



CORPS RESOURCES



CHURCH PLANTING 101

by Rebecca Walker with particular acknowledgement to Peter Roennfeldt

GET A KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE

The way in which we understand the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God will have a huge impact on the way we plant churches. If we believe that the church is the Kingdom of God, we will be surprised when we see God at work outside the church. If we believe that the church is the Kingdom of God, we will feel safer within its four walls than on mission to the lost. However, if we understand the church as being an agent for the Kingdom, yet only one part of what God is doing we will go out from the church expecting to find people who are open to the gospel.


Jesus confronted a similar attitude amongst the Jewish people at the beginning of his ministry. In Luke 4:25-27 he challenged them, "I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian." Jesus was challenging their understanding of the Kingdom, he was telling them that God is at work and cares for those outside the nation of Israel. We need to keep a Kingdom perspective when seeking to plant new churches.

LOOK FOR PERSONS OF PEACE


Luke 10 provides Jesus' model for missional engagement. When he sent out the seventy-two, he instructed them, "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" (Luke 10:5-9).

The person of peace is a connection point into a community. Bringing the gospel to the person of peace will spark the birth of a home-grown church in a mission field. This concept is illustrated in Acts where Cornelius is the person of peace that Peter connects with, with the result that he and his household were all saved. The church planting process can therefore be explained as:

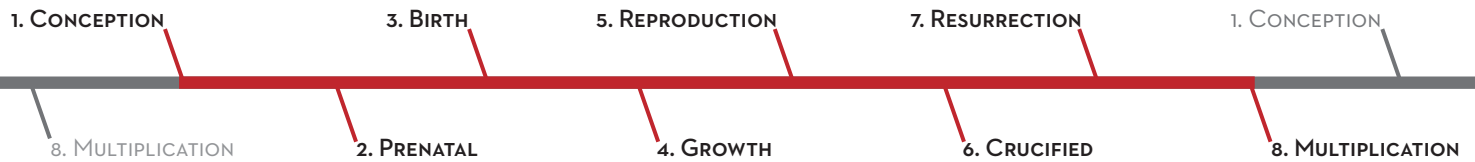
1. Find a person of peace
2. Accept their hospitality
3. Minister to their needs
4. Proclaim the Kingdom



IF WE UNDERSTAND THE CHURCH AS BEING AN AGENT FOR THE KINGDOM, YET ONLY ONE PART OF WHAT GOD IS DOING WE WILL GO OUT FROM THE CHURCH EXPECTING TO FIND PEOPLE WHO ARE OPEN TO THE GOSPEL



JESUS CHRIST Body Life Cycle



BODY of CHRIST Life Cycle

1. Conception	<i>By Holy Spirit</i>
2. Prenatal	<i>Preparation</i>
3. Birth	<i>In a barn</i>
4. Growth	
5. Reproduction	<i>Equipping</i> → <i>Ministry - eating / healing / blessing</i> → <i>Full of the spirit - Kingdom of God</i> → <i>Led by spirit (Transformation)</i> → <i>Anointed by spirit</i>
6. Crucified	
7. Resurrection	<i>by the Spirit</i>
8. Multiplication	<i>by Pentecost</i>

CHURCHES SHOULD BE SENDING OUT CHURCH PLANTING TEAMS EVERY TWO YEARS TO BEGIN NEW MISSIONAL ACTIVITIES, OTHERWISE THE SENDING CHURCH WILL FACE DECLINE AND EVENTUAL DEATH

CULTIVATE THE PRACTISE OF CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

Conversational Prayer enables fellowship with God to happen in ways that are non-confrontational to those who do not yet know Christ. Religious language and long-winded prayers are barriers to involving not-yet-Christians, and new Christians into fellowship. Furthermore, God does not even like religious and longwinded prayers. Jesus addressed this issue on a number of occasions, “when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men... when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (Matthew 6:5-7). Speaking of the Pharisees he said, “... for a show [they] make lengthy prayers” (Luke 20:47).

Conversational prayer is practised by having a conversation with one another and with God. Prayers are short and voiced in simple phrases, and directed to God “as if He were in the room”, which of course he is. Prayer requests are not discussed beforehand, but in prayer with one another. No pressure is put on anyone to pray, there is no “praying around the circle”. Rather prayer happens in a spontaneous and natural way, as a normal conversation does. Due to the

natural rhythm of conversational prayer, it is an appropriate way to pray for not-yet-Christians, perhaps while having a cup of coffee in a local café. Eyes may be kept open so that the body language of the other members of the group is just as much a part of the prayer as the words spoken. Agreement with another’s prayer can be expressed through an “Mmm”, an “Amen”, a nod or a smile. This style of prayer is useful missionally as it is relaxed, enjoyable and does not put pressure on anyone. Conversational prayer plays a big part in ministering to the needs of persons of peace.

PLAN FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST LIFECYCLE

The church is the Body of Christ, an organism rather than a typical human organisation. Therefore the Body Life Cycle of Christ provides a better model for the church’s lifecycle than the typical organisational lifecycle. The typical organisational lifecycle is CONCEPTION → BIRTH → GROWTH → PLATEAU → DECLINE → SENILITY AND DEATH. In contrast, the body lifecycle of Jesus was CONCEPTION → PRENATAL → BIRTH → GROWTH → REPRODUCTION → CRUCIFIED → RESURRECTION → MULTIPLICATION.

In contrast to dying of old age and senility as expected in the organisational lifecycle, death in the church’s lifecycle is one of cruciformity. To be cruciform is to be conformed to the crucifixion of Christ. As Bonhoeffer wrote, “When Christ calls a man, He bids Him come and die”. This is the same idea that Christ expressed as, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). There is death in the church body lifecycle; however it is one that is brought about by radical obedience to God.

Cruciformity leads not to extinction but is the springboard for multiplication. Peter Roennfeldt counsels that churches should be sending out church planting teams every two years to begin new missional activities, otherwise the sending church will face decline and eventual death. This sacrifice of the sending church is a form of cruciformity, as that church diminishes so that Christ may increase in another mission field. If every church covenanted to start new missional activities on a two year cycle, then a movement of home-grown multiplying churches would spread across the nation and the world.