THE 12 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH PLANTING

THE BOSS PRINCIPLE

1. Christ is the Lord of church planting and He has a vision for your new church.

Let us consider this principle in two parts.

First, Christ is the Lord of church planting.
And God placed all things under his (Christ's) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Eph. 1:22, 23).

This passage teaches us that our Heavenly Father placed Jesus Christ in the position of headship over the church. The word “Lord” refers to the boss, or leader or head of an organization. Christ is the Lord of the church. He is the leader of the congregation. Church planting is the reproductive activity of the church. It is through the planting of churches that churches multiply and Christ's Kingdom expands. Jesus is the Lord over this and every other aspect of the church.

The relationship between Christ and the church is so close that the church is described as the Body of Christ, the fullness of him (Christ) who fills everything in every way. In order to have the right and biblical understanding of the church, the church planting pastor must, through his attitude and actions, submit to the Lordship of Christ over the church and in church planting. The church planter must look to the Lord for guidance, direction, decision-making and vision.

Second, He (Christ) has a vision for your new church.

In Acts 16, the Apostle Paul is trying to plant a church. He wanted to go to Asia., but the Lord kept him from traveling in that direction. Then he decided to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow the missionary team to go there. Christ envisioned Paul’s planting a Macedonian church.

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:9-10).

Christ has a vision for the church that he wants you to plant. Your job is not to invent a vision. Your work is not to appropriate a successful vision from another church planter and church. Your job is to prayerfully discern the vision that Christ has for your church.

Christ is incredibly creative. He is the creator of new churches. He doesn't make churches that are all the same. He has a vision for the unique church He wants you to plant. He knows where he wants you to plant, just as he knew where the Apostle Paul was to plant.

So what philosophy of ministry does He want to use in His new church? What is his vision statement for the new church? What are his unique values for the new body of believers? What kind of people does he want His church to reach? What is Christ's vision for your new church? Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church, will guide you to the answers as you and your leaders wait upon him in prayer.
THE POWER PRINCIPLE

2. Prayer is the indispensable source of God’s power and wisdom in each phase of church planting.

Since Christ is Lord of church planting, and since He has a vision for your new church, prayer becomes incredibly important.

First, prayer is important because it leads us to intimacy with Christ.

God has called us first to be lovers of Christ before we become lovers of the lost, or lovers of the church.

In prayer we connect with this One who is Creator and Sustainer as well as Redeemer and Friend. We pour out our hearts in prayer, and receive from the Lord His sweetest comforts and assurances.

When the Apostle Paul, the greatest church planter of any generation, sat in a Roman prison for the sake of the gospel, he reflected on what was most important to him. God had used him to bring the good news to Asia and Europe. He had trained and mentored scores of leaders and planted churches all across the known world.

But what was most precious to him was intimacy with Jesus.

...Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:7-11).

Second, prayer is important because it puts us in touch with Christ’s vision and plan for His church.

A story about the Old Testament leader Joshua illustrates the point.

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" (Joshua 5:13 – 15).

Obviously this story is not about church planting, but it is about warfare. And church planting is warfare. As Joshua prepared to lead Israel in siege against the city of Jericho, he had an encounter with an angel, perhaps the preincarnate Christ Himself. When Joshua asked if the man was “for us or for our enemies,” the reply was, in effect, “Neither. I command the army of the Lord, and you’d better worry about whose side you’re on.”

Joshua quickly grasped the point, and fell on his face in reverence. “What message do you have for me?” he asked.

Like Joshua, it’s easy to assume that we’re in charge, that the church plant is our battle. But that puts us at odds with the true Commander, the Lord of the church. When we humble ourselves and listen, as Joshua did, the Lord will lead us in His victory.
What follows in Joshua 6 is the famous battle of Jericho. God’s battle plan must have seemed ridiculous at first. March around the city every day for six days. Then on the seventh day, march around seven times, and have the priests blow their trumpets. But on the seventh day, when the walls collapsed, Israel won a great victory—God’s victory.

Prayer is all about humbling yourself, listening, and obeying. The Lord has a vision and a plan for your church to be planted. It may be a vision and plan that is unconventional. But following His vision and plan leads to His victory.

*Third, prayer is important because it opens a door for the gospel.*

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should (Col. 4:2-4, emphasis added).

We church planters must be strategists and tacticians. Applying church growth principles will help us. Good research is essential. Learning good leadership skills is crucial. The right kind of practical, church planting training is vital.

But the message of the gospel will have impact only through prayer. Unless the gospel is proclaimed, no one will be saved. But without prayer, hearts will remain closed to the transforming power of the gospel. Prayer is as essential to the harvest as preaching the gospel.

*Finally, prayer is important because it is the key to God’s provision for church planting’s many needs.*

“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt. 9:38).

The Greek word (δεομαι) translated “ask” in this verse has the idea of crying out for help on behalf of the needs of someone else. It is this kind of intercession, crying out to God for the needs of others, that is so powerful as we pioneer new churches.

Do you need to build a core team? Jesus said to cry out to the Lord of the harvest. Do you need resources? Cry out to the Lord of the harvest—pray! Do you need courage in the face of danger and opposition to the gospel? Pray!

**THE NEHEMIAH PRINCIPLE**

3. God’s vision must lead to prayerful planning, the result of which should be a comprehensive TaskList set out upon a TimeLine.

Many church planters have an aversion to planning. They tend to be free-wheeling and spontaneous, and would rather get on with the project than take the time to lay down plans for a successful church plant.

Some even feel that it is “unspiritual” to plan; they want only to be “led by the Spirit.” But can the Holy Spirit lead us through our planning?

Just what does the Bible say about planning? Consider these examples:

- Jesus Himself affirmed planning with regard to finances when He said, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28)
• Proverbs 16:9 says “We should make plans . . . counting on God to direct us.” (TLB) No plan should be made without God’s direction. But God directs planning, not just spontaneous efforts.

• Proverbs 11:14 says, “For want of a skillful strategy an army is lost; victory is the fruit of long planning.” (NEB) Likewise, new churches have literally been lost “for want of a skillful strategy.” A church planter’s heart may be right, his efforts diligent and goal noble. But without careful planning, the battle can be lost.

The Lord wants us to **plan**!

I (Mark) have served as the founding pastor of two churches. The first was started with no Vision, TaskList or TimeLine. We started with thirteen people in attendance on the first Sunday, and very slowly grew from there. We planned as we went along, and the fruit was limited. The second church was started with a carefully planned vision, TaskList and TimeLine. The foundation was laid out over a period of several months. On launch Sunday there were 225 people in attendance, most of whom came because of our outreach planning and efforts. Thirteen people were saved on the first Sunday! Over the next three years, 127 people professed faith in Christ.

Having done it “both ways,” I can tell you that I believe it is a lot more productive, enjoyable and God-honoring to utilize the minds God has given us to carefully plan out the work of church planting.

If God is not at work, even the best laid plans will fail. But if God is in a work, we can serve Him best by **prayerful planning**.

**THE BARNABAS PRINCIPLE**

4. **Every church planter needs a mentor. A mentor is someone who has been where you want to go and is willing to help you get there.**

Church planters need effective mentors to come alongside and help them establish the new church. A mentor brings wisdom, protection, care, resources, networking, support, accountability, and prayer to a church planter.

Mentoring is an ancient art. Most of the training of leaders in the Word of God occurred in mentoring relationships. Moses mentored Joshua. Elijah mentored Elisha. Barnabas mentored the Apostle Paul. And the Apostle Paul poured his life into a team of leaders.

Before he became Timothy's mentor, Paul needed to be Barnabas' protege. When Barnabas discovered that the new church in Antioch was in great need of leadership, he remembered Saul. It was a long, hard journey from Antioch to Tarsus. But Barnabas was willing to make that journey to recruit Saul as his protege and as a teacher for the new church in Antioch.

When Barnabas found Saul, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year Barnabas and Saul (who becomes the Apostle Paul) met with the church and taught great numbers of people. (See Acts 11: 25, 26a).

In Acts 13: 2, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The mentor and his protege set off on their first missionary trip together. Acts 13 and 14 reveal that the work to which the Holy Spirit called them was preaching the Word and planting churches. Great learning adventures
happen when a mentor and protege are able to minister together. The Apostle Paul took the practice of mentoring and expanded it to a team of men that he recruited and trained for his church planting mission. Chief of his proteges was Timothy.

He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1-3).

Paul discovered a young Christian who had impressed those who knew him best. Paul was able to get a clear picture of a young, emerging leader through the references of others who “spoke well of him.”

Paul began to travel with and mentor his team of church planting proteges. Acts 20:4 tells us that Paul was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarcus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

Church planting is an incredibly difficult ministry. One of the greatest assets that a church planter can have in successfully establishing a new church is a mentor who will help him all along the way.

**THE TEAM LEADER PRINCIPLE**

5. **The church planting pastor is most effective as part of a team on which he serves as the visionary leader.**

In the book of Acts, Holy Spirit-prompted organized church planting was done by teams. The Antioch church, for example, commissioned Barnabas and Saul as a daughter church planting team. And the Holy Spirit called these church planters through a leadership team of five prophet and teachers (Acts 13:1-3). (The Antioch church thus became the mother church for many, many generations of churches!)

Paul soon emerged as the lead church planter. In the beginning Barnabas is mentioned first (Acts 13:2, 7, but soon it became clear that Paul was gifted to be the lead church planting pastor. Starting in Acts 13:13a, he is recognized as the team leader: “From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia.”

In the same way, church plants today need a lead pastor. Willow Creek Community Church, the largest church in the US at this time, had no senior pastor in its early days. Bill Hybels was called the “coordinating pastor.” But it soon became clear that accountability, authority and responsibility were sorely lacking. So Hybels became the lead pastor.1 The rest is history!

New Testament church planting was done as a team effort. Paul was accompanied at different times by various teammates: Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others. Why did the Lord direct them to work as a team?

There are many advantages to team ministry:

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1 Lynne and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 73-75.
accountability,
balance of gifts and strengths,
mutual encouragement,
multiplied efforts,
prayer support,
companionship.

If a church plant starts with a team, it has a much better chance of surviving and thriving. God uses both solo and team efforts, so if you are unable to plant with a team, go forward in faith and God will use you. But a team planting effort best fits the biblical model.

THE MISSION PRINCIPLE
6. The central work of the new church will always be to help people put their trust in Christ, and grow into maturity as His followers.

Churches and church members have many agendas and priorities, but we must never forget that God’s heartbeat is for the lost to be found.

In Luke 15 Jesus told three parables all with the same point: lost people matter to God and heaven rejoices when the lost are found.

The first parable is of a lost sheep. Though ninety-nine are in the fold, the shepherd leaves them all to find the one who is lost.

When the lost sheep is found, the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors together and celebrates.

Jesus applied his story in this way, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (15:7).” Joy in heaven comes when lost sinners are found!

So is winning the lost all the church needs to do? Of course not! Indeed, some churches become so focused on evangelism that they neglect the nurture of the saints. Jesus’ Great Commission balances both evangelism and discipleship.

. . . All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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 (Mt. 28:18 – 20).

Not only are we to “make disciples of all nations,” but we are also to be “baptizing them” and “teaching them to obey.” New churches need to balance evangelism and discipleship.

2 A good resource to help evaluate this balance is Natural Church Development by Christian Schwartz.
Which direction do most churches lean? Most established churches may lean heavily toward discipleship.

Newer churches and church plants often have a better balance, but some may lean too heavily toward evangelism and neglect discipleship.

Sadly some churches don’t practice either evangelism or discipleship, but seem mainly to focus on the social aspects of church life.

Regardless of its age, Christ has called every church to this central work—helping people become Christians and then grow into maturity as His followers.

THE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

7. Leadership development lies at the heart of the new church’s mission and the most important leadership quality to develop is spiritual maturity.

Central to the mission of any new church is the equipping of God’s people for ministry. We church planters have the privilege, and responsibility, of overseeing a process by which unbelievers become converts, converts become growing Christians, and growing Christians become mature servant-leaders.

The Apostle Paul wrote definitively about this in his letter to the Ephesians:

- It was he 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 . . . (Eph. 4:11,12).
- And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).

But what does it mean to “prepare” God’s people? The Greek word katartizo translated “prepare” (or “equip”) is a very rich word. In the first century world, mending a broken leg was said to be “equipping” it. When stalemated political parties, frozen by their differences, were brought together to work for the common good, they were “equipped.” When a torn fishing net was dragged up on the beach and mended so that it could be used again, it was “equipped.”

In every case, the “preparing” or “equipping” pictures a transformation from brokenness to wholeness, from ineffectiveness to usefulness.

God’s design is for His church to be transforming broken people into people who are restored to wholeness and enabled to serve Him effectively.
The word of God is essential to this process of equipping:
All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

So the goal of any new church’s evangelism, follow-up, discipleship, counseling, and leadership training is to see unsaved people become fruitful followers of Jesus Christ. And it is only as this process culminates in the identifying, training, and deploying of godly leaders that the new church can have ongoing impact in its community. The church will not be able to grow beyond its foundation of godly, gifted leaders.

Effective leadership is “three-dimensional”—it comes as the confluence of personality (“constitution”—the way God made us, our inclinations and passion), ability (“competence”—skills, education, learning), and maturity (“character”).

Maturity is the foundation for everything else. The Pastoral Epistles focus almost exclusively on character qualities when describing those who are ready for leadership (see 1 Tim. 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9).

Paying attention to this principle will keep the church planter from many unwise, even dangerous, practices that are all too common in new churches. For example, many church planters avoid the maturing process entirely, and the result is a church of spiritual infants. Or they may try to appoint leaders based on non-biblical qualifications—like money, education, secular ability, or personal likeability. In the end, leaders chosen by the wrong criteria will only hurt the church.

The wise church planter will see his responsibility to develop leaders based on Christlike character.

THE BRIDGE PRINCIPLE
8. Understanding (and communicating sensitively to) the hearts and minds of people in the target community is essential to reaching them effectively with the gospel.

Each new church is planted within a subculture. This is true whether the church is established is North America or in other parts of the world. The sub-culture may be ethnic or linguistic. The church may be planted among Tamil-speakers in southern India. Or the church may have a core group of Serbians in Vienna, Austria. The subculture may be generational. The new church may focus on Generation Xer's in Seattle or Boomers in Florida. Or the subculture may be socio-economic. The new church may be targeting the wealthy in Milan, Italy or the destitute in Ghana, Africa.

Understanding and communicating sensitively to the hearts and minds of people in the target community is essential to reaching them effectively with the gospel. The Apostle Paul understood this reality and was willing to make personal sacrifices to insure that all kinds of people were won to Christ.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one

[3 See chapter 9 for a more complete discussion of “Three-Dimensional Leadership.”]
under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

He was determined to become like the people he was serving in order to see them come to Christ. He looked for ways to “bridge” the gospel to their culture. For example, when he was in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see so many idols. But when he spoke to them in Athens, he didn't focus on his distress. Instead, he learned about them and made a “bridge.”

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you (Acts 17:22, 23)

Paul’s compliment about being “very religious” gave him the ear of the crowd. His reference to an altar dedicated TO AN UNKNOWN GOD enabled him to “bridge” from something they knew to something they didn't.

Our goal at DCPI is to help church planters establish new, dynamic churches in every sub-culture throughout the world. We believe in training church planters who are planting within their own sub-culture. They already understand their sub-culture and have the capability to communicate sensitively to their own people.

Rev. Christopher Sarkar is a church planter from the untouchable caste in Bangladesh. We want to better train him to plant churches among his own people whom he already understands. The biblical principles of church planting remain the same for all situations, but applying the principles and the methodology to establish a new church is going to be different in each situation. At DCPI, we can teach the principles. But we must look to church planting leaders from within to decode their own subculture and apply the most effective methodology.

**THE MAGNET PRINCIPLE**

9. **When God plants a church, there should be wide spread community awareness and interest.**

Jesus said,

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Mt. 5:14 – 16).

The entire tenor of this passage is that the good news of Jesus Christ is meant to light up the entire world. God's means for lighting up the world are Christ's disciples. Christ's disciples compose the church. When a new church is planted, there should be wide spread awareness and interest. The new church should light up the entire
The planting of the first church is a great illustration of this principle.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. God chose a strategic day to launch the first church. It was Pentecost, a Jewish holiday, in which God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven were present in Jerusalem. Then, God used the sound of the wind to get the attention of the city and gather an interested crowd. God found a way to communicate the good news of Jesus to these people in their own language. As a result, three thousand were added to the new church on that day (Acts 2:5, 6).

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47b).

The new church continued to let their light shine for Christ throughout their city. Even the Jewish Sanhedrin realized that everybody in the city of Jerusalem knew about Christ. (Cf. Acts 4:16b.)

When a new church was planted in Antioch of Syria, there was widespread community awareness and interest.

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:20, 21).

It is sad when a new church is planted and the news is kept to a small group of people. The new church is not merely for the care and nurture of a small group of Christians. The new church is meant to bring the light of eternal life to the broader community. Church planters should prayerfully discern which methods of outreach the Lord means to use to bring about widespread community awareness and interest in the new church. This must be an on-going ministry of the new church to its community and to the world.

**THE BALANCE PRINCIPLE**

10. The church planter’s walk with God, family life, and ministry must be in biblical balance.

- He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) (1 Tim. 3:4).

- Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7).

- Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... (Eph. 5:25).
The planter’s own walk with God is the wellspring for everything else. From his intimate connection to Jesus comes vision, unique strategies for reaching the community, and the spiritual power to share Christ’s love in a transforming way. A leader who neglects the care of his own soul will end up starving both himself and his ministry.

Personal holiness can never be taken for granted among Christian leaders. A wise church planter knows that, apart from God’s grace, “nothing good lives in me” (Rom. 7:18). He will make sure he is accountable to someone else (a same-sex friend) who will ask him hard questions about his prayer life and personal devotions, leisure time, and thought life. He will “feed himself” from God’s word before he attempts to feed and shepherd others.

A balanced leader will also recognize that God has established the family as the foundation of society, as an institution that predates even the church. The family is God’s proving ground and the first ministry priority for the church planter.

Church planting will require sacrifice and commitment on everyone’s part: husband, wife, and children. But the church planter must never sacrifice the emotional, physical, or spiritual health of his family for the sake of the church plant. Healthy church planting families plant healthy new churches.

A balanced leader will attend to his own soul, care for his own family, and then will work hard and smart in the ministry. A church planter has to be a self-starter because there is no time clock to punch, and usually no one to monitor his weekly schedule. As a man of integrity he will have the reputation of a hard and persevering worker, as well as a humble follower of Christ and a loving and attentive family man.

THE MULTIPLICATION PRINCIPLE

11. Healthy churches will reproduce and daughter church planting should be envisioned and planned from the new church’s beginning.

Let’s begin by asking a couple of humorous questions.

*Who should give birth to cows: horses, mice, pigs or cows?*

*And who should give birth to sheep: shepherds or sheep?*

*The point is, like gives birth to like.* And all believers are called to evangelize, not just the leaders (shepherds).

Now here’s a related question, the focus of this principle: *Who should give birth to churches?* It makes sense that churches give birth to churches, just as sheep give birth to sheep!

We believe God’s best for every church is to reproduce. It is natural and normal that every church gives birth to “daughter” churches. The Scriptural pattern was set as early as Acts 8.

Though Jesus had instructed His followers to bear witness to Him throughout the world (Acts 1:8), it took persecution to prompt their obedience.

. . . On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. . . Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:1b, 4).

Some believers fled to Antioch in Syria. As the result of their witness, “The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord
(Acts 11:21).” The Jerusalem church had just given birth—an unplanned, but blessed, pregnancy! As a result they sent Barnabas, who brought along Saul, to provide leadership to the new church.

And it wasn't long before that church in Antioch was ready to give birth to its own daughter churches.

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

Because it commissioned those two church planters, the church in Antioch became the mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother of churches all across what is today called Turkey and Greece.

It's fair to say that Christians through the ages and on every continent owe a debt of gratitude for the daughter church planting done by the church in Antioch.

And the reproductive pattern of Antioch continued. For example, the church in Ephesus, (apparently founded by the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla after Paul's Second Missionary Journey⁴), one of the seven churches of Revelation, is thought to have been the mother church for the other six: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.⁵ These cities surround Ephesus and were connected by a circular Roman road which would have made a natural path for church planting in the region.⁶

We believe that it is natural, normal and God’s expectation that every church gives birth to “daughter” churches. Without reproduction, eventually the life of the gospel will die.

When is the best time to envision and plan for daughtering another church? From the beginning of your church plant!

When couples dream of marriage, they usually envision where they would like to live, the home they would like to live in, and the children they would like to have some day. In the same way, we recommend that emerging Core Groups begin to envision the “daughter” churches you would like to give birth to some day. Such dreaming is normal, healthy, and pleasing to the Lord. We know of one new church that introduced their first daughter pastor on their opening Sunday!

Scripture speaks of the joy and blessing of having children:

Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth.
Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them (Ps. 127:3 – 5).

And so it is with churches! Daughter congregations are a heritage, a reward, and a legacy. And blessed is the congregation that gives birth to them.

⁵ See Acts 19:10.
**THE JOSEPH PRINCIPLE**

12. Attending to organizational and administrative matters will protect and stabilize the new church, and enable it to grow in a healthy way.

- In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word . . . . This proposal pleased the whole group . . . . So the word of God spread . . . . (Acts 6:1-4, 5, 7a).

- But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Cor. 14:40).

Visionary church planters usually prefer freewheeling spontaneity to “stuffy” organization and administration. That’s why church planting with a team has so many advantages. Complementary gifts and multiplied skills can attend to both the larger vision and the details of daily ministry.

But even if a church planter doesn’t have a team, he needs to attend to the organization and administrative matters of his church plant. In the long run it will help bring stability and insure a healthy growth path.

Administration is not just about charts and graphs and reports. Rightly understood, it is all about ministry, about helping shepherd the people whom God has given us.

The new church in Jerusalem faced a sensitive problem that involved the neglect of a group of needy people—widows. What made the situation potentially explosive was the cultural tension between the diverse groups in the Jerusalem church. Widows from a Greek background were neglected, but their Jewish counterparts were not.

The new church’s elders developed a system to care for these widows. They identified qualified leaders from the very cultural group that was affected, and gave them responsibility and authority to care for the widows. At the same time they reaffirmed their own calling within the body of Christ: prayer and the ministry of the word.

This is a great example of dealing with a crisis and meeting a need, not by a spontaneous “reaction,” but with a compassionate, careful plan.

The result was that harmony was restored to the church (“This proposal pleased the whole group . . . .”) and the ministry of gospel was release with greater effectiveness into the community: “So the word of God spread.”

No wonder the word of God advises us church planters to do everything “in a fitting and orderly way!”