- 2Sa 7:25-26</li> <li>- 1Ki 8:41-43</li> <li>- Isa 43:10-12; 54:5; 55:4, 5; 59:20; 60:16</li> <li>- Da 7:13-14</li> <li>- Zec 13:1</li> <li>- (plus many, many more)</li> </ul>
NT	Jesus: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world	Gospels: Jesus the Redeemer Came	Acts: History of story of Redemption taken to ends of earth	A Redeemed people being transformed into image of Christ: "How should we Live?"		Revelation: Ultimate Redemption
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jn 1:29</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mt 1:21</li> <li>- Jn 3:16, 17</li> <li>- Lk 4:18, 19</li> <li>- Lk 19:10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jerusalem 2 &amp; 6:7</li> <li>- Judea &amp; Samaria 6:8 - 9:31</li> <li>- Palestine &amp; Syria 9:32 - 12:24</li> <li>- Eastern part of Roman World 12:25-19:20</li> <li>- To Rome 19:21-25:31</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ro 3:24; Ro 4:22-25; Ro 6:11-14;</li> <li>- Ro 8:29</li> <li>- 2Co 3:18</li> <li>- Eph 4:21-33</li> <li>- Col 1:15-22</li> <li>- 1Pe 5:1, 10</li> <li>- 1Th 2:19</li> <li>- Jude 24, 25</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Creation of) a New Heaven and New Earth (21:1)</li> <li>- Everything made new (21:5)</li> <li>- His servants will reign with Him (22:5)</li> <li>- Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14)</li> </ul>

**Figure 4A.2 Chronology of the Bible**

This chart shows how the Bible is broken down into historical periods. Key figures in each of the periods are noted



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**BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS**

**5**  
LESSON

# Interpretation Workshop

## ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to give trainees the opportunity to practice the interpretation stage of inductive Bible study.

## ☞ Main Points

- The goal of interpretation is to understand the author's intended meaning.

## ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Begin to apply the principles of interpretation.
- Better understand the meaning of Acts 17:1-10a.

## ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Workshop: Divide the trainees into small groups of 3-4 people. Have all the groups work on the same passage recommended at the end of the first hour. Allow 15 minutes at the end of the workshop for the groups to discuss their understanding of the passage together.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

The passage we will use for our workshop is Acts 17:1-10a. The format for this workshop is as follows:

- We will divide into groups of 3-4 people.
- We will have 35 minutes to read the passage and work through the steps of interpretation as presented in Lesson 4.
- The last 15 minutes of the workshop we will regroup and share our understanding of the passage, and to choose key 'interpretation' questions.

## GROUP WORK

As a result of Lesson 3, each trainee should already be very familiar with Acts 17:1-10a. You will need to refer back to your observations in that lesson in order to complete this lesson. In fact, it may be necessary to do additional observation of the passage if questions arise that you cannot answer.

Use the same process that you used to interpret Jeremiah 1 in Lesson 4.

### A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts

As I look at my observations on Acts 17:1-10a, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

*Context of the passage:*

*Original audience:*

*Original situation:*

*Other facts and observations:*

**B. State the Main Point**

The subject of the passage is:

The thing that Luke is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

**C. Describe the Flow of Thought**

Luke develops the main idea of the passage by:

#### **D. “What Does It Mean” Questions**

As you work through this passage as a group, record below key questions you asked about the meaning of the passage that helped you better understand *what the verses mean*.

*[Circle the two most helpful questions that you would use if you were leading a group study of this passage.]*

#### **E. State the Biblical Principle**

The timeless principle of this passage is:

### **SUMMARY**

Use the space below to take notes when the groups come back together to discuss their understanding of the passage. Note how other groups agreed or differed from your understanding. Try to arrive at a consensus on the meaning of the passage.

Choose the two best ‘interpretation’ questions for a group study from among the ‘favorites’ of all the groups and record them below.

- 1.
- 2.

### **SOURCES**

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.



BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

6

LESSON

# Applying God's Word

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of 'application.'

### ☞ Main Points

- We need to obey the biblical principles we learn, or else the exercise is futile.
- Our situation must be equivalent to the biblical context for the application to be valid.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to apply principles learned from the Scriptures
- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study application questions.
- Begin to apply the application principles presented in this lesson.

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

The focus in this lesson should be on practical applications that each person can make to his/her own life and ministry. Trainees should be encouraged to make these personal applications.

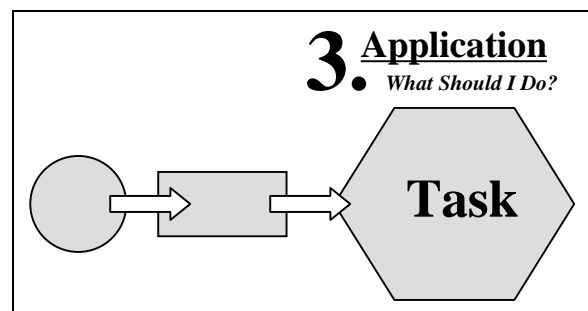
## INTRODUCTION

For some reason, the hardest part of the Christian life is applying the truths of Scripture to everyday life. We might gain much knowledge and our faith might increase from our study of the Bible. However, unless we understand how to put into practice what we have learned, the study will not greatly profit us. In the preceding lessons, we have collected our materials (observation) and constructed them into a biblical principle (interpretation). Now it is time to live in the truth (application). Application specifically asks the question "what should I do?"

When we determine what we *should* do, we still need to **obey** what the Bible teaches. Jesus taught that His disciples should teach others "...to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). The Apostle Paul speaks of applying what has been learned this way, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1Co 11:1). The Apostle John writes that "we know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1Jn 2:3). Also, we need to look for practical ways to **apply** the truths we learn as we study the Bible. The Apostle James writes, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas 2:17).

In this lesson we want to return to the passage in Jeremiah chapter 1. We will study the text again, looking for biblical principles that we can apply to our lives. While the principles will apply to everyone, the practical applications may well vary from one person to another because our circumstances are all different.

Figure 6.1



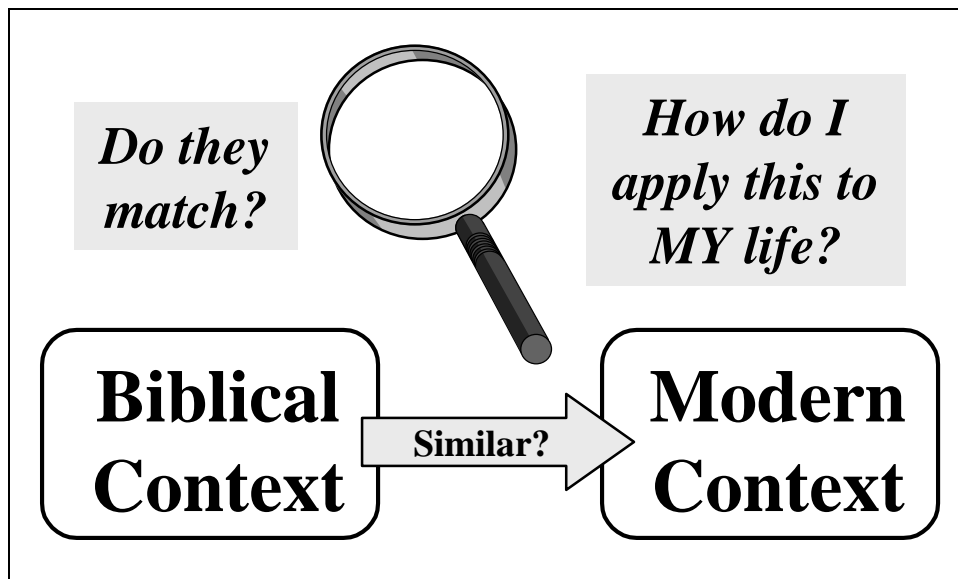
## I. APPLICATION—THE THIRD STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

There are two very important issues that must be addressed in the application stage. The first is the fact that application should always be made to oneself, rather than only to others. It does not matter whether the study is for the purpose of personal growth, or for teaching others. If we do not apply it to ourselves first, we become hypocrites. Whatever we teach to others should always flow out of what we have already learned and applied in our own life. Then we can teach others if the need arises.

The second important point is to make sure that *our context* is the same as the *original context*. We cannot, and must not apply a message given to biblical characters to our own lives unless our situation is equivalent. Therefore, much of the application stage consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Application consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Figure 6.2 Comparing the Contexts



## II. PROCESS OF APPLICATION

Proper application starts with a logical and systematic consideration of the basic areas of our life and ministry that should be affected by the biblical principle that we have seen in the text. It is helpful to consider each topic, and then to ask ourselves probing, thought-provoking questions about what we should do in response to the message. As always, this process should be surrounded by prayer, and accompanied by a willingness to learn and grow in the Lord.

### A. Application Topics

The ultimate goal of application is personal character development and greater ministry effectiveness. There are a number of areas or topics that we should consider when we try to apply the message of a passage personally. These topics include both our personal life and ministry. Some examples are listed here:

Faith: What can I learn about personal faith?

Attitudes: What attitudes are good or bad? What are their results? How can I change negative ones?

Actions: What should I start doing? What should I stop doing?

Sins: What sin(s) have been pointed out to me? How can I right things with God/others?



- Challenges: What challenges have been made clear to me in my personal life? In relationships with others? In my ministry?
- Promises: What promises can I claim as my own? Are there conditions? What are the implications for my life and ministry?
- Character: What are the godly character qualities that I need to develop in my life and ministry?

## **B. General Questions**

Hendricks lists a number of helpful application questions that can be asked of any passage of Scripture. They are:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

## **C. Specific Questions**

Having asked the general application questions of Jeremiah chapter 1, it is also helpful to look at each verse or section and ask more specific questions. As distinct from previous stages, however, these questions directly relate to *what you should do* as a result of the message. There are an endless number of these specific questions, since they are different for every passage. You are limited only by your creativity. The important thing is to open your heart to the Lord, and allow Him to show you what He wants to be different in your life.

Some sample questions are listed below. Feel free to add to them as you work through the passage.

### *Verse 5*

- What does the teaching of this verse say personally to you about your personal relationship with God the Creator?
- What does this verse say to you personally about your call to ministry?
- If you do not have a clear sense of call, what is this verse saying to you?
- What does this verse say personally to you about God's will for your life?
- Do you know what God's will for your life is at this point?
- What impact does this verse have regarding your faith in God's sovereignty?
- Do you agree? Do you accept this concept without reservation?

### *Verse 6*

- Do you identify with Jeremiah's hesitancy to respond to God's challenge?
- What have been your "excuses?"
- Are you still offering excuses? What should you do about them?

### *Verse 7*

- What do you think personally about God's response to Jeremiah?
- How do you feel personally about the apparent lack of "flexibility" on Jeremiah's part to refuse God's call?

- There doesn't seem to be any room for Jeremiah to make his own decision. What do you feel personally about not having any real choice in the matter of a call by God? Should you have a choice?
- Does this verse create a problem for you in the area of man's free will and God's sovereignty?
- If this does create a problem, how will you respond?

*Verse 8*

- What does this verse mean to you personally?
- How will you apply this to your personal and ministry situation?

*Verse 9*

- Can you describe a situation in which God has "met" with you personally?

*Verse 10*

- What does this verse say to you personally about God's ultimate goal of your ministry?
- Can you see any similarity between Jeremiah's task and yours as a church planter?
- There were obstacles that Jeremiah had to face and overcome in order to reach the goal of building and planting anew. What are some of the obstacles you face as you reach toward that same goal of building up the kingdom of God by planting new churches?
- How do you feel about the prospect of being in a position where you might have to go against tradition and leaders who might oppose your church planting ideas?
- How would you deal with the obstacles and those who might oppose you?

*Verse 12*

- How do you see the principle of this verse applying to you personally?
- What does this verse do for your confidence as a church planter?

*Verse 16*

- How do you deal with the issue of "other gods" in your own life?
- What do you need to do to make sure that your allegiance is only to God and not to other "gods", i.e., materialism, nationalism, etc.?

*Verse 17*

- How do you rate your readiness at this point to be able to stand up for God against all opposition?
- What do you need to do personally to prepare yourself for your future ministry?
- What areas of your life need reinforcing spiritually?

*Verse 18*

- God fortified Jeremiah. How has God fortified you to stand for Him?
- What has God given to you to be with you in all circumstances?
- How does this make you feel about God and His provision for you and your ministry?

### III. SUMMARY

The application I see for my life and ministry in Jeremiah 1 is:

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- Do you agree that it is always necessary to apply teaching to ourselves first of all? Why is that important?

- How does the 'context' influence the application of a passage?

## **ACTION PLAN**

- If you have not had time to complete this lesson as a group, do so before the next workshop so that you will be familiar with the principles.

## **SOURCES**

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.



**BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS**

**7**

LESSON

# Application Workshop

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to give the trainees opportunity to practice the application stage of inductive Bible study.

## ☛ Main Points

- We must apply the message of a passage to ourselves first of all.

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to apply the message of Acts 17:1-10a to his or her own life and ministry.

## ☛ Appendix

7A Ephesus—An Inductive Bible Study

## ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

This workshop is a similar format to the two preceding ones. Divide the trainees into groups of 3-4 persons. Allow 15 minutes at the end of the hour to come together and compare results.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

We will continue to study Acts 17:1-10a. We will be using the previous observations and interpretation. This time, however, we will be looking for application to our own lives and ministry.

- Divide into groups of 3-4 persons.
- Take 35 minutes to work through the application steps, and decide how best to apply the passage to each of your lives and ministries.
- Use the last 15 minutes to regroup and discuss your applications, and to choose appropriate 'application' questions for possible use in leading an inductive study on this passage.

## GROUP WORK

Use the following process to help you arrive at a valid and helpful application for your own life.

### A. Remember the Biblical Principle

Recopy here the biblical principle that you derived for Acts 17:1-10a from Lesson 5:

### B. Compare the Contexts

In order for your application to be valid, your context should be equivalent to the original biblical context.

1. *Briefly describe the original biblical context of Acts 17:1-10a:*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. *Briefly describe your current context (who you are, what you are doing, etc).:*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. *Write a brief statement of at least one way in which your context is similar to the one in Acts 17 (Note: This will vary somewhat for every person in the group, but there will also be enough similarity that you should be able to help each other).*

### **C. Think about the Application Topics**

Read through the passage and see if any of the following topics seem to be appropriate for your situation. If so, note how it relates. Perhaps there is another more appropriate topic. If so, note it below.

- Faith
- Attitude
- Action
- Sin(s)
- Challenge
- Promise
- Character
- (other)
- (other)

### **D. General Questions**

Ask the general application questions listed below. Record your answers to any that are appropriate.

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

### **E. Ask Specific Questions**

Now as you work through the passage together, think of specific questions for each verse that focus on "What should I do?" Record those questions, and the answers in the space following:

*[Circle the best two questions that you would use in leading a group inductive study of this text.]*

### **SUMMARY**

As you come back together, discuss and compare the applications that you see in the passage. Finally, compare the 'application' questions that each group selected, and select the two that would be most helpful if you were leading an inductive study of the passage. Record them below:

1.

2.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION**

- What is the most important thing you should do as a result of reading this passage?
- What did you see as a result of this method that is new for you?

### **ACTION PLAN**

- You have now progressed through the stages of observation, interpretation, and application. Before the next seminar, you will need to develop a brief inductive Bible study using the principles you have learned. You will have 20 minutes present this Bible study during a workshop in that seminar. The next seminar will discuss the principles of *leading* an inductive study.

- At this point, your assignment is to study a passage using the inductive method, and to prepare as many observation, interpretation, and application questions as possible. You should determine the *meaning* of the passage, and the *application* during this preparation time. Then, from all your questions, choose a maximum of 5-6 observation questions, 2-3 interpretation questions, and 1-2 application questions that would best lead the other trainees discover and apply the teaching of the passage.
- You may choose one of the passages listed below for your study. Please compare your choice with the other trainees so that everyone does not do the same passage. As an example for you, Appendix 7A is a sample inductive Bible study on the founding of the church at Ephesus in Acts 19:1-10. Your study should have similar format, but will of course have different questions, main point, and application.
- Sample passages from which to choose:
  - Acts 13:4-12 (Paphos)*
  - Acts 13:13-52 (Antioch)*
  - Acts 14:1-7 (Iconium)*
  - Acts 14:8-20 (Lystra and Derbe)*
  - Acts 16:11-40 (Philippi)*
  - Acts 17:10-15 (Berea)*
  - Acts 17:16-34 (Athens)*
  - Acts 18:1-17 (Corinth)*

## SOURCES

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.



BIBLE STUDY  
APPENDIX

7A

# Ephesus—An Inductive Bible Study

## HOW PAUL FOUNDED THE CHURCH

### INTRODUCTION

Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations. Can we really do this? How much can you accomplish? How many people could you win for Christ in say...two years? How large a geographical area could you saturate with the Gospel in that time? In Acts 19, the Apostle Paul was able to proclaim the Gospel to everyone in a huge area in such a short time. If we want to be effective church planters, we need to study how Paul accomplished this, and try to use the same methods that he used. Let's look at the methods that Paul used in this successful church plant.

#### I. PRAYER

Take a moment to pray that God would open our eyes and hearts to understand how He wants to speak to us through this passage.

#### II. READ ACTS 19:1-10

Read the passage carefully and thoughtfully—either silently or aloud.

#### III. OBSERVATION

The first step is to discover what the Bible *says*. Look closely at the passage and answer the questions below.

*From the context (Acts 18:18-28):*

- When Paul arrived in Ephesus in Acts 19:1, he found some disciples. **How** do you think these people became disciples?
- **Who** was involved in making these disciples, and **how**?

*From the passage (Acts 19:1-10):*

- **What** weakness did Paul discover in these disciples, and **what** did he do about it?
- **Where** did Paul begin his work in Ephesus?
- **What** change did Paul make in his strategy and **why**?
- **What** was the result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus?

#### IV. INTERPRETATION

The second step is to decide what the Bible *means*. Think about the message of these verses by discussing the following questions:

- **Why** does Luke focus on Paul's response to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the first eight verses of this passage?
- In verse 8, Paul argued persuasively. But in verses 9 and 10, he chose instead to focus on the training of the disciples. From the text, **what** was the response to each of these methods, and **which** method do you think the passage is intended to encourage?

Summarize in a sentence or two the *main point* of these verses. State it in terms of a *biblical principle* if possible. Write it in the space below:

*The principle of this passage:*

## V. APPLICATION

The third step is to decide how this truth applies to our lives and ministry as church planters. Think about the following questions as you look again at the text:

1. In order for me to minister as the Apostle Paul ministered, the two most important activities that I have to do are:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. From this passage, how should I be ministering in order to most effectively minimize persecution and maximize the spread of the Gospel?

## SUMMARY

Knowing the truth is not enough. We have to apply it. The final step is to *obey it*. Take another moment to pray for God's help to respond in obedience to the things you have seen in this passage.

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# EVANGELISM

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EVANGELISM

1

LESSON

# Introduction to Evangelism

## GOD SO LOVES THE WORLD

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the nature, need, motive and place of evangelism in the SCP strategy.

### ☛ Main Points

- Evangelism is a process, and not just an event.
- Skills and experience in evangelism can be developed.
- The process of evangelism is not complete until a more mature believer has begun to disciple the new Christian and help him or her to grow in the faith.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should :

- Recognize the urgent need of the lost and be increasingly motivated out of unconditional love to evangelize them.

### ☛ Appendix

1A The Bridge

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Have participants read selected verses aloud in Section II. Take same time to review prayer triplets. Encourage participants to organize their own prayer triplet before the next training seminar.

## INTRODUCTION

Evangelism is important work for all believers. For those involved in church planting, evangelism is no less important. In fact, planting a church without evangelism is impossible. We can find hope for the process in Matthew 4:19, where Jesus challenged the disciples to follow Him with the words, "Come, follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus wanted these experienced fishermen to use their lives to build His Church. As we follow Christ, observe His law and obey Him, He also desires to make us fishers of men, able to attract and win people to Himself. Only the Lord is able to make us effective fishermen for souls.

There are many ways to catch fish. We use large boats, complicated machines and huge nets to catch them by the thousands. We cast smaller nets to catch several. And we use barbed hooks with bait or attractive lures to catch them one at a time. We do not catch fish with every toss or cast, but we can be learning with each experience. We have to go where the fish are and choose an appropriate method in order to catch them.

In the same way, there are a multitude of methods to bring men, women, youth and children to Christ. There is, of course, only one true Gospel. As we preach this Gospel, God's Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt regarding sin, and righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8) and brings people to life-changing faith. Our task is to combine effective methods and strategies to win people to Christ and incorporate them into the church. We will be considering some of these methods and strategies in this lesson.

## I. THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM

Evangelism means “telling the good news.” The “good news” that Jesus Christ has made salvation possible and available as a free gift is the best news ever to strike the human ear and heart. Evangelism involves assisting those outside of faith in Christ to move toward faith in Him. However, evangelism is not the end of the process. True evangelism is like the first leg of a relay race. Once people are won to Christ they must be “handed over” to a discipler who will help them nurture their new lives in Christ. The race is not complete until believing fellowships are planted and the body of Christ multiplies through further evangelism and discipleship. Dropping the baton after the evangelism stage is not acceptable.

### A. The Process

This process of evangelism is one important way that the Lord involves Christians, in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit, to build the kingdom of God—the Church of Jesus Christ. While the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men is invisible, the Christian’s efforts in evangelism are both public and private.

Evangelism begins in private, with prayer. This includes both individual prayer and also “Prayer Triplets” (see Prayer Appendix 3A “Prayer Triplets”). A prayer triplet consists of three Christian believers meeting regularly to pray for three unsaved friends or relatives. The group meets to pray for these people until they become believers or until circumstances prohibits the group from continuing to pray together. Encourage others to pray as you are engaged in the work of evangelism, following Paul’s example in Ephesians 6:19-20 and Colossians 4:2-6. When we pray, we ask God to:

- Prepare the hearts of those to whom He wants us to speak
- Lead us to those who are prepared
- Help us present the Gospel in a clear and meaningful way
- Preserve the planted message

Publicly, we capitalize on divine encounters to share our faith as we go about the ordinary activities of our lives. We initiate genuine relationships with people in our communities. We spend time with people so they can observe our lives and we can see theirs. We build bridges of trust to individuals and families, expanding the testimony and influence of Christ. Evangelism often includes specific activities designed to win a hearing for the Gospel. It could be through simple acts of kindness or sharing a tract, or it could be as complex as organizing a regional outreach effort using the *Jesus* film or a gifted evangelist.

### B. The Message

In a letter to the newly established church at Rome, the apostle Paul wrote these words:

*“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Ro 1:16)*

What is the Gospel message—the “good news”—that we share? Paul makes a clear and simple presentation of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. In this passage, he breaks the content of the Gospel into two parallel parts—repentance and trust. Theologians are able to write countless volumes on the content of the Gospel. However the essence of the “good news” is summed up in this text.

The parts of the Gospel are clearly seen if we print the verses as shown below:

**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*]

- that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve . . .

In this form it is easy to see the two main points—the death and resurrection of Christ. Both were accomplished “according to the scriptures” and each has a supporting proof. The proof of His death was His burial, and the proof of His resurrection was His appearances to the believers. Look closely at each of the main points.

1. *Repent – (because He died)*

There is a lot packed into this statement. First of all, we must acknowledge that we are sinners before a Holy God. If there was anything we could do to save ourselves there would have been no reason for Christ to die. But there is absolutely nothing we can do to gain favor with God. There is no such thing as a righteous person (Ro 3:10, 20). We must cast ourselves on His mercy. We need grace, and not justice (Eph 2:8,9).

The death of Christ also means that His death was sufficient to save us. This would not be possible if He were not the Son of God—the God-Man—God in the flesh. God could not die until Jesus took human flesh on Himself. But a mere man cannot die for everyone. He can only die for his own sins. Therefore only Jesus, as God Incarnate, could satisfy the wrath of God against sin and offer salvation to us by grace.

The first part of the Gospel includes an admission of our utter unworthiness and of the deity and sufficiency of Christ. No one is genuinely saved until they acknowledge the supremacy of Christ and repent.

2. *Trust Christ – (because He rose)*

The second part of the Gospel involves trust. It is necessary to repent, but that alone is not enough to save us. Many “Christians” believe Christ died for sin, but they think they need to do some kind of work to merit His salvation. This was the heresy that Paul confronted in Galatians. Some taught that we must both believe and also keep the law in order to be saved. Paul condemned that idea in the strongest possible terms (Gal 1:8-9; 2:15-16; 3:3,11). Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient to save us. We need not and cannot add anything through our own effort.

The fact that Christ arose from the dead means His promise is true. He has gone to prepare a place for us and will come again to take us home with Him (Jn 14:2-3). Our salvation is settled when we trust Him. We can indeed serve Him with our good works as a way of thanking Him and worshipping Him. But these actions are part of our *sanctification* and not of our *salvation*.

**C. The Medium**

The most powerful presentation of the Gospel message is the one we authenticate with our lives. The way we live brings life to the words being spoken. Our integrity, compassion and transparency are essential tools used by the Lord to make us “salt and light” right where we live. A simple poem challenges us:

*You are writing a Gospel, a chapter a day,  
by the deeds that you do and the words that you say.  
Men read what you write, distorted or true.  
What is the Gospel according to you?*

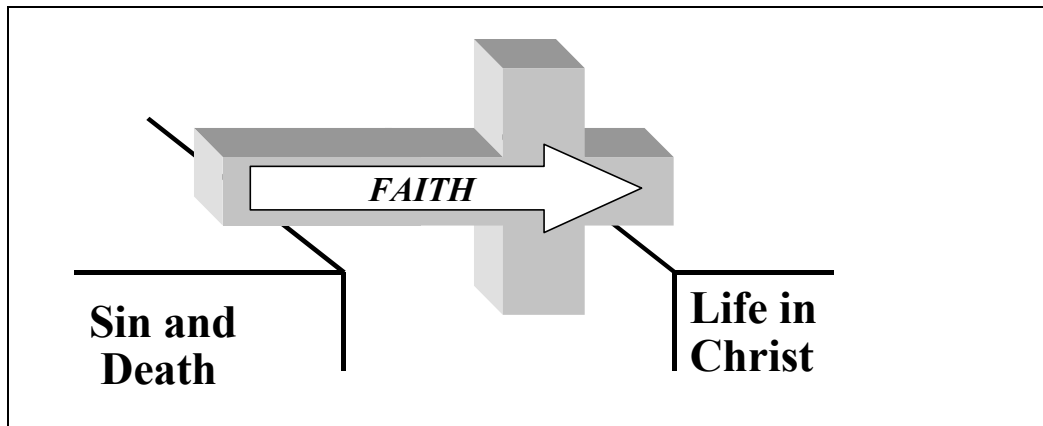
**II. THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM**

**A. People Are Spiritually Lost and Forever Separated from God without Jesus Christ**

Not only is every person separated from God spiritually, but also each person is absolutely unable to redeem himself. Because of sin the Holy God is inaccessible to him. Whether an individual is aware of his condition or not he is desperate and doomed apart from receiving the solution offered by Jesus Christ, and no one else. Please see appendix 1A “The Bridge” for a simple way to explain how Christ bridges the gap between God and us.

- ◆ Romans 1:18ff
- ◆ John 14:6
- ◆ Romans 6:23
- ◆ Romans 3:9-20,23
- ◆ Ezekiel 3:16-21
- ◆ Ephesians 2:1-3

**Figure 1.1 The Process of Evangelism**



**B. We Are God's Method of Reaching the World**

Since the time of Christ, followers have been charged with the responsibility to represent the Lord and His kingdom in the world. The apostles were the first to receive the charge. They understood that they were to be witnesses—that they were to be spokesmen and ambassadors of Christ. These roles imply a faithful presentation of the truth as we understand it and a faithful representation of the God who has won us and sent us out.

Paul understood this responsibility as a debt or obligation that he owed to the Lord and to the lost. While it is true that a person may be saved through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit only, this is highly unusual. In fact, even when Christ Himself spoke to Paul on the Damascus road, He sent Ananias to complete the evangelism process in Paul's life. God desires to use men and women who know Him as the means to reach the lost.

- ◆ 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- ◆ Acts 1:8
- ◆ Mark 16:15
- ◆ Matthew 28:18-20
- ◆ Romans 1:14-17
- ◆ 2 Timothy 4:5b

**C. Many are Eager to Hear and Understand the Solution to Their Dilemma**

French Philosopher Blaise Pascal noted that there is within man a God-shaped vacuum, which only God can adequately fill. Through the ages, people have sought resolution for their spiritual dilemma. The list below is just a sample of the many in the New Testament who would openly discuss their condition in the hope of resolving their problems. There are others like them who will listen to the Gospel if we will go to them and make it plain.

- ◆ Nicodemus—John 3
- ◆ The man born blind—John 9
- ◆ The woman at the well—John 4
- ◆ Jerusalem crowd—Acts 2
- ◆ Zacchaeus—Luke 19
- ◆ Ethiopian eunuch—Acts 8

**D. The Gospel Has The Power to Change**

*1. The Gospel changes spiritual realities.*

The Gospel moves people from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, from darkness to light, from death to life. No longer enemies of Christ and slaves to sin, we (and those who come to faith through our testimony) have become a part of the household of God (Col 1:10-14).



2. *The Gospel changes the whole world.*

The Gospel is changing lives—in huge cosmopolitan areas, in obscure mountain villages, in steaming tropical jungles, among troubled youth, within struggling families, among hard-working businessmen and concerned political leaders. Throughout every continent, the Gospel is having an impact. Families, communities and nations around the world are being changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. *The Gospel changes society.*

As people come to Christ and yield themselves to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the community of those who love Christ can exert a moral influence for good felt across the face of your nation.

4. *The Gospel changes individuals.*

All who have placed their faith in Christ upon hearing the Gospel message have a testimony of how God's grace has profoundly changed them personally, making each one a new creation in Christ. Individuals and families are profoundly affected.

5. *The Gospel changes life now.*

Christ's life-giving Gospel has delivered us. We have been saved from the penalty of sin! Moreover, we will be saved from the presence of sin. However, right now we are being saved from the power of sin. The Gospel makes a difference today (1Co 15:55-56; Ro 5:8-10).

6. *The Gospel changes our future.*

Through those who come to faith because of the work of the Gospel in us, we can affect not only our generation but succeeding ones as well. We can become the foundation of spiritual generations in and outside our own families.

7. *The Gospel changes our eternity.*

The change brought by the Gospel affects not only our temporal life, but our eternal destiny as well. We, as Christ's bride, the Church, are an eternal testimony to the spiritual realm of God's mercy and grace (Eph 3:10, 11).

### III. THE MOTIVE OF EVANGELISM

#### A. It Is Possible to Evangelize Out of a Sense of Duty or Obligation to God or Others

Paul wrote in Romans 1:14 that he was a debtor to those who had not heard the Gospel message. He sensed an obligation to share that which he possessed, the Gospel, with others. Men of God have often referred to themselves as His servants, implying that their activity was at least partially motivated in response to the authority of God, their master.

In Colossians 1:28, the apostle Paul speaks of the goal of his Gospel ministry, ". . . so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ." Often that which motivates God's servants to evangelism is the long-range goal of seeing God's purposes in the world accomplished. That hope and satisfaction itself can powerfully stir us as we serve the Gospel.

#### B. It Is Possible to Evangelize Out of Fear of God and His Judgment

Perhaps from time to time the feelings of love for God and man are not there, and a sense of duty does not motivate us. Sometimes the fact that we are accountable to God and will one day answer to Him for our service stirs feelings of fear in us. Even that fear can motivate us to service. God warned Ezekiel in strong language to take His message to the people or bear the consequences (Eze 3:16-21). Jonah evangelized only after being terrorized by a whale (Jnh 2).

#### C. It Is Even Possible to Evangelize for Totally Inappropriate Reasons

In one of Paul's letters to a young church, he noted that some had proclaimed the Gospel "out of envy and rivalry" (Php 1:15). He went on to say that it did not matter! That the Gospel of Christ

was being proclaimed is what was important to Paul. He rejoiced that the right thing was happening in spite of wrong motives! (Php 1:15-18)

#### **D. We Should Evangelize Out of Love for Christ and The Lost**

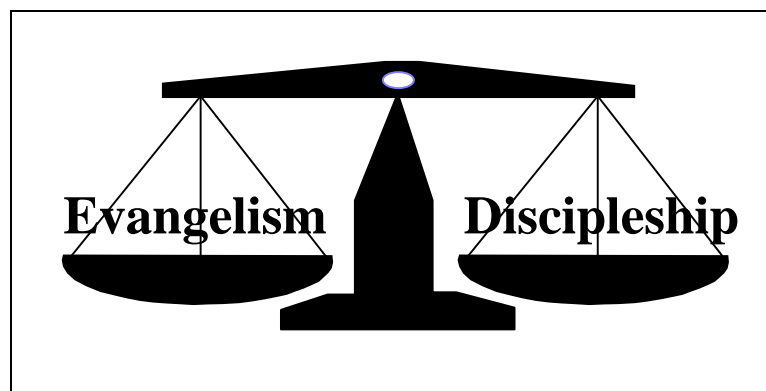
The maturing believer increasingly finds himself growing in his love for Christ and, in turn, for those whom Christ loves—the Church and the lost. Paul spoke of Christ's love “compelling” him to persuade men (2Co 5:14).

It seems from reading 1 John that what motivated and stirred the apostle John to proclaim the Gospel was a desire to include increasing numbers of people in the fellowship of the Church.

### **IV. THE PLACE OF EVANGELISM IN AN SCP STRATEGY**

The strategy of saturation church planting is largely dependent upon focused evangelistic effort. Saturation evangelism goes hand-in-hand with saturation church planting. The initial and foundational work of evangelism—winning people to faith in Christ—must be succeeded by the ongoing work of nurturing and equipping new converts and disciples. But in that subsequent work, we dare not neglect the critical place of intentional, continuing evangelistic work, building bridges to the lost and moving them toward faith. There is a balance that must be maintained between telling the Good News and assisting those who have come to faith. To neglect either jeopardizes the work of God in which we are involved.

**Figure 1.2 Keeping the Balance**



We certainly need to help those whom God has given us to disciple, but we must never be satisfied with the number of those who have come to faith. We must not forget the task of evangelism. We must be committed to and diligent in our responsibility to reach the lost with the Gospel. Without people continually being won to faith (thinking of the church planting cycle), there is no further establishing, no further developing of leaders, and no hope for on-going multiplication of churches. Evangelism must take the first place in saturation church planting. Equipping and mobilizing all believers to do the work of evangelism will be a primary ingredient in any SCP strategy.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- Do you believe that God could use you to reach others for Him?
- What is the most important thing that has ever happened to you personally?
- If that is true, what, then, is the most important thing you can do in life to make a positive impact on the many people you know?
- What is “the work of an evangelist”? (2Ti 4:2)
- What most motivates you to share the Gospel?
- Can you think of ten people in your web of relationships who need a personal relationship with Christ?
- What plans do you have for increasing your evangelistic efforts?

## **ACTION PLAN**

With two other believers, form a prayer triplet to meet and pray regularly for the salvation of those whom God has placed on your heart (See Prayer Appendix 3A: Prayer Triplets).

## **SOURCES**

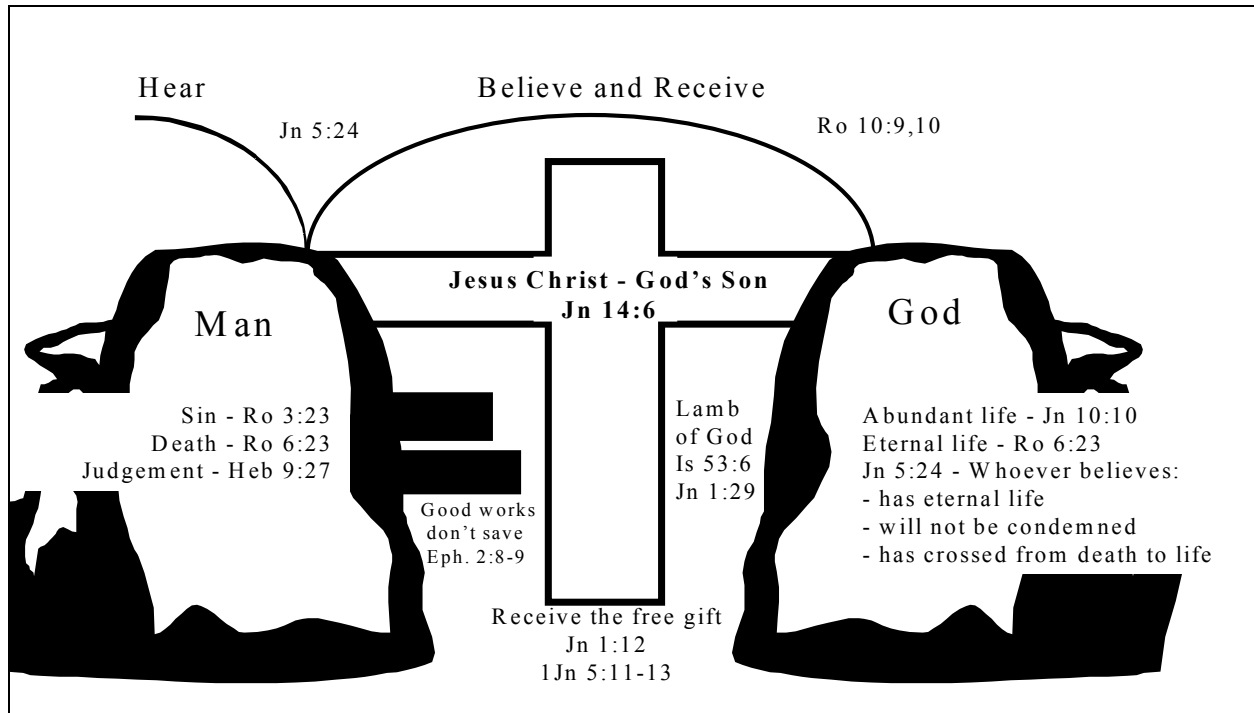
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EVANGELISM

APPENDIX

1A

# The Bridge



The Bridge diagram can be an effective evangelism method. You might find it helpful to gradually make a rough sketch of this on a blank sheet of paper while you share the Good News (with related Bible verses) with unsaved friends. A verbal and written presentation is often more powerful than using either medium alone.

EVANGELISM

LESSON **2,3**

# Developing Your Personal Testimony

## THIS IS WHAT GOD DID FOR ME!

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain the value and preparation of a personal testimony.

### ☛ Main Points

- A personal testimony is an effective and non-threatening way to witness to the lost.
- A personal testimony will be more effective if it is carefully prepared to include the most important information.
- A personal testimony tells what God has done in your life—it is not a sermon!

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the potential spiritual impact of a personal testimony.
- Develop a three - five minute personal testimony to share with others.

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

This is a two-hour lesson. The first hour should introduce the participants to what a personal testimony is and help them write their personal testimony. The second hour should be used to practice sharing their personal testimony (point V. in the outline). Although the lesson is written all together, you may want to leave a few days between the two hours to give the participants a chance to learn their testimony well before sharing it in class.

Be sure that the testimonies are not longer than five minutes. Consider using a stopwatch to ensure that this is not violated. It takes great discipline to keep a testimony short, but there will be situations where you will only have time to share a short testimony. It might be more effective to divide the group into two or three groups for sharing of testimonies.

## I. THE NATURE OF A TESTIMONY

### A. We are Called to be Witness

In Acts 1:8, Jesus promises His disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and that they will be His witnesses. But what is a witness? In a legal courtroom, a witness is one who is called upon to tell others what he has observed. He tells the truth about a critical event, as he has perceived it. A witness is not expected to know every detail or have various perspectives on truth. He is expected to tell what he remembers accurately and honestly. The content that a witness communicates is his testimony.

### B. We are Called to Give Testimony

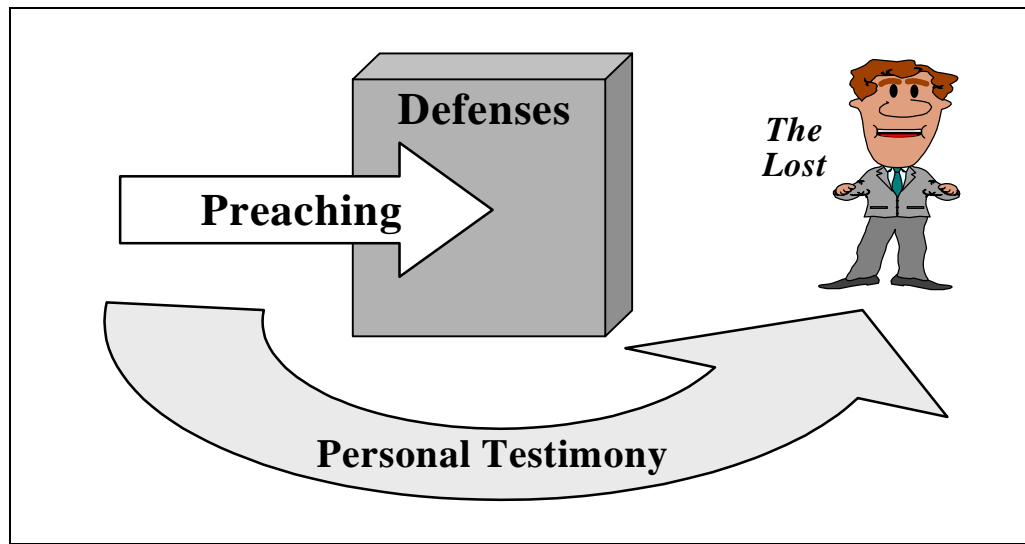
Each of us who has placed our faith in Christ also has a testimony to share. What has been your experience with Christ? Our testimonies are as individual as fingerprints and snowflakes. Our testimonies provide valuable insight to others about the way God works among men. This is vital information unbelievers need to make an informed decision about Christ. Our testimonies also provide encouragement to those who love God. As we tell of Christ's work in our lives, others are stimulated to greater faith and obedience.

## II. THE VALUE OF A TESTIMONY

### A. Overcoming resistance to the Gospel

People listen selectively. The people you want to win to faith may resist a theological discussion about salvation. But they will easily and readily hear your personal story of how you came to faith in Christ. People like to listen to interesting stories. Whether they admit it or not, they want you to give them a good reason to believe. Your testimony, shared honestly, briefly and creatively, can be used by the Spirit to open up their eyes and minds to see spiritual truth in a fresh way.

**Figure 2.1 Overcoming Defenses With Personal Testimony**



### B. Overcoming Satan in spiritual warfare

When we are sharing our faith with others, we are engaged alongside God in spiritual warfare, assaulting the kingdom of the devil. In Revelation 12:10-12, we read the following:

*"... Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him 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. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!"*

Note the means by which the accuser of our brethren, Satan, was overcome ... "the blood of the Lamb" and "the word of their testimony." The finished work of Christ and our relationship to Christ are two things God uses to defeat the evil one. Your testimony of faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ is an important tool God uses to build his church. Even if we have to experience hardship, suffering or ultimately death for our faith, we win and Satan loses! So tell people what God has done in your life!

## III. EXAMPLES OF TESTIMONIES

Scripture is filled with accounts of people giving their personal testimony. Read the following as examples of personal testimonies and see what you can learn from them. Use the methods you are learning in the lessons on inductive Bible Studies.

### A. The woman at the well (Jn 4:28-29)

- What did she say?
- To whom did she witness?

- Why did she choose this particular form of testimony?

**B. The man born blind (Jn 9:13-34)**

- To whom did he witness?
- What did he say?
- What was the occasion for the testimony?
- How was the testimony received?
- How did he deal with opposition?

**C. Paul's conversion (Ac 9, 22, and 26)**

In these passages, note how Paul emphasizes different aspects of the same experience to impact different audiences.

- Chapter 9 is Luke's account of Saul's conversion.
- Chapter 22 is Luke's record of Paul's interrupted testimony before the Jerusalem Jews.
- Chapter 26:2-23 is Luke's record of Paul's testimony before King Agrippa.

**D. Paul's testimony about events in Jerusalem (Ac 24:10-21)**

**IV. THE PREPARATION OF A TESTIMONY**

Please take the remainder of this session to prepare a 3-5 minute version of your personal testimony. Ask God to help you recall your conversion clearly. Make some notes about key ideas or verses you want to be sure to include. It is best if you can isolate one particular thing that moved you to faith in Christ—something that others, non-Christians, could relate to. In your testimony, share in these three broad categories:

**Figure 2.2 My Testimony**

***My Testimony***

*My life before . . .*

*How I trusted Christ . . .*

*My life now . . .*

**A. What was your life like before you met Christ?**

This will point to areas of need that you believed Christ would meet in your life. It provides a sense of common ground between you and the person you want to win to faith. Why did you need Christ? Try to isolate the prominent issue that led to your repentance.

**B. How did you come to Christ?**

What actually happened? Where were you? When did you trust Christ? What did you do? What Scripture did the Holy Spirit use in your life? Did someone help you in this process? Make this as basic as possible; assume that the hearer is a God-seeker and your experience will be used as a plausible scenario that he could relate to.

**C. How has knowing Christ changed your life?**

What impact has your faith had on your life? In what practical ways was your life changed? Were there changes that surprised you? Were your expectations met? Do not only talk in the past tense—tell what the Gospel is doing in your life today. Do not necessarily avoid talking about difficulties—non-Christians need to know that Christians have problems because they, the non-Christians certainly have problems. Listeners need to know that Christ is a solid anchor in the storms and that the Christian life provides power for life.

**V. THE SHARING OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

Now that you have prepared your personal testimony, take some time to share it with the other trainees. Each participant needs a chance to share his or her testimony. Take five minutes to hear each testimony and no more than five minutes to give feedback. As testimonies are shared, use the following points to consider the effectiveness of each.

**A. Complete**

Does the testimony tell the whole story? Does it include the three parts?

- Life before Christ: What can the non-Christian relate to?
- Circumstances at the point of conversion: How is it like the non-Christian's situation?
- Life since finding Christ: How is your life different than the non-Christian?

**B. Clear**

Will the testimony be easy for a non-believer to understand, or is it filled with religious language that might confuse non-believers? Does it sound like a sermon or is it a helpful recommendation to a friend?

**C. Gospel**

Are all necessary points of the Gospel message touched upon in the testimony? While it is impossible to go into detail concerning all of this in a short testimony, all or some of the following points should be properly treated.

1. *The Bad News*

- We are sinners, and the penalty is death
- God is holy, and we cannot please Him
- Jesus—the Son of God—died in our place

2. *The Good News*

- We are saved by faith—not by our works
- We are born again into God's family as His children
- We have the assurance of eternal life

**D. Concise**

These testimonies should be not longer than five minutes. Is there any unnecessary detail in the testimony? We do not need to tell the whole story now—evangelism is a process.



## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- Where are some places and what are some of the times in your day or week during which you could share your testimony?
- What topics of general conversation might readily provide “openers” for the casual introduction of your testimony? Do you travel on public transportation?
- Do you take breaks or eat a meal at work? Ask the Lord to arrange “divine appointments” for you to be able to share your testimony.

## **ACTION PLAN**

- Share your testimony with at least three other Christians who will see if you are clear in your presentation.
- Be prepared to share your testimony again during the next training session or during this seminar.
- Prayerfully make a plan that will result in sharing your testimony with two non-Christian friends or existing contacts within the next two weeks. Ask God to prepare “divine appointments” for you to share your testimony (perhaps without advance warning) within the next four weeks.