

Vietnam Edition

# **Practical Training for Saturation Church Planting**

**Book 1  
Laying Foundations**

**Practical Training for  
Saturation Church Planting  
Vietnam Edition  
Book One – Laying Foundations**

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This is a revision of the original version of the *Omega Course*, a practical church planting curriculum which was prepared in 2000 by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting ([www.alliancescp.org](http://www.alliancescp.org)) in cooperation with Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries ([www.russian-ministries.org](http://www.russian-ministries.org)). The original *Omega Course* was copyrighted by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, and is currently under copyright by United World Mission. Materials from the original *Omega Course* are used by permission.

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**PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR SCP**  
**BOOK 1 - LAYING FOUNDATIONS**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” – Habakkuk 2:14

### **NOTES FOR THE STUDENT**

To give glory to God: this is the greatest purpose of all mankind. God loves all peoples and wants every man, woman and child to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, to accept Christ, and to know Him and give Him glory (2 Peter 3:9, Psalm 67:3).

What kind of vision do we have when we think about the purpose of our life and ministry? Of course, we give people the opportunity to hear the Good News, but do we really understand what God’s vision is? How can we fulfill His will so that God’s glory touches every person in our country?

We believe that God’s primary instrument for worldwide evangelism is the local church, and that church planting, based on the principles of multiplication, is the most effective method for fulfilling the Great Commission. New churches must have a vision for multiplication from the very beginning, and must have the ability to start new congregations. When this happens, you have the potential for the beginning of a movement of new churches which are able to reach an entire country and change the lives of many people in that country. This process of widespread church planting is called “saturation church planting” (SCP).

The primary purpose of this material is to help pastors, church leaders, church planters and lay people to develop a growing understanding of the need to fill their country with the glory of God through the planting of new churches. This course is comprised of five books which correspond to the church planting and multiplication process. This first book contains the components of God’s vision, the biblical basis for SCP, a proper understanding of the church, and the need for prayer and research. It addresses foundational issues that are helpful to all of God’s people (not just the church planters). When it is studied, it will have the effect of mobilizing all of God’s people, no matter what their calling, toward a common vision. The other four books are designed to impart church planting skills to those who are called to be directly involved in church planting.

May God bless you and help you as you glorify Him through your life and ministry!

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In order to benefit fully from this course, you will need to:

- Attend all training events and cooperate with your mentor.
- Be faithful to complete all assignments and study all material as directed by your mentor.
- Pray for understanding, and spend time meditating on the content so that the Lord can speak to you and help you grow in your service for Him.
- Discuss what you are learning (as well as the content of this course) openly and honestly with your spouse or a trusted close friend.

## COURSE COMPONENTS

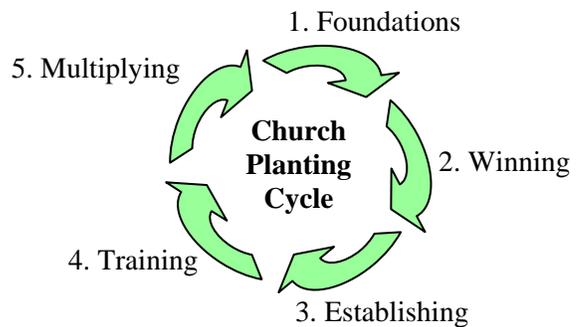
The course consists of the following components:

- Training material for reading, studying, discussion and reflection.
- Training seminars for processing concepts.
- A mentor for guiding you in learning and applying.
- Assignments for application.

## COURSE OUTLINE

This course has been designed to lead a student through the actual process of starting a church. It is not simply theory, but rather provides the skills and knowledge necessary to see a new church begun.

As you look at church planting efforts around the world, there is a common “cycle” of activities that happen whenever a new church is planted. The first phase deals with foundational issues which the church planter needs to understand, such as his vision and the definition of the church. The second phase involves evangelism of the lost, bringing people from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. The third phase involves establishing these new believers, grounding them in biblical truth, and helping them to grow in their spiritual maturity. Training leaders happens in the fourth phase, when the church planter begins to identify the new believers whom God has gifted to become leaders. Finally, the fifth phase involves multiplying the existing church planting ministry. In other words, the new church which has been started begins to pray and plan for starting a new church itself, thus repeating the cycle from the beginning. As this cycle repeats itself over and over again, we begin to see entire movements of new churches in a given region or area.



This material has been grouped into five books which correspond generally to the five phases of the church planting cycle. The intent is to provide the ministry skills and knowledge necessary for each phase at the same time that the students are actively involved in that phase.

The best way to use this material is to meet on a monthly basis with a mentor to read and discuss the lessons for that month. Each of the five books contains several month’s worth of lessons:

### **Book 1 - Laying Foundations**

- Months 1, 2

### **Book 2 - Winning the Lost**

- Months 3, 4

### **Book 3 – Establishing Converts**

- Months 5, 6, 7

### **Book 4 - Training Leaders**

- Months 8, 9, 10

### **Book 5 - Multiplying Ministry**

- Months 11, 12

If you meet on a monthly basis, it should take about two days to go through the lessons for that month. If you are meeting bi-monthly or quarterly, you will need to adjust your time accordingly.

## **YOUR MENTOR**

Your mentor will be available to guide you and the other participants through this course. What is a mentor? He is not a “teacher” in the traditional sense of the term, nor does he need to be an “expert” in church planting. The main responsibility of the mentor is to help the course participants interact with the material and apply the truth to their personal lives and church planting ministry. He will encourage you to explore your observations, apply what you are learning and keep to the lesson schedule. You can trust your mentor to pray for you and to keep confidential any personal information that you share with him. Feel free to interact with him often.

Pray throughout this course, asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate your understanding and to transform your mind, heart, and soul so that you grow in your understanding of God’s plan for the nations.

## **NOTES FOR THE MENTOR**

These lessons have been designed to be used in a small group setting, with a large amount of interaction between the students themselves. Your task is not to teach them what you know, but rather to use the lesson materials and bible passages to help them learn what God wants to teach them. The most important part of your role in this process is to help the students (1) understand the lesson content (2) decide what it means for them personally and (3) figure out together how it will impact their lives and ministries. To help with this discovery process, there are many questions throughout the lessons which appear in *italics*. These should be discussed during the lesson time.

As you ask these questions (and others that God will bring to mind during your time together), you should help the students process what is in the lesson, and not simply ask them to repeat what has been written. It is easy to sit in a group and agree that personal evangelism is important, but when you begin asking how each student will do this, with whom they will share, what they will say, etc. it brings it to a much more practical level.

As a mentor, your goal is to help each church planter with whom you work to be successful in their ministry. You need to pray for them on a regular, ongoing basis. You are to “prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph. 4:11-12). In order to do this effectively, you need to be a servant to them. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ...” (Phil. 2:5-8). As you humbly walk with your students through the church planting process, you will not only equip them for ministry, but you will also provide a model of mentoring and training which they can repeat in the future with others.

May God bless you and help you as you glorify Him through your life and ministry!

## **NOTES REGARDING THIS EDITION**

These materials are a revision of the original *Omega Course* curriculum and were designed for a unique ministry opportunity in Vietnam. You will find that most of the original *Omega Course* lessons have been revised and/or updated, and there are also new lessons which were not part of the original *Omega Course*.

Besides changes in content, this edition also promotes a very interactive learning style. Many questions have been added throughout the lessons, allowing for a time of interaction, reflection and application as your work through the lesson ideas. This edition also encourages a strong mentor/student relationship. The materials are organized in such a way that the student and mentor can meet together once a month to pray, discuss issues/problems, learn new content, and encourage one another. Review sections have been added at the beginning of each new month so that the mentor and student can go over the assignments from the previous month.

Although designed for use in Vietnam, these lessons could easily be adapted for use in other cultures and locations. Please contact the authors (see copyright page) if this is something you are interested in.

The following page shows the curriculum outline. Note that the Vietnamese language version of this curriculum corresponds to the English, with the exception of being organized into six books of two months worth of lessons in each book.

**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Book	1. Laying Foundations	2. Winning The Lost	3. Establishing Converts	4. Training Leaders	5. Multiplying Ministry
<b>Overall Goal:</b> The participant should complete this book ...	...certain of his call and a strategic approach to the church planting task.	...with the skills and motivation to share the gospel.	... able to organize new converts into small groups and lead them toward maturity.	... able to start corporate worship and to equip new leaders for ministry.	... with the skills and commitment to multiply new churches and continue in SCP ministry.
<b>Subjects / Lessons, Timeframe</b>	<p><u>Month 1</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God’s Ultimate Purpose</li> <li>Making Disciples Of All Nations</li> <li>Planting Churches Everywhere</li> <li>“Z” Thinking</li> <li>Research</li> <li>SC 1: Spiritual Adoption</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer In The Church Planting Process</li> <li>Purpose Of The Church</li> <li>Nature Of The Church</li> <li>Defining The Church</li> <li>SC 2: The Centrality of the Cross</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form And Function</li> <li>Understanding the Message</li> <li>Sharing A Personal Testimony</li> <li>Evangelism And Church Planting</li> <li>Biblical History Of Redemption</li> <li>SC 3: Who Needs the Gospel?</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History Of Christianity, Advance Of The Gospel</li> <li>Barriers To Effective Evangelism</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 1</li> <li>IBS: Intro</li> <li>IBS: Method</li> <li>IBS: Demonstrated</li> <li>SC 4: The Law and the Gospel</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Inductive Bible Study</li> <li>Cell Group 1: Intro</li> <li>CG 2: Leading Cells</li> <li>CG 3: Preparing to Start</li> <li>SC 5: Understanding and Overcoming the Sin Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perseverance Through Persecution</li> <li>Prayer And Fasting</li> <li>Discipleship 1: Intro</li> <li>Discipleship 2: Forms</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 2</li> <li>SC 6: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Pity</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 7</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discipleship 3: Toward Maturity</li> <li>Caring For Others</li> <li>Team Ministry</li> <li>Developing Your CP Team</li> <li>Styles Of Interaction</li> <li>SC 7: True Repentance</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing SCP leadership</li> <li>Servant Leadership</li> <li>Spheres of Leadership</li> <li>Christianity and Culture</li> <li>Discipleship 4: Multiplying the Process</li> <li>SC 8: Growing in the Gospel</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 9</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilizing Leaders</li> <li>Identifying and Equipping Leaders</li> <li>Training Cell Group Leaders</li> <li>Skills for Leaders</li> <li>Strategic Planning</li> <li>SC 9: Forgiveness</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 10</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiplying Cell Groups</li> <li>Corporate Leadership Skills – Supervising Cells</li> <li>Worship</li> <li>Effective Communication</li> <li>Studying Culture</li> <li>SC 10: Conflict Resolution</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 11</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Planting Cycle</li> <li>Next Steps – Planting More Churches</li> <li>Training As Part Of A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Signs Of A Movement</li> <li>Vision And Telescoping— Taking The Gospel Into The World</li> <li>Contextualizing The Gospel</li> <li>SC 11: The New Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 12</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biblical Examples Of Saturation Church Planting Movements</li> <li>Strategy Components For A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Shepherding Within A Movement</li> <li>Mobilization</li> <li>SC 12: Ministry Through Weakness</li> </ol>
<b>Outcome Project (Homework)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research The Target Region</li> <li>Organize Prayer Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evangelize The Lost And Their Friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize Converts And Contacts Into Cell Groups</li> <li>Identify And Begin Working With Disciples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train And Release Leaders</li> <li>Complete A Strategic Ministry Plan</li> <li>Organize Cells Into Corporate Worship Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research And Cast Vision For Work In New Regions/New Groups</li> <li>Start Daughter Churches</li> </ul>

Note: the Vietnamese language version of this curriculum corresponds to the English, with the exception of being organized into six books of two months worth of lessons in each book.

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# MONTH ONE

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<b>SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING VISION</b>
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## **Lesson 1 - God's Ultimate Purpose - To Spread His Glory throughout All Creation**

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We want to begin to explore SCP by studying a few simple biblical principles which, when seen together, lay the foundation for SCP. The principles are not new – it is likely that you have heard or seen them before - but we are going to look at them in light of the task that God has called you to.

### **I. GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE**

We would like to introduce the first biblical principle with a very important question, a question which theologians and other curious believers have debated. The question can be asked in many ways such as: “What is God's ultimate purpose?” or “What does our faith, the Bible and theology etc, all lead to?” or “What is the one basic theological truth that explains all others?”

***Question 1: (for the group) What is the first answer which comes to mind? What is God's ultimate purpose?***

Some people might say, “God's ultimate purpose is to redeem mankind”. This is not a bad answer - it makes a lot of sense – for the redemption of mankind is important to God. But as the answer to this question, it has at least two problems. First, it does not explain everything God does. For example, it does not explain why God created us in the first place. He did not create us to redeem us, because when he created us, we did not need redemption. The second problem: if God's ultimate purpose is to redeem mankind, then according to the Bible, He is going to fail. The Bible makes it clear that not all will be redeemed.

Some might say, “Well, the ultimate purpose of God is unknowable”. At a certain level, God is mysterious and His ways are beyond our understanding. But, God is knowable, and so is His will. We will see this clearly in a moment when we study a few passages from Scripture.

Another might say, “The ultimate purpose of God is to build up the church”. The Church is very dear to God. But the Church, no matter how you understand it, is not all that God has a purpose for. His purpose affects all things – not just the Church.

The best answer is that the ultimate purpose of God is to make His glory be known throughout all creation. Just imagine the earth filled with God's glory! This is God's ultimate desire, and He has been working toward this throughout history. He revealed his glory in the creation of the world and of us, in the calling of Israel, in Israel's rescue from Egypt, in the life and death of Jesus, and our own calling and salvation. The revealing of God's glory continues today. The Holy Spirit has come in order to glorify the Son of God, and we are commanded to serve in a way that gives glory to God. In the future, God's glory will be revealed even further when Jesus returns and sets up the millennial kingdom on earth. God's glory motivates everything that He does. It is all for his glory!

What do we mean by God's glory? What does it mean for His glory to be known? The word "glory," as it is used in the Bible, has a wide range of meaning. When we talk about the "glory of God," we are speaking of His essential worth and unique majesty, which are part of His very character. To reveal His glory is to reveal HIM! And to know the Lord is to know His glory!

Let's look at the Bible to see how God has been revealing His glory. We will look carefully at some of the major events in Scripture to see why God does what he does.

### **A. The Creation of the World**

Read Psalm 19:1-4a and Romans 1:20.

*Question 2: What are God's "invisible qualities" as stated in Romans 1:20?*

*Question 3: To what extent is God's glory revealed to mankind?*

### **B. The Creation of Man**

Read Isaiah 43:6-7.

*Question 4: What does this passage in Isaiah tell us about our creation?*

### **C. The Calling of Israel and Exodus from Egypt**

Read Isaiah 49:3, Exodus 14:16-18 and Psalm 106:7-8.

*Question 5: According to Isaiah 49:3 what does God intend to do through the nation of Israel?*

*Question 6: According to Exodus 14 and Psalm 106, what did God intend to accomplish through the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt?*

### **D. God's Restoration of Israel in Their Own Land**

Read Ezekiel 36:22-24 and Ezekiel 39:27.

*Question 7: Why did God rescue His people from exile?*

### **E. Jesus' Earthly Ministry**

Read John 1:14; 13:31-32 and 17:4.

*Question 8: According to the above passages what was Jesus' ultimate purpose during His earthly ministry?*

**F. The Return of Christ**

Read Matthew 24:30 and Matthew 25:31.

*Question 9: What reactions from believers and non-believers would you expect when Christ returns in His glory?*

**G. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

Read John 16:13-14.

*Question 10: According to this passage, what does the Holy Spirit do? To whom does He bring glory?*

**H. Punishment for the disobedient**

Read Ezekiel 39:21 and Romans 9:17, 21-24.

*Question 11: Why does God punish the disobedient?*

**I. The Salvation of Man**

Read Ephesians 1:11-12.

*Question 12: True or False: God saves men for the praise of His glory.*

**J. God's Promise**

Read Isaiah 11:9; 66:18 and Habakkuk 2:14.

*Question 13: Will God's plans to fill the earth with his glory become realized?*

**II. MAN'S REBELLION**

In spite of God's ultimate desire to spread His glory, rejection of God and denial of His glory has been the normal patterns for people throughout history. Yet denying God the glory that is due Him, that is, failing to worship Him for who He is, is a serious sin from which all other sins grow. Satan's desire to have God's glory was the beginning of sin. Man's rebellion from God also involves a rejection of God's glory.

Read Romans 1:21-23. List the five downward steps man takes progressing from knowledge of God to sinful indulgence:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The progression of sin in mankind begins with not glorifying God and results in idolatry (Romans 1:21-28). Man must worship something – having rejected God the creator, man began giving glory to creation. Denying God's Glory leads to idolatry!

However, those who reject God's glory never truly escape its grip. For, in the end, all people will see and acknowledge His glory (Isaiah 45:23, Psalm 102:15, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10). This acknowledgment will come either by way of eternal condemnation ... or by eternal salvation.

### **III. GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN**

#### **A. Blessing a Few to Reach Many**

Psalm 67 tells us how God's plan works. Here we learn about God's plan to bless some so that they would be witnesses to the rest of the world! In a sense, it is a reversal of what Romans 1 describes. Romans 1:21-23 describes the fall of man because he rejects God's glory. Psalm 67 describes the redemptive process that takes place as man embraces God's glory. The psalmist asks God to bless His people in such a way that the nations would recognize the hand of God, and be drawn to worship Him. Notice the progression that starts with the psalmist's request for God's blessing and leads to evangelism, to the nations praising God, and to more of God's blessing.

--> God's blessing (vs. 1)

    --> Evangelism/missions (vs. 2)

        --> Worship (vs. 3-5)

            --> God's blessing... (vs. 6-7)

Read Psalm 67.

***Question 14: What does the writer of this psalm wish to receive from God in the first verse?***

***Question 15: What does the writer of this psalm hope that God's blessing will lead to (see verse 2)?***

***Question 16: From verses 3-5, what does the writer of this psalm hope that the salvation of the lost will lead to?***

*Question 17: What does the writer of this psalm hope that worship will lead to (vv. 1, 6, 7)?*

## **B. Redemptive History**

Throughout the Bible we see God's plan unfolding. We see that in the revealing of His glory, God normally blesses a few in order to reach many - to restore fellowship between God and man. This is why God chose one man (Abraham), who gave birth to a nation (Israel) among whom was born a messiah (Jesus) to conquer the work of Satan, make salvation possible, and establish a new people of God (the church). Through all this God's Glory is spread.

**Abraham: "Blessed to be a blessing"**

Read Genesis 12:1-3

*Question 18: God blesses the \_\_\_\_\_ in order to bless many.*

**Israel: "A Light to the Gentiles"**

God chose one man, Abraham, in order to bless many. And in the process of blessing many, God made Abraham's descendants into a great nation. This nation, Israel, God's chosen people, was called for the same purpose as Abraham was called. God blessed Abraham so that Abraham would bless others. God blessed Israel so that Israel would bless others (Isaiah 49:3,6; 51:2; 60:1-3). The main way that this would happen would be through birth of the Messiah (Ro 9:4-5).

**Jesus: Our Messiah**

At the right time, God sent his Son Jesus - a descendant of Abraham and of the Israel. We have already seen that the purpose of Jesus' ministry on earth was to bring glory to the Father (John 1:14; 13:31-34; 17:4). It is also true that God's final solution to man's sin is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:20; 2:9). In Jesus Christ, God is reconciling people to Himself, restoring their relationship with Him (Ephesians 1:9-10). This ministry of reconciliation He has given to His church (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) which He established (Matthew 16:18-19) purchasing it with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

*Question 19: Jesus the messiah makes reconciliation with God possible. Who does Jesus share this ministry of reconciliation with? (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)*

**The Church: God's Primary Instrument for spreading His glory**

The principle of God's blessing holds true for the New Testament people of God, the Church, which is called to be witnesses to Israel (Romans 9) and to the world (Ephesians 3:10, 1 Peter 2:9). God established the Church, through which the nations will learn of His glory (Ephesians 3:10-11 and 21). In fact, the establishment of the church is the most recent step in God's redemptive plan (2Co 5:19).

The Church is the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:12, Colossians 1:18), the people of God, Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), called to live in a way that gives Him glory (John 17:22, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 3:18), testifying through word and action of the character of God and the salvation that is available only in Jesus Christ. The Church exists in order to spread the glory of God, and thus to fulfill the purpose of God.

Read Ephesians 3:10

*Question 20: Why did God establish the Church? Was it to replace Israel? Was it simply so that His people could have fellowship?*

## **CONCLUSION**

We have seen that God's ultimate purpose is to spread His glory throughout all creation. His plan in that process is to reveal His glory through His people.

It is true that we are a blessed people, but also a people with a responsibility. We have been chosen and blessed so that we might persuade all men to glorify God. Our lives lived out before others should reflect God's character and bear witness to His salvation. We are the few whom God has chosen to use to accomplish His purpose of spreading His glory. We are called to "proclaim His salvation, declare His glory" (1 Chronicles 16:23-24). He has no other plan. Through the building up of His church (Matthew 16:18), He will accomplish His purpose.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is God's ultimate purpose? Are you convinced of this?
- How has God decided to spread His glory?
- What are the stages of depravity which mankind has fallen into, as described in Romans 1:21-23?
- In what ways are the people idolatrous in your region? In other words, in what ways have they exchanged the glory of God for the worship of something else?
- What would it be like for your region to be filled with God's glory? What would change?
- What new things did you learn while doing this lesson?

## Lesson 2 – Christ’s Clear Command – To Make Disciples of All Nations

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Spreading God’s glory is something that God does today through all things, but primarily through the church. The second biblical principle on which we are building the SCP strategy comes from the Great Commission itself, and shows us more specifically what it means to spread God’s glory. It teaches us that we spread His glory by making disciples, people who live to glorify God!

If God’s glory is to be spread, then the Gospel must be proclaimed everywhere. This is clear from many New Testament passages (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:8). Just as Abraham was blessed so that he would be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:1-3), so God’s people, who receive God’s blessing, are to pass it on to others.

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

### I. UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus said:

*“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:19-20

#### A. What is the main idea?

The heart of the Great Commission is the discipleship of all nations. The central and most important word in the Great Commission is translated, “make disciples.” As the only imperative verb in this passage, it communicates to the greatest extent the desire Jesus has for his followers.

The original Greek for the word “go” could easily be translated “as you are going” or “having gone.” It assumes that those who obey the Great Commission are “going”! Perhaps this is meant to be in contrast to “coming” to the temple in Jerusalem to see God’s glory. Instead, we are going with God’s glory within us (2 Corinthians 3:18). “Going” should also be a natural response for the disciples who had been with Jesus for three years and had seen much of the glory of the Father in Jesus. They had a responsibility to go and tell what they had seen and experienced.

*Question 1: What is the central task of Great Commission? What are we to “do”?*

#### B. How are we to do that?

A close study of the passage reveals that those who fulfill the Great Commission, those who make disciples, do so by doing two things:

##### 1. Baptizing - ‘turning to Christ’

Baptism is the public testimony concerning conversion, an indication that they have received Christ as their savior. In order for a person to become a follower of Jesus Christ, he or she must repent and believe (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21). Baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration, of forgiveness of sins and of new life in Christ (Tit 3:5; Mark 1:4, Romans 6:3-4). It means that someone has ‘turned to Christ.’

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 (John 17) as the Trinity.

## 2. Teaching: Becoming like Christ

Following baptism, a believer normally begins a life-long process of learning to become like Christ. Making disciples, then, includes training about the One whom converts have determined to follow. Conversion involves a relationship with a personal God. We are commanded to train others to be “followers,” or “learners,” of Jesus by teaching them to obey His commandments.

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 that 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?” The teaching of obedience is an ongoing process, which *follows* baptism but *continues* throughout the life of the believer.

***Question 2: What two things must people who make disciples do? What will this look like in the life of the new disciple?***

## C. What is our target?

The target of the Great Commission is "all the nations". What is a nation? The Greek word for nations in this text is the word "ethnos." An ethnos (ethnic group) may be any group of people united by their language, culture, and common traditions. A country may contain several ethnic groups within its borders, every one of which must be reached in its own language, and according to its own culture and customs if we are to obey the Great Commission.

We are called to take the Gospel to all the nations because Jesus purchased, with His blood, men "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). The apostle John had the privilege of seeing this command fulfilled in his vision of heaven, which included people from every nation worshipping the Lord (Revelation 7:9).

***Question 3: What does the Greek word “ethnos” mean? How many different “ethnos” are there in my country? In my town? In my neighborhood?***

## D. Are we alone?

Making disciples of all nations may seem overwhelming. However, as we go to make disciples, we can go with confidence. Note that Jesus promises to be with those who are doing these things: “And I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age”.

Christ Himself is the guarantee of success, as we abide in Him, depending on His authority and presence (John 15:4-17). 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 (Philippians 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 Paul 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. PARALLEL PASSAGES

Matthew 28:18-20 records the last words by Christ to the disciples before He ascended into heaven. As we have seen, Jesus used this opportunity to make clear the task that He wanted the disciples to carry on: to make more disciples. It should not surprise us that there are several parallel passages in the New Testament in which Jesus, in saying farewell to His disciples, challenged them in the similar way.

Read and meditate on the following four passages, all of which include commands like the Great Commission. Then, answer the questions given for each passage.

### A. Read and study Mark 16:15-20

*Question 4: What are some possible evidences that a person has become a believer?*

*Question 5: How did the Lord reveal Himself after His ascension into heaven?*

### B. Read and study Luke 24:45-53

*Question 6: What things did the disciples to give witness to?*

*Question 7: What promise did Christ make to them?*

### C. Read and study John 20:19-23

*Question 8: How does Jesus send his disciples?*

*Question 9: What does it mean to be “sent” in this context? What happens to the power and authority of the “sender”?*

### D. Read and study Acts 1:1-11

*Question 10: According to this passage, what is the natural result of having the Holy Spirit?*

**Question 11: How far will the message of the Gospel reach?**

As you studied the parallel passages, perhaps you noticed things that all five passages have things in common. Seeing these common thoughts helps us better understand God’s plan for his people.

	<b>Preamble</b>	<b>Command</b>	<b>Promise</b>
<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).

**III. FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION**

The Great Commission was not a temporary command only for the original hearers. In the Matthew account alone, the reoccurrence of the word "all" indicates its far-reaching application: *all* authority, *all* nations, *all* things (that I have commanded you) and *all* the days. We are to persevere in making disciples "to the end of the age," i.e. until Jesus returns for His Church. At that time, Christ will have been "preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Matthew 24:14). So the command remains valid for us today.

***Question 12: Who is supposed to obey the Great Commission? Only missionaries, or pastors? Only the original 12 disciples?***

**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, nor to perpetuate its own programs. Also, the Church does not exist only to worship God, though this is one of its functions. The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by taking the Gospel to "all the nations." The outreach of the church is not just one of its many ministries; it is the very heart of the church, its reason for existence.

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 developed according to how well they serve this purpose.

***Question 13: How can different ministries in the church lead to evangelism and church planting? How about children's ministry? What about teaching ministry?***

***Question 14: Is there any ministry in the church you can think of which could not lead to evangelism and church planting?***

**B. The Great Commission and Church Planting**

The best way to fulfill the Great Commission is to start new churches. A new church plant accomplishes the command to "make disciples" through evangelism, training of the new believers, and ongoing discipleship. Churches which understand their purpose and reason for existence will start new churches that have this same reason for being, and in doing so will provide the means to eventually reach "all the nations" with the Gospel.

Those involved in starting new churches are in a very unique and strategic ministry, since church planting 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.

***Question 15: Based on all that you have learned in this course so far, what would you say is the primary purpose of the Church?***

***Question 16: What is the best way to fulfill the Great Commission? Why?***

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the goal of the Great Commission?
- In your own words (avoid theological ones) what is a “disciple of Jesus”?
- How do we know that the Great Commission was not a temporary command only for the original hearers?
- How many "ethne" are in your region? Describe them.
- How many churches are needed to reach every person of each “ethnos” in your region? Why?
- Is it possible to complete the Great Commission without planting churches? Why or why not?

## Lesson 3 - The Bold Example of the Apostles– Planting Churches Everywhere

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God's ultimate desire is to spread His glory throughout all creation. This was our first biblical principle for saturation church planting (SCP). In the second principle – a more specific expression of the first – we saw that God's glory is spread as disciples of Jesus carry the good news of the Gospel, making other disciples everywhere. This second principle was most clearly stated in the Great Commission given by Jesus.

The third biblical principle comes from the example of the apostles – the very first ones to attempt to fulfill the Great Commission. By studying what they did as recorded in the Bible (mostly in the book of Acts), we can gain insight into what we need to be doing today.

### I. THE CHURCH EXPANDS

As we study the New Testament church in the book of Acts, we see that the disciples understood church planting as the natural method for fulfilling the Great Commission. In the early days, immediately following the ascension of Jesus, the Gospel had had little impact on the world outside of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Christianity appeared small and powerless in comparison to the political and religious powers of the day. Yet, it rolled like an wave across the Roman Empire so that within one generation, worshipping communities were established everywhere from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. Historians marvel, wondering how Christianity could have spread so widely in such a short time. We have the advantage today of being able to look back and learn from this impressive part of spiritual history. We must ask, "How did the apostles, those who first heard the Great Commission, go about completing it?"

Beginning in Jerusalem, the Apostles began preaching, healing, evangelizing and baptizing. As people responded to the Gospel, they were gathered into groups for training, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42). These groups became established with their own leadership and were known as the Church. When the believers were scattered from Jerusalem, they preached the Gospel and presumably started new house churches everywhere they went (Acts 8:1-4).

This pattern continued. Thus we see that in the early Church, church planting was such an integral part of disciple-making that it is more often assumed than stated. Everywhere the disciples went, they made more disciples, gathered them into fellowships, and appointed leaders. In this way they started many new churches. The new churches, then, continued the work in their community, and sent people to extend the work in other places. Church planting was the normal way of life for the New Testament believers. The spread of the Church was the evidence of the spread of the Gospel. Wherever the Gospel went, a new church was established.

### II. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS IN ACTS

#### A. First Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28) – Cyprus and Galatia

During this journey Paul and Barnabas traveled as evangelists on the Island of Cyprus (Barnabus' homeland) and in the Roman province of Galatia (central/eastern Turkey). They left new disciples behind in nearly every city they visited. On the way home, Paul and Barnabas appointed leaders in each church in these Galatian cities.

*Before continuing, read Acts 13-14.*

*Question 1: As you read, note all the cities in which Paul and Barnabas established churches during their first missionary journey. Notice also the strategy they used in the process.*

**B. Second Journey (Acts 16:1-18:22) - Macedonia and Achaia.**

As a result of a disagreement (see Acts 15:36-41), Paul and Barnabas began to minister separately. Barnabas and John Mark returned to Cyprus. Paul and Silas revisited the Galatian cities on the way to the province of Asia (western Turkey). However, the Spirit led Paul into Macedonia (northern Greece), bypassing Asia. Again, they evangelized and left new disciples behind in nearly every city they visited. When Paul was driven out of Macedonia by persecutors, he sought safe refuge in Achaia (southern Greece) where, of course, he continued to preach the gospel and plant churches.

*Before continuing, read Acts 16:1-18:22.*

*Question 2: As you read, note all the cities in which Paul, Silas and Timothy establish churches during the second missionary journey. Notice also the strategy they used in the process.*

**C. Third Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16) - the Province of Asia.**

Paul began his third missionary journey by visiting the churches he planted in Galatia for the fourth recorded time. He then made his way directly to Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia. In Ephesus, Paul trained leaders daily – “so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:9-10). Ephesus became Paul’s base for operations for this entire campaign.

*Before continuing, read Acts 19:1-20:38.*

*Question 3: As you read, note all the cities in which Paul and his team establish churches during the third missionary journey. Notice also the strategy they used in the process.*

**III. THE CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY**

Use questions such as the ones below to discover the strategies that Paul and his teammates used in the church planting ministry which you just read about in the book of Acts.

*Question 4: How did Paul and his teams make the Gospel known? (open air preaching, other places where they taught, etc.)*

*Question 5: What kind of people did they reach? From which ethnic groups?*

*Question 6: Who were the “God-fearing Gentiles” of Acts 13:26 or the “God-fearing Greeks” of Acts 17:4?*

**Question 7: How did the disciples react when their message was rejected in the place they were at? What did they do?**

**Question 8: How long did it take for Paul to plant a church? In other words, how long did he spend in various places before raising up new leaders and moving on? What is the shortest amount of time we know of (see Acts 17:2 if you don't know)? Where was Paul the longest (Acts 20:17,31)?**

**Question 9: How did the apostles react when they faced persecution? Did they ever avoid it (Acts 14:4-7)? Why would they sometimes endure it, even though they could have chosen not to (Acts 16:37-39)?**

**Question 10: Where did new believers gathered for fellowship, worship and Bible study? (there are several different answers to this question)**

**Question 11: Where did the leaders of the new churches come from? Can you think of examples where Paul appointed leaders from among the new believers? Were there other locations where the leaders came from the missionary/church planting team (1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:5)? Why did Paul choose to use both of these methods to raise up new leaders?**

**Question 12: How were new leaders trained? Did they go to seminary in Jerusalem?**

**Question 13: How were the new churches financed?**

#### **IV. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S "CHURCH PLANTING MODEL"**

The strategy that Paul used in church planting lead to a pattern that we can call the "church planting model" as described below.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Passage</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Missionaries Commissioned</b> Selecting & sending, prayer, encouragement, training, support	Acts 13:1-4, 15:39-40	Months 0-3

Activity	Passage	Timeframe
<b>Audience Contacted</b> Courtesy contact, community contact, selective evangelistic contact, widespread evangelistic contact	Acts 13:14-16; 14:1	Months 3-6
<b>Gospel Communicated</b> Message contextualization, method determination, media selection, measurement implementation	Acts 13:17ff, 16:31	Months 3-6
<b>Hearers Converted</b> Instruction, motivation, decision, confession	Acts 3:48, 16:14-15	Months 6-9
<b>Believers Congregated</b> Belongingness, group size, meeting place, meeting times	Acts 13:43	Months 6-9
<b>Faith Confirmed</b> Instruction, worship, service, witness, stewardship	Acts 14:21,22, 15:41	Months 9-15
<b>Leadership Consecrated</b> Leadership development, permanent organization, scriptural discipline	Acts 14:23	Months 9-15
<b>Believers Commended</b> Withdrawal of church planter, transition of leadership, continuation of ministries	Acts 14:23, 16:40	Months 15-24
<b>Relationships Continued</b> Missionary/church relationships, church/church relationships, church/mission relationships	Acts 15:36, 18:23	Ongoing
<b>Sending Churches Convened</b> Understanding of mission, participation in mission	Acts 14:26-27, 15:1-4	Ongoing

## V. CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

The church planting cycle that Paul used in his church planting ministry led to a church planting movement. It has already been clear that Paul worked strategically. He evangelized whole regions, but he did not preach in every part. Rather, he established strategically located churches from which the Gospel would spread and permeate the surrounding area. Nearly all the cities in which Paul ministered were great centers of trade from which a movement could easily spread. Having used this approach, Paul could say with confidence “*From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ ... now there is no place left for me to work in these regions*” (Romans 15:19-23).

We have looked carefully at Paul’s missionary journeys. If we look once more, we will see from Scripture that he started church planting movements in the following four regions:

### 1. From Pisidian Antioch to Galatia

On his first journey, Paul and Barnabas planted churches in many cities. One of the most prominent cities was Pisidian Antioch, an administrative capital in southern Galatia. Since it was a strategic city, the impact of Paul and Barnabas' ministry was not limited to Antioch as “*the word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region*” (Ac 13:49).

**2. From Thessalonica to the provinces of Macedonia, Achaia, and everywhere.**

Paul planted the Thessalonian church on his second missionary journey. Later, in writing to the Church in Thessalonica, he wrote, *"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere"* (1Th 1:8). It is interesting to note that the pattern of Great Commission, as recorded in Acts 1:8, is repeated beginning with the city of Thessalonica:

	<u>Local city</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>Neighboring province</u>	<u>World wide</u>
Acts 1:8	Jerusalem	Judea	Samaria	"uttermost parts"
1 Thessalonians 1:8	Thessalonica	Macedonia	Achaia	"everywhere"

**3. From Ephesus to the province of Asia**

While in Ephesus during his third journey, Paul had what was, perhaps, the climax of his church planting ministry. *"...he took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord"* (Ac 19:9-10). From this passage we see that Paul equipped 12 men (Acts 19:7) and they, in turn, saturated the entire province of Asia with the message of the Gospel.

The New Testament indicates that many churches were started (perhaps by those Paul taught in the lecture hall of Tyrannus) in the major cities of the province (Rev 2, 3, Colossians 1:2, 6,7; 4:12-13). These churches give evidence to a church planting movement and substantiate Paul's statement that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

**4. The Island of Crete**

Paul left Titus on the island of Crete that he might *"...straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you"* (Titus 1:5). Apparently, churches had been established in every town, and thus there was a need for elders to be appointed. Paul and his team had saturated the island with churches.

**CONCLUSION**

Paul ministry was not just to evangelize – although he did that. It was not just to evangelize and disciple believers – although he did that as well. His ministry was not just to evangelize, disciple and plant churches – although he did that! His ministry was to evangelize, disciple and plant churches that started new churches themselves, resulting in church planting movements!

Like Abraham, Paul was blessed. Also like Abraham, Paul passed the blessing on to others – who in turn blessed still others. Through church planting, churches spread God's glory and fulfill the Great Commission.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What have you learned about the church planting strategy of Paul? Describe his pattern.
- Paul found a point of contact in the synagogue. What is the equivalent of the synagogue in your community?
- How do you think Paul knew when a church was established well enough for him to move on?
- Why is church planting so important in the evangelization process?
- How does church planting relate to God's glory?
- What can you do today to advance church planting in your region?

## Lesson 4 - Vision: “Z” Thinking

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A paradigm is a way of thinking or a mindset that influences the way we expect something to be. When you look through a pair of lenses to see an object, the lenses color and shape the object in view. A paradigm works like the lenses.

Church planting movements need a solid foundation, firmly attached to God's Word, that incorporates new ways of thinking, or new paradigms. These foundational paradigms include how we view the task (our “vision”), the purpose of the Church, and the role of leadership. If someone does not have the correct paradigms in these areas, the SCP effort will be doomed to difficulty from the start.

### I. WHAT IS VISION?

Simply stated, vision is a desired goal for the future. Vision takes people forward and gives them direction. Everyone has a vision for what they want in the future; however, many churches have a vision simply to survive or to maintain existing ministries. Some regions lack church planting movements because the local churches in those areas lack a vision for it. People rarely go beyond the limits of their vision. How can people strive toward that which they do not see, or see as a vague goal to be achieved only in the distant future? As a lighthouse gives guidance to a ship, so vision helps us along the way as we keep a firm eye on the goal. We cannot move toward that which we cannot see. But if we keep our eye on the goal, our path will be straight.

For us as believers, we must be mindful that VISION COMES FROM GOD. What ultimately is God’s vision? We have seen that He wants to be glorified through the reconciliation of mankind to Himself through Christ (1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9). God's desire is that every man, woman and child hear and understand the Gospel.

What does this mean for us here and now? Have you considered what your vision is for your region? What God’s vision is for your region?

### II. “Z” THINKING

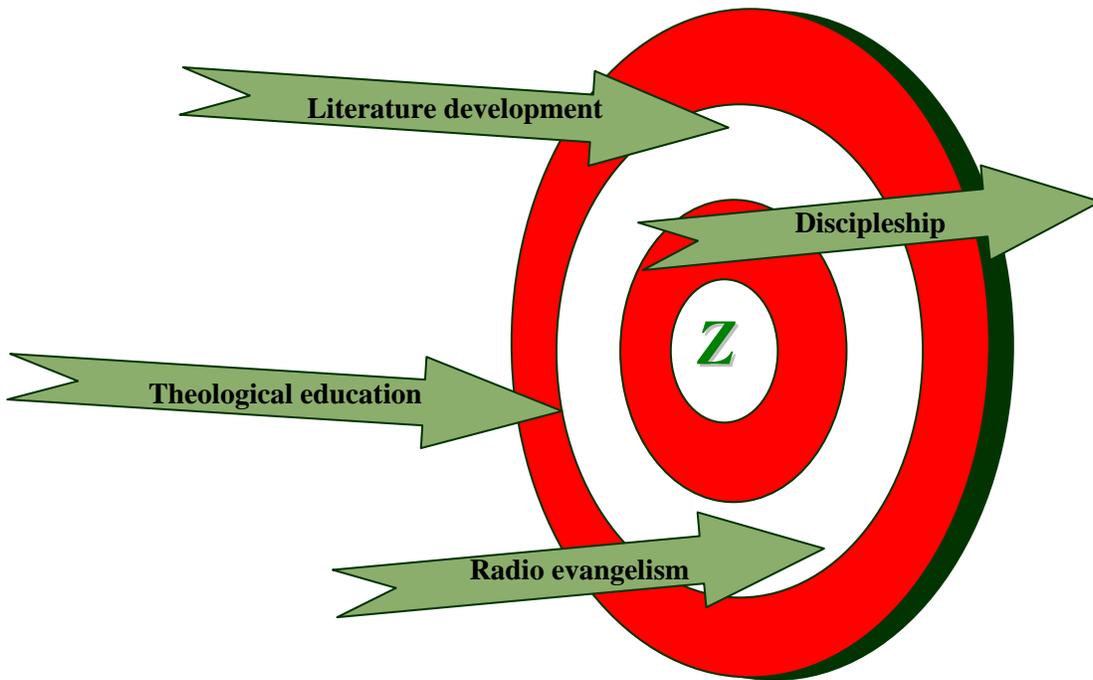
“Z” is the final letter of the Latin alphabet. “Z” thinking is a way to think about vision that keeps the final goal (Z) in sharp focus. Simply stated, “Z” thinking is thinking that begins with the end in mind. The best way to determine “the end” is to prayerfully search the Scriptures and seek God’s mind to discover His final goal. The critical question for “Z” thinking is: “What does God want?”

What, ultimately, does God want? God's desire is that every man, woman and child hear and understand the Gospel. How can everyone have the opportunity to hear and understand? One church leader says it this way: “The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is the planting of new churches.”

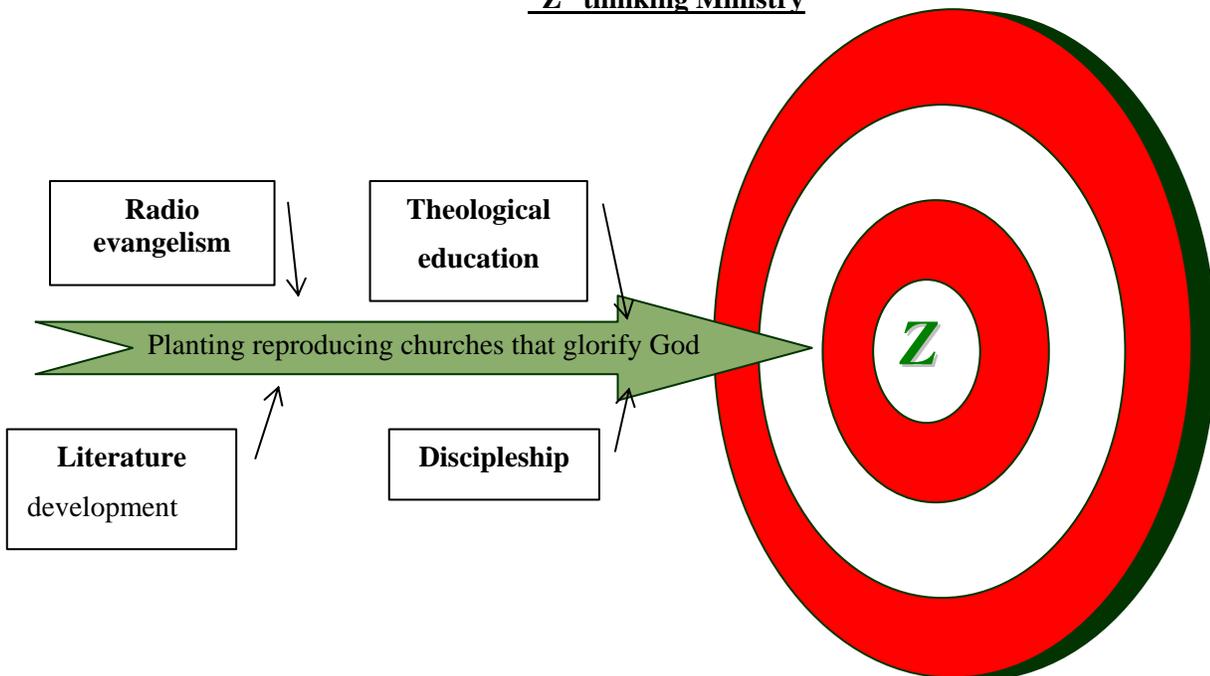
By “Z”, we do not mean a personal goal, such as the building of your church, or the growth of your ministry. These activities might be steps along the way towards the final goal. “Z” is a goal that is bigger than any one of us or any group. We are talking about a goal that can only be completed by God. In this context, **“Z” is the planting of so many churches that every person in your region will have a local church near enough to them not only to hear the Gospel, but also to see it in the lives of God’s people.** For “Z” to happen, the Church must be everywhere, on display to everyone.

*Question 1: What is the most important question in “Z” thinking?*

Typical Ministry



“Z” thinking Ministry



## A. Examples of “Z” Thinking in the Bible

Here are several examples of “Z” thinking that we find in Scripture.

### 1. Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land

The book of Joshua records the conquest of the Promised Land by children of Israel. Possessing the land was the “Z” for Israel. There could be no confusion that this was God’s will (“Z”) for it had been stated hundreds of years prior as the blessing to Abraham and his descendents (Genesis 12:1-7), and it had been reaffirmed many times in subsequent passages (Numbers 13:2, Deuteronomy 1:8; 34:4).

The conquest of the land of Canaan under the command of God’s servant Joshua was indeed impressive. With three swift campaigns (one through the interior, one to the south and one against the united forces of the north), the Israelites gained control of the land despite the fact that the enemy remained. Joshua’s army was not better equipped, stronger or more numerous than the Canaanites. But, God had promised, saying, “I will give you every place where you set your foot” (Joshua 1:3, Deuteronomy 11:24a). In pursuing God’s will (“Z”) with His guidance, and believing in His promise, they were able to strategically overtake the enemy.

We have a greater, more enduring vision. Our vision is not of just a piece of land for a home, but of the whole Earth filled with the Glory of God. This vision (which is God’s vision) should motivate our whole life. Will you be a Joshua to lead the people into this vision?

***Question 2: What was the “Z” for Joshua? Was it possible in human terms? Through whom did God accomplish it?***

### 2. Jesus and the “Great Galilean Ministry”

At a certain point in His ministry, Jesus specifically targeted Galilee, the region he had grown up in, for evangelism (Matthew 4:23; 9:35). Theologians call this time period His “Great Galilean Ministry.” We could say that for Jesus, Galilee was his “Z” for this part of His ministry. Jesus traveled from village to village, healing and teaching about the Kingdom of God. When Jesus was invited to remain in one part of Galilee, He refused because He would not be distracted from the wider goal of all Galilee (Mark 1:37-39). Notice how prayer played a role in His strategy (Matthew 9:38). Jesus asked His disciples to pray, so that workers would be sent to evangelize Galilee. We see this prayer answered when the disciples themselves were sent to preach the Kingdom of God and were given the authority to do what Jesus had done (Matthew 10:1ff, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:2ff). Notice that Jesus recruited and mobilized others to reach His “Z.” Even Jesus did not pursue “Z” alone!

It is interesting to note that, in targeting Galilee, the impact of His ministry was not contained to that region. “News about him spread all over Syria,” and “large crowds” from the Decapolis, Judea and the trans-Jordan region came to hear Him in Galilee (Matthew 4:23-25). Apparently, Galilee was a very strategic region to minister in, since it resulted in a very broad impact.

***Question 3: What is one reason, according to what you have just read, that Jesus concentrated on Galilee and not some other region during his earthly ministry?***

### 3. Paul and the province of Asia

The Apostle Paul was a “Z” thinker (Phil 3:14). He would not be distracted from what God called him to do. We have already seen how Paul used the principles of SCP to evangelize the province of Asia. He wanted to go to Asia even before God wanted him there. That is why God redirected him to Macedonia on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10) but led him back to Asia to ministry during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21; 19:1). From his training center (the hall of

Tyrannus) in the city Ephesus, all of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9-10) and many churches were established (Revelation 2-3).

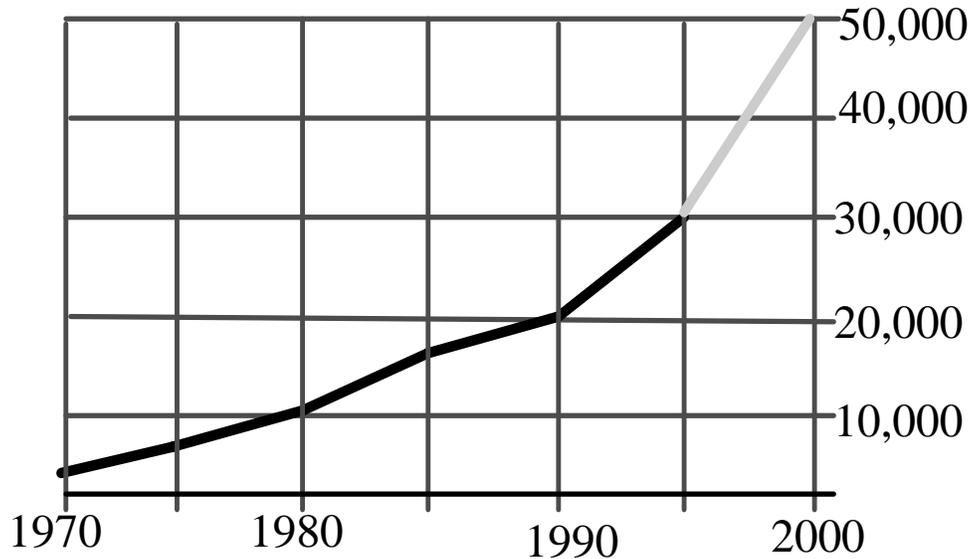
When we look at Paul addressing the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, we gain some insight into how “Z” thinking impacted his commitment to the province of Asia. Paul says there that he “kept back nothing” (20:20) and did not value his own life (20:24) in pursuit of the spread of the Gospel.

**Question 4: How do we know that Paul was a “Z” thinker?**

### B. Modern Examples of “Z” Thinking

In 1973, brother Jun Balayo caught the vision for Saturation Church Planting in the Philippines. At that point the Philippines had 4,000 evangelical churches. When Jun applied the principle of “Z” thinking, he was led to want what God wanted: for every Filipino to have a chance to hear the gospel and be saved. Jun organized an interdenominational effort in which Philippine believers set a goal of establishing 50,000 new churches in the Philippines between 1973 and 2000. The Philippine believers celebrated the achievement of this goal in December of 2000, and have set new goals to establish 50,000 more churches by 2010. This massive effort is driven by “Z” thinking.

Church Growth in the Philippines from 1970 to 2000.



Many others around the world have taken the SCP vision seriously and have applied Z thinking to their ministries!

### III. DETERMINE THE “Z” FOR YOUR TARGET AREA

Take some time to pray and think about a region or group of people that you would like to see evangelized. John Knox, the great theologian and Christian leader, is famous for his statement “Give me Scotland or I die!” For him, Scotland was the “target area” in which he worked to spread of the Gospel. What calling has God placed on your heart? Pray about it. Has God called you to reach a city, a particular people group, a neighborhood, or a country? We will call whatever you pick your “target area”.

Seeking God's will in fervent prayer is crucial to determining your target area. Remember that on your own you are likely to come up with a target area that is much easier to reach than what God desires. The Father of Modern Missions, William Carey, said, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God". Your target area should be big enough so that it cannot be saturated with new churches without God being involved in the process.

***Take out a piece of paper and draw a circle on it. Write the name of your target area inside the circle.***

Now consider “Z” for this target area. Generally speaking, how many churches need to be established in a given region so that every person in that region has an opportunity to hear, understand and accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ? In other words, what is “saturation”?

There are several factors that need to be considered when determining how many churches a region needs in order to be saturated. Population size is the most obvious – the more people in a region, the more churches are needed. Geography also plays a role. You need to think about where the new churches need to be started so that every person in the target area can easily travel to a local church. If you remember back to our discussion about the Great Commission, Jesus said to make disciples of “all nations”, or “ethne”. Consider your target region. How many different ethnic and linguistic groups are there? Most people prefer to worship in their heart language and with their own people. If there are many nationalities living in a region, each may need its own church.

The number of churches need to saturate a region will vary from place to place, depending on each region’s unique circumstances. However, it may be helpful to learn that for many people involved in saturation church planting, the goal of one local church fellowship for every 1,000 inhabitants is considered “saturation”. This estimation is based on the theory that an average size church with viable, witnessing Christian believers can have an impact on 1,000 people.

What is “Z” for your target area? In other words, noting the factors described above, how many churches need to be established in your target area so that every man, women and child has a chance to hear the Gospel? In answering this, do not consider what is humanly possible, or the difficulties in working toward the realization of such a vision. Rather, think only about what is ideal. What does God want? How many churches need to be established so that every person in that region has an opportunity to hear, understand and accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

***Inside the circle that represents your target area, write the number of churches that should be established to reach everyone in the area with the Gospel. Keep in mind both the population size and the different ethnic or linguistic peoples who live in your target area.***

## CONCLUSION

God desires the earth to be filled with His glory. To accomplish this, God has commissioned the Church to reach every part of the world. “Z” thinking focuses our vision on the saturation of our nations with churches. Through the large-scale planting of new churches, disciples are made and God’s glory is spread. Our cities, regions and nations will be saturated with God’s glory in and through His Church. This is what God desires – this must be our vision.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do people rarely work beyond the limits of their vision?
- Which of the biblical examples of “Z” thinking impressed you the most? Why?
- What is your vision for your region? What is your target area? How many churches need to be established in your target area so that every man, woman and child has a chance to hear the Gospel?

## CHURCH PLANTING SKILLS

### **Lesson 5 - Research: Information for Strategic Purposes**

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What is research? Simply defined, research is information we gather which helps us in ministry. As churches become more involved in fulfilling the Great Commission, research is something they can use to help them become more effective in ministry. Specifically, research helps Christian workers understand the big picture of what God is doing in their nation or people group, helps them to stay focused on the task, and ensures that their strategies remain effective. Often when God calls people to new ministries, He first leads them to think about the situation around them. We believe this is the case in church planting.

#### **I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR RESEARCH**

In each of the biblical cases described below, research was part of God's plan to do His work at a specific time:

- Before possessing the land of Canaan, God required the people of Israel to count the available soldiers in preparation for battle (Numbers 1:1-46). For church planting, information obtained from research can help reveal those people who are available to help.
- God instructed Moses to send spies to collect firsthand information on the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1-26). For church planting, research provides the information necessary to plan correct strategies for reaching the people living in your target area.
- Jesus traveled among the people and saw their needs before sending His disciples out to work among them (Matthew 9:35-10:1). As He saw the overwhelming needs firsthand, He felt a deep compassion for the lost. His observations also motivated Him to mobilize people for prayer and then to send His disciples. For church planting, firsthand research generates compassion, mobilizes prayer, and focuses ministry.
- As the Lord added to their numbers, the early church kept track of the numerical growth of the churches and reported it (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 9:31). This kind of information helps us understand how and where God is working in the lives of the people in a given region.

#### **II. THE NEED FOR RESEARCH**

When the men who were sent by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan returned and reported, ten of the twelve gave inaccurate information, causing the Israelites to rebel against Moses and God (Numbers 13:27 – 14:38). Sometimes the Church labors under false suppositions, with outdated forms and erroneous data. Times change. Yesterday's truths easily become today's fictions. When this occurs, the kingdom of darkness has an advantage. Church growth will tend to stagnate without the right information. For the Kingdom of Light (Colossians 1:13-14) to win the battle, we need to illuminate the facts. Truth -- facts, reality, and light -- is necessary for dispelling darkness. Jesus said, "The truth shall set you free."

Success in ministry requires the right information, in the right form, in the right hands, at the right time. Why do some churches in an area grow and others stagnate or decline? Careful investigation often reveals a lack of awareness of the social and cultural differences. Research can reveal these differences and lead to growth. Research helps us determine what needs to be done in ministry, and gives us insight into what is working or not working (especially in terms of evangelism). Research can help us see what God is already doing in the lives of people, so that we can join with Him.

There are basically two kinds of research that we need in church planting ministry. They are called the "harvest field" and the "harvest force".

### **III. RESEARCHING THE "HARVEST FIELD"**

It is essential to study the “harvest field,” or the immediate context in which the Church ministers. The phrase “harvest field” is drawn from John 4:35, where Jesus commanded His disciples to “look” on the fields that were ready for harvest. The words “look” and “field” are insightful. “Look” means “to study, or to examine, with a view of interpreting an object.” This speaks of research. The word “field” refers to people. Jesus called the disciples to look at the people coming out toward them, who had likely heard from the Samaritan woman, of Jesus and His Gospel (see John 4:27-38). Jesus was speaking of a harvest of souls (See also Luke 10, Matthew 9).

When considering how to reach a target area, church planters should know the social, cultural, and religious distinctives of the area. The changing times we live in often create a variance between the Church and emerging generations. Often new methods are needed for evangelism, training, and church planting. “Ministry as usual” will reap “results as usual”. We must understand the worldview and mindset of the unchurched people whom God is calling us to reach.

The following research questions will help you understand the harvest field for your target area:

- What is the total population of your target region?
- What are the social and economic realities of your target area? What percentage of the population are men, women, youth, and children? What is the number of working adults? What are the main occupations? What kind of income do people receive?
- Describe the ethnic and cultural makeup of the target area. What ethnic minorities exist in your target region? Do they live in a particular region? What languages do they speak?
- Describe the political, cultural and spiritual history. What non-biblical religious ideas are commonly held in the target region?
- Identify the major areas of societal pain and suffering.
- What elements divide the region (rivers, railroads, roads, etc.)? How do these dividers impact travel patterns, wealth, etc.?
- 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 bicycle, car, bus, subway?
- Where do people go for leisure and recreation? Do they stay in the city and go to parks? Do they spend most weekends in the city or out in the countryside?

Gathering harvest field information can be done through personal interviews and surveys. Some foundational harvest field data can be obtained in community centers, libraries, government offices and on the internet. However, when these sources are used, personal contact will be necessary to fill in the gaps and to update and validate information. Personal interviews are normally the best way to determine the physical, emotional and spiritual needs. It can be valuable to interview local government officials regarding how they perceive the needs -- and always ask people how you can pray for them!

### **IV. RESEARCHING THE "HARVEST FORCE"**

Obtaining and maintaining an accurate, up-to-date picture of what the “harvest force” has done, is doing, and has yet to do, requires careful planning, research and analysis. The harvest force includes churches, denominations, and parachurch groups such as training ministries, mission agencies, and Christian media. To understand the harvest force in your target area, you need to know the number of churches, their identity, organizational association, size and distribution by area and by people group. It is important to map out where the churches are, and to note which churches are growing and which are not, and why. You need to learn which

societal groups are in the churches, which aren't, and why. Lastly, it is important to discover who is carrying forth successful methods of evangelism, training, mercy ministries, and church planting.

The following research questions will help you understand the harvest force in your target area:

1. Provide a map showing where churches are located, and where they are not.
2. Indicate the approximate size and the year each church was planted.
3. Determine the people group each church is reaching (e.g. certain ethnic group, gypsies, youth, children, elderly, internationals, etc.) How successful have they been in their efforts?
4. Identify how churches are growing and/or not growing.
5. List all mission and parachurch groups active in the target area. Briefly describe the ministry each has (literature, prison, minority ministry, youth, etc.)
6. Determine the current degree of impact and influence of the Church on the various elements of society.
7. Describe the task remaining to reach various geographic and cultural groups.

## **V. USING INFORMATION GAINED FROM RESEARCH**

After information has been gathered, it can be used to motivate and challenge God's people to action. Research can inspire godly men and women to be committed to the fulfillment of God's plan for His people, to be diligent in using their gifts and abilities towards this end, and to sacrifice whatever is necessary in order that others might live.

Sharing research results with the leadership in a region can be eye-opening. It helps them see how their ministries fit in the overall picture. As they see the task remaining, they become aware of the implications for completing the task, both for themselves and collectively with others. This information, combined with prayer and God's revealed purpose, provides a "call to action" to the Church to guide it through the process of saturating its region with new groups and churches.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR LESSON FIVE**

1. What is the target area you have defined for your church planting efforts? What are some methods you can use to determine information about the "harvest field" and "harvest force" in your area? What resources are available?
2. What is the best way to gather the harvest field information that you need? How is the most appropriate way to approach people in your target area? How can you minister to them in the process of doing your research?
3. Name the number one obstacle to your work of church planting. What research is necessary to help you define, address, and remove this obstacle? If removed, how would your church planting effort advance?
4. What is a "call to action"? How is the "call to action" formed? What would the "call to action" be in your region?
5. With whom could you share your research once it is completed? How can you present it in such a way that other churches and/or Christian organizations will catch a vision for church planting in your region?

## **RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT**

The following assignment is a series of research questions which will help you learn how to use research as a tool for effective church planting. You have seen some of the questions in the lesson, but others are new. This assignment may take several weeks to complete. You should attempt to do all components of the assignment. While you may find certain questions more relevant than others, trying to answer all the questions will help you understand your target area better.

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 mentor and with others. The last section of the assignment will guide you concerning how to summarize the your findings and develop a church planting strategy.

### **Research Assignment**

#### **Understanding the Harvest Force**

As described earlier 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. Provide a map showing where churches are located, and where they are not.
2. Indicate the approximate size and the year each church was planted.
3. Determine the people group each church is reaching (e.g. certain ethnic group, gypsies, youth, children, elderly, internationals, etc.) How successful have they been in their efforts?
4. Identify how churches are growing and/or not growing.
5. List all mission and parachurch groups active in the target area. Briefly describe the ministry each has (literature, prison, minority ministry, youth, etc.)
6. Determine the current degree of impact and influence of the Church on the various elements of society.
7. Describe the task remaining to reach various geographic and cultural groups.

#### **Understanding 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. What is the total population of your target region?
2. What are the social, and economic realities of your target area? What percentage of the population are men, women, youth, and children? What is the number of working adults? What are the main occupations? What kind of income do people receive?
3. Describe the ethnic and cultural makeup of the target area. What ethnic minorities exist in your target region? Do they live in a particular region? What languages do they speak?
4. Describe the political, cultural and spiritual history. What non-biblical religious ideas are commonly held in the target region?
5. Identify the major areas of societal pain and suffering.
6. What elements divide the region (rivers, railroads, roads, etc.)? How do these dividers impact travel patterns, wealth, etc.? (For example, railroad tracks run through the neighborhood of a city. On one side of

the tracks, the people may be much wealthier than the other side. People do not readily cross the railroad tracks because of the differences. In such a case the tracks are an invisible social barrier and people are not likely to attend church on the “other side of the tracks.”)

7. 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 bicycle, car, bus, subway?
8. Where do people go for leisure and recreation? Do they stay in the city and go to parks? Do they spend most weekends in the city or out in the countryside?

### **Researching the History of Christianity/Religion**

Assuming there are believers in the region, or at least those who consider themselves to be Christians, you should study how Christianity came to the region. This can give insight in to how people receive Christianity or why they would be resistant to it.

1. 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?
2. Describe the history of each denomination’s entry into the area.
3. What other major religions have had an impact in your target area? What other religions/cults exist in your area today and how successful are they in winning followers?
4. How does this history affect your church planting strategy?

### **Understanding Peoples’ Worldview**

By learning about peoples’ 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:

1. Spiritual beliefs. Do people believe in God? What do they believe about God? What do they know of Jesus, the Bible, heaven or hell? Do they believe in the existence of angels, demons or Satan? When they are sick, where do they turn for help? Do they believe in luck? What do they believe sin is? How often, if at all, do they attend church? If no, why do they not attend church?
2. What are major celebrations or holidays in this area? How do people celebrate them?
3. What do they like best about their life? What one thing would they change?
4. What do they see as one or two major social problems in their community? (alcoholism, orphan children, lack of adequate medical care, elderly without care, etc.)
5. 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.
6. Who are recognized leaders in the community? Why are they seen as leaders?
7. Who are considered heroes?
8. List five things people value in others. (honesty, cleverness, generosity, etc.?)

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

### Lesson 6 - The Blessing Of Adoption

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*Does your life show that the Heavenly Father loves you?*

The fact of adoption is one of the most important aspects of our relationship with God. It influences thinking, system of values and actions of a person. To understand the blessings of our acceptance in God's family as fully lawful children, it is important to look at what a typical Christian thinks about himself. In what ways do we think and act like orphans, and in what ways like children of God? What do we think about most of the time and how do we act day after day?

This lesson will explain the application and daily life of this truth - that we are adopted by God. It's goal is to reveal the areas in which we don't expect constant love, care, protection, direction and correction of the Father. Adoption implies a close relationship with the Heavenly Father, and this relationship addresses and heals us of our fears, worries and inability to love others.<sup>1</sup>

#### **I. LIFE AS AN ORPHAN**

In one of the last and most memorable teaching moments Jesus ever had while on earth with his disciples, he said "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18). This claim is very important since Jesus was preparing to leave to go to the Father. Nonetheless, He wanted the disciples to know that they must not feel like orphans. What did Jesus want to say with this statement?

Look at the following characteristics of orphans:

##### **1. Orphans are full of fear and the feeling of danger**

The absence of parents gives orphans a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and danger. They feel, and know from experience, that everything depends on the work of people that are "foreign" to them. For most of us the future doesn't worry us a lot, but for the child in whose life a lot of bad has already happened (he doesn't have a mother or father), doesn't expect anything good from life and accurately thinks that he himself needs to fight for his future.

##### **2. Orphans are characterized by their drive to care for themselves.**

Orphans don't have parents with them. For that reason it is necessary for them to take care of their own well being. They must fight for their future. Every child from a shelter or orphanage compares himself with other children and what they have. For this reason, if you give one child something, it's necessary to give the exact same thing to all the others. Any distinction, any small thing - even a different color dress, might cause offense and jealousy. If you show preference to one of them, that will cause pain in the other children. Orphans are very sensitive to what you expect from them and are always ready to play whatever role they need to please you. The goal of this is to get you to like them and to earn your love.

##### **3. Orphans feel a deep sense of loneliness.**

Orphaned children have the sense that because their mom and dad have given them up (or have been taken away), that they really don't belong to anyone. With the biological "right" stripped away, there is no one "connected" to them and it is difficult for these orphans to believe that someone truly cares for them.

## II. HOW WE BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD

The Bible calls Christians 'children of God' (Jn 1:12). But think about it. Haven't you met believers who act like orphans? Christians who feel lonely, full of fear, constantly worried about something? The following will explain how to overcome an orphan mentality and enjoy full adoption as a child of God.

### Read Gal. 4:1-7

*Question 1: What are the "basic principles of the world" (verse 3) that Paul speaks about in this passage? (see also Gal 3:23, Col 2:8;20) What are the basic principles at work in your world, today?*

*Question 2: When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, Jesus. What was the purpose of Jesus' coming? What did God first do for us in Christ? (Gal 4:5a)*

### Read Romans 8:15-17, Mt. 6:25-34 and Heb. 12:5-11.

*Question 3: Describe what it means for you to be a child of God.*

## III. WAYS WE FAIL TO LIVE LIKE CHILDREN OF GOD

Why is it that we, adopted sons and daughters, often find ourselves acting like orphans? Why do we feel all alone, full of fears, and self-concern? It is because we trivialize the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its relevance to our lives. The Gospel is the basis of our sonship. When we fail to recognize the Gospel, we fail to understand our relationship as children of God. We do this in several ways.

### Trivializing the Gospel through pride

The Gospel is good news but it is also a strong medicine that can be hard to take. It humbles us, reminding us that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves. Even as Christians, we often exalt ourselves above others. We live for our glory and for our own selfish purposes. We live to accomplish our own goals, to exalt ourselves. We sometimes think we really don't need God's help or that we are who we are as a result of our own effort and not because we are His adopted children. We become orphans because of our pride.

Example: David was born into a Christian family. He repented and came to salvation and an early age. All his life he has been a strong witness of the Christian life even though many tried to discredit him. David faithfully followed the Lord's leading to become a missionary. Within a few years he even planted three churches among a traditionally Buddhist people group. Many consider David to be a model Christian, and in his heart, he feels that he is. But, he actually behaves like an orphan. You see, David is serving God out of his flesh. His heart is filled with pride and he lacks real intimate communion with God. Trusting only in himself, David excludes God from his ministry and is alone. David is a spiritual orphan.

### Trivializing the Gospel through unbelief

Another way in which we trivialize the Gospel is that we stop believing God's promise of grace based solely upon the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Out of love, many of us seek to serve God and honor Him. We fail, and we are devastated by our failure. Again, we must repent- this time for our sin of unbelief. We must keep believing the truth of the Gospel, which tells us that it is by grace, and no other reason, we have been made children of God.

Example: Tom turned to God and having received forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, experienced tremendous joy. Like a prisoner set free, he had a deep desire to please God in all things. But after a while, he failed in one area of his life. The sin so overwhelmed him that he was depressed for weeks. He thought his

failure made him unworthy to be a child of God. He could not make himself believe that God still loved and accepted him. Tom suffers because he does not recognize that forgiveness is available. That is why Jesus died. In failing to put his trust in his heavenly father, Tom is a spiritual orphan.

We must become honest about our sin and stop trivializing the Gospel if we are to understand the true nature of God's love for us and the rich blessing of our sonship with Him. Otherwise we will go on feeling alone, thinking that life is all up to us. Our failures will haunt us, our guilt will turn into condemnation. Our service to God will become a slavish obligation, the weight of which we cannot bear. We will become ungrateful toward God and others, unmoved by the reality that Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sin in order to make us privileged sons.

***Question 4: Who are you more like, Tom or David? Why?***

#### IV. SONS AND ORPHANS CHART

How do you behave like an orphan instead of like a child of God? Read the following table and mark five areas in the column "orphans" that describe you. Read the description of a son in the adjacent column to see what God wants you to learn in those areas.

<u>ORPHAN</u>	<u>SON</u>	
LIVING BY "TRYING HARDER." JESUS OUR FLESH'S "HELPER" Jn 14:18 <i>"I will not leave you as orphans"</i>	LIVING BY FAITH. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE! Jn 15:4, Gal 2:20 Ro 8:15 <i>"He has given us a Spirit of Sonship"</i>	
I feel alone and lack a vital daily intimacy with God.	1.	I have a growing assurance that God really is <u>my</u> loving Heavenly Father (1Jn 4:16). I enjoy communing with Him.
I am full of anxiety over needs; friends, money, etc.; <i>"I'm all alone and nobody cares."</i>	2.	I trust the Father and have a growing confidence in His loving care. I am free from worry; He will take care of me!
I live on success/fail basis. I am performance-oriented.	3.	I am learning to live in daily partnership with God. I know He is pleased with me.
I feel condemned, guilty and unworthy before God and others.	4.	I feel loved, forgiven and totally accepted because Christ's righteous covers me.
I have little faith, lots of fear, no ability to really trust God. <i>"I've got to fix it."</i>	5.	I have a daily working trust in God's sovereign plan for my life as the loving, wise and best plan.
I labor under a sense of unlimited obligation; trying to please God and others. I am prone to burnout.	6.	God works in me and through me to bring glory to Himself. I know He loves me and wants the best for me.
It is hard for me to submit to God and others. I am often hard-hearted and feel spiritually cold.	7.	I have strength from God to be submissive, soft-hearted and humble.
I am often defensive. I can't tolerate criticism. It is hard to listen. I can only handle praise.	8.	I am open to criticism since I consciously stand in Christ's perfection, not my own. I am able to examine my deeper motives.
I must always be safe, secure and right. I cannot fail.	9.	I am able to risk - even fail, because Christ will never fail!
I feel discouraged, defeated and lacking in the Spirit's power.	10.	I am Christ-confident and encouraged because of the Spirit working in me.
I rely on my gifts and abilities to get by in life and ministry.	11.	I trust less in myself and more in the Holy Spirit.
I am thankless and bitter toward God and others.	12.	I cannot stop worshipping God for all that he has done for me.

<u>ORPHAN</u>		<u>SON</u>
I am an expert at pointing out what is wrong. I often display a critical spirit.	13.	I am not blind to wrong, but choose instead to focus on what is good and lovely (Php 4:8).
I enjoy confessing other people's sins (gossip). It is part of my gift of "discernment."	14.	I am able to freely confess my faults to others and prefer to major on their strengths.
I love to be right. People must see my point.	15.	I don't always have to be right. I am finding that I am often wrong. I am eager to grow.
I usually compare myself with others, leading either to pride or depression (depending on how bad or good others look).	16.	I stand confident in Christ. My self-worth comes from Jesus' blood and righteousness (Php 3:9).
I am powerless to defeat the flesh and have no real heart victory over "little sins."	17.	I can rest in Christ. I see more and more victory over the flesh (Ro 8:1-9).
I have no sense of being a big sinner who needs a savior.	18.	I see myself as a big sinner. I know I still need Jesus Christ my Savior.
I pray mostly as a last resort. I can pray often in public, seldom in private.	19.	Prayer is the first resort and a vital part of my everyday pattern. Talking with the Father is a joy (1Th 5: 16-18).
The Bible's promises of spiritual power and joy seem to mock my experience.	20.	God's promises of power and joy are beginning to describe me (Ro 15:13).
I am working to build a record of good works that needs noticing and defending.	21.	Christ's righteousness is my record of good works. I stand complete in Him (1Co 1:28ff). I do not need to boast, protect or defend myself.
I have a deep need to be in control of situations and other people. <i>"If they would only see things my way!"</i>	22.	I can believe in God's sovereign plan in all circumstances. <i>"I can trust in Him – even when I cannot see His way"</i>
I often think that something other than Jesus can satisfy me. Possessions, position and passions (idols) give me a sense of value and pleasure.	23.	God truly satisfies my soul. <i>"...and earth has nothing I desire besides you"</i> (Ps 73:25).
I feel obligated, but have little desire, to share the Gospel (since my own Christian life is such a struggle).	24.	I desire to see the lost come to know Jesus. I share the Gospel with others, even when not under outward pressure. <i>"..the love of Christ compels us"</i> (2Co 5:14).

## **CONCLUSION**

Because of what Jesus has done God accepts me into his family! He gave me a new position and all the privileges of being his child. I always have the right to approach him without fear of judgment. Even more I can call him "Abba, Father". God gives me all that I need to have a close relationship with him. He is always with me. As an heir, I now have an inheritance - life in eternal fellowship with a loving Father and His family.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Describe in your own words what it looks like for you to be a spiritual orphan.
- Using the Orphans and Sons chart in this lesson, list the five characteristics of a spiritual orphan most applicable to you.
- For two or three of the above, give specific recent examples.
- Describe a recent time, when by God's grace, you responded to a difficult situation like a son/daughter instead of like a spiritual orphan.
- How would you like to see God change you (specifically)?

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# MONTH TWO

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## Review of Month 1

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During last month's training you began to examine some foundational issues in church planting ministry – God's ultimate purpose in the world, the centrality of making disciples in the Great Commission, examples from the New Testament, thinking with an end goal in mind, research, and spiritual adoption.

The only assignment from the first month is the research assignment in Lesson 5, "Research: Information for Strategic Purposes". This assignment should be completed in written format. As you are working through your research project, you are encouraged to ask your mentor to help coach you through the process.

If you have not yet completed the research, continue with it during this next month of training. Be sure to share your results with your mentor when you are through.

<b>PRAYER</b>
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## Lesson 7 – Prayer in the Church Planting Process

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### I. PRAYER – THE FOUNDATION 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:

- 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" (Rom 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 church planting ministry must be born out of prayer and then continuously be bathed in prayer from start to finish.

***Question 1: We all know that we need to pray, but sometimes it's the thing we do the least. As you begin working on your church plant, how and when will you set aside time to pray yourself? Share your ideas with the group.***

## **II. MOBILIZING PRAYER WARRIORS**

One of the early Church's greatest resources for the advance of the Gospel was prayer. From the Upper Room before Pentecost to the missionary journeys of Paul, prayer preceded and supported the outreach efforts of Christ's followers (Ephesians 6:19-20, 2 Timothy 1:3).

This is because prayer is essential in order for a church planting movement to take place. A prayer strategy for saturation church planting must be focused at the point where it matters - each neighborhood of every town and city of your nation and among every unreached people group. There are a many ways in which people can organize prayer for a city or nation. For example:

- In Korea, churches commonly spend whole nights in prayer or rise daily at 5 a.m. for prayer.
- In America, Christians gather for special days of prayer, such as a national day of prayer, to pray specifically for the nation.
- In Europe, teams of people walk the same routes as the Crusaders - from England to Istanbul, praying for reconciliation and conversions to Christ in cities along the way.

***Question 2: What are some practical ways in which you can mobilize people to pray in your region?***

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 sharing good information about your church planting work with those churches and individuals who are praying for you.
- Encourage regular, specific, concentrated prayer for the Gospel to penetrate the hearts of people living in your target area. Ask people to pray against evil influences which keep people in bondage to Satan and which hinder the advance of the Gospel in your target area

## **III. PRAYER LEADERS**

Because it is God's desire to reconcile people to Himself and declare His glory among the nations, it is likely that the Holy Spirit has already given people a burden to pray for the lost in their neighborhood, city and region. Therefore, the first step in mobilizing prayer is to seek out those people who have a burden to pray for the lost. Once prayer warriors have been identified, they need to be linked together--that is, put into communication and fellowship--with those who are actively reaching the lost through evangelism and church planting in their region. Too often, prayer groups are isolated from evangelism and church planting, when in fact prayer is the one thing these outreach ministries need the most.

If there is little activity in the way of organized prayer, the focus should be on asking the Lord to raise up prayer leaders, and on mobilizing strategic prayer at a grass roots level among believers in local churches. Prayer leaders function in different ways in a prayer movement. Some will lead specific prayer groups - maybe in a local church, or with members from several local churches in a community. Others will be leaders of prayer networks - small groups or individuals throughout a region, city, or nation, who are linked by a burden to pray for the advance of the Gospel in that area.

*Below are some characteristics of an effective prayer leader:*

- A strong commitment to Christ
- Faithfulness in spiritual disciplines, such as Bible reading, personal prayer, fellowship, etc.
- An ability to lead and focus prayer meetings, restraining any inappropriate or unhelpful praying.
- Has a good relationship with the believers in their church.
- Has emotional balance.
- Is not prone to gossip and is able to keep confidences.
- Has a vision for outreach and church planting and is able to communicate this to others.
- Is able to coordinate information flow among prayer groups and church planting efforts.

***Question 3: Is there anyone you know of already who is a prayer leader in your region? How can you get them to begin praying for your church plant?***

***Question 4: How can you find the people in your target area whom God has already called to a ministry of prayer? List several ideas how you can keep them informed about prayer needs as you begin your church planting ministry.***

***Question 5: A lot of people pray, but few pray for church planting. How can you organize prayer specifically for evangelism and church planting in existing church fellowships in your area?***

#### **IV. PRAYING FOR SCP**

As people catch a vision for what God wants for their neighborhood, city, region or nation, they will need practical ideas and helps on how to participate prayerfully in the advance of the Gospel. Church planting projects should be fervently prayed for. Some possible methods to generate prayer support include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Prayer Triplets** – A prayer triplet consists of three individuals or three couples committed to meeting regularly (weekly or every two weeks) to pray for nine non-Christian friends, colleagues or neighbors. Prayer triplets 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 the evangelism of their own communities.
- **Prayer Walking** – A regular walk of intercession for a target area. Prayer walking is a tool that can help to break up hard ground and prepare the soil of people’s hearts to receive the Gospel. Prayer walking should be followed by strategic evangelism. If you are going to reach out by distributing literature, showing a film,

feeding the poor, etc., a key part of that outreach should include prayer before and during the event. Prayer walking is simply one way to prepare an area or region to be receptive to the Gospel. Around the world it has been shown that an area which has been prayed over in this way results in much more fruit than an area which has not been prayed over.

- **Prayer Support Team** – A team that assists church planter(s) through prayer. They meet on a regular basis to discuss what is happening in the church planting process, to review new prayer requests they've received from the church planter, and to rejoice in prayers which God has answered. They play a vital role in the church planting process.
- **Prayer Chains** – A network of people who contact each other with urgent prayer needs and news. This can be by word of mouth, on the telephone, by email, etc. Prayer chains are set up to generate a large amount of prayer support in a very short amount of time.
- **Prayer Wheels** – A group of prayers who intercede "around the clock" for a need by having each group member commit to spending specific times of the day in prayer until every hour of a day is covered.
- **Concerts Of Prayer** – Regular gatherings for intercession that have a prayer leader(s) who "conducts" the time of prayer. These can happen either during the day, or sometimes overnight.
- **Days of Prayer** – A regional or nationally recognized day of prayer for the region or nation itself.

Prayer for SCP may begin on a small scale in your region, but we need to ask the Lord to raise up prayer leaders for towns, cities, regions and even the whole country. National prayer leaders encourage prayer for issues and concerns that affect an entire country. They also promote prayer for those serving in government, the military, etc. They encourage prayer networks throughout the nation for specific prayer efforts and might coordinate activities, such as a national day of prayer. These national prayer leaders should be networked to national prayer leaders from other countries around the world.

Regardless of whether prayer is at a city, regional or national level, the goal of facilitating prayer movements is to see Christ-centered, growing churches accessible throughout each nation so that every person can hear and see the Gospel in a way which is relevant to them and their situation.

***Question 6: Which of the methods listed above do you think would help to generate more prayer support for your church planting ministry? Choose two of them and think about how you could implement them in your ministry.***

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How are your personal prayers intimately linked to the work of evangelism and church planting? What next step should you and/or your church take to facilitate prayer for evangelism and church planting in your region?
- Have you ever been part of a prayer triplet? What happened as a result of your prayers?
- Have you done any prayer walking in your region? If not, how, when, and with whom could you begin using prayer walking as a part of your evangelistic strategy?

## **PRAYER SUPPORT TEAM ASSIGNMENT**

A consistent theme we see in Paul's letters is that he spent much time in prayer for his disciples (Eph. 1:17-19, Phil. 1:9-11, etc.), and that he also asked them to pray for him (Eph. 6:19-20). One of the most important aspects of your church planting ministry will be your prayer support team.

Each church planter or church planting team must 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 should decide when they will meet together to pray for you and your ministry—once a month or perhaps 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.

### **Prayer Support Team Assignment**

Ask the Lord to raise up at least 4-5 people who will commit to pray for you on a regular basis. Spend some time yourself in prayer before approaching the people that God will bring to mind. Give them a vision for what God is calling you to do in your church planting ministry, and ask them to pray specifically for your family and ministry.

The next time you meet with your mentor, bring with you a list of the people who have agreed to be part of your prayer support team. Explain how you are keeping them informed about your ministry, how you are communicating prayer requests to them, and how you are letting them know when those prayers have been answered.

**THE CHURCH**

**Lesson 8 - The Purpose of the Church**

When we think of the word “church”, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Often we tend to think of buildings and pastors. We think of Sunday. We think of an activity, a place and a time, of an organization with order and structure. However, if we believe that the fulfillment of the purpose of the Church can be measured by a building, or what occurs within a building, or through a program, then our theology of the Church is weak and incomplete. It is ludicrous to think that we can accomplish God’s plan within the few hours a week that are spent in a church building or in church sponsored activity. It also suggests that God is satisfied with small pieces of service, rather than with total devotion from the heart. What God intends to accomplish through His people is far more profound than many believers realize. As we will see, the purpose of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission as given by Jesus. We will also see that if the church is to achieve this purpose, then we must rethink our ideas about the nature of the local church.

**I. THE THREE-FOLD 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.*

**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**

We have already seen that God’s ultimate purpose throughout all of creation is to glorify Himself. 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.

**Question 1: What does it mean for you personally to glorify God? When is God glorified in your life and ministry?**

**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.

**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.

*Question 2: What are the implications of this vital truth for your church planting work? How will this affect how you do what you do?*

*Question 3: Re-read Eph. 4:11-16. What observations do you make from this passage about planting a church? Write them down.*

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 go out 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.

**II. THE “CHURCH-PLANTING ORIENTED” CHURCH**

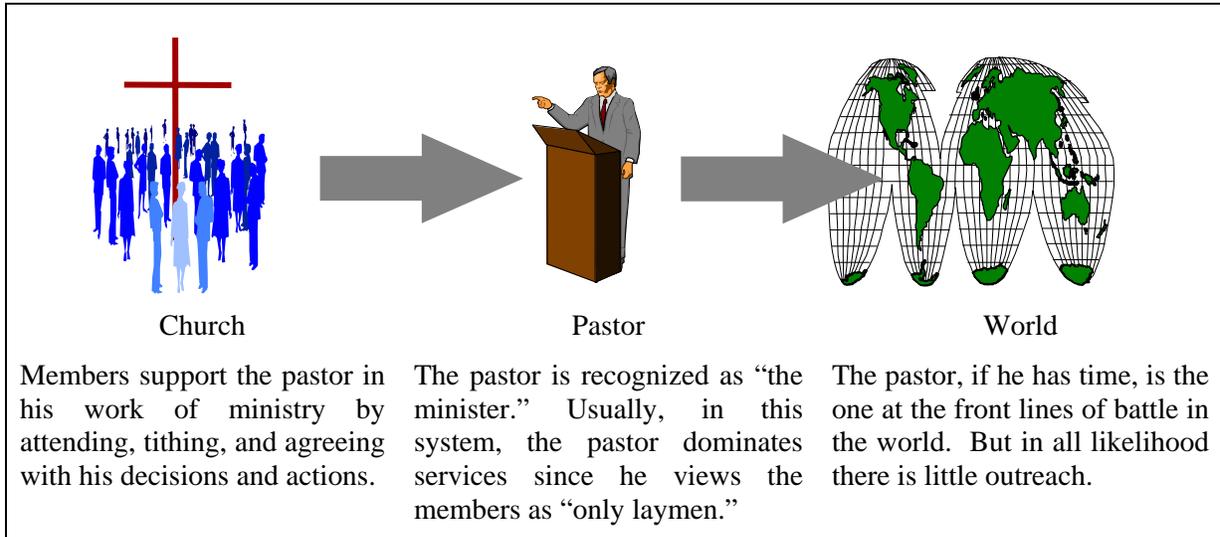
In the previous lessons, we have described the SCP vision which God has given us. What we are talking about concerning our understanding of the task is summarized in the table below.

	Old Approach	New SCP Approach
Vision:	Maintenance mentality	“Z” thinking
Church:	A walled fort	A living army
Leadership:	Controllers or Nurturers	Catalytic servant

### A. Typical Church Ministry

Typically, many think of the **church** as simply a place where believers gather for protection. Often, a pastor or **leader** does all the work while the congregation watches and supports. There is little **vision** for reaching the people who are outside of the church. The result is that the world is not reached with the good news of Christ.

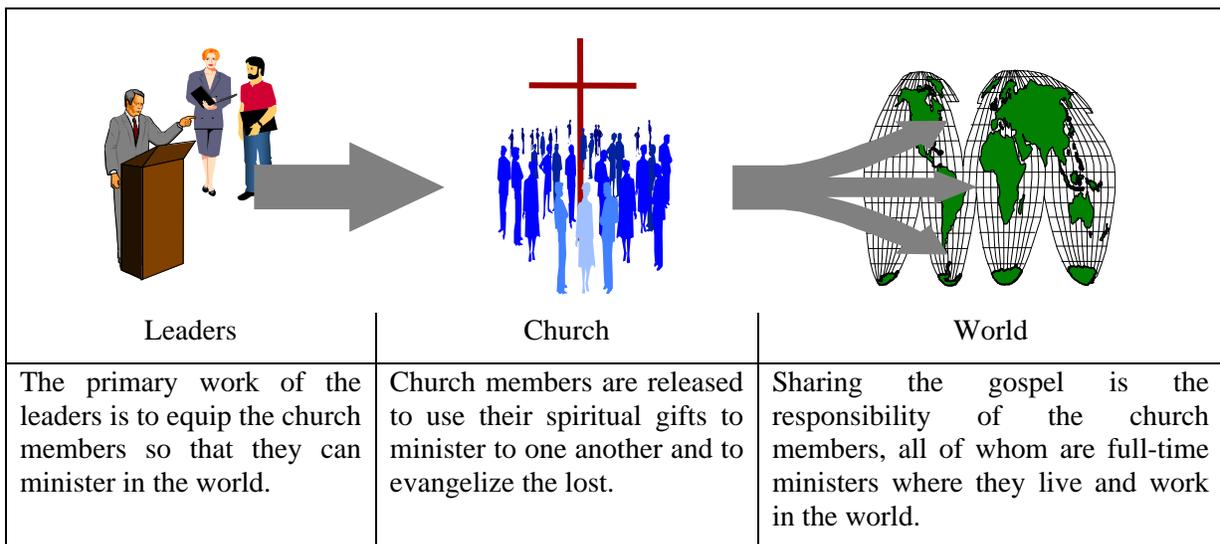
The Typical Church



### B. Biblically Oriented Church Ministry

As we have seen, the **church** is not simply a fort for protection, but rather is a living army. The **leader** serves not by doing all the work, but primarily by inspiring and equipping other believers to minister – as a catalytic servant. The **vision** for ministry isn't simply to maintain the status quo, but is to achieve what God wants – “Z” thinking. According to this way of thinking, believers in any given local church fellowship are to be engaged in the multiplication mandate. This is a radically different, but very biblical, way of viewing the task.

SCP Oriented Churches



## **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 and church leader should understand the biblical purpose for the Church and think through this purpose in the light of his own church planting work and mission.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 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?
- What is the role of leadership in a local church? What happens if they try to do all the ministry themselves?

## Lesson 9 - The Nature of the Church

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### I. THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

The church was born in Acts 2 when the empowering Holy Spirit was poured out on people from many nations. 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. Thus we see that the church has been international since its birth.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for church (*ekklesia*) refers to a group of people who have been called together for a purpose. We see the "church" as manifested in many 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)
- The Universal Church: Ultimately, there can be only one *church* (1Co 12:13, Eph 4:4-5). The universal Church which is that body of believers in Jesus Christ, living and dead, from every tribe, language, people and nation.

The emphasis of the church in the New Testament is on people and purpose, not on a place. In the early days of New Testament, we see believers gathering wherever they could; sometimes in the Temple (Acts 3:1) or synagogues (Acts 22:19), sometimes in people's homes (Acts 2:46) and sometimes outdoors (Acts 16:13). During this time, these groups grew spontaneously and the structure was simple. People turned to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. They were baptized. They began to meet together. They recognized leaders from within their midst (Acts 14:22). These groups became churches. Establishing churches was natural, spontaneous ... simple.

The emphasis of the early church was on relationships. Members took care of one another. Some had material possessions (land, money, food, homes, etc.), which they happily shared (Acts 2:44). Talents and gifts were also shared. God blessed these groups, giving every believer in every local church a special gift (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) which, when used according to Scripture and the guiding of the Holy Spirit, were all they really needed for spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 1:7, Romans 15:14).

The simplicity of the church allowed it to deal with the society in which it was planted and to confront the sins found there. As local churches grew and problems occurred, structure developed in order to address the individual needs of the particular group. Thus, each local church grew naturally to fit its circumstances. This was possible because the focus was on people and purpose, not on rules and traditions. This way, local churches could be established anywhere and thrive, because they became a part of their own societies, not spreaders of a different culture or tradition.

***Question 1: What does the Greek work "ekklesia" mean? How does this impact our understanding of what "church" really is?***

***Question 2: In the early days of the Church, who was given special gifts to be used for spiritual growth?***

## II. THE CHURCH AS A BODY

### A. Biblical Metaphors for the Church

The biblical metaphors for the Church give us insight into the nature of the Church. Read the following passages and write down the metaphor used to describe the Church in each. The first one has been done for you:

Passage	Metaphor
John 15:1-16	Vine
Acts 20:28-29	
Romans 12:4-5	
1 Corinthians 10:16-17	
1 Corinthians 12:12ff	
Galatians 3:26-27	
Ephesians 1:22-23	
Ephesians 3:15	
Ephesians 4:4-16	
Ephesians 5:25-33	
Colossians 1:18,24	
1 Timothy 3:14-16	
1 Peter 2:5	
1 Peter 2:9-10	

Passage	Metaphor
Revelation 1:5-6	
Revelation 21:2	

**B. Implications for The Body of Christ**

We saw previously that the church is most often described as a body – the Body of Christ. When Christ works in the world today, he does so through us, His Body, the church (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. Principles of Life**

Like the “body” metaphor, other images used in the New Testament to describe the church are also things that are alive (a flock, bride, family, etc). Indeed the church is living, active organism. This analogy contains certain implications.

**1. All living things change**

Anything that is alive will change. We all experience this. Some changes are welcome, such as getting taller. Some changes may not be welcome, such as growing bald. But if you are alive, you will change. We may not like getting older, but we prefer it to the alternative. If something is not changing, it is dead!

In a similar way, we welcome church growth and new churches, but such growth often brings new problems and new responsibilities. *“Where no oxen are the manger is clean, but much increase comes by the strength of the ox.”* (Proverbs 14:4 NAS) As new converts are won and new leaders trained, they will bring with them many of their difficulties. As the church tries to witness to the community of God’s goodness and justice, there will be problems. This is not a bad thing. It shows that the church is dealing with sinners. This is what God wants. Think of all the problems that Paul writes about in his epistles. These problems came about because these young churches were growing and dealing with sinners.

The local church must change in order to answer the needs of the changing society. If the local church refuses to change, it will be thought to be irrelevant and will die. Think for a minute: what changes has growth brought to your church? Have these changes been healthy or unhealthy?

**2. All living things reproduce**

There are two types of growth. One is internal growth. In this case the subject simply gets bigger and stronger. All living things grow in this way, but they do not grow indefinitely. At a certain level of

maturity they stop growing (stop getting bigger) and reproduce themselves. Reproduction then, is the second method of growth. In the final analysis, the only way that life continues through successive generations is through reproduction. We see this principle everywhere in the natural world.

This is true of churches as well. We talk about believers reproducing themselves through evangelism and discipleship. But we seldom think about this idea when we think of churches. And yet, it makes perfect sense. When we see a married couple without children, the tendency is to think of them as unfortunate (if the cause is a physical problem), or we might think that they are selfish. The Church, as a living thing, needs to reproduce if it is to expand.

Internal Growth	Reproduction
Key is to train helpers	Key is to train leaders
Focus on maintaining health	Focus on multiplying ministries
Emphasis on the needs of the body	Emphasis on needs of the community
Results in a large church	Results in many churches

### 3. Obstacles to Reproduction

So the Church, as a living organism, is made to reproduce – to plant other churches. However, there are many obstacles to reproduction. Which of the following obstacles to reproduction have you noticed in your region?

- Excessive Structure – *A real church must have pastor and a building and a...*
- Tradition – *We’ve never done that before ...*
- Excessive Caution - *Change will destroy the church ...*
- Selfishness – *We cannot afford to plant a new church. We will lose people and resources ...*
- Unbelief – *Our Church is too weak to expand. Our people are not gifted to lead new ministries ...*

### III. THE CHURCH AS AN ARMY, NOT A FORT

When Jesus promised to build His church, He promised victory over the world (Matthew 16:18). With this promise, Jesus gave us a picture of a victorious army advancing against the gates (the last defense) of Hell. Nothing, not even Satan’s stronghold, can stand in the way of the advance of the Church!

But the common view of the local church today is that of a fort and not an army. In this misguided view, the believers gather in the fort for safety from the world, and the pastor and elders guard the door to prevent sin from getting in. At times, there is a need for this function. But to make this the main task of the church is an unbalanced view. God is not hiding in any kind of fort, but is boldly leading His victorious army against the enemy.

All believers are part of God’s mighty army. It is not enough for Jesus’ followers to quietly sit and listen to the pastor. The Bible teaches that each believer has a ministry which God has prepared for him or her. The task of the Church is to become an army of disciples who will make disciples (Matthew 28:19). This means that the Church is responsible to train all believers to be followers of Jesus. Our God is a powerful God who chooses to use us to accomplish His will. He gives us His authority, the Holy Spirit and gifts in order to be victorious over the world.

***Question 3: How do we know that the Church will ultimately be victorious? What is our part today in achieving that victory?***

#### **IV. 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 Jesus died on 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 and restoring their relationship with Him (Eph 1:9-10). God has given this ministry of reconciliation to His church (2Co 5:18-20). 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 a key part of 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!

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- In what ways have churches today departed from the nature of the church as we see it described in the New Testament?
- Can a believer be part of the universal church and not part of the local church?
- Describe how churches should change. What kinds of changes are healthy and what kinds of changes are harmful in the life of a church?
- Why is it important that we think of the Church as an army and not a fort?
- Which of the following obstacles to church planting have you noticed in your region? Pick one of the following and explain how it has hindered church planting.
  - Excessive Structure
  - Tradition
  - Excessive Caution
  - Selfishness
  - Unbelief

## Lesson 10 - Defining the Church

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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 the Second World War, 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 dramatically affect the success of the church planting process. The definition of the church reveals what the church planter is expecting to produce, and determines the strategies and forms he uses. The definition will be the reference point, or 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 –

***Question 1: When is a group of people a church?***

***Question 2: What are the criteria for deciding whether it is a church or not ?***

**Question 3: Respond to the following situations. Is each a church? Why or why not?**

- Eight believers in DaNang meet every Tuesday night for Bible study and fellowship. They have no official pastor although one man leads the gathering. They have been doing this for several years. Some of the participants also attend an “official” church on Sunday.
- In a large city in Europe, 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.

As you considered each example, what helped you to determine whether or not it was a church?

## II. EXAMPLES OF CHURCH DEFINITIONS

### 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).”*

**Question 4: How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?**

**Question 5: What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?**

**Question 6: 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.”

***Question 7: How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?***

***Question 8: What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?***

***Question 9: 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.”*

***Question 10: How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?***

***Question 11: What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?***

***Question 12: 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.”

***Question 13: How would this definition enhance or hinder the church planting process?***

**Question 14: What kind of a church would be produced by a group of people who subscribed to this definition?**

**Question 15: 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 which the church uses. Programs will be a part of any developing church. But if we start a new church plant with a focus on programs, it can result in structures that do not meet the true needs of the people. 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 new church plant, he initiated a Wednesday night prayer time. However, 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 and look 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 of the new church. 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.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What unnecessary items are typically added to people's working definition of the church?
- Why is it wrong to focus on forms when defining the local church?
- If you are working with a church planting team, spend some time together to develop and agree upon a definition of the church. Use this definition to help determine what your new church plant will look like.

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

### Lesson 11 - The Centrality of the Cross

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#### *How do we grow?*

The Apostle Paul had a lot to boast about. By religious, social, and academic standards he was exemplary (for examples see Phil 3:4ff, Gal 1:13-14). However, at the end of Paul's letter to the Galatians, he makes a very interesting statement, saying, "May I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). Paul could not boast in his own accomplishments - only in what Christ accomplished on the Christ.

In this lesson we will consider the two options that daily face us: to boast in the cross, or to boast in ourselves. The cross of Christ is the answer to the worldly spirit and its desire to be right and to look good. To focus on the cross is to focus on Jesus - the only one who is right and good. The cross should have the central position in the heart of the believer and what it means to grow spiritually.

#### **I. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL GROWTH?**

Spiritual growth is called sanctification in the Bible. Sanctification is the work of God in the life of the believer in which he or she actually becomes holy. The word "holy" here means "renewed into the image of God". This process by which our moral character becomes conformed to our position before God (in Christ we are proclaimed righteous).

How, in a mental picture, would you describe the spiritual growth process in the life of a believer? Many illustrations and diagrams have been used to explain the process of spiritual growth. Consider the following:

##### **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 so spiritual, we fall back down on the ladder.

##### **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.

#### *Question 1: What other diagrams can you think of?*

Depending on how these pictures are used they are not necessarily bad. The Bible even uses these pictures and others like them. However, we want to present a new image that perhaps you have never thought of before.

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

##### **Growth in the Knowledge of God's Holiness**

One of the primary aspects of spiritual growth is growth in the knowledge of God. The Lord proclaims through the prophet Jeremiah: "'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says

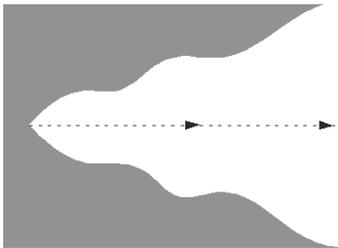
the Lord." (Jer 9:23-24). In John 17:3 Jesus says: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Without the Holy Spirit, the magnitude of God's holiness is veiled to man (Rom 1:21). But as a person comes to receive and then grow in Christ, he becomes more and more aware of the holiness of God. Of course, we will never know all that there is to know about God's holiness in this lifetime, or in the next (Rom 11:33-34).

### **Growth in Knowledge of our Sinfulness**

The more we discover about God's holiness, the more we realize how sinful we are. When we are not aware of his holiness, we might tend to think that we are OK. But in seeing his glory, holiness and perfection, we feel like unholy, imperfect, broken sinners in comparison. It's like the feeling Peter had when he saw the miracle Jesus did and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord..." (Luke 5:8-9). Or like Isaiah in the Temple, (Is 6), who saw God's glory on display and immediately realized how unclean he was.

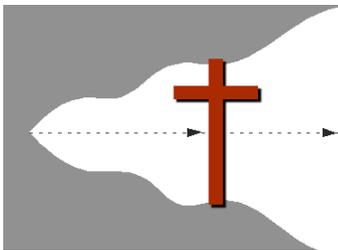
Probably the Apostle Paul offers us the example of growth in realizing one's own sinfulness. In the year 55 AD Paul called himself "the least of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9). Later, about 60 AD he wrote about himself as "less than the least of all the saints" (Eph. 3:8). And even later, at the end of his life around 64 AD, he called himself "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim.1: 15). Did Paul in the process of spiritual growth really become more sinful? More likely, the understanding of his own sinfulness grew, as well as his humility and his sensitivity to sin. To the extent that he began to see aspects of his life, that didn't bother him before, but were not pleasing to God.



*The diagram on the left shows how knowledge of God's holiness (the upward wavy line) and the knowledge of our sinfulness (the downward wavy line) combine to create a growing gap between God and man. Apart from Christ this gap is impossible to fill. Watch how this diagram will change as we explain how believers grow spiritually.*

### **The Resulting Gap**

When a person comes to salvation he sees a gap that lays between sinful man and a holy God. He knows that he cannot fill the gap through good works or any other human means, so he puts his trust in Christ and the cross fills this gap. This is why Christ died.

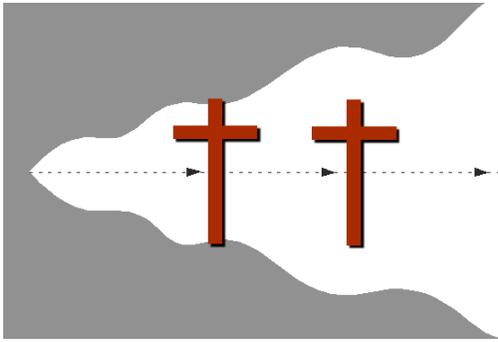


Having come to faith we continue to grow in our understanding of God's holiness and realization our own sinfulness. Knowing God causes us to look at our lives from a more objective, unbiased position. This is difficult because we are in the habit of hiding our weaknesses. Even so, for the Christian who is growing spiritually the gap shows the ongoing need for Christ and His victory on the cross. The more we know God, the more we realize that we are not worthy of him. In this process the forgiveness and reconciliation which Jesus Christ

acquired for us receives greater significance.

### **III. OBSTACLES TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

After we are born again a certain amount of time passes, and like the Apostle Paul we realize that we're a lot worse than we knew earlier. At the same time the holiness of God seems to appear before us more perfect and unattainable. The gap gets bigger. Before the sacrifice on the cross of Christ covered the extent of the gap in our consciousness, but now it's already "not enough". What can a person do when it feels like the gap, or part of it is still there? What are our options in this situation?



### **Variation 1: Despair and Depression**

Looking at the spreading gap between God's holiness and our own sinfulness many believers, fall into despair, not knowing what to do. They try to fill the gap with good works, but they realize that they don't have the strength to do enough to please the demands of a perfect God. People make time to read God's word, but there will come a day when they can't do that. They try to control their speech, but it doesn't always work. At these times they think that their walk with God is only defeat. They can't believe that God could possibly love them. Looking at all their mistakes, they come

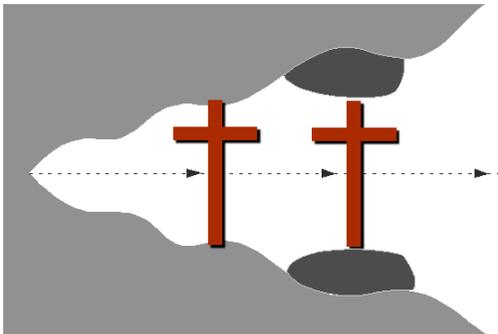
to the conclusion that they never can really please the Lord. The result is despair and depression.

*Question 2: Describe a time when you felt depressed concerning your spiritual growth.*

### **Variation 2: Phariseeism**

Other believers try to keep fill the "gap" with good works, and service. In doing so, they begin to play a game of "success" or "defeat" instead of faith and dependence on God. They start to live like the Pharisees, of the New Testament.

However, no amount of good works can truly cover our sinfulness and please the demands of a perfect God. In spite of this truth many believers try to build a record of good works in an effort to earn God's favor. At the same time they tell themselves that they aren't such horrible sinners. They live by the flesh and their spiritual growth stops.



*The diagram on the left now shows efforts to fill the gap by our own means. The darkly shaded area above the cross represents and effort to deny God's holiness - as if his standards are not that high. The darkly shaded area below the cross represents denial of sinfulness.*

*Question 3: Describe a time when you behaved like a Pharisee.*

*Question 4: Which do you struggle more often with, depression or pride?*

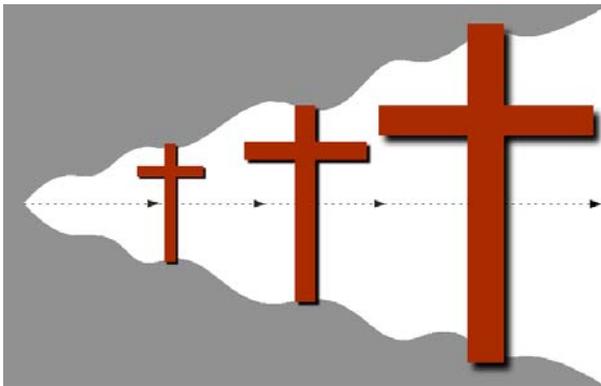
*Question 5: What kinds of things do you tend to trust in above the cross?*

#### IV. ANSWER: THE CROSS MUST GROW

Both of these problems have the same root, which means the same solution. The proud believer, the Pharisee, falsely believes that he can earn God's favor with good works. The depressed believer understands that it's impossible, and so he might not even try. Both errors lead to the same results. In both cases people minimize the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus. They further lack an intimate walk with God and fail to have victory over sin.

It's important to remember that our understanding of God's holiness and our sinfulness is minimal in this lifetime. The true gap between us is unending. It's always a little bigger than we have strength to imagine. But no matter how big the gaps, the sacrifice of Christ really covers it, "for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). In that way our understanding of God's holiness and our own sinfulness, our faith in Christ must grow. It is necessary for us to openly and honestly acknowledge our sin before the Lord, being justified by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The cross of Christ must take the central place in the life of a believer. No good works, service or keeping of



the law will make us closer to God - only the sacrifice of the Savior closes the abyss between the holiness of the Lord and our sinfulness. That is exactly what Paul meant when he said: "but God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14). There is no other place where sinners, even saved sinners can meet God - only at the cross. Growing in knowledge of God, we transform more and more into the likeness of God. The Gospel becomes for us more and more important and the necessity for relating to the Lord becomes a moment by moment need.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is spiritual growth?
- For you personally, what is the biggest obstacle for spiritual growth?
- How do you continue in holiness? With your own example describe how this happens in everyday life.
- Give an example from your own life when the realization of your sin and/or of God's holiness left you feeling needy. During those times what kinds of things have you used to fill the gap? How have you needed to believe in the cross during those times?

#### ASSIGNMENT

Explain what you learned about spiritual growth to someone else using the cross chart. Try to draw the diagram free hand and explain the changes that have taken place in your life because of the new understanding of the cross in the life of a believer.