

Church planting and establishing of God's people

Church Planting Institute
 Multiplying Ministries

In emphasising the importance of this aspect of ministry let me give you something important to remember. **"It is more important to bring Christ to the world, than to bring the world to Christ."** Initially there may seem to be little difference between these two concepts but there is actually a tremendous difference.

In bringing Christ to the world, our premise begins with Christ. We focus our thoughts and attention on Him. We spend time with Him. We wait upon Him. We emphasise His importance in our lives. We acknowledge our complete dependence upon Him. Anything and everything we attempt begins with and issues forth from Him. He is our focal point, our lives revolve around Him. Our hearts and minds, our life and strength, are all focused on Him. He is the starting point of all our endeavours and nothing is attempted that He does not initiate.

The concept of bringing the world to Christ is quite different. This endeavour focuses our attention not upon Jesus, but upon the world. We are initially conscious of the world with all its problems and heartaches. In focusing our initial and immediate attention upon this we concentrate our thoughts on the world and the masses of humanity instead of on Christ. To use an old colloquialism, we are "putting the cart before the horse." We are putting things back to front. Jesus knows about the world. He came to live and die for mankind. He has purchased salvation for all people. As we abide in Christ, enjoying daily fellowship with Him and drawing on His strength and power, He will direct us to the very ones to whom He wants us to minister. In this way all our efforts and endeavours begin in Him and ultimately bring Him, in us, to the world around us.

The foundation of His Body

It was largely in the setting of these house churches that the Apostles laid the foundations of the early church. Church buildings as we know them, were not evident until some 300 years after the birth of the church and its growth throughout the world.

The Apostolic Emphasis.

"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost". (Acts 2: 38)

1. REPENT. "Mentanoia". Change your thoughts, life style etc
2. BE BAPTISED. Bury your old life.
3. RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. Your new life.
4. SURRENDER TO THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST.

Acts 2: 36-38. "Jesus Christ is Lord"

6: THEY THAT WERE BAPTISED CONTINUED STEADFASTLY IN :-

1. Apostle's Doctrine. —"Life style"

The word "doctrine" in its New Testament setting, does not convey the same idea that it does in our modern context. Today we usually understand it to mean the principles of our belief. We think of studying doctrine almost as an intellectual pursuit. In the Bible it conveys a much more practical application, meaning a way of life, or life style. The Apostles had imbibed a lifestyle from Jesus. Now they shared this with their disciples who would in turn share it with their disciples. We must maintain close contact with Jesus and out of that contact form the lives of our disciples.

2. Apostle's Fellowship. —Koinonia = Relationship and Partnership

Just as doctrine has assumed a different meaning in recent years, so has the idea of fellowship. It has assumed a very superficial image such as drinking tea together or having a picnic. But in the Bible it meant a solemn partnership, for which marriage or a business partnership may be an ideal model.

Therefore the Apostles had a partnership in which they were all deeply committed one to another. They taught the new converts about this relationship and by their teaching endeavoured to induct them into it.

3. Breaking of Bread, covenant relationship and social activity.

The reference to "breaking bread from house to house", does not only refer to partaking together of Holy Communion. Nor does it simply mean to share meals and hospitality. Breaking bread and eating together was symbolic of joining in covenant with each other. They entered into a "covenant of strong friendship" together. Within the context of their covenant relationship they also spent quality time together including times of relaxation that helped to enhance and enrich their relationships.

4. Prayers. Spiritual life. Reciprocity of communication.

It is significant that prayers came after doctrine, fellowship and covenant. It was only because of these solid relationships they were able to unite in community prayer. They were not only in the same building, they were also "of one accord".

6: THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN.

As soon as the New Testament church was formed on the Day of Pentecost, we see a pattern established that included the principle of meeting in small groups.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart". (Acts 2:46)

Psa 133:1 *A Song of degrees; of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!*

Psa 133:2 *It is like the precious ointment on the head that ran down on the beard, Aaron's beard, that went down to the mouth of his garments;*

Psa 133:3 *like the dew of Hermon that came down on the mountains of Zion; for there Jehovah commanded the blessing, life forevermore.*

It was evidently in these small groups, meeting daily in their houses, that the foundations of their new Faith were laid. It was here that the discipleship process took place and their New Covenant relationships were formed. It was in this close context of fellowship that the koinoia bonds were formed and developed that would later enable them to “lay down their lives for the brethren”. (1 John 3:16)

Our attitude towards one another.

The formation and outworking of our relationships with other members of the Body, especially those with whom we are meant to form a ‘joint’, (Eph. 4:16) will help to mature our personal life into that of an effective and responsible minister of God. Our inter-reactions with fellow members in giving, receiving, ministering, and sacrificing will deepen, enrich and enhance our life and ministry.

a: Accept one another. Rom 15:7.

“Therefore, receive one another, just as Christ also received you, to the glory of God”. Christ received us willingly, lovingly, just as we were. Jesus did not receive us because we fulfilled some kind of criteria He demanded, He loved and accepted us just as we were. It is precisely because Christ has received us so freely that we must in turn accept each other in the same manner.

b: Forgive one another. Eph 4:32.

“Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as Christ forgave you”. Paul intimates, (Rom 14:1) that when we do receive and accept one another it must not be “to doubtful disputations”. i.e. we must not accept each other partially or conditionally but wholly and unconditionally.

c: Care for one another. 1 Cor 12:25, 26

“The members should have the same care for one another so that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it”.

Jesus Christ wants to care for the members of His Body and He wants to accomplish this through the members of His Body. He wants to exercise His care, in His Name to every member of His Body. This must begin with the

leadership and filter down amongst all the members. The leaders must be seen to love one another, for Jesus said of His disciples, *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, because you have love one for another”*.

d: Edify one another. 1 Thess 5:11.

“Therefore comfort each other and edify (build up) each other, just as you are also doing”.

Edify comes from the Latin word, “to build”, hence, build up one another. Its particular application in the biblical sense is to build people up in their faith, — intellectually, morally and spiritually.

It is the opposite of tearing down. Rather than tearing each other down with strife, criticism and malice, we are to positively bless, strengthen and edify each other.

e: Bear one another's burdens.

“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”. Gal 6:2.

This scripture occurs within the context of an exhortation to lovingly restore a brother who has been “taken in a fault”. Obviously it refers to helping to bear the kind of burdens occasioned by such events and other grievous experiences. It also refers to helping each other to bear the burdens that life often thrusts upon us. Instead of leaving a brother to struggle alone we are to help and assist each other to meet the demands of life.

f: Be devoted to one another. Rom 12:10.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another”.

When something was given to God, it was said to be “devoted” to Him. Having once devoted some item to Him, it could never be retrieved or taken back. It was now deemed to be “holy unto the Lord”. As such, it was His forever. God wants us to devote ourselves to one another. To give ourselves in covenant relationship to those members of the body to whom God has joined us. In order to develop such relationships we need to relate closely to our brethren with “kindly, affectionate, brotherly love, in honour preferring others before our self.”

g: Love one another. 1 John 4:11

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”.

The biblical kind of love that is enjoined on us in the scriptures, is a higher, richer, deeper, more meaningful love than any human love. Human love has many varied expressions including mental, emotional, romantic, and physical. The quality of love that Jesus demonstrated and advocated is different and superior to all of these. The “agape” (ar-gar-pay) love that Jesus introduced

was far superior to human, romantic, sentimental, physical love, that may often be showy, yet superficial and unreliable. It is a love that is based on something far deeper than sentiment or emotion. It is a Divinely imparted love that is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Rom 5:5) It is really the love of Christ within us, whereby we may love one another, “with the love of the Lord”.

h: Serve one another. 1 Pet. 4:10

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”.

The ministry of servanthood is a somewhat despised and sadly neglected one today, yet the biblical implication of “minister”, is “servant”. Jesus demonstrated the ministry of servanthood and set forth a pattern for all His disciples. It requires true humility to be an effective servant, a humility that unfortunately, many ministers do not have.

It was this humble attitude of servanthood that is referred to in Phil 2:5 where we are exhorted to *“let the same attitude be in you that was also in Christ Jesus”*. It is impossible to attain any measure of Christ-likeness unless we have this attitude, the reality of which is developed and refined as we humbly choose to serve one another in the Body of Christ.

I: Provoke each other to good works. Heb 10;24.

“And let us consider one another, to provoke each other to love and good works”. To provoke means to “rouse or incite” and has both a negative or positive implication. The New Testament clearly teaches that we are not to aggravate each other negatively, i.e. to anger or evil, but we are to provoke (stir) each other to love and good works”.

This is the only kind of provocation that we are allowed to indulge in as Christians. The provocation whereby we encourage, inspire and stir up each other to perform good works through which the name of the Lord may be honoured.