

Paul's Method of Church Planting

“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house”
(Acts 20:20).

The Revell Bible Dictionary quotes a second-century writing that describes Paul as “a man of small stature, with bald head and crooked legs...with eyebrows meeting and a nose somewhat hooked.” Many scholars feel that on top of that, his thorn in the flesh was very poor eyesight. Despite physical limitations he developed an effective strategy for church planting that can still be used today. He started more than fifty of the first churches in history and wrote more than one half of the New Testament. Paul the Apostle was a tremendous missionary who made three different missionary journeys in the Book of Acts.

His strategy of evangelism and church planting involved taking a partner or a small group of people and traveling to major cities to establish churches.

Paul was a man that understood the plan of God for his life. He understood the purpose that God had for him. When Paul was knocked down on the road to Damascus he asked two questions:

1. Who are you, Lord?
2. What do you want me to do?

Once he truly knew the Lord he was in the proper position to know the will of God for his life.

In Acts 26:16-19 he relates his conversion experience to Agrippa. “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness...Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”

Paul understood God's vision for ministry in his life. He knew what God wanted him to do and that was why he was able to conclude in the end, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course...” (2 Timothy 4:7)

I Have Kept the Faith

Once he had the vision he became a man of action. Wherever he went he preached or taught the Word of God. Evangelism and teaching the Word of God must go hand in hand in order to produce a healthy church. Church planting will only be accomplished when we receive the vision, go forth, and become hard workers.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalms 126:6).

One important factor in church growth is concerning the leadership. It has been found that churches grow most when the pastor invests time in developing the lay leadership of the church. He also must spend time in prayer and fasting. He must spend time in preparation. All of these involve hard work and discipline. Paul was not only a zealous man but also very hard working.

Because it was very important to preach the gospel to every creature he made it his priority to take the gospel to the cities.

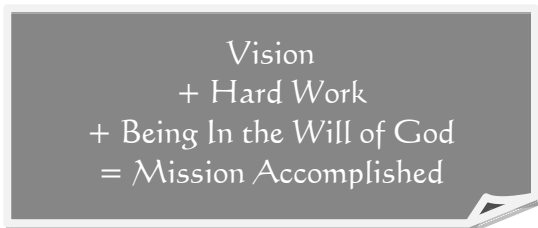
We presently live in a world of cities. According to Mission Today 95, 80 percent of the world's population will live in cities by the year 2000. People reached in the cities can be responsible for taking the gospel back to their villages and towns.

Ed Roebert in Mastering Management in the Church relates Paul's strategy in each city where he established the church.

1. He always started in the synagogue where he did two things:
 - A. Preached the Gospel (Acts 19:8)
 - B. Performed miracles (Acts 19:11)
2. He then gathered a leadership group and gave them special attention (Acts 19:10).
3. He would leave behind a special person who would serve as the leader.
4. He would encourage them by visits and letters.
5. His plan included strategic cities. These cities were either capital cities or on major trade routes. It was from these key cities that the gospel would spread quickly.

When Paul started to open a church he would not start by looking for a building. He was not a building oriented person who waited for a church building before he could begin his outreach to the lost. From this we learn:

1. Start where you are.
2. Use what you have.
3. Give the best you have.
4. God will give you His help.



Because Paul was a man of vision, who had a desire and willingness to sacrifice and work hard for God in the places where God wanted him to be, souls were won and churches were brought into existence.

We need not expect this to all happen overnight. In many parts of the world we have what we call “mushroom churches.” They spring up overnight

and also fade away just as fast. Church Growth is usually slow and steady. This allows for the church to develop into a strong tree.

Richard Allmon in his article, “Church Planting Through Satellite Church Model” tells us that the mandate for world evangelism is sometimes hindered by not having enough money, no building, or even by language barriers. The establishment of preaching points assists us in overcoming these obstacles. It is still believed that planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic method available.

Allmon defines church planting as “a preaching point designed to grow a new church.” We know that not every plant will actually grow but surely some will.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

The Apostle Paul was actively involved in church planting. He was sent out by the mother church at Antioch. He started many preaching points that grew into churches. Many of them started from synagogues, market places, schools, etc. They did not have buildings, trained pastors, or a lot of money.

Yet, the seeds planted, germinated, and grew into churches.

In the course of these lessons we will be looking more closely at some of the churches that Paul established.

Study Questions

1. What two questions were asked by Paul on the road to Damascus? _____

2. Why is it important to preach in cities? _____

