

*Footprints*



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

# **Church Growth &**

**church**planting

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Footprints into Africa

## **CHURCH GROWTH AND PLANTING** **(Illustrated from Paul's Life)**

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

The Bible Basis for Missions - Glover  
Get your Church involved in Missions - Michael Griffiths  
Cinderella - Waking the Sleeping beauty - Herbert  
Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective - Kane  
A vision for Missions - T. Wells

### **INTRODUCTION**

By any definition, the apostle Paul was an unusual person. He would stand out in any crowd, not because of his physical stature, but because of his intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities. He did for Christianity what Moses did for Judaism and God saw in Paul qualities that were not found in any other man in that generation, not even Peter, James and John. He had the mind of a scholar, the heart of an evangelist, the discipline of a soldier, the devotion of a lover, the vision of a seer the zeal of a reformer and the passion of a prophet. He can be classed as the greatest missionary ever.

**“The expansion of Christianity under Paul was the fact of chief importance. It was through Paul’s work that Christianity was established in the chief cities of the Empire. Under him Christianity evaluated its content and extended its area” G Purves .**

**R. Allan: In little more than 10 years Paul established the church in 4 provinces of the Empire (Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia) The churches were all well-established, but why was Paul so successful? One important reason was that Paul considered the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of churches as his primary task. In other words, his primary mission was accomplished when the gospel was preached, when people were converted, and where churches were established”.**

It is in this vision for planting churches locally and cross- culturally that we are concerned with. Proportionately too much emphasis on multiplying converts, not nearly enough emphasis on multiplying congregations..

*If you want to plant something that will last a season  
plant flowers:  
If you want to plant something that will last a life time  
plant a tree  
If you want to plant something that will last for all eternity  
plant a church.*

There are **three** aspects: **Theology, strategy, and reasons for his success,** then the principles for today.

## **1. PAUL'S THEOLOGY**

**Griffiths:** We must begin with God. What kind of God is he? The God of the Bible may be described as an outgoing God, He is not isolated, distant, withdrawn, remote, but He is welcoming, close at hand, involved, warm, a loving person. This outgoingness of God allows us to call Him the missionary God, and because He is a Missionary God, we should be missionary people.

## **1. OUTREACH IS THE WORK OF GOD**

Outreach was born in the counsels of our triune God, where it was decreed that by the preaching of the gospel, there should be brought to eternal glory a great multitude which no man could number, from every tribe, race and language.

If the missionary enterprise is what we have described it to be, then it can have only a single foundation - the gracious pleasure of God in Christ Jesus.

So it was the Father who sent His Son into the world, and it is the Son who is Himself the gospel. Missionary work now is the gracious work of God, if there is a gospel; it is the Gospel of God. If there is power, it is the power of God. If there is a door or a heart opened, it is God who did it. So all evangelism and missions then, is the story of the grace of God, as the bread of life pursuing the hungry e.g. it was not Adam who looked for God, but God who said "Adam, where are you?"

Before sinners can call on the name of the Lord, someone has to preach, and only one who goes to preach is the one God sends.

The first factor of missionary work is to know that it is not a human undertaking, but the work of Christ who will gather to himself a congregation out of every nation. The origins of missionary work are therefore found in the grounds of eternity (Psalm 2).

All missionary work is the harvesting of that for which Christ died and it is the work of the Spirit to bring back a bride for His son.

## **2. OUTREACH IS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH** **(John 10:11-16 II Peter 1:4)**

Missionary outreach now is the indwelling life of the Good Shepherd driving His people out after those other sheep that He must also bring in, but people today are far too busy with themselves. True outreach is the work of the church, therefore the agenda of any church meeting should not have outreach under “Matters Arising” or any other business, but it must be our top priority, whereby with the compassion of God we reach for the lost. This is not a choice, but should be a compulsion. (1Cor. 9, 11 Cor. 5:14) It was in the redeeming love of Christ and the death on the Cross that Paul’s heart and mind found a constraint from which there was no escaping (Romans 1:14-16, 1Thes.2:4). Paul’s compassion was not thoughtless. His intellect and heart marched together, driving him to missions.

**Haldane: In their way, we may discern the characteristic of a Christian - he who has no sorrow for the perishing state of sinners and especially of his kindred, is not a Christian. No man can be a Christian who is unconcerned for the salvation of others.**

## **3. OUTREACH IS THE WORK OF EVERY LOCAL CHURCH**

A local church is the local manifestation of the whole church. Paul refers to the church “at Ephesus”. New Testament doesn’t view the church in terms of the visible and invisible. But in terms of the whole and the local e.g. Matthew 16:18. Every local church has a two-fold location – spiritual and geographical (Paul addresses the saints in Christ at Philippi). Life and fellowship of the family of God is to be cultivated and demonstrated in local manifestations of their family. The local church therefore becomes a manifestation of the whole church - it is a demonstration of the glory and grace of God - it is a divine evangelistic tool (“heaven’s continuing missionary outreach in that community”). Outreach, therefore, is the essence of the church.

**M. Griffiths:** Churches must realize that missionary work is part of their very existing. The church with no missionary vision is no New Testament Church.

#### **4. THE SPIRIT IS LORD IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

It is by His Spirit that Christ rules His church on earth. In every church the Holy Spirit is Lord and by Him each and every church functions as it should.

- a) The Lordship of the Spirit in the home church - i.e. the sending body must have top priority.

**M. Griffiths:** If the spiritual life of the home church deteriorates, the Missionaries will be the first to suffer. The deterioration will be immediately reflected in terms of diminished interest, sympathy, prayer and giving. Missionary work is the outreach of one spiritual home towards the establishment of others.

- b) The Lordship of the Spirit is there on the mission field

**Kuiper:** The church that neglects the teaching of the Word of God to its members cannot have a constituency that is zealous for biblical missions. The church that fails to indoctrinate its youth will soon have no missionaries to send out.

**Tozer:** The popular notion that the first obligation of the church is to spread the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth is false. The first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it.

#### **5. THE LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD**

We are labourers together with God, working with the God of the impossible who only does wondrous things. Here is a work which finds its values in the precious blood of Christ, and which won't culminate until it gathers around His throne a great multitude which no one can number, of every nation, from every tribe and people and language. Therefore there should be optimism, based on the character of God and His promise that His Word won't return void (1 Thes. 2:19-20).

6. **THE LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS  
FOR GOD**

**William Carey's text = Isaiah 52:2-3 One principle is clear – in worship, fellowship or missionary work, the basic unit is the local church.**

**SUMMARY**

Missionary outreach is the work of God. None the less, it is the work of the church which by the Holy Spirit is empowered to carry out the imperative commission of the Son of God

11. **HIS STRATEGY**

People ask, “Did Paul have a missionary strategy?” Some say no, some say yes. Much will depend of the definition of “strategy”. If it means a “deliberate well-informed duly-executed plan of action based on human observation and experience, then Paul had no strategy. But if it means a “flexible modus operandi, developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and subject to His direction and control, then Paul did have a strategy. Today we live in a very man-centered age - believe nothing can be accomplished in the Lord's work without committees, workshops and seminars.

**Michael Green: I don't believe there was much of a strategy in Paul. The gospel spread in an apparently haphazard way as the people obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and went through the doors He opened.**

There are **nine** principles for strategy:

1 **HE MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE HOME BASE**

Paul was wise enough to see the importance of this. He received his Missionary call directly from the Lord at his conversion, but the call was confirmed by the church in Antioch. The Holy Spirit directed the church to set aside Barnabas and Paul for missionary work.

## **2      HE CONFINED HIS EFFORTS TO FOUR PROVINCES**

Any one missionary has only so much time and energy - he can't cover all the ground. If he tried, there will be failure and frustration. so, under the leading of the Holy Spirit he concentrated on four of the most populous, prosperous provinces - Galatia, Asia (in Asia), and Macedonia and Achaia (in Europe)

Rather than wandering all over the world, scattering seed in great profusion, he preferred to labour in a smaller field to that, so others could water the seed, cultivate the soil and then produce the harvest.  
Paul's aim is not to "cover territory", but to plant churches

Paul's active missionary career only lasted 12-15 years - in a comparatively short space of time he succeeded in planting strong, thriving and autonomous churches (Rom, 15:19-24)

## **3.     HE CONCENTRATED ON THE LARGE CITIES**

He chose to work in the cities of the Empire, NOT because they gave more comfort or larger crowds – but because they were strategic, from which the light of the gospel would spread e.g. Antioch - the third city of the Empire (after Rome and Alexandria) - a mixed population, connected commercially to the east and the west - which led to the gospel being taken to the world

**Kane:            No place was so well-suited to be the base of operations  
for the progress of Christianity in the Empire.**

In his three missionary journeys, Paul kept to the famous Roman roads which were maintained by the State, and the important cities like Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens and Ephesus. He didn't preach in all the cities but he did chose those that were important for his plan of speedy evangelism of the Empire (e.g. Acts. 17:1) - through Amphipolis, but stayed in Philippi - would stay three years in some places.

Ephesus was the most important of all the cities - the capital of Asia and the religious centre of the Empire (Acts 20:31) - stayed three years. He left Timothy there (1 Tim 1:3)

## **4.     HE MADE THE SYNAGOGUE THE SCENE OF HIS LABOURS**

Although he had been chosen to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal.2:8) and he took special pride in the office (Rom.11:13). Paul followed the principle "to the Jew first" (Rom.1:16) He went straight to the synagogue (except in

Philippi). In the Synagogue he felt at home - familiar order of service and form of worship. The custom in the Synagogue was to invite a visiting rabbi in order to give a word of exhortation (Acts 13:15) to worshippers i.e. wherever he went he had the opportunity to give witness to an attentive, intelligent audience. Only when he was expelled from the Synagogue, did he go elsewhere (Acts 18:7) Most of the opposition came from the Synagogue.

## **5. HE PREFERRED TO PREACH TO RESPONSIVE PEOPLE**

Not all are equally responsive to the gospel e.g. the parable of the sower (Matt. 13). Paul was very interested in results - he had been entrusted with a commission (1 Cor. 9:17) and one day he would have to give account of that (1 Cor. 3:10-15). While a Christian worker is required to be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2), he must also be fruitful (John 15:2). Most preaching was done in the Synagogue - the spreading of the gospel and the extension of the kingdom was of paramount importance. Every ethnic group had the right to hear the gospel. If they opposed him he would just leave.

**Roland Allen:**      **The possibility of rejection was ever-present with Paul, so he didn't establish himself in a place or go on preaching for years to people who refused to act on his preaching. When he'd brought them to the point where a decision was clear, he demanded a response. If they rejected him, he left**

## **6. HE BAPTISED CONVERTS ON CONFESSION OF THEIR FAITH**

3,000 Jews and proselytes who responded to Peter (Acts 2 and 16).  
the Philippian jailer, etc. Converts were baptized immediately

## **7. HE REMAINED LONG ENOUGH IN ONE PLACE TO ESTABLISH A CHURCH**

Like every good missionary he had two goals in mind:

- a)      The speedy evangelism of the world (the immediate goal)
- b)      Ultimate goal = to establish local churches – this couldn't be done in a short space, therefore he would remain in one place long enough to establish a church – at least 2 – 3 months or even a few years. In every city (except Athens) he left a strong growing church behind which carried



on after he left. These churches were self-governing, self supporting and self propagating i.e. missionary minded churches.

This strategy paid off handsomely for Paul - after only 15 years of missionary work he could say (Rom.15:19 ff) "From Jerusalem ... and as far round as the Illyrium, I have no longer any room for work in these regions ... I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain ..."

He established missionary churches in major centres of the population and they in turn engaged in saturation evangelism in their own area. So the Eastern part of the Empire he left to them, Now he went to Spain to start the Western side.

## **8. HE MADE AMPLE USE OF FELLOW WORKERS**

He never worked on his own, or did his own thing. He believed wholeheartedly in teamwork. Before he began missionary work, Paul was associated with Barnabas in team-teaching ministry in Antioch. On his first missionary journey he took John Mark and Barnabas, : in Lystra he took Timothy: in Troas, he had Luke. Other helpers were Silas, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Tryphemus (Acts 20:4).

In the Epistles there were Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Priscilla and Aquilla and Apollos. In Romans 16 he sends greetings to 27 people - he had a great capacity for friendship. In Athens he asked for Timothy and Silas to come (17:5), 11 Cor. 2:12-13, (Timothy and Titus) - he was a team man

## **9. HE BECAME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN**

In the content of the gospel message - he was adamant and dogmatic. The message could never be changed (Gal. 1:6-9), but in everything else he was flexible. To the Jew he became a Jew, to the Gentiles a Gentile - his one great purpose was to win them to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23) This was remarkable if one remembers his background.

In order to fulfill his high and holy calling he was willing to become all things to all men so that he could win some e.g. the burning issue among the Jewish believers was circumcision (Gal. 5:6). It was clear to him. How then can we explain his decision to circumcise Timothy, but he refused to circumcise Titus? (Gal 2:4) - the answer - the work e.g. the issue of idolatry (1 Cor 8:13) - food offered to idols.

## **111. REASONS FOR HIS SUCCESS**

Few missionaries have been as successful as Paul. The blessing of God was on everything he did - souls were saved, believers edified, churches founded, communities changed. But not all was positive - others fought him, drove him out of town, stoned him but never ignored him. He was a success-oriented person - he always played to win (1 Cor. 9:26-27), he played for keeps (11 Cor. 5:9-10), he was high minded (Phil.4:8), He had the purest of motives (1 Cor.13:1-3) and the noblest of goals (Phil.1:21). He sought nothing for himself (1 Thes. 2:5-9), but everything for Christ (Phil. 1:20).

For him, success involved two things: The glory of God (1 Co. 10:31), and the good of his fellowmen (Rom. 15:1-2. Paul believed in success (11 Cor. 2:14). He prayed for success (Rom. 1:10), he expected success (Rom. 15:20) and achieved success (11 Tim.4:6-8). How did he do this?

### **A. HIS DEEP CONVICTION REGARDING HIS CALL**

Many full time workers today face great crises, discouragement and heartache. They are not quite sure how they fit in - many resign, but for Paul it was different. He knew that he was an apostle, called by God to reach the lost. - He was also an author, preacher, teacher, traveler, organizer, tentmaker - all incidental to his main calling of an apostle (Rom.1:1, 1 Cor.1:1. This was by the will of God (11 Cor.1:1, Eph.1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 Tim.1:1. Not only was he called to be an apostle, but an apostle to the gentiles (Eph.3:7-8). He never forgot his call and his mission e.g. Rome might immobilize him, neutralize him, victimize him, even in chains he remained an ambassador for Jesus Christ. He might lose his Roman citizenship but never his apostolic credentials. Nothing could dampen his spirits or blur his vision (Phil. 1:21).

### **B. HIS COMPLETE DEDICATION TO THE WILL OF GOD**

To many, the will of God is something to be avoided or endured. It was not like this with Paul. Like his Master, he would say, "I've come to do thy will" (Heb.10:7). From the first day he acknowledged Christ's lordship (road to Damascus). To the end of his long career his chief concern was to do the will of God. All plans focused on this one great goal (Rom.1:10), Acts 18:2, Phil. 1:12). Nothing could ever take him away from his great objective - nothing could hold him back from doing the will of God.

#### **William Booth:**

**I will tell you the secret of my success - God has had all there is of me to have, adoration of my heart, all the power of my will and all the influence of my life**

C. **HIS COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Paul was a very unusual man with great natural gifts. He would have been tempted to depend on those gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-5). This power from the Holy Spirit was the power of God (Rom. 1:16), the power of Christ (11 Cor. 12:9), the power of the Spirit.

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is portrayed as the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), the Spirit of Power. It is only the Holy Spirit who can reveal the truth of God to the mind darkened by sin and Satan. Only the Spirit communicates the power of God to the life dedicated in service to the Lord. Without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian worker labours in vain. All his best efforts are doomed to failure (Zech. 4:6). Especially for the missionary to try to live and work in the energy of the flesh, without the power of the Spirit is an act of great folly - no one knew this better than Paul.

D. **FEARLESS PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL**

If today's missionary in his presentation of the gospel thinks he has problems with paganism, humanism, nationalism or syncretism, he should remember the predicament in which Paul was. His world was divided into three groups - the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans. Paul preached to all three groups, but all found his message offensive. The Jews demanded signs, the Greeks wisdom, and the Romans only were interested in Power. Paul therefore had problems but never once flinched at his proclamation of the gospel. Regardless of his audience he never failed to declare the whole counsel of God. This took faith and courage. He believed in truth (Col. 1:5) - that it was the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), therefore he was fearless in his presentation.

E. **HIS EMPHASIS ON THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

**Roland Allen:**            **If there is a striking difference between Paul's preaching and ours, there are still greater differences between his methods of dealing with converts than with ours today. His dealing with the converts is the heart of the matter - here is the secret of his amazing success.**

How did Paul treat converts? They were all drawn into the local church and expected to stand on their own feet, administer their own affairs. There was no control from him. To get a church established, Paul appointed elders. Then

everything was under their control... He committed them into the tender ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was a living reality, possessed all the prerogatives of the Godhead - would guide the church into all truth, energize it into witness and service and control, teach, purify and protect them. Paul taught converts to depend on the Holy Spirit.

**F. HIS WISE POLICY REGARDING MONEY.**

No other thing has done so much harm to the Christian cause, yet money did not loom big in the practice of Jesus or the early church. Neither attached much importance to money (Matt.6:19). - Jesus warned against laying up treasures on this earth (Matt.10:9-10) The apparent lack of money did not hamper the early church. Paul's policy:

- a) He supported himself - worked with his own hands (supplementary ministry today).
- b) He always expected the churches founded by him to be self supporting from the beginning.
- c) He encouraged even poor churches to contribute to the needs of others.

**G. EXAMPLE OF HIS LIFE (highest possible standard)**

In all Christian work, the character of the messenger is as important as the content of the message. There are two dimensions to the Christian work - the divine and the human (1 Thess.. 1:5-6) Converts first were won to Paul, then to Christ - they were attracted to him, a living example of the loveliness of Christ. Through him they came to know the Lord.

**CONCLUSION (for ourselves)**

**A. WE NEED A NEW VISION OF THE CHURCH LEADERS**

If God is the "outgoing one" or the missionary God, then there is a great challenge to us to break the fetters of all our reservations, and to launch out into reaching the lost for Christ. Too often we talk of outreach. When really we mean "in-drag". We want to get people into the church building to be preached to. But the Holy Spirit wants to thrust us out and to go where people are, and reach them for the gospel. We must not stay in our social ethnic ghettos - we must "venture" boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit and stay with the tanner (e.g. Peter), to

hitch-hike with the Ethiopians (e.g. Philip) to dance for joy with beggars (Peter), to feast with tax collectors (Jesus) to embrace Samaritans as a brother (Peter and John), and to be liberated from the fetters of our social ethnic reserve by the missionary Christ.

**Michael Griffiths:** The outgoing God calls us to the wilderness and risk with humility and love. The simple Indian peasant or the sophisticated Japanese businessman look different in the light of the ??

(READ: Don McClure - Adventures through Africa)

**B. LOCAL CHURCHES NEED A VISION FOR PLANTING CHURCHES**

True mission work arises from our worldwide concern for the growth of the church. Our increasing involvement and dedication to the perfection of our own local congregation inevitably deepens our enthusiasm for doing the same thing in the world. In the New Testament, those already active members of the congregations go out as missionaries

**C. WILLINGNESS TO GO**

**M. Griffiths:** Those chosen to be missionaries in the New Testament Churches were already ministers - this suggests that when we are seeking to discover which person in our congregation might have the greatest contribution to make overseas, the person concerned is probably not some student studying at Bible College, but someone already prominent and active in the local church - if not, then we don't want them!, Send us your cream, not your dregs!.

**D. COUNT THE COST**

1. Hard work
2. No money
3. Misunderstanding

**E. OUR APPROACH TODAY**

1. Pray - Q.T. (Operation World, prayer letter (missionary Organisation. Pray for missionaries.
2. Read missionary biographies.
3. Areas have never heard of Jesus Christ - 18,000 groups of unreached peoples.