



Biblical Foundations: New Testament Pattern of the Church

Pre-class Preparation:

Book of Acts 1-13

Dale, *Simply Church*, 33-35, 65-78

Ephesians 6:10-20

Herron, *Expanding God's Kingdom through Church Planting*, 3-41

Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 17-32

Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, 9-14

Maulphers, *Planting Growing Churches*, 119-130

Reddin, *Planting Churches that Grow*, 27-45

Redford, *Planting New Churches*, 8-21

Romo, *American Mosaic*, 63-70, 81-93

Shenk & Stutzman, *Creating Communities*, 19-29, 90-95

Sjogren & Lewin, *Communities of Kindness*, 140-146

Stetzer, *Planting New Churches*, 32-38

Suarez, *Connections*, 58-73

Towns & Porter, *Churches that Multiply*, 92-104

Memorize Matt. 28:18-20!

- In our last session we ended with the quote from the Apostle Paul as he shared his philosophy concerning reaching people for Christ:

“I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23 NKJV).

We talked last time about E-1, E-2, and E-3 evangelism and the task of bridging the cultural gap in order to share the Gospel. Because the challenge for the church planter and Christians in general is that we have to learn to speak their cultural language whereby they might understand the Gospel. It's about being relevant with God's un-

changing truths. If we preach the Gospel in a language others can't understand, all we've done is make ourselves feel good in the process. Preaching in a language others can't speak or giving examples they can't understand is really just monologue. It takes more than that. It requires . . .

Good Communication

*Our overall goal as Christian communicators is to explain
the Word of God to the people God has entrusted to us
to hear His message.*

⊕ **The medium we choose - our "style" or our strategy - must match the circumstances in order to be understood.**

- Isn't this what God Himself did in the Incarnation? "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14a NASB). Jesus didn't come to earth speaking some unintelligible heavenly language. He spoke Aramaic. He found the cultural context and spoke the languages that were there. He spoke the everyday language of the people. The church, in its history, has historically fought for this. Martin Luther wanted the Bible translated into the vernacular German and the church fought it for years and years. They actually burned the German Bibles because of this objection to using the common language of the people. In a sense, churches still do the same thing as they oppose preaching and teaching the Gospel in the vernacular of the people today. It's not about Bible translation; it is about living out the Gospel and sharing it in such a way as to make it understandable.

⊕ **The general missiological term for effective communication is
"contextualization."**

- It means to become like the context. This is not accommodation, where we take cultural values and blend them into our message. It is simply to express Christ in the context of the culture. For the minister of the Gospel it means you must come to the place where you're willing to share Christ in the culture in ways they can understand; and many Christians have a hard

time doing this. They see any response to culture as an unbiblical compromise of truth. Many times they view what takes place in practice as contrary to Scripture. Historically, this has always been an issue in the church. So looking to the biblical texts, let's see how cross-cultural communication takes place.

Effective cross-cultural ministry has two end-points:

⊕ The Communication of the Word of God: We must know the Bible!

- **The Principal.**
 - We must know the Principal...that is God. And then...

- **The Content.**
 - His Word, and ...

- **The Message.**
 - It is the message of redemption and salvation. But it requires more. There's the message of men and women, the message of the church and its function, the message of evangelism and its approaches, which are all contained in the Word of God. So to communicate the Word of God we must know its principal, content, and message. In addition, we must have an . . .

⊕ Understanding of the cultural background of the listener: We must know the audience!

- Otherwise we could all just learn the Greek New Testament and preach in Greek because there would be no need to contextualize the message. Again, contextualization doesn't mean changing the content of the message. But it does mean changing our approach of sharing Christ depending on who we're speaking to..

A pastor going out to share his faith with someone in a hospital setting will be sensitive. He will observe the condition of the patient who needs to hear the Gospel message. If the indi-

vidual is in bad condition, he might use a gentle yet firm approach as he shares the message of the Gospel.

This same pastor going into a county jail will probably use a different approach. In this setting, he deals with men who may be rough in character. The setting is loud and sometimes intimidating. In this situation, the pastor will be more forthright and blunt in his Gospel presentation as he seeks to lead a convict to Christ.

As this pastor goes into the home of a family in his community, he looks at the setting and shares Christ differently. Things are more relaxed. Children come out to see who is visiting. The television is turned off. And there in the comfortable environment of the home he might use a more relaxed approach. He shares the Gospel message with ease but conviction. In each situation, the message never changes; however, the method of delivery is different according to the cultural context.

John the Baptist called Jesus “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29 NKJV). In a culture where they don’t understand what a lamb is, it is the challenge of the communicator to make the concept understandable. And rather than take the time to understand the culture and how to relate the unchanging biblical truth, we mistakenly keep the timeless truth ‘timeless’, instead of making it timely. What people really need is another way to understand the message. It goes to . . .

- **The Perception.**

- What do people who have no church background think when we ask them, “Have you been washed in the blood of the lamb?” The idea sounds strange to them. They may think that it is some bizarre ritual the church uses to initiate people. The problem is that we have an entire language that we use in our Christian culture that others cannot comprehend. It’s a problem on the mission field. Missionaries have to keep in mind that their own personal perception relates to . . .

- **The Context.**

- The Christian culture in which they were raised does not adequately provide the language they will need for another cultural context. A new cultural context requires a new approach in presentation of the Gospel. And that points us to . . .

- **The Medium.**

- That is ***to be able to communicate our message***. For example, there's been a movement away from the wholesale distribution of tracts as a means of evangelism. They are still effective in some cultures and not so effective in others. It was not uncommon in the past to have a mass tract distribution in an area with materials telling people how to be saved. It was effective in a culture where everyone believed in hell and the tract offered a prescription on how to avoid it, but things have changed. A few years ago in North America, many churches were distributing copies of The Jesus Film. It was still the same message used in the tracts; it was just a different medium for the distribution of the message.
So the message is unchanging, but the method of delivery has been adapted to reach the culture. So let's think about it in terms of the Apostle Paul and His example. What was . . .

Paul's basic communication principal?

- We're looking again at the Scripture we started with in this session . . .
- **"I become all things to all men that I might by all means save some"**
I Corinthians 9:22b
 - Notice how Paul did this when he spoke to the people.

⊕ Paul's Preaching in Acts:

- 13:15-41 at Antioch of Pisidia, to attentive Jews:
- **Rich in scripture and history.**
 - Paul uses the stories of the forefathers and how God had worked in years past because his audience was rich in scripture and history. But Paul doesn't always do that in his Gospel presentations.
 - Notice . . .14:15-17 at Lystra, to heathen idolaters:
- **General revelation as a bridge.**
- **Quoted Stoic poet, reasoned arguments.**

- Paul appeals to the example of the created order to illustrate that God must indeed exist. In this context, there are no references to Samuel, David, or Saul. And that's because his audience is different, therefore calling for a different delivery vehicle of thought. In church planting, generally you are speaking to a different group of people who are more like the people of Lystra than the people at Antioch. It requires a re-thinking of how to present the message according to the culture. For example:

In an older established congregation, you might make a reference to Moses and assume that your people understand who you are talking about. But in a new church plant, many people know nothing of Moses. And if they are aware of him it may be from the DreamWorks cartoon production where they've seen Moses and his brother in a chariot race together. It's not that the movie is bad; it's just that different cultures may not understand the point you are trying to make if you aren't sensitive to where they are spiritually.

Acts 17:22-31 at Athens, to educated philosophers: Paul . . .

- **Confessional testimony of relationship to God.**

- This helps us to understand that as we're doing evangelism, it isn't always necessary to begin by taking the listeners down "The Roman Road." But our ultimate goal must be to bring them to "the stumbling block of the cross" where God can work in their hearts and they can in turn respond to Him in faith. Paul understood where the people were and then brought them to the place where they could understand the teachings of Christianity. Cultural setting determines the starting point, but not the end point. And that's . . .

⊕ Contextualization.

- **"A strategy which takes into account the various cultures into which God's eternal message is shared"¹**

- So how do we contextualize the message in the situation where we are at work? And how do we keep the biblical foundation in tact? Because if we understand the context without the Bible all we do is relate to people, and that's not the calling.

PPT Video Clip: Young lady's life was changed through church plant

So this young lady's life was changed through the Gospel as presented by this church plant. So as we think of contextualization, we must understand that a part of evangelical strategy is not only in the **cross-cultural communication** of biblical truth but also in **biblical interpreta-**

tion, and the **adaptation** of church life to the receptor culture.”

It requires a sensitivity to differences between “content” and “context.”

It requires a knowledge of a culture’s world view. It requires an awareness of effective communication techniques.

Are church planters missionaries or theologians? Paul was both. Roland Allen wrote that Paul “was the most successful founder of churches the world has ever seen.”² So as you focus in on what God is calling you to do, is it church planter or theologian? Paul was both...

- **We should be too!**

A correct understanding of theology will guide you to a proper strategy in missiology. Study God’s Word and see how God’s men and women understood their culture and then communicated biblical truth. Ron Rogers, former missionary to Brazil and a professor of missions wrote:

The missionary evangelist who would be truly incarnational seeks a ministry in which he is able to communicate the Gospel to his people in language—verbal and nonverbal—that they can understand plainly. He learns to speak the language of their heart and to relate the truth of God in cultural patterns of behavior in order to concretize the Gospel for them.

- And that’s precisely what we find in the book of Acts...understanding the culture and then applying that to mission strategy. And in order to do this successfully, we need God’s help. So as we look at the book of Acts, we must ask the question . . .

⊕ Whose “Acts” are they?

- Zechariah 4:6

Not by might...

not by power...

but by my Spirit.

⊕ Early church debate on “Acts”:

- The Acts of the Apostles?
- The Acts of Peter and Paul?

- **Some suggested “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”**

- Zechariah 4:6 tells us clearly of our dependence on God’s Holy Spirit.

The fact is that if all we have is a head full of methods and techniques on church planting, all we’re building is a house of cards. Strategies and techniques are vital, but more important is the power of God’s Holy Spirit in church planting. So from the very beginning, tell the Lord, “I want a solid theological foundation. Lord, I want to know that ‘it’s not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord’.” Understand that this is the focus of church planting. This is what we see in the New Testament. So let’s look at . . .

⊕ **The Church Planted in Jerusalem. (adapted from Mark Terry)**

- **Acts 1-13**

⊕ **Its Origin.**

- Jerusalem, the heart of the Jewish nation. Notice. . .

⊕ **Its Beginnings.**

- **Born in prayer (1:12-14)**

- In the upper room. It was ...

- **Bathed in the Spirit (2:1-4).**

- We see that powerful outpouring. It was ...

- **Begun with proclamation (2:14-39).**

- They went out preaching salvation. And they were ...

- **Baptized in the name of Jesus (2:41).**

⊕ **Its Functions.**

▪ **Doctrinal Teaching (2:42)**

- The task of the church planter is to teach the new church right biblical doctrine, laying that theological foundation. In addition, this first church experienced deep . . .

▪ **Fellowship (2:42)**

- It's a genuine care for their spiritual community. They participated in genuine . . .

▪ **Worship (2:42, 46)**

- They gathered in homes for smaller group worship and in the Temple courts for larger corporate worship. They saw the importance of . . .

▪ **Prayer (2:42; 4:29-31).**

- They saw needs around them and exercised . . .

▪ **Benevolence (2:44-45; 4:34-35).**

- As a result they had a positive . . .

▪ **Identification w/ the community (2:47).**

- In their Jewish community, they spoke words of redemption. And later they were able to carry the message outside of the confines of their own people group. Finally, they were dependant on God's Holy Spirit in their . . .

▪ **Witness (4:33; 5:42).**

- And they preached God's Word with power. Take a look at this video clip as it illustrates these truths concerning the church today . . .

PPT Video Clip: What is a real church?

The presence of a building doesn't necessarily mean the presence of a New Testament church.

In addition, a New Testament church can exist without the presence of a building. As we look at the church in Acts, we see . . .

⊕ Its Growth.

- Three thousand baptized at Pentecost (1:41).
- People saved daily (2:47).
- Two thousand saved on Solomon's Portico (4:4).

- Multitudes added (5:14).
- Priests believe (6:8).
 - All this is beginning to take place. And we see God at work in ...

⊕ Its Organization.

- Apostles (6:2).
- Deacons (6:2).
- Congregation (6:5).
- Elders (15:6, 22).
 - All of these were parts of the structure of the early church. Then you see...

⊕ Its Actions.

- In Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12).
- Church planting done by laity (8:1, 4).
- Mass evangelism (8:5-6, 12).
- Village evangelism (8:25).

- Churches multiplied (9:31).
- Growth enhanced by miracles (9:35-42).
- Salvation extended to Gentiles (10:44-48).
 - This aspect of its actions was a turning point alone. Because at that point, as salvation was being extended to the Gentiles, we begin to see...

⊕ Its Movement Into the World.

- At this point the faith began to leave the normal Jewish church culture and get “dirty” as it adapted to the culture of the Gentiles. Because the fact is, sometimes church planting means “getting dirty” with the surrounding culture. Lost people are not always as clean and shiny as people in our Christian culture. Notice this video clip. . .

PPT Video Clip: Young woman trying to live the Christian life in her culture

This young woman named “Sky” is going to reach people many of you could never reach. She’ll reach people who would never talk to you. But maybe those are the “new Gentiles” of today. Church planting reaches out to the fringe of the culture. And the fringe is sometimes a challenging place to be. So as we look to the New Testament we see in this first church that the . . .

Acts 13-28

- Scattered laity started Jewish churches (12:19).
- Christians from Jerusalem plant Gentile/Jewish church in Antioch (11:20-21)
 - This was a major turning point for the church in planting this Gentile church, and . . .

⊕ Antioch: great missionary church.

- It was...
- Sensitive to the Holy Spirit (13:2).

- **Submissive to the Spirit (13:3).**

- And as a result it becomes a ...

- **Sending church (13:3)**

- Isn't it interesting that the first sending church was a church that was ethnically mixed. The Jerusalem church was never a sending church, rather, it became focused inward and over time it lost its Christian basis and Christian character. Years later it was excommunicated by the rest of the church because of its refusal to allow the Gospel to spread forth. The Jerusalem church refused to adapt to its cultural context. The New Testament lays out the foundation, particularly as we look at . . .

⊕ The Unveiling Great Commission.

- The Great Commission calls us to **evangelize** and to **congregationalize**.

- In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus laid out important principles that are easily missed. At first glance, the Great Commission seems to be a simple call to evangelize, and that's part of it. But take note of the various functions that are contained in the Great Commissions. Jesus said:

Matthew 28:18-20

“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Good News Bible in Today's English Version)

⊕ The Great Commission is...

- church planting
 - because we are called to do certain things that are the function of a congregation.

⊕ Because we are called to...

- Disciple.
 - Discipleship is fulfilled in the New Testament church as a local church functions in sharing Christ with the lost and leading them to faith in Him. We're called to . . .

- Baptize.
 - The word is a participle and means to continue baptizing. Baptism is a local church ordinance and directs us to 'add' or bring into the community life of the fellowship those being won to Christ. We're called to . . .

- Teach.
 - The teaching command is fulfilled in "teaching the apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:49) which was the basis of their growth and fellowship. It is the function of a local church. And we're called to . . .

- **Multiply.**

- The early church fulfilled the great commission by planting churches. It is what they did when they heard. They went out and planted multiple churches. They led the lost to faith in Christ and then planted churches. Remember it was Roland Allen who said that church planting, not just the converting of individuals, was the method of the Apostle Paul.

⊕ **The Four-Fold Commission:** (see chart on next page)

- **John 20:21**

- **Matthew 28:19-20**

- **Luke 24:46-48**

- **Acts 1:8**

- The Great Commission sends us to people groups. And the way we go to share Christ with retirees in Ft. Lauderdale is entirely different from how we share Him with the arts culture in the upper west side of Manhattan. So the incarnational manner in which we are sent to impact people groups, impacts our methodology. But the message always remains the same: repentance and forgiveness of sin through Christ Jesus our Lord. This spiritual challenge from Jesus does not let us rest with “us four and no more.” He doesn’t allow us to relax in “the holy huddle.” Instead He sends us to people, preaching this Gospel of repentance and faith, and He sends us to all nations. Our ultimate goal in church planting is to bring glory and honor to God as we respond to His Commission to go, to tell, to proclaim the Good News, and to plant new churches.

The Four-fold Commission

TO

WHERE

WHEN

WHOM

WHAT

KEY

1.	John 20:21	Upper room Jerusalem	Resurrection	10 disciples	I am sending you	Commission
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2.	Matt. 28:19, 20	Mountain in Galilee	At least two weeks	11 disciples	Disciple all "peoples" then baptize & teach	Strategy
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3.	Luke 24:46-48	Jerusalem	40th day	11 disciples	Preach repentance & forgiveness of sins based on resurrection of Christ	Content of the Message
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4.	Acts 1:8	Mt. of Olive	40th day	11 disciples	Jerusalem and to uttermost parts of earth	Geography
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