

Church Planting Institute
Planting The Now Kind Of Church



Church Planting Institute

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Planting the “NOW” kind of Church

**To be effective, the
Church
must always be
Contemporary!**

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Chapter One

END TIMES ARE HARVEST TIMES

The Bible predicts a tremendous harvest in the last days.

It is a harvest that will touch the whole world but I believe that its greatest impact will be seen in the so called, “Two Thirds world,” largely involving Asia, Africa and the Latin Americas. These are the areas where the bulk of the world’s population resides and where the conditions are ripe for spiritual harvest and revival.

It is my firm conviction that this harvest will not be reaped by “professional ministers,” but by an army of lay workers recruited and trained in their local churches. From the environment of their churches they will go out into their “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria,” preaching the good news of Jesus and His Kingdom and planting a multitude of churches.

THE BIBLE CLEARLY PREDICTS AN END TIME *HARVEST*.

Matt 13:38-39

*“The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. **The harvest is the end of the age,** and the harvesters are angels.” (NIV)*

John 4:35

*“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, **and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.**” (KJV)*

Matt 9:37-38

“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (KJV)

Joel 2:28-32

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

Amos 9:13

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

Isa 52:10

“The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

WORLD EVANGELISATION IS GOD’S PURPOSE,

CHURCH PLANTING IS HIS STRATEGY.

Not buildings, institutions, denominations, but His Body and His Bride. His Kingdom come!

1. TWO PHASE STRATEGY:

Immediately prior to His ascension, Jesus gave two, final commands. They were His “last words” to His church before He returned to His Father. We have called these final orders, “The Great Commission.” Those commands are:-

a) Preach The Gospel. Mark 16:15.

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (NIV)

Most ministers of the Gospel are endeavouring to fulfil this aspect of the Great Commission, though frequently they are actually preaching it to the converted.

b) Make Disciples. Matt. 28:18,19.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (NIV)

This second aspect of the commission is sadly neglected. Relatively few ministers are seriously trying to “make disciples.” It is primarily for this reason that the church is largely failing to produce trained and effective workers.

2. HOW MAY THE CHURCH MOST EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY?

By recruiting, training and
Utilising an army of labourers!
The more labourers,
The greater the harvest.

3. WHERE ARE THOSE LABOURERS?

a) Not in Seminaries, Colleges.

The total number of seminary students around the world is tiny and irrelevant compared to the vast number of reapers who will be needed in the last day harvest. In addition, Seminaries and Colleges are not specialising in training evangelists and church planters. The majority of Seminary graduates are looking for an established and secure position, not a pioneer task. Most graduates are seeking a teaching position in a well established church or educational institute.

b) But in every Local Church.

The majority of potential reapers of the End Time harvest are presently occupying the pews of established churches. They have never been challenged or commissioned to the harvest. Many of them have innate leadership skills and a sincere desire to accomplish something for God but they have never been recruited or trained. It is a

primary task of every true Pastor to discern and prepare every potential leader under his spiritual care.

In the model we are currently presenting, every local church becomes a local training centre. Every pastor becomes a trainer and mentor of leaders for the work of the ministry. According to Paul, this is one of the primary tasks of every apostolic minister.

Eph 4:11-12

‘It was He (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (NIV)

c) Many are not yet even Saved!

I feel sure that many of those who will help reap the great harvest are not yet even converted. They are presently outside of Christ. As the move of God's Spirit sweeps the earth, millions will be converted. Many of these, though spiritual babes, will be quickly trained and thrust into the harvest. Their new found faith, dedication and enthusiasm will find fruitful expression in ministry as God entrusts them with spiritual oversight. This scenario is very obvious in China today. In that national church, which is the fastest growing in the world, most of the leaders and shepherds have received no formal training. They have learned from their local pastors and applied themselves diligently to the task. God has more than compensated for their inadequacies.

4. HOW MAY WE MOST EFFECTIVELY RECRUIT THEM?

RIGHT WHERE THEY ARE!

We must reach the potential workers right where they are, sitting in the local churches, unrecognised and without adequate training.

- a) **The local church is the biblical training centre.**
- b) **Local church has many potential leaders.**
- c) **Local churches are wide spread geographically.**
- d) **Local churches have experienced qualified instructors.**

Local leaders are experienced in:

- **Pastoral Ministry.** (2 Sam 7:8 God took David from sheep folds)
- **Evangelistic Strategy.** (2 Tim 4:5. Do work of an evangelist)
- **Church Growth Principles.**

5. HOW MAY WE BEST ACHIEVE THIS?

a) Discern your potential leaders.

- People with a willing heart. Who usually volunteers to help?
- Who will gladly undertake menial tasks?
- Faithful and consistent. Who can you rely upon?
- Born leaders. Who do people naturally gravitate towards?
- Who do they admire, trust, and seek to emulate?
- Who do people instinctively follow?

b) Recognise them.

Once you have discerned potential leaders you need to recognise and acknowledge them. Begin to treat them like leaders and they will rise to the level of your expectations. Encourage them whenever possible. Utilise them whenever opportunities arise. Commend them when they earn it, privately and publicly.

c) **Recruit Them. Matt. 4:19.**

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

"At once they left their nets and followed him." (NIV)

COME. Get up. Stir yourself. Get moving.

FOLLOW ME. Observe, watch, emulate me.

I WILL MAKE YOU. Forming the lives of disciples.

FISHERS OF MEN. Reaching men and women for Christ and His Kingdom.

d) **Train Them.**

- a) The CPI curriculum is an easily transportable medium.
- b) It is designed primarily for use in the local church.
- c) It is simple, easily absorbed and appropriated.
- d) Pastors and Teachers will first benefit from study of it.
- e) It can be taught direct from the curriculum, + your ministry experience.
- f) Disciple the students. (Suggest 2 or 3 nights per week)
- g) Use the students in church activities. On the job training.
- h) Grow them under your spiritual covering. Be a **Father** to them. Not legalistic, dictatorial, but loving, caring, selfless.
- i) Target mutually agreed objectives.
- j) Initiate mutually co-operative strategies.
- k) Practise mutually supportive strategies.

Chapter Two

WHAT WILL THOSE CHURCHES LOOK LIKE?

For too long the traditional concept of a church has been that of a building.
A particular type, or style of building, whose architecture suggests religion.
A building conducive to lecturing a captive audience. (Pulpit and pews)
A building in which certain religious exercises are exclusively performed.

1. THE IMAGE OF “CHURCH” IS CHANGING. IT IS BECOMING :-

More Like People, Less Like Buildings.

During His ministry on earth, Jesus erected no churches.
He concentrated on reaching *people* with His message of salvation.
He always went where the people were.

More Like Laity, Less Like Clergy.

In order to gather in the end time harvest, God needs an army of labourers.
That army will be recruited from amongst the members of the church.
It will be recruited, trained, prepared and led by pastors and evangelists.

More Informality, Less Formality.

Most church services and activities have become too stereotyped and formal.
They have been made unnatural, religious, predictable, dry and boring.
Joy and spontaneity have been stifled.
Religious forms and ceremonies have been substituted.
But the now church is breaking out of that mould.

More Practise, Less Rhetoric.

Rhetoric is “Speech that implies significance and importance, but lacks true relevance.”
Rhetorical questions are questions “to which no answer is expected.”
Too many churches today are answering questions that no one is asking.
The Church’s activities have been reduced to talk rather than action.

More Like Houses, Less Like Cathedrals.

The New Testament church did not possess consecrated buildings or temples.
The New Testament church consisted of people, not buildings.
They met together daily, from house to house, with gladness and simplicity of heart.
The believers fellowshipped together in houses and preached the Gospel in the public places.

2. HOUSE CHURCHES ARE BIBLICAL.

Rom 16: 3, 5.

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the service of Jesus Christ. Also, greet the church that meets in their house.”

Jesus spoke and ministered in house meetings. Mark 2:1.

“And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.” (KJV)

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Luke 5:17-20

“And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

*And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they **went upon the housetop**, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.*

And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. (KJV)

The early church met in houses. Acts 2:46-47

*“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, **and breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (KJV)

Peter ministered in houses. Acts 10:24-27

“And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.”

Paul ministered in houses. Acts 16:32-34

“And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptised, he and all his, straightway.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” (KJV)

Acts 28:30-31

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” (KJV)

There were no consecrated buildings

for first three centuries of church history.

3. HOUSE CHURCHES ARE LOW PROFILE.

House churches were less conspicuous than “churches” or temples. This was advantageous in New Testament times for a people who were hounded and persecuted.

House churches are more culturally authentic than are “church buildings.”

So many church buildings have an architecture style inappropriate to their cultural setting. Houses usually mirror the economic standards of the average local person, which eliminates the grotesque image of lavish and expensive “churches” amidst the poverty of the average persons.

4. MORE NORMAL, - HAVING EVERY DAY USAGE.

In most villages and towns, the average houses (80%) look very similar.

The average person lives in the same style and approximate quality of house and is therefore very familiar and comfortable with it, feeling very much “at ease” there.

More widely available

Every neighbourhood consists mainly of houses. Wherever there are people, there are houses. Therefore, there are many more houses available than churches or public halls. This increases the opportunity to gain a suitable location for the gatherings of the group.

5. MORE INFORMAL AND FRIENDLY.

The atmosphere in a typical family home is much less threatening to a pre-Christian. People are more accustomed to being in a house, than in a “church.” There are usually fewer people, the atmosphere is less formal, and more natural. Newcomers frequently already know some of those person present. In a small and intimate gathering, people are often much more open about their real needs. There is often a greater opportunity for sharing at a deeper level. Spiritual and emotional support is close at hand. There are opportunities for more spiritual accountability one to another. There is usually more involvement in corporate tasks. The architecture and atmosphere of many church buildings is repressive.

6. COMPARATIVELY INEXPENSIVE.

It can be very expensive to launch and grow a church. The financial cost of planting a church is greatly lessened by using the house church model. The building already exists. Does not need to be built or rented. The financial upkeep of a house-church is much less than that of a formal church. In most places today, the cost of land and of building is exorbitant making it extremely difficult to obtain.

7. AFFORDS OPPORTUNITIES DIFFERENT TO “CHURCH.”

	A Traditional church.	A House church.
Location.	Large, often impersonal hall.	Small, intimate room.
Size.	Large impersonal crowd.	Small intimate group.
Support System.	Dependant on Minister.	Edify each other.
Relationships.	Often fleeting and superficial.	More personal and real.
Discipling.	Does not usually occur.	Effective in smaller groups.
Task of Leaders.	Perform all ministry functions.	Share ministry opportunities.
Prayer emphasis.	Few people participate.	Everyone participates.
Use of spiritual gifts.	Mainly by clergy, or select few.	Exercised by all believers.
Teachings.	Knowledge of Scriptures.	Practise of Scriptures.

Expected of members.	Regular attendance. Listen to sermons. Pay tithes and offerings.	Servanthood and practical ministry to others.
Basis of Evaluation.	How much you know.	How well you function with others.
Basis of Staff recruitment.	Seminary graduates. Professional ministers.	Lay persons produced by the fellowship.
Evangelism.	Mostly introspective.	Encourages friendship evangelism.
Atmosphere.	Traditional, religious and formal.	Informal and friendly.

(Adapted from a model by Dr Ralph Neighbours)

8. AN IDEAL TRAINING CENTRE.

The house group format and environment provides an ideal setting for the development of budding ministries.

The smaller the group, the less intimidated most people are, particularly when it comes to participating in activities such as preaching, worship leading and the like.

“*Apprentice*” leaders and pastors feel more confident in a smaller gathering.

If they make mistakes, their embarrassment is less pronounced.

The house church provides an environment conducive to involvement and participation by all members of the group.

9 EVERY LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD HAVE “CELL GROUPS.”

They spread the influence of their membership much further.

They unite the believers in a geographical proximity.

Makes daily fellowship and inter-action more feasible. Acts 2:46.

They make relationships more personal, practical, effective and productive.

They provide better opportunities for practical pastoral care.

They involve more lay persons in ministry activities.

They afford opportunity for more members to exercise their spiritual gifts.

Many of the activities the Bible instructs us to perform are impractical in the impersonal atmosphere of a large and formal gathering.

A few reasons why some small groups fail.

Group leaders are not adequately trained and prepared.

Their role and objective is not sufficiently clear to the leader or the group.

It simply becomes another church service.

Inter-personal relationships are not developed.

Insufficient progress is made towards a measure of autonomy.

10. WHAT SIZE SHOULD A HOUSE CHURCH BE?

Matt. 18:20 possibly defines the smallest kind of church. Jesus said -“Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them”

12 - 15. seems to be ideal. Small enough to have intimacy. Large enough to have variety and scope.

In some nations with restrictions on house gatherings, it is permissible to have up to 12 persons in a house without requiring specific permission or an official permit.

Even 50 - 60 persons is still feasible providing the house is large enough. Before this size has been achieved, this group has already become a local church in a biblical sense. It is in fact a true "house church."

11. SETTING UP HOUSE GROUPS.

- The local church should adopt and advocate the concept.
- Recruit potential leaders.
- Train and prepare those leaders.
- Designate the houses in which the group will meet.
- Appoint and authorise the leadership.
- Disciple those leaders regularly.
- Conduct weekly leaders meetings for de-briefing and future planning.

12. STIMULATING GROWTH AND CONSOLIDATION.

From its inception the whole group should understand that the purpose of the group is to strengthen and consolidate the believers and to reach their immediate community.

The early, New Testament church, continued steadfastly in :-

- The Apostles life-style.
- A corporate, koinonia style community relationship.
- Breaking bread. Sharing meals together & commemorating Christ's death.
- United prayers.

"And the Lord added to them daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:47.

13. ENCOURAGE AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT.

Autonomy is the "authority of self government."

In respect of a church, the ultimate, towards which it should be developed is to be :-

- Self governing.
- Self financing.
- Self propagating.

14. EXERCISE SHEPHERDING OVERSIGHT.

It is advisable, scriptural and proper, for the house church to remain under the general oversight and covering of the "mother church" and its senior minister, until the time comes for it to achieve the autonomy level of a local church.

The house group leader should therefore be seen as an "under-shepherd" exercising certain privileges of his authority, yet remaining under the pastoral oversight of his senior pastor. Major decisions and matters of policy will therefore be determined by the "mother church" eldership. Other areas of authority, pre-determined by the mother church and the under-shepherds, can be exercised at the discretion of the under shepherd and his house group.

15. TWO STRATEGIES FOR HOUSE CHURCH PLANTING.

a) The Cell Group Model.

In which a local church institutes Home group meetings in the surrounding localities in which members live. These gatherings are usually convened in mid week. They may

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consist of 10 -12 members with appointed leadership. They meet in a suitably located house. The gatherings are less formal than the traditional church services. They afford opportunities for closer, deeper and more meaningful relation development than does the more impersonal and formal setting of a church service.

In many ways this group is like a mini church and can certainly be encouraged to develop as such. As the group reaches into the surrounding area, winning people to Christ and to their fellowship, it can grow and emerge as a true church.

b) The House Church “Plant.”

This model may be used in cases where a house church is commenced in an area outside the immediate influence of the local church. Perhaps several families attend the church from a nearby village or town. It is not always appropriate or convenient for them to travel to the church, nor is their presence and witness felt in their neighbourhood if they worship in some place further afield. Therefore an obvious possibility is the initiation of a house meeting in that village. This may be convened in the mid week initially and at some later point be held on Sundays also.

The idea, from the very beginning, is that this group will be developed into a local church and at some future date will be granted some measure of autonomy to conduct its activities and affairs in a manner appropriate to its location.

Chapter Three

WHY EVERY CHURCH SHOULD CONDUCT HOUSE GROUPS

1. HOUSE GROUPS PROVIDE A SCRIPTURAL, PROVEN AND EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR :-

a) **Training and experience for “trainee” leaders.**

Those potential leaders and pastors who are being disciplined and trained in evangelism, church growth and church planting, are able to gain practical experience in these ministries through their leadership of a house group.

b) **Ideal learning environment for believers, with opportunities for dialogue, questions and inter-action.**

The teaching style employed in most churches, i.e. lecturing to a captive audience, does not lend itself to in-depth or experiential learning.

c) **Suitable setting for development of inter-personal and social relationships between members.**

The growth and development of Jesus was appropriately balanced occurring in four areas of His life.

Luke 2:52

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. (NIV)

Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially.

d) **Opportunity for organised, practical activities to express love and concern for fellow members.**

There are many practical tasks that should be performed as expressions of the love of Christ through His Body. These include the care of widows, e.g. physical upkeep, painting, etc of their homes. Child care for single mothers and other meaningful expressions of concern.

e) **Ideal for friendship evangelism outreaches into the adjacent communities.**

Neighbours have a much closer proximity to house churches than to traditional churches. The house churches also reach out in wider circles to the surrounding communities. Their visibility and influence is much more widely seen.

2. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF HOUSE MEETINGS.

Acts 2:46-47

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (NIV)

Acts 5:42

*“Day after day, in the temple courts **and from house to house**, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.” (NIV)*

Acts 20:20

*“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught **you publicly and from house to house.**” (NIV)*

3. HOW DO HOUSE CHURCHES FIT INTO CHURCH STRUCTURE?

To achieve its fullest expression every church needs to include “small group dynamics” in its structure.

Dr Peter Wagner, a well known and respected church growth and missions specialist, says that every church needs at least three elements in its structure.



CELEBRATION = Our large, Sunday type of gathering, where the whole church comes together to celebrate Jesus.

CONGREGATION = The common interest groups that meet at the church. Men’s meetings, Women’s meetings, Youth meetings, Boy scouts, Girl guides etc.

CELL GROUPS = The house meetings conducted in each suburb in which members live.

4. THE BASIC FUNCTIONS THAT HOUSE GROUPS FULFILL.

a) A Pastoral function.

- The effective edifying of the church is not accomplished by the clergy, but by those members of the Body whom the pastors and teachers have trained to perform *the work of the ministry*. Eph. 4: 11-13.
- The exercise of these ministries can best be accomplished in small, informal groups, where people tend to be more relaxed, open and willing to receive.
- The members can relate to each other and help to meet a variety of needs, spiritual, physical and social.

b) A Learning function.

Not only is it easier to *teach* in a small, informal setting, it is certainly easier to *learn* in such a setting.

- Musicians and worship leaders who are still learning their skills feel more relaxed and confident in a small group.
- Preachers and teachers who feel inadequate through lack of experience, can function with more confidence.
- Members can learn and practice a variety of communications skills in the friendly informality of a small group of their peers.
- Members can learn to “*move and flow*” in the operation of spiritual gifts.

c) Opportunity for participation and involvement.

In a large congregational setting, only the more experienced usually contribute and participate. Less experienced persons often feel inhibited in the presence of more capable persons.

In the less formal, friendlier atmosphere of a small intimate group, people are usually more willing to join in, express themselves, and participate in the activities.

d) House groups fulfill a nurturing function.

- Welcoming visitors into the church or neighbourhood.
- Initiating new converts or “seekers” into the fellowship of the church.

- Expressing practical care for widows, orphans, singles, afflicted persons and the lonely.

e) House groups provide opportunities for evangelism and outreach.

- Friendly and informal activities such as barbecues, social evenings, parties, etc can be conducted more easily in the non-religious setting of a home.
- Friendships and relationships can better be fostered in a relaxed home setting.
- The church that only has celebration and congregation functions tends to become introvert and insular.
- The church that adds house groups to its activities, provides opportunities to widen its circles of contact and influence.

“OWNING” A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

One of the main reasons why some small groups do not succeed is because neither the leadership nor the members understand clearly enough the reason for their being, or the ultimate objective of their purpose.

This problem must be eliminated before the group commences by making a clear statement of purpose that leaves no room for misunderstanding. The purpose should be conceived and developed by the responsible leadership, together with the persons who will share in its fulfilment. Persons who join the group after its initial launching should be fully informed as to what the aims, objectives and purposes of the group are.

1. THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

a) Conceiving the Purpose.

The statement of purpose must firstly deal with what we understand as to what God wants to accomplish in His people. This concept may vary to some degree from other groups or churches, but the inviolable factor is that the purpose must harmonise with the Word of God and a specific understanding of what He wants to achieve. This understanding must be prayerfully and carefully sought and agreed upon by all relevant parties.

b) Recording the Purpose.

One excellent way to clarify the purpose is to commit it to writing in a very clear and succinct style. Everything that the group feels constrained to achieve should be recorded in an orderly fashion. Each point should be carefully and consistently recorded.

Once this has been done, a process of editing should commence which reduces the statement to a concise minimum. The statement should be edited and re-edited until it is reduced to a clear statement of purpose that is in no way ambiguous. It should eventually be presented in a form that is easily understood and memorised.

c) Owning the Purpose.

When we speak of “owning” the Purpose we mean that every person involved should be morally and spiritually aware of, and committed to that Purpose. Each person, from the leadership down to the least significant member, should be wholly persuaded about the importance of the Purpose and its fulfilment. Everyone involved should feel they are an important and integral member of the team. Everyone should know and fully understand their specific person role and what God and the leadership wants them to achieve.

2. THE NATURE OF OUR COMMITMENT.

Effective membership of the group requires a commitment on the part of every member. It is not sufficient to “join” the group, there must eventually be a commitment to that group and its members. Commitment implies dedication to a cause or a purpose. It clearly infers an obligation, responsibility and promise. Without this there no be no true discipling of the members, nor can there be a development of relationship that will be meaningful and reliable. Our commitment therefore is :-

a) To God.

We recognise Him as the ultimate One to whom we are submitting ourselves. Promises and commitments that we make are not merely made to each other, but to the God who is over us all. This is eminently true of Christian marriage. The pledge of faithfulness is not only to one’s spouse, but to God Himself. It is also true of our commitment to the God, the Body of Christ, and the persons who comprise that Body.

b) To The Group.

The second level of our commitment is to the group itself. Firstly to the delegated authority over that group, e.g. the senior pastors of the church under which the group functions. Then to the local leaders of the group. And not, but by no means least, to the particular members of the group. There should be a love and loyalty to each and every member that enables us to *“speak the truth one to another in love.”* Eph. 4:15.

c) To our mutual growth and development in God.

Our ultimate commitment one to another is to encourage, aid and assist each other to grow up into Christ in all things. Eph 4:15.

Paul outlines some of the requirements for such development :-

Eph 4:29-32

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(NIV)

d) Committed to caring for one another.

The Body of Christ is edified, built up, strengthened and inspired, by that which every joint supplies. Eph 4:16. Those joints are comprised of members of the Body working together in harmony for the effective growth and development of the Body and each individual member of that Body.

e) Committed to reaching the community.

The ministry of evangelism and bringing others to Christ is an integral and indispensable part of the purpose of house groups. They are a biblical model for reaching the Christless community and this aspect must never be ignored or neglected. The informal, natural and friendly atmosphere of a home often makes an ideal venue for non-church people.

3. COMMENCING CELL GROUPS IN THE CHURCH.

It is most important that as many members of the church as possible should also be committed members of a house group. Vital aspects of their Christian and spiritual

development can only be achieved in the kind of relationship structure that a small group affords.

a) How many groups should you have?

The number of house groups that a church should have may depend on several factors.

- The number of people in the church who could regularly attend a group.
- The response of those able to attend.
- The availability of sufficient competent leaders.

It is a good idea to begin with a few groups, allow them to grow and then sub-divide them, forming more groups in appropriate geographic areas.

b) Choosing suitable leaders.

The right kind of leaders are absolutely vital to the effective functioning of house groups.

Obviously they must be persons of some spiritual maturity and experience.

They need to be persons who have a good working knowledge of the Bible.

They should be persons who know how to hear from God and receive His direction.

They should also be “people persons” who have the ability to relate well to others.

Ideally they should have some knowledge and experience of leadership and management.

Choose persons who are humble and teachable.

Choose persons who will be compatible and work well with the church leadership and others.

c) Train the potential leaders.

The training of under-shepherds is usually the task of the senior pastor or his personal appointee.

The training must be done properly. Neglect of this will cause problems in the future.

Training should occur in a discipleship format.

The candidates must be involved in a class that relates closely and personally to the pastor.

They must be brought into close relationship with the pastoral team.

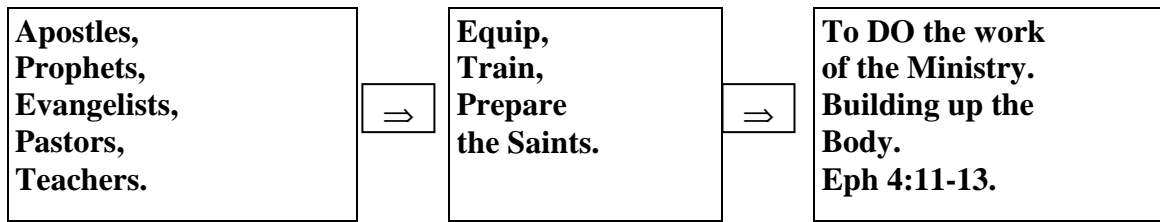
All training should be biblically based, spiritually appropriate and very practical.

Ideally it should be accompanied by regular opportunities to practise what they learn.

The teacher and his disciples must meet regularly in official and unofficial capacities.

The CHURCH PLANTING INTERNATIONAL program offers an ideal syllabus for the training of lay leaders in evangelism, church growth and church planting. It covers most of the areas of understanding required for preparing candidates for these tasks.

It is NOT a theological course. It is intended to be Biblical, Spiritual and Practical. It is most effectively employed in the context of a local church in which the pastoral staff are desirous of equipping the members for “the work of ministry.” It can be successfully conducted as a part time class, requiring some 6 to 8 hours weekly. As the candidates mature in their ministry abilities opportunities for exercising those ministries should be given regularly in the local church. The learning process, coupled with ministry opportunities constitutes an “on the job” training model that is extremely effective.



d) Exercise genuine and meaningful oversight.

The teaching pastors must be prepared to invest sufficient time into training to allow genuine relationship to develop.

Invest quality time and effort into the development of meaningful relationships.

This relationship is often a type of spiritual father and son, or Paul and Timothy relationship.

Be prepared for the requirements of being a spiritual mentor and father to your disciples.

The awareness of your compassionate and caring concern will add great credibility to your leadership.

Endeavour to be a true covering to your apprentices.

Be consistently fair and impartial in both the official and unofficial aspects of relationship.

If you ever lose the respect of your colleagues, it will not be easy to regain.

Be prepared to take the blame whenever it is honest to do so.

Always seek to be a shepherd to the shepherds.

4. LOCATING THE HOUSE CHURCHES.

Obviously the geographic location of the houses will always have some bearing upon their suitability. Try to cover as wide an area as you can realistically service with pastoral care and authority.

Place some of the house groups in those areas that are not in close proximity to the church.

Endeavour to spread the presence and influence of the gospel as widely as possible.

Always choose the homes of families who enjoy a good Christian reputation and standing in the neighbourhood.

Select a family who will humbly serve as exemplary hosts to the group.

Choose a house that has sufficient space to comfortably cope with the numbers you anticipate may attend.

Choose a home that will be available at whatever times you will need to use it.

5. EMPHASISE THE DESIRABILITY OF THIS GROUP BECOMING A LOCAL CHURCH.

One of your aims in creating house groups is to “be fruitful and multiply.” Healthy churches should birth other healthy churches. Group members should understand and work towards this objective from the beginning. It provides powerful incentive and motivation towards growth and development.

Chapter Four

PLANTING A HOUSE CHURCH

Planting a new church, using the house church model, may not be as dramatic as some other methods, but it does have much to commend it.

- It can be accomplished by other than “professional ministers.”
- It can be accomplished in a low profile manner, escaping unwanted attention.
- Facilities for meeting are much more readily available than are public halls.
- The small group gives opportunity for developing strong relationships.
- The informality of a house encourages people to relax more.

This method of church planting is useful in instances where a church desires to plant a new church in another location, other than those adjacent to the church. Here are a few helpful suggestions.

1. TARGET A PARTICULAR VILLAGE OR TOWN.

Always endeavour to be open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit in respect to what He may show you about a particular place. Realise that when some particular place begins to come before your mind regularly it may be the Holy Spirit directing your thoughts and concern towards that place. Begin to pray about that village or town. Ask God to show you what He wants to do there. Begin to visit the place. Drive or walk around it. Get the feel of the place. Let God speak to you whilst you are actually there. Pray for the place as you walk around it. Try to see the place from God’s perspective. Try to share His feelings about its people.

2. FORM A TEAM OF WORKERS.

As you begin to pray about a particular place you will often discover that others also are interested and concerned about that place. God frequently begins to speak the same thing to a number of persons. Suddenly their concern will come to your attention. Include them in your prayer gathering as you pray specifically for this location for which God is obviously giving you a “burden.”

There will often be potential workers amongst those concerned persons. Make opportunity to give training and preparation to them. Begin to mould them into a team. If any of your contacts actually live in the area for which you are concerned, try to knit them into your team. Endeavour to encourage the various ministry potentials in the people. Encourage them to flow together in a team harmony.

3. BEGIN TO MAKE CONTACTS IN THE AREA.

Your initial contacts should be spread as widely as possible. remember the biblical maxim, “He who would have friends, must show himself to be friendly.” Never regard the people to whom you are sent as “the enemy” or the “opposition.” Try to build bridges of friendship with as many of the local people as you can.

This phase is known as Pre-Evangelism. At this point you are simply trying to make meaningful contact and build friendly relationships with as many people as possible. Just be friendly towards them. Let them discover that you are a normal, friendly, helpful individual.

4. START TO SHARE JESUS WITH PEOPLE.

Once you have established some point of contact with people, begin to share Jesus with them in the most natural manner. Don’t begin to preach at them. Never condemn them.

Jesus always built bridges of friendship with people before He began to share His good news. He always avoided condemning people. Rather He sought initially to commend them for something before He began to show them their personal needs.

5. AIM TO MAKE A CONVERT.

Amongst the people with whom you are able to share Jesus, (Your own personal testimony, given in a friendly, humble manner is often the finest kind of introductory talk you can give), endeavour, without forcing anything, to bring someone to faith in Christ.

The first break through in this respect is often critical to the success of your mission. The initial converts you make are often a deciding factor in who else you will be able to effectively reach. Believe God for a good, quality convert. Possibly someone well known in the community, who enjoys credibility and standing. Or some person whose life is obviously changed and transformed. This kind of convert can powerfully impact the neighbourhood for good.

6. COMMENCE REGULAR MEETINGS IN SOMEONE'S HOME.

As soon as possible, try to establish a regular meeting place in someone's home. Try to find a place that is easily accessible to a strong sector of the neighbourhood. Choose a house that is not intimidating for any reason. A place where the average type of person will feel comfortable. Obviously you will need to find a place large enough to adequately contain the kind of numbers you expect God to initially attract. Don't let the place become too crowded. Some people have an aversion to having too many people in too small a space.

7. KEEP THE MEETINGS INFORMAL, FRIENDLY, POSITIVE AND JOYFUL.

Take advantage of the fact that you are meeting in an informal location. Never try to achieve the kind of formality that many churches have. Do not try to perpetuate another church service. Keep the gatherings informal. Make sure that everyone is warmly welcomed. Try to make the atmosphere as "user friendly" as possible.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of your visitors. Endeavour to see the event from their point of view. Make the gathering as "normal" and friendly as possible. Avoid empty religious traditions that will probably not make sense to non-church persons.

8. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL PRAYER.

Most of the new comers who are drawn to you will have personal needs of some kind. This is one of the reasons why they are searching and why they have decided to visit your house group. Whenever it appears appropriate, gently suggest that you would like to pray for them about their needs. Do not pry into their affairs. Don't push this opportunity upon them. Let the Holy Spirit create the opportunity in His time. When you sense that it is appropriate, quietly offer to pray for them. If part of their problem is ill health, tell them of Jesus' power to heal and encourage them to exercise faith with you.

An intervention of God's healing power has often been the effective key that will open the door of a community to the Gospel.

9. BUILD INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PEOPLE.

So many people in this world are searching for a trusted friend. Jesus Himself is the finest, most reliable friend but we humans need flesh and blood friends too. The church should be the best place to find such friends but so often the impersonal structure we find there makes it difficult to cultivate such relationships.

A house group structure can help to solve that problem because we gather in a less formal, more intimate way. This makes it so much more natural and easy to foster real friendships

and build true relationships. Quality time should be reserved for the effective development of such relationships. Emphasis and teaching should be shared on this subject and various activities should be organised that will facilitate it happening.

10. SHARE A LIGHT MEAL TOGETHER AFTER THE SERVICE.

Members of the early New Testament church obviously shared meals together and this formed a meaningful aspect of their relationship. Eating together can break down many barriers and forge new bonds of friendship. There is something about eating together that affords an intimacy and appreciation that may not be obtained any other way.

The meals, particularly following a church service, do not have to be elaborate. The simple act of “breaking bread and sharing a simple beverage” constitutes a covenant meal. This kind of fellowship can be a particularly good “ice breaker” for new comers. A chance to talk and get to know people in a relaxed and casual setting.

11. BRING IN VISITING SPEAKERS AND BELIEVERS TO MINISTER FROM TIME TO TIME.

Although the local group may be ministry sufficient in itself, it is a good idea to encourage visitors to come from time to time. It is helpful for a small group to realise that there are many other believers beyond their own group. The visitors may share testimonies or perhaps a song if appropriate. If possible get someone who can preach or teach the Word of God effectively. Their contribution will vary the diet of the believers and bring a fresh perspective occasionally.

12. KEEP EVERYONE WELL INFORMED ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIVES.

It is essential that the vision and objective of the group is kept clearly before them and this can be achieved in a variety of ways. Obviously teaching on the subject is the main way, but banners and slogans can sometimes be used to keep the vision before the people’s eyes and minds.

Every new member should be introduced to and inducted into the vision to enable them to understand and work with the overall purpose of their group. A simple pamphlet can be produced that outlines the basic vision and the ways in which the group is endeavouring to fulfill it. The Bible says that “without a clear vision, the people wander aimlessly.” (Prov 29:18) So we need to keep that vision before them continually, inspiring and motivating them towards its fulfilment.

The underlying and ultimate purpose of any Christian community is three fold.

- a) To worship the Lord together in the beauties of holiness.
- b) To edify each other, building up each one in their most holy faith.
- c) To effectively reach our community with the good news of Jesus.

To simplify this objective we may call it :-

WORSHIP. FELLOWSHIP. OUTREACH.

