

Why Start a Church?

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Acts 29 Network's vision is "Churches Planting Churches."

- Roughly 3,500 churches die and close each year in America
- There are only enough church plants to keep up with 1/8 of the U.S. population growth
- There are only 100 churches planted for every 1 million people and with an average attendance of 80 to 90 people that means they will house only 8,000 to 9,000 people
- Nationally, the population grew 13.2% between 1990 and 2000 but new churches were only planted at a 5% rate
- The United States remains the fourth largest mission field in the world. A continuous influx of people from all over the world created this phenomenon.
- Approximately 2000 new immigrants and visitors come to the U.S. daily. Thousands of them come to live here permanently and others stay a few years for business or for further education. The mission field is right at our doorsteps!

Starting a new church has many challenges. If a planter struggles with the motivation for starting a new church, it would not likely survive. So, how do we get over this hurdle of being resolved in our motivation to start a new church? Listed below is a checklist for the potential planter to help him determine his motivation for starting a church.

1. **Do I possess a call of God to start a new church? Can I envision myself doing anything else?**

²⁶From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:26-27 (c.f. Gen. 12:1-4)

Tim Keller: "Virtually all the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are basically calls to plant churches, not simply to share the faith."¹

2. **Do I have a clear vision for what the new church would be like? Do I see transformed lives, newly redeemed people, authentic relationships, radically devoted followers of Christ, repentant hearts, and humble and broken believers?**

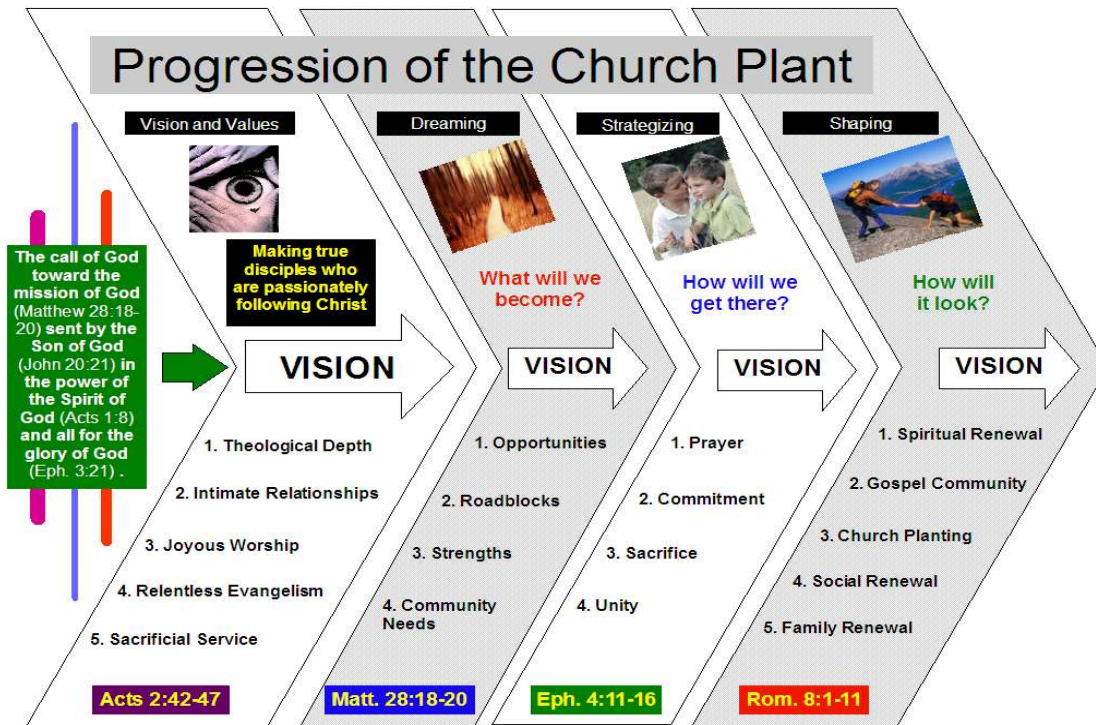
The Church at Corinth was a mess! Paul should have poisoned the communion wine and called it a good day. Instead, he called them to a holy lifestyle. He gave proper instructions for the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-33). He taught them how spiritual gifts were to be practiced (1 Cor. 12). He showed and explained about true love (1 Cor. 13). He demanded proper worship (1 Cor. 14), urged them to live their lives by the power of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15) and led them to give their money sacrificially toward the mission of God (1 Cor. 16). Finally, he exhorted them to *¹³Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. ¹⁴Do everything in love*" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). That is *not* how you would describe the Church at Corinth: "Firmly contending

¹ Unpublished paper by Tim Keller. *Why Plant Churches*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church. February 2002



for the faith in love.” But it is how Paul saw this bunch of spiritual rejects. How do you see the people you will be leading?

The following chart is adapted in part from Dick Kaufman and published in the Redeemer Presbyterian *Church Planter’s Manual*.
<http://www.redeemer2.com/rstore/> (Click on “Studies and Training Material”)



3. **Am I deeply convicted of being sent by Christ to the world?**
¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:14-16, 18, 21).

Ten indicators of a missional church planter:

- 1) Sees himself as a missionary in his own culture (Mt. 4:19)
- 2) Purposely takes Christ to the lost world (Mt. 28:18-20)
- 3) Is personally engaged in the community (Acts 16:20; 17:6)
- 4) Is submerged in culture like Christ (Luke 7:34)
- 5) Is strategically training others to be missionaries (Eph. 4:11-16)
- 6) Is dependant upon the Holy Spirit to empower evangelism (Acts 1:8)
- 7) Is developing relationships with the lost with the intent to share the gospel (Matt. 5:13-16)
- 8) Is living a lifestyle that influences others toward Christ (John 15:12-17; 1 John 4:19-21)
- 9) Is helping others to find Jesus Christ in their own way and timing (1 Cor. 9:20-23)

10) Is personally changed through the gospel in every way (Acts 4:13, 31-35)

The vigorous continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the numerical growth of the body of Christ (Keller).

4. **Do I have an insatiable passion for people? Am I broken by the lost souls around me? Am I deeply burdened by nominal Christianity?**

¹*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1).*

¹*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).*

5. **Do I have a love for my city?**

When we think of love for our city we usually tend to go toward mercy ministries such as homeless, impoverished, addictions and the like.

Having a love for the city however entails the following:

- Deep concern for its spiritual state.

"All problems, personal or social come from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way, to get 'in line with the truth of the gospel' (Gal.2:14). All pathologies [abnormalities, disease] in the church [and city] and all its ineffectiveness come from a failure to use the gospel in a radical way. We believe that if the gospel is expounded and applied in its fullness in any church [or city], that church will look very unique."²
- A cooperative kingdom building among churches and community agencies; serving for the common good of the city (Jer. 29:5-7)
- An aggressive planting of churches within the city

New churches reach the non-churched far more effectively than longer-existing churches. Dozens of studies confirm that the average new church gains most of its new members from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshipping body, while churches over 10-15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.³
- A commitment to stay in the city where the influence resides (education, money, power, politics, culture, music, art, athletics). See Acts 8:4-8.
- A communication of the gospel clearly without falling toward legalism or license.
- Training Christians how to integrate their work and faith without compartmentalizing either.

6. **Do I see the gospel as the answer to the problems of mankind?**

¹⁷*For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

² www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/centrality.pdf

³ Lyle Schaller, quoted in D.McGavran and G.Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies that Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), p. 100. See C.Kirk Hadaway, *New Churches and Church Growth in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987).



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¹⁸*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:17-18).*

Paul's admonition to contextualize to the people in our world was based on the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 9:19ff.).

Tim Keller said, "The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom."⁴

John Piper said, "The New Testament often defines the gospel as, simply, Christ. The gospel is the "gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; etc.). Or, more specifically, the gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4). And even more wonderfully, perhaps, Paul says that the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8)."⁵

7. **Am I desperately dependant upon God?**

- I am not dependant on my abilities (1 Cor. 1:26-31)
- I preach with God's wisdom (1 Cor. 1:21)
- I need the Holy Spirit's power to be effective (Acts 1:8)

8. **Am I willing to make deep sacrifices for the sake of the gospel?**

For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:21-23).

9. **Do I believe I am being disobedient if I don't start a church?**

¹⁶*For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* ¹⁷*For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship (1 Cor. 9:16-17)*

⁴ www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/centrality.pdf

⁵ www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2002/060502.html

Called by God	Passion For People	Dependant Upon God
Vision for Church	Centered On Gospel	Willing To Sacrifice
Mission of God	Love For City	Obedience To God