

## Gospel-Centered Church Planting

By Scott Thomas, Director of Acts 29 (09-29-09)

I want to talk to you about the way we approach church planting and the making of disciples. I don't want to dazzle you; I want to talk to you as a church planter for 16 years and as a church-planting director of Acts 29 where we get to play in the sandbox and dream big.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus did not say *go make churches*. He said *go make disciples*. Where disciples are gathered, churches are formed. But if we fail to focus on making disciples we will use them to build our church. I define a disciple as a spirit-led follower of Jesus united with a gospel community on mission to all people for the glory of God.

I am humbled at the churches being planted by and through Acts 29. I am thoroughly baffled at how many people visit our website and follow what we are doing; mystified that people smarter than us that ask us to consult with them. I love that we cannot attribute growth to any human effort. We owe it all to the gospel.

Paul said in Romans 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

### **This gospel (yü-än-ge'-lë-on) is good news.**

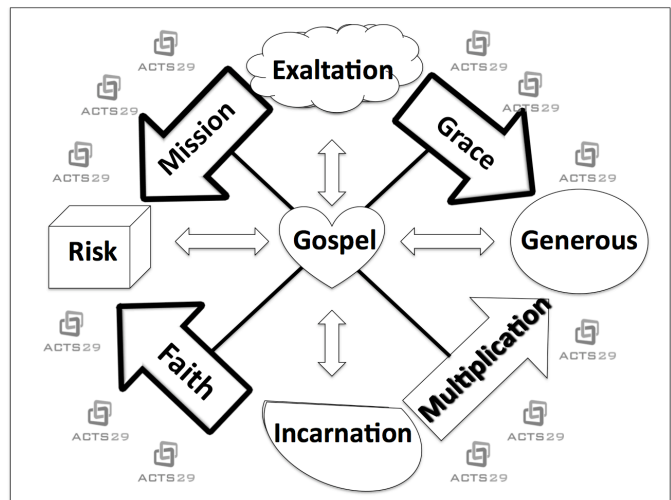
1. The Good News is not that we are okay.
  - a. Adam and Eve were seduced into disobeying and the first sin entered into the world.
  - b. Our Adamic nature means that we are not okay with God. Rather, our sin (by birth and by practice) has separated us from Him and we are in need of a new birth (John 3). We have to be created again (1 Cor 15). We are dead in our sins and transgressions (Eph 2). A transgression is crossing a boundary. The Ten Commandments provide a rudimentary boundary to show us, not a standard for our acceptance with God, but rather how bad a sinner we are. Romans 5:20 says, "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."
  - c. The consequence for our crossing the boundary is death (Rom 6:23). So we are depraved and deserve nothing but death. It is not "I'm okay, you're okay." But rather, "God's okay and I am screwed."
2. The Good News is not simply that God is love.
  - a. God is in fact love (1 John 4:8). But he is also holy and demands holiness in us (Heb. 12:14).
  - b. A parent that loves his child will discipline the brat (Heb. 12:7-8).
  - c. A holy God demands a sacrifice to atone for sin.
3. The Good News is not simply that Jesus wants to be our friend or example.
  - a. He is not just the great example, but he is the penal substitutionary atonement [penal – a penalty for sin requiring payment; substitutionary – he took our place on the cross to die and he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21); atonement – The Lamb of God which takes away the sin

of the world. Our sins are atoned; paid for in full and His blood is the remission of sins (separate the sin from the sinner) and satisfied a holy God.]

4. The Good News is not that we should live rightly.
  - a. Moralism is pervasive in the church and taught rampantly from the pulpits: Do good deeds, give money, attend church, pray, read your Bible and treat others kindly.
  - b. The gospel is not an additive to our good lives to make them better.
  - c. The gospel is admitting that we are screwed up and we acknowledge how desperately that we need Him.
  - d. We cannot satisfy God's demands no matter how morally upright we are.
  - e. By faith we repent and believe (Acts 20:21; Mark 1:15).
5. The Good News is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in His image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In His great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us has been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God.

**From the Gospel, rises exaltation.**

1. Heb 12:1 – looking (continually) unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.
2. John 4:23-24 – God is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.
3. Luke 24:44 – Jesus is the storyline of the Bible.
4. Col 1:18 – Jesus is the head of the church and we are His undershepherds.



**From the gospel, incarnation grounds us deeply.**

1. Living our lives in Jesus is incarnation. It means that we recognize our depravity and we repent of idols and experience the fruits of our repentance in every aspect of our lives.
2. Our marriages are exemplifying this gospel with love, respect, and mutual submission.
3. Our homes are managed well with love and discipline.
4. Your family is the first congregation that you should pastor and your wife is your first disciple. My decision.
5. Our character is above reproach. 17 qualifications of an elder above reproach.
6. Our lives are not characteristically controlled by food, by alcohol, by sexual addictions.

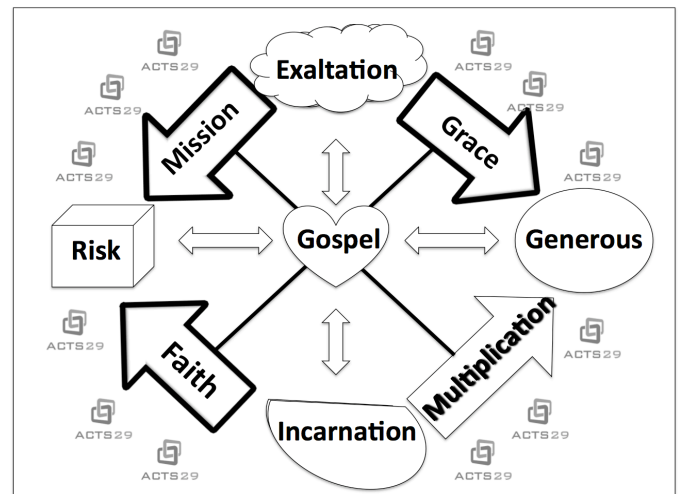
- a. Many young men are drawn into the illusion of intimacy, significance, power and pleasure through the gateway of accessible pornography.
  - b. You are a fool if you think it is a victimless sin. You will become a victim to your own sin. Your wife or future wife will be victimized as well. Everyone around you will suffer the effects of your perversion (an archaic word that needs a resurgence).
  - c. Anything other than mutually satisfying sex with your spouse is a perversion of God's intent for this glorious gift.
7. We incarnate the gospel, not by being perfect, but by continual sanctification.
  8. We incarnate the gospel by intentionally hanging around lost people. "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:15-18; 20:21).
  9. The gospel affects how we incarnate Jesus. It changes how we:
    - a. Act
    - b. Believe
    - c. Care
    - d. Drive
    - e. Eat
    - f. Finance
    - g. Give
    - h. Help
    - i. Influence
    - j. Judge others
    - k. Kneel in prayer
    - l. Lead
    - m. Maritally function
    - n. Nurture
    - o. Obey
    - p. Parent
    - q. Quarrel
    - r. Recreate
    - s. Sabbath
    - t. Teach
    - u. Use words
    - v. Vent anger
    - w. Worship
    - x. Express love
    - y. Yearn
    - z. Zealously Strive

### From Exaltation flow two Interpretations

1. Grace - As we receive grace from God, we extend grace to others. "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16).
2. Mission - as we make Jesus preeminent and follow Him—a sent missionary from God to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10)—we are compelled to make His mission our mission.

### From Incarnation flow two Interpretations

1. Faith
2. Multiplication (2 Tim 2:2)



## Application

1. Where Mission and Faith collide, we take great risks for the gospel. We give, we go to new places, we share our faith, we love others and we reach across boundaries of race, socioeconomic, personal fears and traditions.
2. Where Grace and Multiplication collide, we are generous.

I said that a disciple is a spirit-led follower of Jesus united with a gospel community on mission to all people for the glory of God. Acts 29 serves as a united community of pastors to encourage, rebuke, confront and celebrate the gospel being imaged through exaltation and incarnation.

