

Church Planting

Part II

January 2000

By Jim and Carolyn Murphy

In Part I of this teaching we examined the planting of new churches by apostles and denominations. We also looked at preaching, videos and films, personal witnessing, tracts, and Bible studies, as ways to reach the lost in the new church's community. Let's continue now with more ways to help get a church started and growing in Christ.

5. Planting a Daughter Church

Often small plants that have grown from runners or seeds will appear near larger ones. Or a gardener, wishing to multiply a plant, will remove part of a large one and place it in its own environment apart from the main plant. This same idea is used in church plants.

Carolyn and I witnessed a church plant one Sunday morning in Manila, Philippines. In a church with about 2,000 members, the pastor stood and announced that they were starting a new church in another part of town and gave the location. He then said, "We need 300 people who will agree to make this your church home for three months. After three months, you can stay there or return here. Who wants to be a part of this new church?" He had the people stand while the ushers counted them. The following month, a new church started with 300 people in the first service!

This is a highly effective way to start a new church if the mother church is large enough to be able to do it. The new church plant already has a core of people who love the Lord. People in the new community are drawn to a new church, if it has a sizable congregation already. And, of course, you can start your outreach immediately into the new community.

6. Using Your Particular Talents and Skills

The Apostle Paul was a tent maker by trade. He worked with his hands. He often worked to open an opportunity to witness to unbelievers. In other words, he used his skills to reach the lost. He said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Co 9:22 NIV) Peter agreed with Paul when he said, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Pe 4:10 NIV)

People are hungry for Jesus, but often they don't realize it is Jesus who is the answer for that hunger. Once I was in a television studio in the Philippines. I was off-stage watching the production of a medical educational program sponsored by the government in which a doctor examined a volunteer who had some medical problem. In front of the camera he would explain the problem, talk about the symptoms, and give medical advice as to what to do in such cases. This program was very popular and lasted for two hours every afternoon. Even though the show could have only ten or so patients per program, more than 200 people would line up to see the doctor because his services were free.

As I saw all those people, I was especially touched by one woman. I walked up to her and asked if it was all right to pray for her. She quickly said yes, so I placed my hands on her head, closed my eyes, and began to ask Jesus to touch her. I

prayed for three or four minutes and opened my eyes. To my utter amazement there was a line of forty to fifty people wanting me to pray for them, too! People are hungry for a touch from God. Our job is to learn who and where they are and to reach them with the message of Jesus' saving love.

Often churches have members who are doctors, dentists, lawyers, or other professionals, who can use their secular skills to win people to Jesus. Large churches can send teams into a targeted area to hold free medical or dental clinics. They are showing the love of Jesus in a physical way. As they give free medical treatment, they also gave a one-on-one witness about Jesus' saving grace.

But not every church has doctors and dentists. However, most churches have auto mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, painters, and so on. You can use their services to show the love of Jesus to the lost. Be creative, pray and ask the Holy Spirit how to develop an outreach using the particular skills and talents of your church people.

7. Day Care and PreSchool

Many churches use their facilities to provide day care for the small children of working mothers in their neighborhoods. Carolyn and I recently saw this in Tanzania. The church had more than forty neighborhood children in a preschool program. Most of the children were from Muslim homes. But the church taught the children to sing Christian songs, memorize Bible verses and to pray in Jesus' name!

8. Feeding the Poor

Churches in every part of the world have outreach ministries to the poor by giving away free food. This, too, is showing the love of Jesus in a very real way.

9. Clothing and Shelter

Along with feeding the poor, some churches also provide used clothing for those who are in need. Some open their building for shelter to those who have none.

10. Vocational Classes

The opportunity to reach your community with vocational classes is limited only by the skills of the willing people in your church. Teaching basic mechanics or other specialty classes that fill a community's need will draw unbelievers who can then be told about Jesus. People are much more willing to listen to your witness after you have shown them, in a practical way, that Jesus really does love them.

11. Language Classes

Do you have people in your church who can teach other languages? If so, they can be very valuable for attracting unbelievers who want to learn another language. I have seen language classes in many places that use the Bible as a study text.

12. Counseling for the Community

Offering free counseling service to the unbelieving community can open doors for the witness of Jesus. Many who

would never come to a worship service will readily come for marriage or family counseling when there is a need.

13. Acts of Kindness

In many countries of the world, Christianity is seen in an unfavorable or negative light. This has happened in America due to the bad publicity some prominent Christians have caused in the past few years. The sin and arrogance in a few high profile Christians has had a negative impact on the American people and their view of the whole church.

As a result, people have rebuffed many good, Jesus-loving Christians who are passing out tracts or giving witness of Jesus' saving grace. They often respond, "You are one of those Christians like that guy on TV. No thanks, I don't need your Jesus!" So, often we must overcome this negative view of Christianity before unbelievers will open themselves to the gospel.

A pastor in a large city here in America began a program he calls "random acts of kindness." For the past few years he has involved the people of his church in going about the city performing acts of kindness to people and business establishments. After they have done the kind act, people ask them, "Why are you doing this?" They respond, "Because Jesus loves you." Here are some things he has trained his people to do:

- Sweep floors and sidewalks of business
- Clean public toilets
- Wash windows
- Give away cold drinks at busy intersections or stores in town
- Run errands for sick and invalid people
- Wash cars for people

A lot of these chores are done by the young people in the church. But individuals and whole families also participate. Once people become involved, they are very enthusiastic about helping. Often people try to give them money which they refuse, simply saying that they are showing the love of Jesus to the stranger. People ask what church they are from. Only then do they identify their church and hand them a small card with information about the church such as its location, times of service, and so on. Remember, it's not your church you are doing this for, *it's Jesus!* The effectiveness of this plan is multiplied when several churches in an area participate.

The pastor who began this plan had a congregation of less than 300 when he started five or six years ago. Today his church has over 5,000 people! Not only has his church grown, *but every church in his city has grown!*

This is perhaps the most effective way I have ever seen to overcome the negative impression of Christianity which many unbelievers hold. No, not everyone changes their mind and becomes a Christian. But thousands of people can be reached this way and become born-again who otherwise would have died not knowing our Lord Jesus.

The Growing Church

Up to this point we have discussed the evangelism phase, or ways of reaching and converting individuals to Jesus. Now, let's assume you have a number of converts and your church is growing. There are two aspect to every church, the spiritual and the physical. Let's briefly look at the spiritual functions of the church first.

1. The Spiritual Aspect

I define the spiritual aspect of a church as the spiritual growth and development of the believers. By this I mean instilling in the people the good habits of prayer, the reading and understanding of Scripture, and the forming of a disciplined life. In short, the spiritual aspect of a church encompasses everything necessary to form a body of believes into the image of Christ.

When teaching new believers Scripture, and how to live a Christian life, you don't start with the book of Revelation and the visions of Daniel. It's like constructing a building, there must first be a foundation. Then, piece by piece, the rest of the building is fitted together on the foundation until it is completed. So it is with the spiritual growth of the church. (See Part I for foundational teachings.)

2. Appointing Elders

Every church needs mature, competent leadership with spiritual insight. Every church needs a governing body responsible for the spiritual and moral conduct of church. Every church needs those able to teach others how to live a Christian life pleasing to the Lord.

These responsibilities should begin with the elders of a church. But who are they? Where do they come from? How are they placed in the position of elders? We see an example of Paul appointing elders in Scripture:

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. (Act 14:21-23 NIV)

Paul and Barnabas had clearly spent an extended period at each city mentioned in Acts 14 determining who among the disciples had common sense, good judgment, was not proud, loved the Lord, and was reasonable. So it should be today. Every church planter should do as Paul did, looking for those who fit the requirements Paul listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These are the potential elders. (We have written previously and extensively on the topic of elders so I will not take the space to again teach the subject of eldership.)

And mistakes are going to be made. Invariably there are going to be people set in the office of elder who are either unqualified or become stubborn and difficult. But rest assured, if you walk in obedience to the Lord and thrust your cares on Him in prayer, He will help you in such situations. Note in the Scripture above that Paul and Barnabas "with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." We can do no better and we should do no less. After all, it's God's church, not ours.

After elders are set in place the church begins, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to govern itself, teach, evangelize, elect deacons, and so on as the needs arise.

The Physical Aspects of a Church

Someone once said to me, "the church is built with the widow's mite." Anyone who has ever started a church from nothing will readily say, "Amen!"

It seems as if there is never enough money. There are always obstacles to overcome. It can even appear that hundreds of our prayers for a physical facility to meet in go unanswered. "Where are You, God?" we ask again and again, "You told me to build a church, but You aren't helping!"

In the New Testament church there were no buildings. They met in various homes or in the open air. So having a building is not absolutely necessary, but it is immensely helpful. A building makes every aspect of church life easier. (Of course, some countries do not allow Christian churches so people must meet in the privacy of homes.)

Let's assume you need a building. Here are some helpful ideas.

Identify Basic Needs

First, identify your basic *needs*. Location and weather are important. In much of the world the weather is always warm. The only problem is rain. I have preached in Africa and the Philippines where the churches are a frame structure of bamboo covered on top with large plastic sheets or plant leaves. This works fine. Of course, if you are in an area where winters are harsh, obviously a closed-in building is a necessity.

In many churches different members of the church bring the necessary equipment such as benches, extension cords (which may run to a neighbor's house!) a PA system, keyboard, etc. I was in a Philippines church of more than 100 people where this worked beautifully.

After you establish a location, a very practical decision you face is, "Do we rent a building or buy a building (or land), if possible?" Perhaps the answer is first rent, then buy.

Something Better Than Money!

Once you prayerfully make the above decisions, its time to act. **If God has led you to a specific area and told you to build a church** you have something that is far better than money. *You have the word of the Lord.*

To illustrate the value of that word, let's assume for the moment that you have a very rich friend in your town whom everyone knows. His name is Mr. Mensa. You walk into a building supply store and give a long list of items worth thousands of US dollars to the store owner. You tell him, "My good friend, Mr. Mensa, is paying for this. Please deliver the materials to my lot and he will pay you." There would be no hesitation on the part of the seller, would there? Why? Because everyone has confidence in Mr. Mensa.

Should we have less confidence in God?

I know a brother in Georgetown, Guyana who did exactly that! He, 1) had God's instruction to build a church to seat 300 people, 2) found the lot God led him to, and 3) literally began to place orders for building materials and contract workmen! All this was done when he had less than \$12 US in his church treasury!

Every morning (sometimes when the workers were there!) he would walk boldly around the property prayerfully and loudly declaring, "My God is building His church on this property. My God is supplying the money to pay for these materials! My God is supplying the money to pay these workers!" I

was in that finished building. It is serving a powerful need in the community. It is serving God by reaching the neighborhood.

Let us review how my friend built this building. First he 1) had a clear word from the Lord to build. This word included how big and where to build. Then, like Abraham, **he believed God and acted in faith!** Faith accomplishes all genuine work for God. Look at these verses:

We live **by faith**, not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7 NIV, emphasis added.)

We continually remember before our God and Father **your work produced by faith**, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Th 1:3 NIV, emphasis added.)

... These promote controversies rather than **God's work--which is by faith**. (1 Tim 1:4 NIV, emphasis added.)

From this and similar stories I have heard, and more importantly, from these Scriptures, I know it gives God great pleasure to find those who will hear His word, believe it, and act on it. But I offer one word of caution here. This man in Georgetown acted in faith . . . not presumption. He did not set out to build a building to inflate his ego. God does not honor man's presumption nor does He rescue man's ego. God honors His word and His direction.

Facing Opposition

Paul experienced great opposition throughout his ministry. Look at what he told the church at Corinth:

... I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (2 Cor 11:23-29 NIV)

1. Demonic Opposition

Needless to say you will face strong satanic/demonic opposition whenever you begin to build the church of Jesus Christ. Just as Satan opposed Jesus, he will oppose you too when you begin to walk in obedience to Jesus, especially in the spreading of the gospel. But Satan made a major mistake when he incited the crucifixion of Jesus. He had no idea that the Father was going to resurrect Jesus from the dead and send His Holy Spirit into the hearts and lives of every believer. And it is this power that will cause you to prevail over every obstacle Satan tries to set before you.

2. Financial Testing

There will be financial pressures. Financial circumstances tested my brother in Georgetown. It was not easy. He was forced to believe and obey God time and again. Once the devil tried to get him to resort to his own scheme to get

money. He had promised to pay \$3,000 by a certain date. He had no money. A wealthy Englishman flew into town and asked my brother to drive him to his various appointments. This man had lots of money. He could easily have given the needed \$3,000. A voice inside my friend kept saying, "Ask him for the money! He has the money. This is God's provision--ask him!" But another, still small voice, was saying, ". . . Wait."

He drove the man around town, then drove him to the airport at the end of the day. He saw him to his plane and *never asked for money*. On the way back to his office, he thought, "You really missed it. Now you have no money and today is the deadline." But he sensed in his spirit that he had obeyed the Lord. He arrived at his office to find that a total stranger had sent a check for exactly the \$3,000 needed and, of course, it had been mailed days earlier.

When moving in faith, I cannot overemphasize the importance of obedience.

3. Opposition from Other Religions

In some countries there is fierce opposition from other religions. In Muslim controlled countries Christians can be killed and/or imprisoned for their faith. In recent years militant Muslims have martyred many Christians and burned many churches.

Recently Christians have been martyred at the hands of militant Hindus in and around India.

In many Latin American countries the Roman Catholic church has incited riots against Evangelicals. Here, too, Christians have been martyred at the hands of Roman Catholics.

There will be more martyrs before the Lord returns. But those who run with the words of the Lord are just like Jeremiah when he said, ". . . his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." (Jer 20:9 NIV)

4. Opposition from Governments

In many countries being a Christian is illegal. Governmental agencies arrest and jail Christians, even executing some. Other countries oppress Christians by denying them jobs, or educations, or by confiscating their property. Some countries refuse to allow the construction of church buildings.

We must continually remember to pray for Christian laborers in such countries. They have a very difficult task. Governments do have the power to take the life of a believer. But they cannot stop the power of the Holy Spirit in spreading the gospel!

5. Opposition from Families

In certain countries when people become Christians, their families turn away from them. Some families even hold a funeral service, declaring the Christian convert to be dead.

These are extreme cases of family opposition, but the devil can (and does!) incite members of our own family to oppose the work of the gospel. Satan will use any and every means at his disposal to stop the planting of new churches. In every case we need to pay close attention to what James advised, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (Jas 4:7 NIV)

Conclusion

Church planting is one of the most urgent needs in the world today. As a church begins to grow and develop skilled leaders, there is often no place for them to minister within the structure of their home church. My advice is to *lay hands on them and send them out to establish new churches*. If this is done with much prayer and fasting, the harvest will be great.

Let us close with Jesus' compassion for the lost and his words to His disciples.

"But when he saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Mt 9:36-38, NIV)

HUNDREDFOLD MINISTRIES, INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 625
Blue Jay, CA 92317

Telephone 909/336-9701

E-mail: jim.murphy@hundredfold.org Web site: www.hundredfold.org

Rev. Jim Murphy and his wife, Carolyn, of Blue Jay, California, United States, head Hundredfold Ministries, International. They write Christian teaching literature and travel to the Developing Nations of the world teaching Christian leaders. Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l is a cross-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to strengthening the church in the Developing Nations of the world.

Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l provides in-country Bible school courses and leadership training seminars. The classes and seminars are taught by seasoned, anointed teachers. The subject matter is directed towards the development and maturing of Christian leaders. The goal of the Ministry is to produce leaders who will be better equipped to lead and direct national churches.

All of Hundredfold Ministries training material is available from our web site listed above. Pastors in the Developing Nations may receive this material free of charge by going on our web site and requesting it.