# Sustained church planting as a primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission, with special reference to New Covenant Ministries International

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*The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary*

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## Abstract

This study examines the Biblical pattern for church planting as a primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission. David Bosch (1980:184) once said: "…it is not true that there is a mission because there is a Church; rather, there is Church because there is a mission". In essence, the primary mission of the Church is to 'preach the Gospel to all nations' by planting vibrant churches.

Jesus' ministry reveals a clear pattern for the training of disciples. Part of that training included a pattern for Church Planting. By observing the ministry of the early apostles, there is clear evidence that they adopted this pattern by planting churches wherever the Gospel was proclaimed.

By studying several Christian movements from the eighteenth century to the present day, it is clear that by following similar patterns, they were very effective in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The thesis also examines how these movements often lost their initial effectiveness by the second generation. By drifting from their initial focus on the Word and the Spirit, they succumbed to a number of influences which robbed them of their initial effectiveness. In essence, they became institutional, bureaucratic, over organisational, professional and traditional, resulting in the loss of their initial vision and desire to reach the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Included in this thesis is the study of a current apostolic movement, New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI). The study is used as an example of a movement using the biblical pattern. The thesis demonstrates the effectiveness of the biblical pattern and examines what NCMI has put in place to avoid repeating the mistakes of previous movements.

Finally, the thesis shows that when the principles and pattern laid out in God's Word with regard to the nature, calling and mission of the Church are adhered to, the movement has been effective, not only in the proclamation of the Gospel, but in establishing healthy churches that in turn continue with Jesus' command to take His Gospel to all the world.




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# Chapter One

## Introduction

We are living in a very exciting and important time in Church history. The Church has seen two major moves of God over the past forty years (apart from numerous revivals around the world), viz. the Charismatic renewal movement and flowing out of that, the Restoration Movement.[1]

I believe that we are still in the Restoration 'season' in which God is restoring truth to the Church in terms of its calling and practice. There are many movements around the world that are embracing Biblical principles in order to be a more effective witness to the world.

In the Restoration Movement there has been a fresh understanding of the five-fold ministries taught by Paul in Ephesians Chapter Four, with particular reference to the offices of the apostolic and prophetic roles within the life of the Church.

In the past approximately twenty-five years many churches have been established outside of mainline denominational churches in an attempt to procure more relevance to what the Scriptural teaching on the function and calling of the Church. It follows that many of these churches desire a return to Apostolic[2] (or Biblical) Christianity.

Part of this thesis examines what it means to be an Apostolic Church. At the heart of Apostolic Christianity lies the desire to see the Church coming into line with the norms and practice of Jesus and the Apostles. An Apostolic Church has a mindset geared towards the Church advancing in its witness to the world by planting churches 'in every town and village' Daniel (2001:65) and to being a powerful witness to the world, fulfilling the commission of Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19).

[1] Restoration Movement: By Restoration Movement I refer to the movement growing out of the Charismatic movement where the emphases shifted from the gifts of the Spirit to the five-fold ministry, with the emphasis on apostles and prophets.
[2] The term Apostolic is used to describe Biblical Christianity, especially in relation to New Testament Christianity.



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In this thesis I propose that church planting is God's primary means of enabling the Church to fulfil this great commission and that church planting is not an isolated activity or an addendum within the life of the church, but rather that flows out of a healthy Biblical Church model.

This study aims to show God not only has a definite plan to impact the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but He has given a clear strategy to accomplish this. There is a very definite pattern that God has laid down which was clearly manifested in and through the life of Jesus Christ, and was passed on to His disciples to accomplish the redemption of the world.

**1. Study to be conducted**

Although there are many ways of evangelising the lost, it is my contention that church planting is God's primary method for effectively reaching every tribe (ethnos group) on the earth with the Gospel. Daniel says: "The heart of Apostolic Christianity is to fulfil the commission given by Jesus to "make disciples of all nations" by planting churches, training leaders and functioning as the priesthood". [3]

We live in a time when Apostolic Christianity is experiencing a resurgence around the world, and part of this thesis examines some of the movements involved; their model of Church which will include their practice of church planting.

**2. The aim of the study**

I show that the pattern and the means for discipling the nations is clearly laid out in God's Word and clearly manifested in the life of Jesus, His disciples and in the early Apostolic Church.

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the Church is called, not merely to evangelise the world, but to establish churches in every geographical area as a living witness to Christ. The mission of each local church, in turn, is to replicate the same process of

[3] Gatefold (cover) to Building on Apostolic Foundations



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evangelism in their surrounding area with a view to planting more local churches, which in turn would perpetuate the process.

### 3. Objectives of the study

In order to understand the call of the Church and church planting, I endeavour to lay a Biblical foundation of the nature and calling of the Church and show that because of its organic nature, the Church has a life of its own, and by God's design is able to replicate itself and be a dynamic force in the world.

According to Glasser (2000:105), at Pentecost **a living organism** was created, demonstrating its capacity as a '**life-communicating presence** among men'.

I will examine the model and pattern of church planting in the following people and groups: in the life of the Apostles and the early Church; various movements, with specific reference to the Methodists in the first great awakening in England and current movements around the world, with special reference to New Covenant Ministries International.

By analysing the ministry of Jesus I show how He had a very definite methodology in training and equipping His disciples for the task of discipling the nations. Jesus gave the disciples a promise: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 ESV).[4]

Along with that promise was given the empowering of the Holy Spirit as well as a clear methodology to fulfil that promise. For Jesus, the end goal of His mission and ministry was very clear: He came to redeem the world from sin. With this in mind He set about training the disciples for that task.

[4] All scripture used in this thesis is quoted from the English Standard Version (E-Sword 2000-2005) unless otherwise stated.



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Bosch (1980:184) says: "…it is not true that there is a mission because there is a Church; rather, **there is Church because there is mission".**

The 'genius' of Jesus' ministry was the way He modelled what he was teaching. Jesus based Himself in Capernaum where he lived with His disciples. He would then take them on ministry trips where they could observe His methods of ministry in the area of teaching, preaching, healing and delivering people from demonic oppression.

His pattern was to **gather** (disciples); then **consolidate them** as a strong cohesive group. Then He would **send** them out on ministry trips where they could implement what they had seen and been taught. This would become a way of life for the disciples that they would maintain after Jesus went to the Father.

The Apostles had a clear mandate from their Master, and along with that mandate they had a methodology that would facilitate their witness to the world. I will examine the methodology of the Apostles and that of the early Church with regard to church planting and how they established base (resource) churches that would become resource centres for the whole process of fulfilling the Great Commission.

**4. Base churches**

As part of their training the Apostles established base churches in strategic geographical areas, which in turn became strong resource centres that would sustain the Apostolic ministry and strengthen the younger churches in the region, equipping them to become effective witnesses in that region and eventually for them to go out and plant churches themselves.

In this thesis I will examine the establishment of base churches in Asia and will show how they became resource centres; training leaders who would in turn go out and plant churches.



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I will make observations on various movements in history, including current movements that have adopted this model. I will use New Covenant Ministries International as a case study of a modern apostolic movement.

**5. Sustained witness in the believing community**

An area of particular interest in this study is the importance of the Church maintaining a sustained momentum of effective witness in the community. Many movements have started out well but have not been able to preserve the life of the Spirit within their movement and have, as a result, lost their way in terms of being a radical, Biblical movement on the cutting edge of growth and change and have therefore ceased to make an impact in the world. Without a healthy Church it is not possible to be an effective witness in the world.

Daniel (2001:34) says that we must contain the New Wine in such a way that we **'contain and sustain'**, That is to say that we should handle the New Wine in a manner that does not let it fall away, but 'contain' it so that we **are able to sustain what God is doing in the constant fresh flow of His Spirit.**

Many movements have been short-sighted and tried to contain what God is doing and end up **containing the New Wine in such a way that they stifle** the on-going move of the Spirit.

It has been stated that a movement is measured by whether or not it reaches the fourth generation and still makes an impact on the world and moves forward in its witness to the world.

As part of this exercise I will examine the phenomenon of 'generational impact' (the ability within churches and church movements to pass on to the next generation a strong tradition of a vibrant Biblical and Apostolic Christianity). I endeavour to 'plot' their levels of effectiveness and their ability (or inability) to sustain the momentum of Biblical Christianity, along with their ability to evangelise and plant churches as the primary focus of the Great Commission and to pass that ethos on to the next generation. By



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contrast, Jesus was very successful in 'passing the baton'[5] to His disciples, who in turn were very successful in passing on the baton of a strong Biblical, Apostolic Christianity to their disciples. I trace the moment when the 'Apostolic baton' was dropped and the Church lost its impetus as a vital witness to the world – causing it to pass through a thousand years of 'dark ages'.

I will examine various movements from the First Great Awakening in England up to the present time and observe their church planting methods and observe the sustainability of strong Biblical Christianity.

[5] By baton change I mean the successful passing on of the values and ethos of a particular movement to the succeeding generations.



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**6. The Process** (Research)

I will examine the Biblical records and in particular the ministry of Jesus observing how He went about His ministry and how He taught His disciples the pattern of ministry, demonstrating that it was a clearly defined pattern with very specific goals in mind.

I will further examine the New Testament record of how the disciples went about their task of evangelism, helping to establish churches in many geographical areas, and how they went on to establish base churches in strategic locations from which they would resource their ministry and continue the spread of Christianity.

In terms of the more modern movements I draw on Church history and original writings of Church leaders to ascertain their methodology in church planting.

In the case of New Covenant Ministries International I draw from my own observations (having been part of the movement for 21 years), and the writings of key leaders within the movement and in particular those of its leader, Dudley Daniel, for information of their origin, growth, development as a movement and their methodology in the area of church planting.

**7. Summary**

This thesis provides a prophetic exhortation to NCMI and other like-minded movements to stay true to Biblical truth and continue to be an apostolic people in the full sense of the term. Each movement should not take their 'success' for granted and should understand their obligation to pass on to forthcoming generations, a movement that is committed to Biblical values and to the fresh revelation that the Holy Spirit will impart as they continue to break new ground for the Kingdom of God and pursue their calling to fulfil the Great Commission by planting churches in '**every village, every town, every city of every country'** Daniel (2001:65).

In the next chapter will I discuss how Jesus went about training His disciples for the task of world evangelism with specific reference to Church planting, and I will show how



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Jesus had a pattern for ministry that would become a model for His disciples to follow in the pursuit of impacting the world with the Gospel.



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## Chapter Two

## The pattern of Jesus in church planting

### 11. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal that the whole process of church planting (as discussed in the previous chapter) was inherent in the pattern of Christ's ministry. At no point did Jesus actually say "plant churches". However, as we will see, the pattern of ministry that Jesus set before His disciples would provide them with a pattern and lifestyle that would have a built-in framework for establishing Christian community that would perpetuate the establishing of churches throughout the world. Not only would He teach His disciples to minister to people and bring about the Kingdom of God, but they would have a pattern instilled in them that would enable them to fulfil the Great Commission by planting churches.

Although He did not speak of church planting *per se*, as we observe His lifestyle and pattern of ministry we will note that He had a definite pattern that would work itself out in the lives of His disciples.

### 12. The primary goal of Jesus Christ

The primary goal of Jesus Christ was to redeem the world from sin. His objective was to lay down His life in order to give eternal life (Jn 17:3). "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). His objective was to go to the Cross where He would open up the way for all men to be saved.

Just as there was a process involved in the life of Jesus to get Him to the point of going to the Cross, so too was there a process in the life of the disciples, of preparing them to continue the work that Jesus would begin. His long-term goal was to train His disciples not only to lead people to salvation but to establish a pattern of lifestyle and ministry that



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would facilitate the planting of churches which would in turn enable the Church to take the Gospel to the world.

But there was a process. There was a plan. As we observe Jesus through the eyes of the Gospel writers we become aware that Jesus had a very definite modus operandi.

As Coleman (1963:18) says:

> His life was ordered by His objective. Everything He did and said was a part of the whole pattern. It had significance because it contributed to the ultimate purpose of His life in redeeming the world for God. This was the motivating vision governing His behaviour. His steps were ordered by it.

His first task was to choose a group of men (disciples) that would become His close companions. His purpose was to impart His way of life to them and teach them how to minister to people. The ministry of the disciples would not be an end in itself. Their ministry was ordained to lead men and women to Christ; it was to make disciples of all nations; it was to partner with Christ in building His Church (Mt 16:18).

13. **The time-frame for training**

In order to appreciate the pattern of the ministry of Jesus it is necessary to establish a basic time frame. This will help with the observation of the definite pattern that He worked to in order to fulfil His mission on earth. At first glance it may appear that the ministry of Jesus was almost haphazard, however He was working to a definite plan, as shall be exposed in the following chapter.

Many scholars point out the difficulty of piecing together an exact detail of the chronology of the life of Jesus.

Forster (1998) feels that the chronology is not that important

> since the evangelists were not concerned to provide a detailed itinerary of the ministry of Jesus. What mattered - and still matters - is



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what Jesus said and did, not the order in which it all happened, or even where it all happened.

My contention with the above statement lies in the fact that the ministry of Jesus was not as haphazard as it may appear. He had a plan and there was a definite progression in the training of the twelve that would bring them to a place of understanding and maturity, a place of readiness to take on the mission of the Master and to fulfil the plan of world evangelisation. I believe there is enough material available to give us a good understanding of Christ's movements.

### 3.1 A three and a half-year window period

We have an approximate three and a half-year window period in which to study the plan and methods of Jesus in relation to training and equipping the disciples for the work of the ministry. That period of time gives us enough insight into His pattern and objectives of ministry that would become intrinsic in the life of the disciples. After Pentecost the Church was empowered through the Holy Spirit and the disciples went about the task of establishing churches as if it were already a way of life for them.

MacArthur (2000: XIII) feels that this period of training was a short time. Other scholars (shown below) confirm that this time was considerably longer. From this we will see that there was enough time for sound training in all that Jesus needed to impart to His disciples in equipping them for their mission.

John's chronology of the life of Christ is a good one to use, because according to Lightfoot (1956:148) it is based on the Jewish festivals. By noting these festivals one is able to formulate a fairly accurate chronology of the life of Jesus based on the festivals which correlate with the seasons of the year.

Lightfoot (1956:148) offers the following breakdown of events in the life of Jesus based on the Jewish festivals:



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Jn 2:13. The Lord visits Jerusalem at Passover **(spring)**

Jn 5:1. The Lord visits Jerusalem for the New Year festival **(early autumn).**

Jn 6:4. The Lord feeds the multitude near the Sea of Galilee at Passover time **(spring).**

Jn 7:2. The Lord visits Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles **(autumn).**

Jn 10:2. The Lord, who has resided continuously at Jerusalem since the Feast of Tabernacles [7:2, 10, 37], is still there at the Encaenia, or Dedication Festival **(winter).**

Jn 12:12-19. Jesus returns to Bethany six days before the Passover (**spring)** and on the next day enters Jerusalem.

By noting the seasons over this period we can see that there were three definite seasons, giving us a time frame very close to three and a half years. Jensen (1981:104) has a similar time frame of the life of Jesus.

**Figure 1.** Jensen (1981:117)



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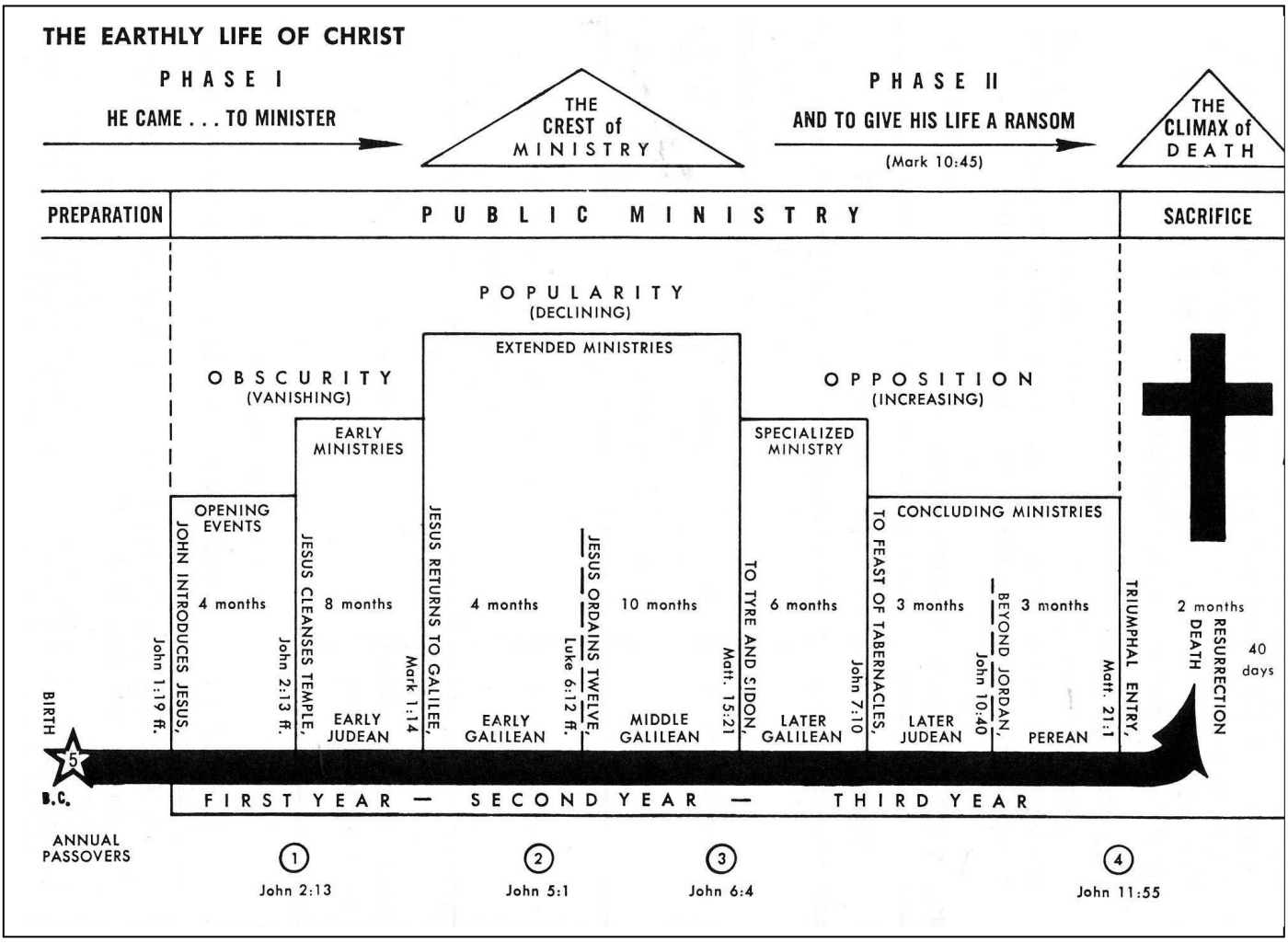


It is noteworthy that in the chronology of events, Jesus is takes His disciples on a journey of teaching and training that will enable Him to complete His work of redemption in the world and the reaching of the nations.



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It appears that it was so much part of their lifestyle, that after the event of Pentecost, the disciples did exactly what their Master did in His ministry. They gathered converts, established them into community and sent them out to reproduce the same pattern of winning the lost and establishing churches.

The events shown in the above timeline are important in that they give us an indication of where they occurred in the life and ministry of Jesus. By observing this process we are able to plot the development of the disciples in the training programme, giving us an indication of the development and implementation of Christ's plan in the training of His disciples. They give us an indication of the advancement of the training programme. As we move to the critical moments like Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13; Mk 8:27) we note how Jesus is in the process of preparing the disciples for more responsibility.

**4. A progression of unfolding revelation**

As we study the life of Jesus over this period of time we note that it was a progression of unfolding revelation on several fronts. Firstly there was the progressive unfolding and disclosure of Christ's personhood to His disciples. It was imperative that they had first-hand knowledge of who He was. We note from the Gospel narrative how the disciples grew in their knowledge of Christ, from fear and bewilderment to a full appreciation of who He was. The first miracle was testimony to this. John tells us that Jesus 'manifested His glory' and the disciples 'believed on Him' (Jn 2.11). Robertson (2000) points out that

> These six disciples (learners) had already believed in Jesus as the Messiah (1:35-51). Now their faith was greatly strengthened. So it will be all through this Gospel. Jesus will increasingly reveal Himself while the disciples will grow in knowledge and trust…

There would be a progressive revelation of the person of Jesus, culminating with Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Jesus 'was the Christ, the son of the living God' (Mt 16:16). Not long after that Peter, James and John would have the privilege of an even greater revelation of Jesus when they were



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privy to the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:2). The disciples had to wait for the resurrection for the completion of this revelation.

At the wedding in Cana John tells us that 'they saw his glory and believed in him' (Jn 2). Lightfoot (1956:115) points out that this belief cannot be equated with believing faith in the true sense of the word. In this instance "it is only a first attraction to the Lord and does not yet know Him as the Son of Man, still less as the unique Son of God." The disciples were on a journey of discovery.

Early on in the ministry the incident at sea is a good example of how the disciples were initially unsure of who Jesus really was. When Jesus commanded the wind to be quiet the disciples were amazed and asked themselves: "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" (Lk 8:24, 25).

The fact that they were asking, "who can this be?" is an indication that this took place in the preliminary stages of their relationship with Jesus. Following this, they would be privy to many more miracles of many descriptions in which their understanding of Jesus' nature and person would be disclosed in increasing measure. The plan of Jesus, however, was not to keep them as onlookers but rather to draw them into a place where they would begin to perform miracles in His name.

Secondly, there was a progressive unfolding of Christ's purpose. He came to seek and save the lost (Jn 10:15; Mk 10:45); He came to usher in the Kingdom of God; He came to lay down His life as a ransom for many. Everything He did was to that end. As the disciples grew in their understanding of who Christ was, they too would have a growing understanding of the nature and purpose of His mission on earth.

A third progressive element was in His life with the disciples. Jesus would take them on a progressive training program that would equip them for the task of impacting the world with the Gospel, preparing them for their world-mission.



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Mac Arthur (2000: XIII) explains how Jesus

> taught them the Scriptures and theology. He discipled them in the ways of godly living (teaching them and showing them how to pray, how to forgive, and how to serve one another with humility). He gave them moral instruction. He spoke to them of things to come. And he employed them as His instruments to heal the sick, cast out demons, and do other miraculous works.

Together they would form a close-knit community. Their life together would become the training ground for their ministry. Jesus was moving progressively toward His God-appointed goal, which was the Cross. But it was vital that He helped the disciples along the way for them to grasp the full extent of his mission and that they became an integral part of it.

Jesus made several references to the factors of time and timing. At the very first miracle in Cana He said to His mother “my time has not yet come” (Jn 2:4). The NIV Study Bible (2000:1629) says:

> Several similar expressions scattered through this Gospel (7:6,8,30; 8:20) picture Jesus moving inevitably toward the destiny for which he had come: the time of His sacrificial death on the Cross.

Timing was the all-important factor in the life of Jesus. He knew that he had a restricted allotment of time at His disposal with which to complete the task set before Him. He had to use every moment to its greatest effect. For this reason He was careful not to bring forth anything before its time in His ministry that would jeopardise the fulfilment of the Cross and His on-going mission through His disciples. He had a program and a process that He wanted to complete. An untimely death would have had disastrous effects upon this process.

Early on in His ministry there was danger of that happening. After reading the prophecy of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth the people aggressively rejected Him. Luke tells us that on hearing the message of Jesus they were filled with wrath and determined to throw him over the cliff (Lk 4:28-30).



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On another occasion, in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles they sought to arrest him. But as John records 'His hour had not yet come' (Jn 7:30). The point being that this was well into the ministry of Jesus. He was working to a plan. His destiny was Jerusalem. He was bringing the disciples to a point when He would not be with them. What He had done was to give them a pattern, a plan and the power to go on and fulfil the Great Commission.

**5. The method of Jesus for world evangelisation**

Men were the greatest part of Christ's plan. As Coleman (1981:71) says, "His (Jesus') concern **was not with programs** to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus started to gather these men before He ever organised an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public**. Men were to be His method of winning the world to God**."

Neil agrees that (1965:102)

> right from the beginning of His ministry Jesus began to build up a nucleus of disciples. The rule of God could not exist in a vacuum. It demanded a community of men – and later also women (Lk 8:1-3) – who were committed to the new life of total obedience to the will of God and who were ready to bring others into His service.

Jesus' program was very definite. Firstly, He **gathered** His disciples. Then He took them through a process of **consolidation** as a group where He spent time moulding them into community, training and equipping them. When they were ready He **sent them** out. This would be a process that Jesus would follow throughout His ministry, preparing His disciples for the moment when they would be on their own and have to follow through with the commission that He would give them. This in turn would be the very process that the Apostles would adopt after the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost and they would pursue their calling to make disciples of all nations.



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**6. Establishing a base**

One of the outstanding features in the early Apostolic Church was the number of base, or resource churches that were established throughout Asia. (This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). They were a vital part in the whole divine program of winning the nations for Christ. What is interesting is that Jesus 'massaged' this pattern of ministry into the life of the disciples so that when He left them they would carry on the process that He had established in their lives. It became not so much a program as it was a way of life.

When we observe the early Apostolic Church, we don't find any reference to 'the plan' or 'the program'. They simply went about their work of preaching the Gospel and establishing churches. But the process that they had learned from Jesus was deeply rooted in their hearts and minds.

The pattern of Jesus made full provision for the establishment of this pattern. He lived this out for the three years that He was with His disciples. When their time came to carry on His mission they would simply live out what had become a lifestyle for them.

## 7. Setting up a base in Galilee

As part of His pattern, Jesus set up a base in Galilee for the training of the twelve. This would become an integral part of the pattern of ministry in the Apostles' lives. Just as their Master had set up a base for training His disciples and reaching out into the world, so too would the Apostles adopt the same pattern in the early Church and Jerusalem would become the first base. Many other base churches would be established which would reach out to other regions with the Gospel. (This will be discussed in detail in another chapter).

From the Gospel records we note that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and made His home in Capernaum. It was a period of consolidation for his ministry. It was here that He first called the disciples and began to train them for the work of the ministry (Lk



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6:13). After being baptised by John in the Jordan Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. After this Jesus went to Galilee (Mk 1:9, 12, 15).

Nelson's (1997) makes this important observation concerning Jesus' ministry:

> Though born in the Judean city of Bethlehem, Jesus was raised in the Galilean town of Nazareth. The town of **Capernaum became the headquarters for Jesus' Galilean ministry** and most of His disciples were from the region of Galilee.

MacArthur (2002: xiii) agrees that Galilee remained their [disciples] home base for most of Jesus' ministry. And Lightfoot (1956:111) acknowledges that "…Capernaum [was] a kind of headquarters" for the work of Jesus. In many ways Galilee was most conducive to the establishment of Christ's program and was an ideal place to set up a base for 'operations'.

Neil (1965:99) gives a good description of the make-up and dynamics of Galilee:

> the lake that formed the heart of the Tetrarchy is only thirteen miles long and at its widest point eight miles across, yet on its western side it was lined by an almost continuous chain of towns and villages. From Capernaum in the north, **which became the centre of Jesus' ministry,** through Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalen, to Tiberias, the chief city, **trade and commerce, fishing, shipbuilding and textiles kept a** large population busy and prosperous.

It was a perfect locale for the kind of training that Jesus had in mind for His disciples. There were a variety of cultures, which was good training ground in preparation for taking the Gospel to the nations. There were a lot of people to minister to which meant a lot of opportunity for training. Because this was a trade route, many foreigners would be passing through who could be influenced by the ministry of Jesus. Jesus made use of this situation to teach the disciples to choose strategic locations at which to establish bases that could be used to touch the lives of people with the Gospel.

McKellar (2001:109) points out that



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> Galilee had many traders and Gentiles passing through and was open to new ideas. The disciples would meet people from many different nationalities, which would prepare them for their quest to go into all the world with the Gospel.

Another geographic advantage of Galilee was that it consisted of a conglomeration of small towns and villages which made it easy to travel around and preach the Gospel (See figure 2). Most of the towns around Galilee were between five and twenty kilometres apart. This would mean that the ministry of Jesus was very concentrated for a considerable period of the three years of his ministry. Being surrounded by so many towns and villages meant a lot of ministry and training could be achieved over a relatively short period of time.

**8. The ministry and activity of Jesus around Galilee**

The first thing to note is the conglomeration of towns. In approximately a ten-kilometre radius around the Galilee area there was, Chorazin, Gennesaret, Gergesa and Bethsaida; within a twenty kilometre radius: Hippos, Tiberias, Magdala, Hazor, Gadara and in a thirty five kilometre radius there was: Nazareth, Nain, Abila and Cana. In a forty five kilometre radius: Caesarea Philippi, Megiddo, Scythopolis and Pella.

From the map (see figure 2) it can be noted the high concentration of activity in the ministry of Jesus in Galilee and surrounding areas, which gives us a clear picture of the concept of the base that Jesus established.

**Figure 2.** The map shows Capernaum as a base from which Jesus operated. The circles show the approximate distances from Capernaum. **Adapted from NIV Study Bible Map 9 (2002)**



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**Figure 2.**

Many of the notable miracles that Jesus performed were in this area. Walking on the water (Mt 14:24); the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:22); the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14); the healing of the paralytic (Mk 2:4); the healing of the centurion's son (Mt 8:8); the healing of the demoniacs (Mt 8:28); demoniacs (Mk 5:1; Lk 8:26); the healing of two blind men (Mt 9:27); the feeding of the 5000 (Mt 14:17); turning water into wine (Jn 2); the widow's son raised from the dead (Lk 7:11); the healing of a Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21); the centurion's servant healed (Mt 8:5); the calming of the sea (Mt 8:23); the woman with the flow of blood (Mt 9:20).

There were also several major events that took place in this area: sending out of the twelve and the seventy and the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount, to name a few. This was Christ's 'Kingdom manifesto' and His most comprehensive teaching and it was



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given in the region of Chorazin[6] which was approximately five kilometres from Capernaum; the water-shed moment of Christ's disclosure that he was the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi; His greater revelation to Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, believed to be Mount Hermon[7].

## 9. Modelling ministry

Jesus was a Master Teacher. For a season the disciples would merely be onlookers to the mighty works of healing and deliverance that Jesus would perform before their eyes. At first they were overawed by the miracles, however, being a Master Teacher, Jesus modelled what he taught. He would often teach a principle and then demonstrate it. Or He would demonstrate the power of God and then later explain it to the disciples.

When one looks at how Jesus worked with His disciples, we notice that He modelled everything for them. As they became an integrated group (community) they travelled everywhere with Him, observing how He preached, taught, healed, cast out demons and brought about the Kingdom of God.

The disciples were fortunate in that they would have opportunity while Jesus was still with them to go out on two substantial ministry trips. This was a key moment in their lives as they were given the opportunity to put into practice what the Master had taught them.

I have earlier spoken of the progressive nature of Christ's program. MacArthur (2002:22) speaks of this progression in the training of the Apostles. "At first, they simply followed Jesus, gleaning from His sermons to the multitudes and listening to His instructions along with a larger group of disciples." He goes on to show that after some time "He [Jesus] selects twelve men out of that group of full-time disciples, identifies them as apostles, and begins to focus most of His energies on their personal instruction". He goes on (McArthur 2002:24) to describe how

[6] Map 11 - NIV Study Bible
[7] Map 11 – NIV Study Bible



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> they became full-time students, learners – disciples. Now the next eighteen months of their lives would be filled with even more intensive training …they had the example of Christ perpetually before them. They could listen to His teaching, ask Him questions, watch how He dealt with people, and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him in every kind of setting. He gave them ministry opportunities, instructing them and sending them out on special assignments.

## 10. The pattern of Jesus' ministry: Gathering

Jesus had a three-pronged process in His ministry, which would be passed on to His disciples. He would gather people and minister to them, either by teaching or preaching or by a demonstration of God's power through healing and deliverance. The primary task in evangelism is to gather people with the purpose of preaching the Gospel and then to gather them into the Church.

This gathering process had a three-fold effect. Firstly, it would be for discipleship purposes where those gathered could be trained. Secondly, the process of consolidation – the establishing of a nucleus community. Thirdly, by establishing a discipleship group He would be able to send them out to follow the same process: gather, consolidate and send.

### 10.1 Gathering process

The **gathering** process was of immense importance. Whether Jesus spoke, taught, healed or delivered people from demonic oppression, it was always accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. But the miracles were never an end in themselves. The end was the ushering in of the Kingdom of God in the lives of the people that Jesus ministered to, and the training of His disciples was for them to do the same thing. As Peter Wagner points out (2000:220) "they are signs of the Kingdom of God".

In His ministry Jesus gathered large crowds. But His primary interest was the 'inner circle' of the twelve, which would later become the seventy and then the 120.



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The ‘power-encounters’ (as John Wimber called them) was the **gathering point** around the life of Jesus and His disciples. These were signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God. They were expressions of God’s compassion to alleviate those who were sick, in pain or demonised.

Wagner (2000:111) says that signs point to the power of Jesus Christ and His Cross to save unbelievers.

> Preaching the Gospel to the poor; Healing the broken-hearted; Preaching deliverance to captives; Restoring sight to the blind; Liberating the oppressed; Instituting the acceptable year of the Lord.

This was the process that Jesus was instilling into the disciples. They were called to be gatherers of people to hear the Good News (Lk 4:18). Having been gathered they would be established into community and in turn would continue the process.

### 10.2 Gathering through teaching

Jesus **was** a Rabbi in the true sense of the word, One who had the gift to teach even the simplest of people. He would take every opportunity given to Him to teach. Just as with miracles, the teaching was not an end in itself. All His teaching had to do with the Kingdom of God and man’s relationship with God.

Synagogues were His first option for preaching and ministry. He had a ready-made platform for His proclamation. As Neil (1965:101) points out:

> According to Lk (4:15) and Mt (4:23) Jesus chose the synagogues of Galilee as **the first platform** for His new message…it is in this spirit that He addresses the gathering in the synagogue at Nazareth, in His **first recorded sermon** (Lk 4:16-21).



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At other times Jesus would teach people who had gathered out of curiosity. As His reputation grew, crowds would willingly gather to listen to Him teach. The most notable of all Hs teachings was the Sermon on the Mount where a great crowd gathered to listen to Him. It covers everything from the personal faith of the believer to the life of the Church – to His Second Coming.



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### 10.3 Consolidating

The consolidation of the discipleship group was an extremely important process. Jesus was imparting His way of life and His way of ministering to His disciples so that when He left them they could emulate His ministry and become the effective witnesses that He desired them to be.

The process of consolidation was a dynamic one. For the disciples, the classroom was the real world where real people were the focus of Christ's ministry; people needing to be healed, set free from demonic oppression; people needing to have the Good News preached to them (Lk 4:18).

The consolidation process was taking place while Jesus took the team out on ministry trips. During the day they would see Jesus performing miracles or hear Him teach and preach and very often when they were alone, they would ask Him questions about His teaching and Hs working of miracles. It is of interest to note that the first parable that Jesus told (the Sower and the Seed) was about the essence of His mission, viz. evangelism. The disciples did not understand it and had to ask Jesus privately what it meant (Mk 4:10; Mk 7:17; Mt 13:36).

Another example in terms of this process was the case when the disciples could not cast the demon out of the demon-possessed man. When they asked Jesus privately what the problem was He gave them a lesson on faith, but added, "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Mt 17:19).

So too with the healing of the blind man. They were able to ask Him: "who sinned, this man or his parents?" (Jn 9:2). On the matter of divorce, when the disciples were alone with Jesus they "asked Him again about the same matter" (Mk 10:10).

In this process a number of things were taking place. The disciples were becoming an established community, they were learning how to work together, not only with one another, but also with the Holy Spirit and relationships were



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being formed with Jesus Christ and the discipleship team. The disciples were learning to be vulnerable with Jesus and were growing in confidence to ask Him some perplexing questions. They were learning to work in a 'safe' environment where mistakes were not fatal but valuable lessons for the future.

In this process Jesus was modelling His ministry. He was imparting a way of life to His disciples so that when the time came for Him to go to the Father, they would have this process deeply ingrained in them as a way of life.

**10.4 Sending**

From the outset of Christ's ministry it was clear that His mission was to be accomplished through men. The gathering of disciples was always with the purpose of sending them out into the world with the message of the Kingdom of God. The Apostolic thrust of Christ's ministry was apparent from the very beginning. "And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles"[8] (Lk 6:13). Mark's record is even more specific: "then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach," (Mk 3:14).

In the High Priestly prayer of Jesus, He affirms to the Father that He is about to see the fulfilment of His mission to earth: "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18).

Commenting on this Scripture, Robertson (2000) explains: "Sent I them" (*apesteila autous*). The very verb (*apostello*) used of the original commission of these men (Mk 3:14) and the special commission (Lk 9:2) and the renewal of the commission after the resurrection (Jn 20:21, both *apostello* and *pempo* here).

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[8] ἀπόστολος - Apostolos *ap-os'-tol-os* - From G649; a *delegate*; specifically an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ ("apostle"), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent. Strongs Hebrew and Greek Dictionary. (http://www.e-sword.net/dictionaries.html). E-Sword.



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And the commission to the disciples spoken of in John says: “As the Father has sent (*apostello*) Me, I also send (*apostello*) you.” [9] (Jn 20:21). This was a recurring theme and goal throughout the ministry of Jesus. In Matthew’s gospel Jesus speaks in the same way: “Behold, I send (*apostello*) you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mt 10:16) KJV.

The time came when Jesus felt that the disciples were ready to go out on their own ministry trip, proof that Jesus was working to a point where He needed to send the disciples out to implement what they had learnt.

The timing of this trip is of special interest. According to Luke, the sending out of the twelve (Lk 9) is just prior to Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi. It is generally agreed that this event was a ‘watershed’ moment in the life of the disciples and Jesus. The Transfiguration of Christ followed Peter’s confession; (Lk 9:28-35) another major watershed for the disciples as they were privy to a foretaste of Jesus as the glorified Lord. What is important to note is that these watershed moments occur at the latter part of the ministry of Christ, which confirms my idea that Jesus was working to a goal and progressively revealing Himself and His way of life to the disciples.

According to Youngblood (1997)

> Other events during **the final year of His ministry** included His journey to Phoenicia (Mt. 15:21–28; Mk 7:24–30), the feeding of the 4,000 (Mt. 15:32–39; Mk 8:1–10), Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13–23; Mk 8:27–33; Lk 9:18–22), and the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1–8; Mk 9:2–8; Lk 9:28–36).

[9] ἀποστέλλω apostellō- *ap-os-tel'-lo.* From G575 and G4724; *set apart*, that is, (by implication) to *send out* (properly on a mission) literally or figuratively: - put in, send (away, forth, out), set [at liberty]. Strongs Hebrew and Greek Dictionary. (http://www.e-sword.net/dictionaries.html). E-Sword



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From a study of the harmony of the Gospels by Jensen (1981:17,140,163) we can say that these took place at the latter part of Christ's ministry. This confirms that Jesus was working with the disciples and getting them ready for the time that He could send them out on their own while He was still with them.

By this time the disciples had observed a lot of ministry. The advantage is that they were able to go out on their first missionary trip to implement what they had learnt. The benefit was that they could come back to home-base and share their experiences with Jesus and get valuable feed-back.

The final stage and the goal of this whole process was the sending out of the disciples to 'make disciples of all nations'. This is the Apostolic mandate that Christ gave the Church.

## 11. Trans-local ministry

Another very important aspect of Christ's ministry was that it was strongly Trans-local - something else that Jesus wanted to instil in the disciples. Trans-local ministry can be defined as any ministry outside the confines of a local church or local community. The end-goal of Jesus' mandate to the Church was reaching the ends of the earth with the Gospel. It was, therefore, important, from the outset, that the disciples could see the pattern in Christ's own ministry of going beyond the local community to impact the neighbouring areas with the message of the Gospel. The mandate from Jesus to His Church is to 'go!' (Mt 28:19).

Jesus always had the bigger picture in mind. When Peter made his wonderful declaration at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was indeed the Christ and Jesus went on to tell them that the Messiah would suffer many things, it was Peter who challenged this and was sharply rebuked by Jesus for 'thinking as men think' (Mt 16:23). The implication of Jesus' response was that the ministry was far wider than they could have imagined at that stage.



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Trans-local ministry was a way of life in the ministry of Jesus. As we have seen, He based Himself in Capernaum. From that base He would go on many trans-local ministry trips with the disciples, again modelling a pattern of ministry that would be outward looking, for a mission that was intended to touch the world.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Mt 9:35)

Commenting on this verse, McKellar (2001:109) says that it

> shows the pattern of Jesus' ministry… He travelled throughout different regions in a very strategic way, teaching and preaching the Kingdom and healing the people to demonstrate God's love and forgiveness for them.

Elsewhere McKellar (2001:71) shows how

> Paul preached in key cities and used key people, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, to establish key churches in those cities. His strategy was that those churches then influence their province, the province next door and eventually reach out even to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8, 1 Thess 1:7-8, Acts 19:10; 2 Cor 10:15-16 and Rom).

It is interesting that it was at this stage of the 'maturity' of the group of disciples, with Galilee as a base, that Jesus took His disciples and travelled to nearby towns and cities, returning to his home in Capernaum where many of His miracles took place.

If we examine the movements of Jesus in His ministry we note how He was constantly moving from region to region. Although the term 'province' only came into existence later in the Roman system, 'region' is very akin to what we would understand as provinces.

Vine (1997, c1996) gives the following definition of region - *chora* (5561),



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> a space lying between two limits, a country, land, is translated "region" in Mt 4:16; Lk 3:1; Acts 8:1; 13:49; 16:6; 18:23, RV. **In the last three passages it has the technical sense of a subdivision of a Roman province**, Lat. *Regio;* as also No. 2 in Acts 14:6.

The Gospel records show how Jesus moved from region to region. "He departed from Galilee and came to the **region of Judea beyond the Jordan" (**Mt 19.1).

"From there He arose and went to the **region of Tyre and Sidon**" (Mk 7:24). "Again, departing from the **region of Tyre and Sidon**, He came through the midst of the **region of Decapolis** to the Sea of Galilee" (Mk 7:31).

From His base in Capernaum, Jesus takes His disciples on a number of trans-local ministry trips and ministers in the following areas:

The furthest trip during this time would have been to Decapolis and Mt. Hermon (site of Transfiguration), about sixty kilometres. Caesarea Philippi was about forty-five kilometres away, while Nain and Nazareth would have been about forty kilometres away. Then there were the longer trips to Jerusalem for the various Jewish festivals.

## 12. Summary

Jesus had a clear pattern in his ministry that he imparted to his disciples. Although he had a definite method of ministry, His primary 'asset' was the men that he trained. He spent much of His time modelling His way of ministry with them. In order to get maximum benefit out of this 'training programme' Jesus established a base in Galilee where He could develop his relationship with his disciples and fully prepare them for their ministry.

In all this we see that God is a God of order and design. This is perfectly reflected in the life of Jesus. Just as Jesus worked with purpose and planning, so we, the Church, must



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work with Him to accomplish the work that He has set before us in winning the lost for Christ.

In chapter four I will discuss how this pattern of Jesus was instilled into the life of the disciples. Once they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, they went ahead with their ministry, implementing this pattern of Jesus, gathering disciples and establishing them in churches. I will also give attention to the Apostles' methods, with specific reference to the establishing of base churches as God's provision for the ongoing process of sending out disciples into all the world.

In the next chapter I will examine the mission and mandate of the Church and show how church planting is vital for sustaining the mission of the Church to disciple the nations.



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# Chapter Three

## A Biblical foundation for church planting

### 1. Introduction

In seeking to establish a Biblical premise for church planting it is important to note that there is not a specific scriptural reference to church planting per se. Jesus commanded the Church to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). He did not give any specific instruction to plant churches. However, the fact that Jesus gathered the disciples to Himself and that they lived for the best part of three years as a believing community is an indication that they would reproduce that way of life of establishing communities (churches) of believers.

The pattern that Jesus set before His disciples in His own lifestyle is enough to show that He had a clear pattern in mind that would facilitate the establishing of churches throughout the world as a result of preaching the Gospel to all nations. In the following chapter I will examine the pattern of Jesus' ministry that was the preparation for the facilitation of church planting.

### 2. The mission and mandate of the Church

In order to appreciate the importance of church planting as a means of fulfilling the Great Commission, it is important to examine the mission and mandate given to the Church by Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

At the end of His ministry, Jesus gave His disciples a primary two-fold mandate. Firstly, that they were to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19) and secondly, that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).



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Bruce (1983:112) speaks of the extent of the calling and destiny of the Church as a "body that pervades the whole of society, and influences in some way, the whole human race" and the most effective way of realizing this goal is by establishing churches throughout the world.

### 3. The first church plant

The Church was first established at Pentecost. Having responded to the call of the Gospel, three thousand people were saved and immediately incorporated into the fellowship of believers where they devoted themselves to the "apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

From very early on the new converts to Christ became the church at Jerusalem where "day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46, 47).

Further on in Acts we read: "And the Word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

### 4. Church planting through persecution.

There is an interesting development in Acts chapter 8. Persecution broke out against the Church (Acts 8:1) scattering disciples 'throughout Judea and Samaria'.



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It was in this scattering process that the disciples became witnesses to Christ in the areas that He had commanded them to go and make disciples. The account goes on to say: "Those that were scattered 'went everywhere preaching the Word' (Acts 8:4). Bruce (1954:183) refers to this period as a time where the "Gospel proceeded to radiate outwards, touching many who heard the Word".

It was God's intention that the Church would be scattered like seed throughout the world. Jesus expressed this principle in reference to His own life when he said that: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (Jn 12:24). In His death and resurrection His own life would be like seed sown into the ground, bringing forth fruit of it's own kind, viz. New life. In the same way the Gospel would be the seed sown into the world to bring forth the life of God in people.

As a result of preaching the Word, new converts were gathered, forming fledgling churches. This was the process: the Word was preached with signs following (Mk 16:20); with people being gathered into the Church. (This process will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter).

Chapter 9 of Acts gives us some very important information regarding the growth of the Church. "So the Church (churches) [10] throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied" (Acts 9:31). A very clear indication that churches (plural) were being established wherever the Word was being preached.

Wagner (2000:16) points out that the growth of the early Church was spectacular. "…over the 30-year span of Acts, the Christian movement grew from 120 to 100,000 among Jews alone".

[10] The Alexandrian copy, and some others, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read in the singular number, "the Church": but the several countries hereafter mentioned shows that more are designed: for it follows, **throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria**; for by means of the dispersion, on account of persecution, the Gospel was preached in these several places, **and churches gathered**;… (Gill – E-Sword Commentary)



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In Acts chapter 11 (about 47 A.D.) we read of further growth of churches in other regions. Those that had been scattered after Stephen's death travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19). As they went they preached the Gospel. The account goes on to say how the Lord's hand was with them and how many believed (Acts 11:21).

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and spent a year teaching the Word to large numbers of people (Acts 11:25). Antioch became a powerful resource church that would train and equip many disciples to go out and continue the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

**5. The Church as community**

From its inception the Church was communal. This was not new to many of the first disciples, having come from a Jewish background. Throughout the Old Testament we note that God wants to establish community. When the people of Israel were delivered out of Egypt they became 'the community of the redeemed'.

Just as God 'presenced' Himself in the community of the redeemed in the Old Testament, so He expressly desires to presence Himself in the world through the witnessing community, the Church.

The Church community was, from its inception, a visible entity in society and a witness to Christ. We are told that all the believers were together and shared a common life (Acts 2:44; 4:32). As a fledgling community they gave powerful witness to Christ and His work of salvation 'with signs and wonders'. "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43).

In order for the Church to carry out its mission in the world, it is not only called to be 'the presence of God' in the world, but to be a living expression of the community of the



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redeemed in each local society. For the Church to be a vital witness to the world, it needs to establish itself as God's community in each locale.

According to Snyder (1977:103)

> Witness and community go together. A concept of evangelism, which sees isolated individuals independently scattering the Word throughout the world, without regard for the life and witness of the Christian community, is truncated and self-defeating. Evangelism takes place through the life of the witnessing community (Jn 13:35).

The Church is called not only to break new ground, but also to occupy the ground she has gained. It is vital that the Church take up residence in the area for effective witness.

The witness of the Church is profound. The Church is not merely a representation of an organisation or an institution, but rather as Snyder (1985:46) says, it is present as salt and light, as the very body of Christ, as a **continuing incarnation of Jesus** in the cities and kingdoms of this world where "we discover the basic fact that true community is essential for effective witness". This was the outstanding feature in New Testament Christianity. They were clearly visible as a distinct community of believers.

As the Church moves into the world to make disciples, it has to occupy the territory and take ownership of geographical areas and become the community of the redeemed in that specific area. The process in Acts must be replicated throughout the world where people are being saved and assimilated into the believing community where they will be established in the faith and become part of the witnessing community of Christ.

Once the presence of the Church is established in an area, it is able to proclaim the Good News and persuade men concerning the Kingdom of God. Once that is established the Church can pursue the operation of propagating the Gospel by planting seeds in new areas, which in turn would become fledgling churches.



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In order to propagate and reproduce itself in the world, the Church must first be a presence in the local area and establish a platform from where it can launch out with the message of the Gospel. This presence can only arise if a community of believers is established in any given area. As they are planted in that area, they become a primary expression of God's presence in their immediate area, which in turn spreads out into the broader community, thus increasing their effectiveness as a believing community. Once established, they can fulfil their calling to proclaim the Gospel and persuade men of the Kingdom, and from that foundation they can produce 'fruit of its own kind'.

To sum up, the Great Commission is not a sporadic activity of randomly sowing the seeds of the Gospel. Rather it is a partnering with God in the whole process of winning converts and establishing church plants. As Paul said, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Cor 3:6). The sowing of the seeds of the Gospel should always be with the intention of seeing churches being established.

**6. The platform for an effective witness of the Church**

For effective evangelism to take place, an effective platform for the proclamation of the Gospel is required. One of the outstanding features in the life of Jesus and the Apostles was the way they made use of existing platforms (synagogues) and how they used situations to create platforms. Once a platform was established they could preach the Word and demonstrate God's power.

The establishing of the Church at Pentecost is a good example of using a given platform (the Feast of Pentecost) to effectively preach the Gospel. By virtue of the Feast of Pentecost, thousands of Jews had gathered in Jerusalem, thus a major platform for the preaching of the first sermon was established with outstanding results.

Snyder (1977:74) makes the comment that



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> If Jesus Christ actually gave more time to preparing a community of disciples than to proclaiming the Good News (which He did), then the contemporary Church must also recognise the importance of community for proclamation.

It is this vibrant Christian community that becomes a beachhead from where it can launch out into society with the Gospel. It is very much a ‘two-way street’. One cannot have one without the other. Once the platform has been established in a society the Christian witness can move forward.

Church planting is about establishing an arena for the proclamation of the Gospel. A Church plant evolves from the healthy establishment of these platforms.

As we follow the process of the expansion of the Church, it becomes clear that the Church is not a ‘passing witness’. When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Acts 1:8), He was not thinking of a sporadic exercise that would see the disciples passing through towns and villages merely preaching the Gospel and moving on. So much of the testimony in the Acts of the Apostles is that wherever the Gospel was preached, in most instances communities were established. Countless numbers of people had the Gospel preached to them, but because churches were not always established in the area, those converts were not assimilated into the fellowship of a church, which created a two-fold problem: on the one hand new converts were not established in the faith, and on the other hand the Church did not have a permanent and lasting witness in the area.

Part of the reason for this flawed approach to missions is, I believe, because much of the Church has not adopted the New Testament model of church planting where each church embraces the command of Jesus to go and makes disciples of all nations and to participate in the establishing of new churches.



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Evangelising the lost is not sufficient. Provision must be made to assimilate the converts into a vibrant church where they will be discipled and grounded in the principles of the Christian faith. From there they in turn will be able to reach out and perpetuate the process.

**7. The presence of Christ through the Church in society**

The function of the Church is to become a visible presence of God in society. This was true in the early Church. The believing community stood out in society. Much of their ministry was in public where the Apostles "performed many miraculous signs and wonders **among the people"** (Acts 5:12). The account goes on to say how they brought the sick into the streets for healing (Acts 5:15).

The gathered community is meant to be visible. Jesus said that 'a city on a hill cannot be hidden' (Mt 5:14). He exhorts the Church not to hide its light under a bowl. Instead they are to put it on a stand so that it can give light to everyone in the house. He further commands disciples to actively 'let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven' (Mt 5:14). Although this command appears to be to individual Christians, one must bear in mind that Jesus is speaking to His disciples collectively. The conclusion is clear: the Church is to be the presence of Christ in society.

As Carson (1998) points out: "you" is emphatic-viz., you, my followers and none others, are the light of the world (v. 14). Derivatively His disciples constitute the new light (cf. Eph 5:89; Phil 2:15).

In order for the Church to be visible it must establish itself as a body of believers in a geographical area. Bonhoeffer (1959:226) has an outstanding way of expressing this truth. He speaks of the Church 'claiming space in the world for its proclamation'. He points out that according to St. Paul's teaching, 'the body of Christ has an **articulated form** (Rom 12:5; I Cor 12)'. By 'articulating' itself the Church is revealing a visible expression of the life of Christ in the world.



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Glasser (1981:105) expresses this truth very well when he says: "… [at Pentecost] **A living organism** was created (1 Cor 12:12, 13) and it soon demonstrated its capacity as a **life-communicating presence** among men".

**8. The need for the Church to propagate itself throughout the world**

The Church by nature has been 'designed' to replicate itself. It is the first principle in creation that 'everything brings forth fruit of its own kind' (Gen 1:12) 'Like begets like'. The process of propagation according to Snyder (1977:104) is a process which, when "empowered by the Holy Spirit, makes the Church a dynamic, living organism. The goal of evangelism therefore is the formation of the Christian community, the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit".

The Oxford dictionary defines propagation as: breed or reproduce from parent stock; (of plant etc.) reproduce (itself); disseminate.

The term is used in a botanical sense of the propagation of plants, which fits very well when we are describing the Biblical premise for the Church to be planted throughout the world. For Snyder (1977:103)

> most Biblical images for the Church imply life, so too do they suggest growth or reproduction. It is of the nature of the Church to grow and multiply itself, just as God's plan has always involved the charge, 'be fruitful and multiply' (Gen 1:28).

Wienand (60:7) provides a helpful definition to the concept of church planting:

> Planting appears to be more of a term of agriculture than Church culture. However, though not found in the Bible as a specific word, our modern language is simply trying to provide words for a Biblical model that splashes almost every page of the New Testament text. Wisely, this word-picture speaks of 'fixing firmly,



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> stationing, take up a position, establish, found, to take root, to deliver a blow with a definite aim' (Oxford Dictionary).

Church planting is therefore an appropriate term to describe the Biblical model for fulfilling the mandate given to the Church.

The call of the Church is not merely to propagate the Gospel, which is what so many missionary movements have done over the years, for example the Moravians. They saw their role as merely spreading the Gospel but not planting churches. As Bosch (1980:131) explains: "The 'planting of the church' was not a goal of mission. Zinzendorf in fact stressed quite explicitly the conversion of *individuals*. Our task, he said, was merely to gather `first-fruits'".

One can only imagine the impact of their movement, had they adopted the Biblical pattern of establishing a witnessing Church in the areas where they won their converts. As a converse example, John Wesley established 'societies'[11] wherever he made converts. The societies soon became young churches who fulfilled their call of being a witness to Christ as the Church in their various localities.

Coleman (1963:102) says that

> Jesus intended for the disciples to produce His likeness in and through the Church being gathered out of the world…through them and others like them it would continue to expand in an ever enlarging circumference until the multitudes might know in some similar way the opportunity which they had known with the Master. By this strategy the conquest of the world was only a matter of time…

That, in theory, is excellent. The only problem with this statement is that unless churches are planted along the way in every society to be this witnessing community, the so-called advance of the Gospel will be one lacking the power that comes from the

[11] Wesley was reluctant to call them churches as he saw himself as an Anglican priest. He did not set out to start new churches. That happened in a sense by default. But the societies became churches in the fullest sense of the word.



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witness of a vibrant Church. Without the establishing of churches the evangelistic thrust of the Church will always be weakened.

God's call is for the Church to replicate itself in every geographical area where each church becomes a 'hot house' where new 'plants' can be nurtured and in turn can be propagated and go out and continue the process.

According to Coleman (1963:35, 36)

> the evangelistic program of the Church has bogged down on nearly every front. What is worse, the great missionary thrust of the Gospel into new frontiers has largely lost its power. In most lands the enfeebled Church is not even keeping up with the exploding population.

I believe that the Church has lost some of its power because there are not enough healthy churches being planted to reproduce the life and witness of Christ. By healthy, I mean churches that are soundly based on Scripture (and especially the New Testament); Christ-centred and living in the power of the Holy Spirit; training up leaders to take the Church forward in its mission to the world.

The Church is neither an institution nor an organisation. It is first and foremost a living organism that is the very extension of Christ Himself in the world. Jesus refers to himself as the 'true Vine' and says that we are the branches. From Him we derive our source of life (Jn 15) and live in the world, bearing fruit as a witness to Him. Every new believer is grafted into the Vine and becomes a fruit-bearing branch in the Kingdom of God.

Given the understanding of the need for the Church to be a living, witnessing community, it would follow that church planting is a primary means of fulfilling the commission of Christ to preach the Gospel to every *ethnos* group in the world.

In creating a people among whom He can live and reproduce His life, it would follow that the Church is called to reproduce a living witness to Christ in every locality and to provide a home for believers where they can be built up and go out to witness for Christ.



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## 9. Summary

The mandate given to the Church is an enormous one. But God has made perfect provision in every way for the Church to effectively accomplish all that He has called the Church to be and do in the world. The Church is God's redeeming community empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the living presence of Christ in the world. By this empowerment the Church is called to replicate itself throughout the world. Only in this way can it fulfil its essential calling.

Coates (1995:35) makes the following observation of what is required if the Church is to fulfil this challenging mandate:

> If a people group or a nation is to be effectively evangelised, it has been reckoned there needs to be a body of Christians for every 1,000 or so people. For the Christian faith to be seen, heard and experienced, it needs to be performed and outworked in a group of practising disciples in every geographic area among all cultures within that area.

Fee (1996:66) makes an important plea to the Church when he says:

> God is not just saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather, he is creating a people among whom He can live and who in their life together **will reproduce God's life and character**.

This I believe is what Biblical church planting will achieve as the Church sets its heart to fulfilling the commission of Christ. In the next chapter I will discuss how Jesus went about training His disciples for the task of world evangelism with specific reference to Church planting, and I will show how Jesus had a pattern for ministry that would become a model for His disciples to follow in the pursuit of impacting the world with the Gospel.

In the next chapter I will note how this pattern of Jesus was instilled into the life of the disciples. Once they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, they went ahead with their ministry, implementing this pattern of Jesus, gathering disciples and establishing them in



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churches. I will also draw attention to the Apostles' methods, with special reference to the establishing of base churches as God's provision for the ongoing process of sending out disciples into all the world.



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## Chapter Four

## The pattern of church planting in the early Church

### 1. Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Jesus had a definite modus operandi with regard to the training of the twelve. Pentecost arrived and the disciples were called upon to implement all that they had learnt from the Master.

They did not have to conjure up a plan to cope with the rapid expansion of the Church nor did they have to devise a plan to evangelise the nations. It was inherent in their make-up as a result of being discipled by Christ.

In this chapter I will discuss the Apostles' methods and strategies for fulfilling the Great Commission by establishing churches throughout the world. The Apostles mirrored what they had seen Jesus doing in the way they went about fulfilling the Great Commission: the pattern of gathering disciples, consolidating them into a community and sending them out to continue the process.

### 2. Platforms

Platforms are the key strategy for sharing the Gospel. A platform is a place or opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. This was true for Jesus and it was true for the disciples. They made as much use as possible of every platform that was presented to them with the view to presenting Christ to the people. In the early Church the platforms were many and varied, from preaching in the synagogues, to courts, jails, homes, in the streets and the market place. Platforms became the 'gathering centres' for the proclamation of the Gospel, whether it was preaching, debating, teaching, praying for the sick, or delivering people from demonic oppression.



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The first major platform for the proclamation of the Gospel was Pentecost. A vast crowd had gathered for this important festival. Wagner, quoting Joachim Jeremias (2000:70) estimates the population to be about 25,000 or 30,000.

The stage was set for the first major display of God's power. From the outset an outstanding feature of the early Church was the display of the supernatural. The first sign was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered 120 disciples, accompanied by speaking in tongues. It was as a direct result of this that the multitudes gathered, marvelling that they heard the disciples speaking in their own language, a clear indication that His gospel was for the nations of the world (Acts 2:6). With this vast crowd gathered, Peter preached the first sermon and the people cried out 'what must we do to be saved?' (Acts 2:37), resulting in 3,000 people being converted to Christ and assimilated into the first Christian community (Acts 2:41, 42).

### 2.1 Synagogues as platforms

After the birthing of the Church we find that the Apostles would use any platform given to them as a means of sharing the Gospel. Synagogues became a platform in just about every town. It is said of Paul that immediately after his conversion 'he preached Christ in the synagogues' (Acts 9:20). This became a lifestyle for Paul, to enter the synagogues to preach about Christ, 'as his custom was' (Acts 13:14 [Antioch]; 14:1 [Iconium]; 17:1 [Amphipolis and Apollonia]; 17:10, [Berea]; 18:4 [Corinth]; 18:19 [Ephesus]; 19:8 [Ephesus]).

### 2.2 Courts and confrontation

Courts and confrontation became platforms for the preaching of the Gospel where they used these situations as opportunities to make a defence for the Gospel (1 Pet 3:15). Peter and John's arrest was another example (Acts 4); Stephen before the Jewish council (Acts 7) was another; Paul addressing the mob at Jerusalem (Acts 21, 22) and Paul before Felix (Acts 24:10-21), and Agrippa (Acts 26) were further examples of confrontational situations being used as arenas for the spreading of the Gospel.



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Prior to the arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:8), a confrontation took place between them and the rulers of the people and elders. Peter used the confrontation to proclaim what God had done in Christ (Acts 4:10). Paul and Silas in jail was an example of making the best of a bad situation to preach the Gospel (Acts 16:30). Paul testifies to the Philippians how his imprisonment **advanced the Gospel** (Phil 1:12, 13). Finally, Paul preached about the Kingdom for two years under house arrest in Rome with great effect (Acts 28:30, 31).

### 2.3 The market place

The market place became a major arena for the preaching of the Gospel and a demonstration of God's power. Luke records how Paul "reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the **marketplace** every day with those who happened to be there" (Acts 17:17). The first demonstration of God's power after Pentecost in public was the healing of the lame man in Acts chapter 3 which gave another platform to preach. After his healing, he went into the temple "walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:8). "So when Peter saw *it,* he responded to the people:" (Acts 3:12). This in turn caused another platform to be set up for the proclamation of the Gospel. As the people gathered around the man in amazement, Peter took the opportunity to explain the way of salvation. This was on one of several occasions when the Apostles explained God's revelation through the Old Testament, culminating in the manifestation of the Messiah. Stephen had the same opportunity to expound the fulfilment of the Messiah to the Jewish Council (Acts 7).

## 2. The process of gathering

The gathering process in the early Church was multi-faceted with various dynamics in operation. It was a working partnership of the disciples and the Holy Spirit that gathered in the lost and established them in Christian community. Just as in the ministry of Jesus, several elements would work 'hand-in-glove' to produce the desired result of gathering converts.



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The outstanding means for the in-gathering was the preaching of the Word; signs and wonders, which would include deliverance from demonic oppression; and finally the witness of the believing community. But it is important to note that it was the Holy Spirit working in and through all of the disciples, and that the goal was always to present Christ, His Kingdom and His purpose of redemption.

As Paul said to the Thessalonians, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thess 1:5). And to the Corinthians he reminds them of the “demonstration of the Spirit’s power”, (1 Cor 2:4).

### 3.1 Signs and wonders

Signs and wonders in the early Church were the catalyst for the rapid growth of disciples. From the outset, signs and wonders were the hallmark of the in-gathering. Just after Pentecost Luke tells us that ‘fear came upon every soul, **and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles** (Acts 2:43). But signs were never an end in themselves. They were pointers to Christ and His Kingdom. Wagner (2000:473), quoting MacMullen, says that “the chief factor accounting for the astounding church growth in the first four centuries was power ministries in the form of miracles and healings,” Allen (1930:58) agrees that miracles greatly helped him in his preaching.

### 3.2 Preaching (and persuading) as a means to gathering

Running in tandem with signs and wonders was the powerful preaching of the Apostles. The preaching of the Word was in no way eclipsed by signs and wonders. Peter’s first sermon is testimony of this. As he preached in the power of the Spirit the crowds were cut to the heart and cried out for salvation, adding three thousand souls to the Church in one day (Acts 2:41).



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The ministry at Iconium bears witness to this working together of the Word and the Spirit. They “spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed… So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3). The same was true for the preaching of the Gospel to many villages of the Samaritans (Acts 8:25). But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also (Acts 15:35).

In the early Church, preaching played a major role in the spreading of the Gospel and formed part of the method of the ingathering. The power was probably due to the fact that they preached Christ (Acts 5:42; 8:5, 35; 9:20; 17:3). Paul says to the Corinthians, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1Co 2:2). This was their message which brought great power.

As Philip preached to the multitudes in Samaria, Luke tells us that “with one accord (they) heeded the things spoken by Philip, **hearing and seeing the miracles** which he did” (Acts 8:6). Apparently the power of the Spirit was at work in the hearing of the Word as well as the seeing of the miracles. The result was that many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12).

Throughout the book of Acts we see that preaching, whether in the form of reasoning (lecturing) (Acts 17:2,17;18:4; 19:8; 24:25), or through proclamation (Acts 4:2; 8:5; 9:20; 13:5; 14:1, 21, 25; 15:36; 20:7), in most cases had great effect on the listeners, causing them to turn to Christ. Paul was later to testify that “it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1Cor 1:21).

### 3. The process of church planting



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Church planting began spontaneously with the gathering of three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). The converts were immediately assimilated into community under the direction of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). The Church was born and the first church had been planted in Jerusalem.

The process of church planting was a very dynamic process in the early Church. Although there was a basic methodology that the Apostles had learnt from Jesus, it was not rigid. It was through partnering with the Holy Spirit and making use of opportunities that He opened for them that churches were established. In this section I will how some of the better-known churches came into being and in part show the development and emergence of base churches.

### 4.1 The Church beyond Jerusalem

After the establishing of the church at Jerusalem, the establishing of further churches (or congregations) came about initially through persecution, but as time went on became a deliberate strategy. Ramsay (2000-2005) points out that the death of Stephen (Acts 8) precipitated a persecution that scattered the Christians which in turn resulted in the planting of many churches. According to him, the Church had 'settled down', which was opposed to the spirit in which Jesus had said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation". He goes on to say that Stephen's vigour provoked a persecution, which dispersed itinerant missionaries over Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-4), first among whom was Philip, the colleague of Stephen. New congregations of Christians were formed in many towns. (Acts 8:14, [Samaria] Acts 8:25, [many villages of Samaria] Acts 8:40, [Phillip in Azotus] Acts 9:31-32, [Judea, Galilee and Samaria] Acts 9:35, [Lydda and Sharon] Acts 9:42, [Joppa]).

What is of interest is that persecution continued to play a role in the expansion of the Church. Paul was many times pressed to move on to new territory due to



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being persecuted. An example of this was when Paul and Silas had to leave Philippi (Acts 16).

**5. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles**

The scene changes quite dramatically with the conversion of Saul. Up to this point Peter, James, Philip, John, Barnabas and others were leading the way in the apostolic thrust of discipling the nations. After Saul's radical conversion he "immediately proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God"" (Acts 9:20). And "increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 9:22).

When the Jews plotted to kill Paul, the brothers sent him to Tarsus (Acts 9:30). Paul then went to Arabia for a period which is generally believed to be fourteen years (Gal 2:1). When he returned he joined the Apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas introduced him to the Apostles and allayed any fears that they may have had about Paul and his credentials as an apostle (Acts 9:27). Up to this point the Gospel had spread "throughout all **Judea and Galilee and Samaria"** and was **"being built up"** and was continuing to be multiplied (Acts 9:31).

**6. Paul's preparation for his apostolic ministry**

Although Paul was not one of the original Apostles he probably adopted, in part, the Apostolic pattern of evangelism from working with the Apostles for a season. But as to his call and commission he was in no doubt that he had received it directly from Christ (Gal 1:1).

But one has to wonder where Paul receive his remarkable strategy for his mission to the world and of planting churches since he was not one of the original Apostles that had the privilege of being trained by the Master himself. In discussing the situation, Ramsay (2000-2005) shows that Paul "received nothing in the way of instruction or commission from the older Apostles."



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It is difficult to know what Paul did during his fourteen years of absence. Sanders (1962:974) says that very little is known about this period in Paul's life. But he goes on to postulate that "some of the missionary work placed later in Acts was in fact done during this period".

It is most likely that during his absence in Arabia, when he speaks of being taken up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2-4), he received much of his revelation concerning his mission. He had received so much revelation concerning the Church, why not of his own missionary strategy of being the Apostle to the Gentiles?

Ramsay (2000-2005) on the other hand says that he had perhaps not yet learned that God "had opened a door of faith unto the nations" (Acts 14:27). Others believe that he continued to preach in that area. One thing we do know is that Paul was to make great use of synagogues for effective preaching platforms.

Bruce (1958:89) has a more convincing argument. He feels that in this time, when he was 'caught away into paradise and hearing unutterable words [2 Cor 12:1-10] he was prepared for his true life-work, to which he was introduced about the year 45 when Barnabas met up with him in Tarsus.' If Paul received so much of his understanding of the Church during this time, then it may not be unreasonable to think that he must also have received a God-given understanding of his strategy for establishing churches.

**7. Strategy for church planting**

Taking the Gospel to the nations was not to be a sporadic haphazard operation. As I have mentioned before, the process was to gather converts and then consolidate them into congregations. As we observe the apostolic thrust into the world we will note the importance of the churches being established and strengthened in the faith.

We noted in the previous chapter that Jesus was a strategist in the choosing of Galilee as a centre of 'operations'. The early Apostles, particularly Paul, were strategists in choosing new locations for evangelism and establishing churches.



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The strategy was a synergy of the Holy Spirit, working with the disciples to accomplish the mission of making disciples and planting churches. There is clear evidence of this wonderful partnership at work between the Apostles and the Holy Spirit in the spreading of the Gospel and the establishing of churches.

This was an outstanding mark in the work of the Apostles. They were constantly working in tandem with the Holy Spirit: Philip received instruction to get alongside the eunuch's chariot, which became a strategic opportunity for explaining the Gospel (Acts 8:29); Peter's call by the Lord to minister to the Gentiles (Acts 11:12).

Another strategic instruction from the Holy Spirit was the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas to their work: "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul** for the work to which I have called them"" (Acts 13:2). What follows is the story of how God's servants proceed in their work of the Great Commission. Instilled in them is the desire to 'go into all the earth', preaching the Gospel to all men.

On other occasions the Holy Spirit would prevent the Apostles from proceeding on a particular path of action. "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were **forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia"** (Acts 16:6).

A good example of the working together of the Spirit and the Apostles is found in Acts 19: "When these things were accomplished, **Paul purposed in the Spirit,** when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome"" (Acts 19:21). On another occasion they tried to go to Bithynia, but again the **Spirit did not permit them** to go in (Acts 16). Speaking of his journey to Jerusalem, Paul speaks of "being **bound in the Spirit** to Jerusalem" (Acts 20:22).



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One of the more famous leadings of the Holy Spirit that opened up a great door of ministry was the vision of the man from Macedonia, pleading with Paul: "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9).

**8. Paul's strategy for church planting**

It is from this point on that Paul becomes one of the leading figures in the whole apostolic thrust of taking the Gospel to the nations. From this point he takes church planting to new dimensions of expansion and effectiveness. In this process he develops a strong 'Apostolic team' that moves around, planting churches and strengthening existing churches and developing base churches.

McKellar (2001:57) says that

> Paul's clear strategy was to work with a team, training faithful men to train faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). He used key cities with geographic, economic and political influence to establish key bases that could influence the surrounding area by planting churches and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Each church as it matured would then be a base to encourage believers, train leaders and plant new churches in its sphere of influence.

This does not mean that every church he planted evolved into a base church, but it does show that he had a definite strategy for his mission.

In the table below (Figure 3.) we note the extent of the team that was drawn around Paul. Men, and in some cases women (Priscilla), were drawn from all walks of life and from different backgrounds. It is interesting to note the geographical mix in Figure 3. It seems that Paul drew people around him that were from different nationalities, which would promote the whole concept of impacting the nations with the Gospel. Judging from the success of their ministry we can be sure that there was a wonderful mix of gifting and anointing. We know that there were several prophets, teachers and evangelists among them (Acts 13:1).



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**Figure 3**. An adaptation of McKellar's chart (2001:355)

| | Men and women working in team with Paul | |
|---|---|---|
| **Paul** | **Partners and fellow workers** | **Reference** |
| Apollos | Barnabas. | **Acts 13:2** |
| Aristarchus | Sosipater. | **Rom 16:21** |
| Artemus | Timothy, Titus, Lucius, Jason. | **Rom 16:21** |
| Barnabas | Timothy and Erastus. | **Acts 19:22** |
| Crescens | Epaphroditus | **Phil 2:25** |
| demas | Philemon | **Phile 1:1** |
| Epaphras | just as you learned it from Epaphras. | **Col 1:7** |
| | Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus | **Phm 1:23** |
| Erastus | Paul and Barnabas + Silas + Barsabas | **Acts 15:22** |
| Gaius | Paul + Barnabas + John | **Acts 13:13** |
| Jason | Rom 16:21 | **Rom 16:21** |
| Jesus (Justus) | Col 4:11 | **Col 4:11** |
| Luke | Luke alone is with me. ( note the 'us' passages in Acts ) | **2 Ti 4:11** |
| Mark | Barnabas + Mark | **Acts 15:39** |
| Onesimus | Col 4:9 | **Col 4:9** |
| Pricilla and Aquilla | Priscilla and Aquilla join Paul on various trips | **Acts 18:18** |
| | | **Rom 16:3** |
| Quartus | Rom 16:23 | **Rom 16:23** |
| Silas | Paul + Silas | **Acts 16:19** |
| | Macedonia | **Acts18:5** |
| Silvanus | (known to Peter) | **2 Co 1:19** |
| | | **1 Th 1:1** |
| | | **1 Pe 5:12** |
| Sosipater | Rom 16:23 | **Rom 16:23** |
| Tertius | Rom 16:22 | **Rom 16:22** |
| Timothy | Paul, Silas, Timothy. Berea. | **Acts 17:14** |
| Titus | As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker. | **2 Cor 8:23 cf. Gal 2:1** |
| Trophimus | He had accompanied Paul on his way from Ephesus | **Acts 20:4** |
| Tychicus | Faithful minster (see separate notes) | **Eph 6:21** |

| Gift 'mix' | Reference |
|---|---|
| Prophets and teachers: | **Acts 11:27;Acts 13:1** |
| Barnabas | |
| Judas and Silas Prophets | **Acts 15:32** |

| Geographic 'mix' | Reference |
|---|---|
| Sopater - Berea | **Acts 10:4** |
| Aristarchus -Thessalonia | |
| Secusdus and Gauis - Derbe | |
| Timothy - Derbe | |
| Tychicus and Trophimus - Asians | |



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**From this table we note the** wide range of people involved in team ministry that was regarded by Paul as his 'fellow workers'. We also note the 'gift mix' of prophets, teachers and evangelists, showing us how the diverse gifting was used to accomplish the task of planting churches and ministering into the existing ones.

Over an approximate twenty year period (44 A.D. – 64 A.D.) there are approximately 26 known people that worked with Paul at some time; some more than others. We note that the teams were never static. There were often different groupings working together in an area. One could deduce from this that there was always freshness in attitude, gifting and outlook. The second column shows something of the extent of those working with Paul at one given time. In the column we note that the following people worked in team with Paul: Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.

### 8.1 Paul the strategist

Paul **was** a master strategist when it came to missionary activity and planting of churches. Working in partnership with the Holy Spirit, through various 'divine appointments', key cities and key people opened up to him for the establishing of churches. As we examine the planting of several churches, we note the strategy of Paul and the opportunities that the Holy Spirit provided the Apostles for their pioneering work of planting churches.

In many cases, the towns or cities where Paul established a church were Roman colonies. Bruce (1958:95) notes that a

> Roman colony was a community of Roman citizens planted at a strategic point of communications, to safeguard the interests of Rome in that outpost of the empire. Paul's missionary eye picked out these strategic outposts and envisaged them as strategic centres in the spiritual Kingdom which he was proclaiming and extending. Roman colonies played an important part in his successive plans of campaign.

Again and again we see the process at work to great effect.



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## 9. Process of consolidation

The Apostolic heart was not a mere spreading of the Gospel. It was to establish the Church of Christ by planting churches. As we read the New Testament we see how deeply Paul and the Apostles felt about the churches that had been established; how they were at pains to see them established in the faith. The function of the Apostles was to shape the churches and bring them into conformity with God's pattern. The work of the apostle was not only to plant churches but to bring them to maturity in Christ. In Christ they had the pattern for building the Church, which was especially evident in Paul's work: "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it" (1Cor 3:10).

As Wienand (60:7) explains:

> God drew [the new converts] into [an] emerging church plant, establishing them in the faith, rooting and grounding them in the faith, firstly fixing them in Christian community.

### 9.1 Strengthening the churches

Part of the task of the Apostles was to strengthen the churches that had been planted. At Antioch, Barnabas "exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord" (Acts 11:23). To the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, they "[**strengthened] the souls** of the disciples, **encouraging them to continue in the faith**" (Acts 14:22). At Antioch "**encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many word**s" (Acts 15:32). And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in **every city** where we proclaimed the Word of the Lord, and see how they are" (Acts 15:36). In Syria and Cilicia they **strengthened the churches** (Acts 15:41). Paul returns to Antioch after ministering briefly at Ephesus. Paul **strengthened all the disciples** in Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23).



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### 9.1.2 The Apostle's letters were a continuation of their encouragement to the churches

As an extension of this work, the letters of the Apostles convey how deeply they wanted to keep strengthening and encouraging the churches. Paul shares with the church at Rome how he longs to see them "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so **that you may be established"** (Rom 1:11). To the church at Philippi he writes: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ … that you **stand fast in one spirit**, with one mind **striving together for the faith** of the Gospel", (Phil 1:27). To the Thessalonians he writes how they sent Timothy their fellow labourer: "to **establish you and encourage you concerning your faith**", (1 Thess 3:2-6).

To the Corinthians he urges them to **be steadfast and immovable** (1 Cor 15:58) and to **stand fast in the faith (**1 Cor 16:13). To the Galatians he shares how he is in anguish for them "until Christ is formed in you!" (Gal 4:19). And that they were to **stand fast** in the liberty of Christ (Gal 5:1). To the church at Colosse: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that **we may present everyone mature in Christ**" (Col 1:28).

Peter writing to the wider Church, the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1Pe 1:1), writes: "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully on the grace** that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pet 1:13).

## 9.2 Setting in order

The church planting process was the gathering of congregations of believers. Ramsay (2000-2005) makes the distinction between 'congregation' and 'church'.



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A congregation would have been a community that responded to the Apostles preaching and teaching and were now meeting together as a congregation of believers. But in order to become a fully-fledged church there was one very important step that had to be taken and that was for elders to be set in place in the church.

If one looks at the first church plant at Pentecost it is interesting to note that the vast new congregation was immediately a church in that the new community came under the direction and oversight of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). They were the spiritual leaders and the 'governing body' of the embryonic church.

The next phase of development in the early Church was for proper Church government to be set in place in the newly formed congregations to facilitate the proper functioning of the Church by choosing men to be elders in the Church. The earliest mention of elders being in place was when the Jerusalem church sent the famine relief to the church at Antioch. Even if eldership was not as developed as we see later in Acts, it showed that there were leaders in place within that church.

A 'water-shed' moment in the life of the early Church is when the Apostles were ministering at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. The record tells us that they "appointed elders for them **in every church**, with prayer and fasting…" (Acts 14:23). Although elders are mentioned in Acts 11:30 in connection with the famine relief, this is the first record that we have of elders being put in place in the Church.

As Wagner (2000:326) points out:

> the first time through Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas's major goal was to win converts and form them into churches. The second time through Antioch, their major goal was to install the leadership of the churches.



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Bruce (1954:296) speaks of this situation as creating a suitable platform for "putting their administration on a firm basis by appointing suitable members as elders, who would be true spiritual guides to their brethren…"

Elders were put in place to shepherd the flock of God. "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly" (1Pet 5:2). And Paul says to Titus, "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, **and appoint elders in every town** as I directed you" (Tit 1:5).

Speaking to the elders at Ephesus, Paul encourages them to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the Church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

The word overseer in Greek is *episkopos*. Vine (1996) explains elders and shepherds in this way: a bishop is an overseer, (*episkopos)*, which literally means 'an over-seer' (*epi,* "over", *skopeo* "to look or watch"), hence Eng. "bishop," which has precisely the same meaning, is found in Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25.

*Presbutero*: "an elder," is another term for the same person who is a bishop or overseer. See Acts 20:17 with verse 28. The term "elder" indicates the mature spiritual experience and understanding of those so described; the term "bishop", or "overseer," indicates the character of the work undertaken. According to the divine will and appointment, as in the New Testament, there were to be "bishops" in every local church, Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14.

Bruce (1958:202) gives further clarity on the subject:



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> Paul writing to the Christians at Philippi, salutes the church in that city together with its 'bishops and deacons' – or, to render the Greek terms by words of a different flavour, its 'superintendents and ministers'. That the language of the New Testament does not allow us to press a distinction between the Greek word translated 'bishop-'(*episkopos)* and that translated 'elder' *(presbuteros)* need not be argued at length. Paul could address the assembled elders of the church of Ephesus as those whom the Holy Spirit had made *bishops.* Later, in the Pastoral Epistles (those to Timothy and Titus), the two terms still appear to be used interchangeably.

**9.3 'Steering' the churches**

One of the major needs in the newly founded churches was for the churches to be strengthened in life and doctrine. Peter, Paul and John are at great pains to warn the Church against false doctrine and against false prophets.

Paul **urges** the church at Ephesus not to be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by **every wind of doctrine**" (Eph 4:14). Three times Paul urges Timothy to guard the flock from false doctrine (1Tim 1:10; 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3). He does the same with Titus (Tit 1:9; 2:1, 10).

Paul **warns** the Corinthians not to be deceived (2Co 11:3). He counsels the Galatian church not to be bewitched (Gal 3:1) and to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). He warns the Ephesian church about fierce wolves coming from among them (Acts 20:29).

One of the Apostles writing to the Hebrews warns them not be led away by **diverse and strange teachings (**Heb 13:9).

Peter, **writing** to the Church in general warns of false prophets who may bring **destructive heresies (**2 Pet 2:1). And John the Apostle also warns of false prophets and teachers and that they should 'not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God' (1Jn 4:1).



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## 10. Summary

The Apostles had embraced the pattern and strategy of Jesus' ministry. A key element in the strategy and process of Church planting was the use of platforms that were provided through circumstance which they used to great effect in the gathering of converts.

Once new converts were gathered into congregations, the apostles spent much time in establishing them in the faith. As part of this process the apostle's task was to appoint elders in each congregation to provide them with proper leadership. Another outstanding feature in this whole process was the emphasis on team work which the apostles had learnt from Jesus and it made the whole process of their mission so effective.

In the next chapter I will give more detail regarding the process of establishing base churches in the early Church and how they played a major role in the on-going work of Church planting.



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## Chapter Five

## The emergence and establishment of base churches in the early Church

### 1. Introduction

As part of the whole church planting activity within the early Church, strong churches emerged that soon developed into what some call base churches or resource churches. Although the term *base church* does not appear in the New Testament, we cannot lose sight of the fact that out of the thousands of churches planted in the early years of Christianity, a number of base churches emerged that served the wider Church.

Base churches emerged organically and not organisationally. Once established, people were naturally able to appreciate what the function was.

In this chapter I will describe what a base church is and the vital role it played in the early Church in the ongoing work of church planting and in the strengthening of existing churches.

Jesus gave an indication that the process of making disciples of all nations would be a progressive process of expansion: Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Church was to expand outward in its mission to the world. In this progression it would be vital to establish places of consolidation and strength that would provide a sustained impetus for the Church in its pursuit of proclaiming the Gospel, gathering converts and establishing new congregations of believers.

As the Church spread across Asia, a massive network of churches was established that were inter-related by a common faith in Jesus Christ and vitally connected by the various apostolic teams that frequently passed through these churches. Within this network of churches, strong churches, like Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi and Rome emerged as base churches. In this network of churches there was a constant supply of Apostolic ministry that would move through the churches, ‘equipping them for the work of ministry and building up the body of Christ’ (Eph 4:12 ).



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McKellar (46) describes something of base church activity in the New Testament:

> The church at Philippi gave generously to Paul (Phil 4:15) and entered into a partnership with him in helping the Gospel to go out to the nations (Phil 1:4). The church in Ephesus appears to have planted out the church in Colosse (Col 1:7), and the church in Colosse appears to have ministered into the church in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 4:12-16). The church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas out to preach the Good News into different nations and welcomed them back after their mission was over (Acts 13:1-3 and 14:26-28). The church at Corinth helped the church at Jerusalem with financial help (I Cor 16:3).

In order for the process of evangelism, church planting and the strengthening of churches to take place there had to be finances and 'personnel' to accomplish the task. Resources had to be made available to the itinerant apostolic teams to 'service' the many emerging churches. Although Paul supported himself from time to time with his tent making, many of the other members of his team needed support for their ministry in the various churches. The greatest resource however is people who are willing to be trained and equipped to be sent out.

Base churches became strong platforms from where the Apostles could launch their ministry into un-reached areas. In observing the way Paul worked with his teams we note that base churches needed to be established as resource centres that would equip and strengthen new church plants and help establish them as a church by releasing elders and helping in the training and equipping of the church for its work in that area.

**2. What is a base church?**

We noted in chapter three that Jesus established Himself in Capernaum using it as a base. From there he was able to reach out to the surrounding areas with His ministry. It would appear from what we see in the early Church that this process evolved into a definite pattern and became the effective means for the Church to fulfil her mission to make disciples of all nations. Daniel (46) describes a base church as "a resource centre, pouring concerted sustained prayer, finances, equipment and personnel" into the life of the Church.



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In order to understand the concept of base churches it may be helpful to refer to a secular model to shed some light on what a base is and how it should function.
In a military setting a base is a place of resources: manpower, weapons, transport, an intelligence network, food and shelter. It is from this secure base that soldiers are able to launch out in their military manoeuvres. They can return again to the security of the base to find respite from the battle and re-group and re-strategise for the next phase of action.

If we were to imagine the mission of the Church as having to move over a vast expanse of water, to carry the Good News to new areas, stepping-stones would be an effective means of moving across the water, one stage at a time. Each stepping-stone would become a base as it were, where it could establish itself and affect the immediate area around it. Before the ripples weaken, another stepping stone (base) is put in place to affect that immediate area and at the same time provide another area of consolidated 'ground'. In this process there is something of the Biblical promise given to Joshua, that "every place on which your foot shall tread I have given to you" (Josh 1:3). The object of the exercise is to possess the land, then occupy it by establishing a strong base and then making an impact on the surrounding area.

This is the process we see very clearly portrayed in the early Church's strategy of moving across the world with the Gospel. Although this process may not have been as deliberate as stated above, it is my opinion from studying the pattern in the New Testament, that a definite pattern did emerge that served the Church well in its pursuit of making disciples of all nations. From secure bases the Apostles and their teams could move out into the next phase of their mission and effectively evangelise the world.

The map below (McKellar (2001:320) depicts this process very well. Base churches are like giant 'stepping stones' moving across the face of the earth, with each base affecting its immediate locale.



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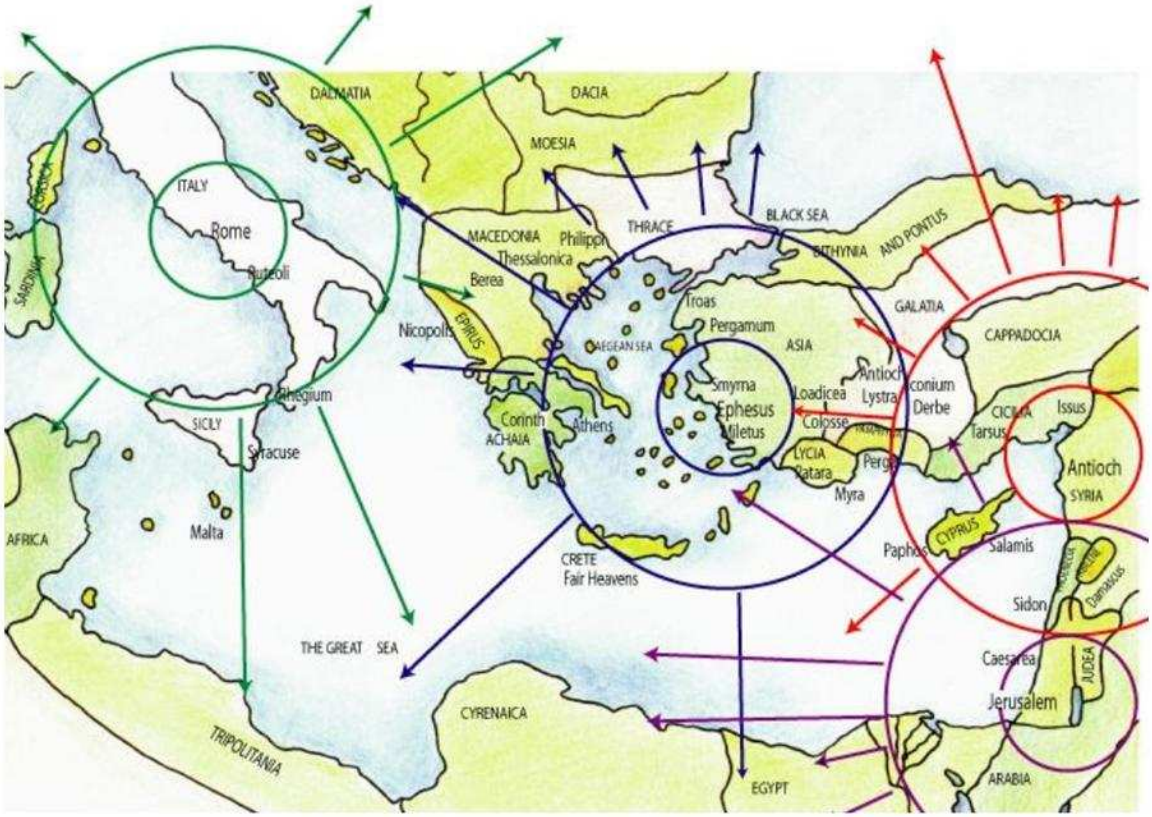
Figure 4 (McKellar 2001:8)

The Spread of the Gospel 30AD – 60AD




According to McKellar (2001:71) Paul preached in key cities and used key people to establish key churches in those cities. His objective was that those churches would influence their own province, the province next door and eventually reach out even to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8; 1 Thess 1:7-8; Acts 19:10; 2 Cor 10:15-16).

**3. What sets a church apart from others as a base church?**

Every church should aspire to be a base church in its attitude of equipping its people for the wider ministry of the Church and to be a sending church. But in practical terms there will always be churches that have a greater capacity in terms of manpower and resources and in its capability of impacting not only its own town, but into provinces, the nation and into the nations of the world.



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Of the thousands of churches planted in the first century, several stand out as being strong centres that would form bases that became 'supply stations' for the ongoing work of the Apostles in the whole process of planting churches.

### 3.1 What are the outstanding features of a base church?

A base church is rich in mature spiritual gifting; strong leadership; has a strong emphasis on training and raising up of leaders; is generous of spirit with its resources, including finances and manpower; has an outward look; not wanting to only gather but to send and sees the bigger picture of going to the nations. A good example of this is Antioch, where the Church was prepared to send their 'best' in Paul and Barnabas.

In the early Church, training was one of the most important keys to building the Church. Jesus spent considerable time training the twelve in the Word, in life and in ministry. Clearly Paul and the Apostles put great store on teaching and training as we see in the various churches. From Acts 2 and throughout the New Testament we see the importance of teaching and training.

## 4. Examples of base churches in the New Testament

By studying some of the base churches in the New Testament we will be able to form a comprehensive picture of what a base church is, how it operated and the effect that it had upon the development of the Church and the advancement of the Gospel in the world.

### 4.1 The emergence of base churches in the early Church

The obvious first base church was the church at Jerusalem. It was here that all the Apostles were present at the establishing and empowering of the Church. It was under their leadership that the Church took shape as the first Christian congregation (Acts 2:42). The Church was strongly established in the Lord and great favour was upon the Church (Acts 2:47).



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Luke records that from the outset the Church was rich in resources where believers shared everything in common (Acts 2:45). Not only were they well resourced in material possessions but were rich in spiritual gifting with the presence of the apostles, prophets, evangelists and many teachers, many of whom went out to evangelise and plant churches. An early example of this was the sending out of Peter and John to Samaria to pray for the believers there (Acts 8:14).

### 4.2 The church at Antioch

#### Background

The **first** major church to be established outside of Jerusalem was the church at Antioch. According to Ramsay (2000-2005:17) this was a great step forward in the development of the early Church as it was about to experience an unprecedented breakthrough with the Gospel into the Gentile world. After the persecution that arose over Stephen's death, those who were scattered went forth preaching the Word as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19). "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

On hearing the news of the growth of the church at Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to assess the situation. Seeing the grace of God at work among them they "encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

Barnabas then went in search of Paul and brought him back to Antioch where they taught the believers for a year (Acts 11:26). We note that the church was rich in spiritual gifting with a strong presence of prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1), an indication of the level of maturity in the church at Antioch. I believe that it is an indication of the level of maturity in the church that the five-fold ministry (Eph 4:11) was so prominent.



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### 4.2.1 Outstanding features in the church at Antioch

By the time Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas out on their missionary journey, they were already a well established and mature church. Paul and Barnabas had spent a year in Antioch where they “taught a great many people” (Acts 11:26). One of the signs of their maturity was a generous spirit that was ready to respond to the needs of the wider Church.

Another sign of maturity was the rich spiritual gifting resident in the church. Not only was it blessed with several apostles, Luke tells us that there were a number of prophets and teachers as well; a clear indication of the presence of the five-fold ministry that Paul would teach about in Ephesians chapter 4.

A further indication of their spiritual maturity was the fact that they were a praying, worshipping church and as a result, sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In a time of worship and fasting prayer the Holy Spirit instructed them to, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). From the text it would appear that once again they responded with immediate obedience and laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them on their first apostolic ministry trip.

The church at Antioch was also a ‘sending’ church. They had grasped the essence of the Great Commission to ‘go into all the world’ and they were facilitators of this great task. Instead of holding on to such gifted men, they were willing to release their best to the greater work of going into all the world with the Gospel.

A base church is one that is able to sustain its own growth as a local church as well as minister to the wider Church. It is a place of refreshment for those coming back from ministry trips where they would be strengthened for further excursions into the world with the Gospel.



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The fact that Paul and Barnabas made a point of giving a report to the whole church is an indication that they saw the base church as a partner with them in the process of spreading the Gospel and planting churches. It was a clear indication that the responsibility of discipling the nations was the responsibility of the whole church. The fact that many would not go out on mission, as such, did not mean that they were not vitally involved in this wonderful process of extending the Kingdom of God by planting churches throughout the world.

In order for the Church to have an effective impact on the world with the Gospel, it had to be working from a position of strength and constantly consolidating itself. And Antioch was one such church. A base church has to be constantly consolidating itself, impacting its immediate 'Jerusalem' and then work outwards in its wider mission, to its Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

### 4.3 The church at Ephesus

#### Background

The **planting** of the church at Ephesus was a story of great importance for the early church. According to Wagner (2000:466) it was "the most outstanding success story of his (Paul's) missionary career" and the third or fourth largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome". Harnack (2005) adds to this by saying that "Paul's labours made Ephesus the third capital of Christianity." It was, according to Bruce (1954:387) to be "a new centre of the Gentile mission – the next in importance after Syrian Antioch…"

Ephesus was the occult headquarters of the then known world. But by the faithful preaching of the Gospel with signs following, this powerful stronghold was broken



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and Ephesus became one of the most powerful church plants in the whole of Asia.

Ephesus became the breakthrough not only for that local area but also for the whole of Asia (Acts 19:10). Luke tells how “the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (Acts 19:17) and how the “the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” (Acts 19:20).

Ephesus became an effective base for the training and sending out of workers to preach the Gospel. Bruce (154:389) points out that

> Paul stayed in Ephesus, but a number of his colleagues carried on missionary activity in the neighbouring cities as well. It was during these years that the churches in the Lycus valley – those at Colosse, Hierapolis and Laodicea were founded (Col 2:1; 4:13).

One would imagine that many of these disciples would come back to Ephesus for strengthening in the Word and fellowship and would go out again into the field for further ministry. He goes on to say that Ephesus became one of the leading centres of Christianity for centuries afterwards.

Paul’s sustained period of teaching at the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus was of great significance. Wagner (2000:470) says that this was a clear example

> of formalized leadership training that we have in the New Testament … where the chief foci of the curriculum were likely to have been evangelism and church planting.

Here we have a wonderful example of a church being planted (again from meagre beginnings); being consolidated through concentrated teaching, preaching and fellowship, combined with very active ministry in its immediate town and then having a radical outward focus for the sending out of ‘missionaries’ to go and make disciples.



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### 4.4 The church at Philippi

#### Background

Philippi is one of many examples of 'divine appointments' in the New Testament and shows how God, working by His Spirit, 'engineers' circumstances for His greater glory. What may appear as a chance meeting with a handful of people turns out to be the beginning of a new church.

Bruce (1958:113) says:

> Here the missionaries found the nucleus of the new community which they founded in Philippi. Lydia, who was the key figure in this situation, was already a worshipper of God. Through Paul's teaching "the Lord opened her heart".

Philippi was well situated not only for the coming and going of Apostolic ministry, but the 'mix' of converts would make it a very cosmopolitan community that would touch many nationalities with the Gospel, who in turn would go out and touch their various nations with the Gospel.

As Lightfoot (1994:62) notes, it was a

> thoroughfare for the traffic of nations and would reasonably represent the civilized world in miniature; and the phenomena of the progress of the Gospel in its wider sphere were thus anticipated on a smaller scale.

Wagner (2000:493) makes a strong case for Philippi being a base church:

> Illyricum is the province to the north of Macedonia, occupying much of the lands of the former Yugoslavia. Luke doesn't mention it in Acts, and nowhere else do we find a reference about exactly when Paul might have preached in Illyricum. This is one logical place to surmise that Paul could have **used Philippi as a base** from which he moved out to plant churches throughout the regions north of Philippi. It could



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> well have been the time when Paul reached his northernmost evangelistic targets.

What is of importance is that Philippi was by the standards of Antioch and Ephesus a much smaller church. Yet this did not disqualify them from acting as an important base for the facilitation of apostolic ministry. In spite of it being a poor church it became a significant church that served as a resource centre for the on-going work of the Apostles. Even though they were not a rich church, they were generous. Paul reminds them that “no church **entered into partnership** with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again” (Phil 4:16, 17).



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### 4.5 The church at Thessalonica

#### Background

Once **again** we note the strategic setting of the church at Thessalonica. Guthrie (1970:564) points out that

> the city of Thessalonica was important not only because it was the capital of Macedonia but also because it stood on the Via Egnatia, the Roman highway to the East

which would make for easy access and the sending out of workers.

The church at Thessalonica was also mature and strong in faith. According to Eaton (1997:13), “the church stood firm and became a centre of further outreach (1 Thess 1:8). Judging from 1 Thess 1:9, many Gentiles were saved at the time”. He goes on to describe how the Thessalonians “found ways to make sure that the surrounding areas heard about Jesus and soon the entire area had heard about Jesus through what had happened to these Thessalonian Christians”, a good example of a church affecting its immediate surroundings with the Gospel.

McKellar (2001:83) speaks of the church at Thessalonica as being a model church.

> It had both an internal and an external focus. They became imitators of the Apostolic team and ‘welcomed the message’ with joy (1 Thess 1:6). They also became outwardly focused and reached out to their own city, their own province (Macedonia) and the province next door (Achaia) and then beyond (1 Thess 1:7-8).

## 5. Summary



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From the information above I believe that there is a very discernable pattern for fulfilling the Great Commission and extending the Kingdom of God throughout the earth through church planting. Base churches are vital for the ongoing work of the great task of strengthening existing churches and facilitating the on-going work of apostolic ministry.

In the next chapter I will examine three major movements and make observations concerning their initial vision and values. They all started out with the desire to emulate apostolic Christianity, but ended up losing their initial fervour, becoming more of a denominational movement.



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## Chapter Six

## Movements: successes and weaknesses

### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined something of the life and vitality of the early Church and how they went about fulfilling the Great Commission by planting churches and establishing base churches to strengthen those that had been planted. It was a time of great growth and expansion for the Church. But sadly, by 300 A.D. the Church had lost its initial impetus and had become so institutional that its message and impact on the world had become impotent. As a result the institutional Church lived in spiritual darkness for the next thousand years. However, during this period many groups emerged as a 'saving remnant' of true Apostolic Christianity that operated outside of the institutional Church, as the inspirational Church, seeking to be an expression of true Apostolic Christianity.

Broadbent (1931:395) notes that many brethren have sought to emulate Apostolic Christianity and have been called by many names, Cathars, Novatians, Paulicians, Bogomils, Albigenses, Waldenses, Lollards, Anabaptists, Mennonites, Stundists and many more. They have been one in their endeavour to act upon and follow the example of the New Testament churches. These churches had a desire to return to Apostolic Christianity and rid themselves of the bureaucratic and institutional baggage that hampered them from expressing true Biblical Christianity.

The purpose of this chapter is to study three Christian movements and their desire to embrace New Testament principles which enabled them to impact the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to play a major role in the expansion of the Church. In each of these movements one can see New Testament patterns in life and practice. Each movement had a vision to implement the Great Commission. They all had a strong emphasis on mission and evangelism, planting countless churches throughout the world.



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The further purpose of this section is to observe how each movement in turn, like so many movements before them, lost their initial effectiveness by becoming 'institutional' and in many cases forfeited their initial vision of going into all the world to preach the Gospel.

This is how McDonald (2005), a member of the Brethren movement, describes the problem faced by many movements:

> Most spiritual movements have been aptly described in the word series: man ... movement ... machine . . . monument. At the outset there is a man, anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit. As others are led into the truth, a movement develops. But by the second or third generation, people are following a system with sectarian, machine-like precision. Eventually nothing is left but a lifeless, denominational monument.

Philips (1989) shares a similar insight:

> In the first generation a perceived truth is a conviction; in the second generation it settles down to a belief; in the third generation it becomes merely an opinion.

According to Jackson (1999:370), "it is rare in church history for a movement to sustain vitality for more than one generation". By the movement's own criteria they have lost their initial vision and focus. And according to Bosch (2001:94) "where the institutional aspect begins to eclipse the dynamic aspect of the movement, the creative tension disappears and petrifaction sets in."

I believe that God's intention is for the Church to live in increasing effectiveness, continually impacting every generation with the Gospel and not to be constantly losing their fervency in making disciples of all nations. Christ is not coming back to rescue a weak insipid Church, but one that has made herself ready, not merely in appearance, but in power. He is coming back to a victorious Church that has accomplished her mission on earth. In the next chapter I will be discussing 'generational effectiveness' in more detail with a view to understanding how movements cannot only maintain their effective mission to the world, but also need to increase it.



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Paul expresses the heart of God when he says that “through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10) and that God may have the glory “in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:21).

In this chapter I will examine three major movements, with a view to determining their effectiveness, and will evaluate why their initial effectiveness diminished over time. I have chosen these three particular movements because, although they each have their own distinctive character, they represent movements that sought to embrace Apostolic Christianity. The three movements under discussion emerged roughly at eighty-year intervals. Each of these movements was powerful in their own right and made a tremendous contribution to Biblical Christianity over those years. My quest in this chapter is to discover what caused these once-robust Christian movements to lose their initial momentum and effectiveness over the generations.

I will be focussing my attention primarily on the following movements: the Methodists, the Brethren and the Pentecostals. I have chosen the Methodists because they were at the forefront of the Great Awakening in Britain and were used by God to impact England and America with the Gospel. They were extremely evangelistic and became prolific church planters.

I have chosen the Brethren because they were a group that sincerely desired to emulate New Testament Christianity in every way and were also strongly missionary-minded, planting churches throughout the world.

I have chosen the Pentecostal movement because of their incredible growth and their pursuit of rediscovering the power of the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in them becoming an enormous influence in the expansion of the Church in the world. They too planted thousands of churches throughout the world.

**2. A brief overview of the movements**



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## 2.1 Methodism

The Methodist movement was birthed in the eighteenth-century revival in England. The revival, according to Wood (1988:448), was a work of the Holy Spirit and developed through various channels. The three channels were the Moravians, the Calvinistic mission of George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers, John and Charles.

Wesley never intended to start a new denomination. In his mind a new denomination amounted to a new church and for Wesley, the Anglican Church was 'the Church'. According to Snyder (1980:128) "Wesley viewed the Methodist societies as *ecclesiolae* or 'little churches' within the *ecclesia,* the Church." He believed that any movement outside of the mainstream Church was merely an *ekklesiola* – an offshoot of the main Church. Until his dying day he regarded himself an Anglican, yet he had become the father of a very powerful movement that not only spread throughout England, but across the seas to America and later to the rest of the world.

According to Wood (1967:74) Wesley felt that he had been raised up to promote a vital, practical religion; "…and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men". His famous statement with regard to his call was that he had been raised up to "reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread Scriptural holiness over the land".

The hallmark of Methodism was a belief in instant conversion and a radical commitment to the Bible as 'the only rule of faith', echoing the words of the great reformer, Martin Luther.

Revival spread throughout England as Wesley, along with George Whitefield, Howell Harris and the Moravians went about preaching the Gospel. The outstanding feature of Wesley's ministry, along with people like George



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Whitefield, was that they took the Gospel to the streets and fields; to the common folk. Wesley later said to his preachers:

> You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.[12]

Without wanting to start another church, Wesley nevertheless had to provide care for the thousands of converts. These he gathered into societies, which were in fact congregations of believers.

According to Snyder (1980:33)

> he formed a number of societies and bands and on the 9 May, 1739, acquired a piece of property where he built his 'New Room' as a central meeting place….the Wesley's preached, the crowds responded and Methodism as a mass movement was born.

According to Snyder (1980:63) Methodism had 100,000 members at the end of the century, which would mean that they reached this number in about 60 years (Wesley's conversion took place in 1738). Considering that the preachers travelled from town to town on horseback, and that many of their new members were new converts, this was a significant number.

In America the growth was even more spectacular. Finke and Stark (2005:57) state that

> in 1776 the Methodists were a tiny religious society with only 65 churches scattered through the colonies. Seven decades later they towered over the nation. In 1850 there were 13,302 Methodist congregations, enrolling more than 2.6 million members – the largest single denomination, accounting for more than a third of all American church members. For such growth to occur in eighty years seems nearly miraculous.

[12] "Twelve Rules of a Helper" – John Wesley.



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## 2.2 The Brethren

The Brethren movement originated around 1825. The movement emerged out of a desire to be free from denominational restrictions. Their desire was to return to Biblical roots and a New Testament way of life. According to Bruce (2005) the Brethren insisted that their roots were really in the Apostolic age, and their aim was to maintain the simple and flexible church order of New Testament times.



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The founders of the Brethren movement, according to Bruce (2005)

> were a group of young men, mostly associated with Trinity College, Dublin, who tried to find a way in which they could come together for worship and communion simply as fellow-Christians, disregarding denominational barriers. They had no idea that they were starting a movement; still less had they any thought of founding a new denomination, for that would have defeated the very purpose for which they came together.

They had a passion for the Word of God. According to Lineham (2003) “their motto was 'every person to be a Bible student.” And Coad (1968:250) says “the place of the Bible in the early Brethren movement was …essentially the same as in the great traditions of Protestant renewal”. As testimony to this tradition, many notable scholars arose within their ranks. Ezhumattoor (2005) provides a list of some of the well-known scholars/authors in the Brethren movement. F. F. Bruce, H. A. Ironside, William MacDonald, Andrew Miller and W. E. Vine. To this list can be added: Erich Sauer, George Muller (Children’s orphanage fame) and E.H. Broadbent, author of the Pilgrim Church.

Their meetings typified their lifestyle. They were ‘open’, which meant that as a priesthood of believers anyone had the liberty to share in the meeting, much like the principle Paul shares in Corinthians, that when the believers gathered, each one had a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation (1Cor 14:26).

Their desire was to be led by the Spirit and to express the ‘body-life’ of the Christian community, expressing the priesthood of all believers. This is testified to by Groves (2005) with regard to the Lord's Supper.

> I doubt not that this is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves.



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## 2.3 The Pentecostal movement

Although Pentecostalism was birthed at the famous Azusa Street revival in 1906, Dunn (1988:683) points out that "the most important figure within that stream in previous centuries was John Wesley…who emphasised the 'witness of the Spirit' and so in some way paved the way for a new work of the Holy Spirit in America".

There was a growing disinterest in the restrictive holiness movements and a growing interest in the gifts of the Spirit, specifically the gifts of tongues and healing. Dunn (1988:618) describes the culmination of this process:

> But it was the revival which began in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906, which really forged the link between Spirit-baptism and tongues. This three year long meeting was the launching-pad of twentieth-century Pentecostalism.

The growth of the movement from the outset was staggering. McClung (1986:3) says that according to Corum, "there were soon 13,000 adherents. By the mid-1920's it had, in the United States alone, increased ten-fold". He then quotes du Plessis who says, "by the time of its 'Golden Jubilee' it had reached a count of at least ten million worldwide".

The movement continued to grow by staggering proportions. Synan (2005) says that

> the Pentecostal movement is by far the largest and most important religious movement to originate in the United States… and that by 1993 they had become the largest family of Protestants in the world. With over 200,000,000 members designated as denominational Pentecostals, this group surpassed the Orthodox churches as the second largest denominational family of Christians, surpassed only by the Roman Catholics.



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Anderson, quoting Faupel, (2004) says,

> From the beginning, the movement placed an emphasis on evangelism and missions. People went to Azusa Street from Europe and went back with the 'baptism', and Pentecostal missionaries were sent out all over the world, reaching over twenty-five nations in two years.

## 3. Strengths of the movements

Each of the movements being discussed had tremendous strengths and made a significant impact on the Church and the world in various ways. Each movement embraced the Great Commission and was motivated to extend God's Kingdom throughout the earth by planting churches wherever they went.

### 3.1 Methodism

Methodism was birthed in revival, which was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Wesley himself had a profound experience of the Holy Spirit at his 'conversion' whilst attending a service in Aldersgate. The outstanding feature of the early Methodist movement was that they were a people who believed in the power of the Holy Spirit. All the meetings where Wesley preached were a constant demonstration of God's power, where thousands of people were radically converted to Christ.

Alongside this powerful move of the Spirit was the fact that the early Methodists had such a high regard for Scripture and regarded it as the only rule of faith. Wood, (1967:209) quoting from Wesley's works, shares Wesley's view on Scripture: "I began not only to read, but to study, the Bible as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion." Most of what Wesley did was based on his understanding of God's Word. According to Keefer (2005) Wesley died with the satisfaction that primitive Christianity was being restored in his day, believing that the *eschaton* could not be long in coming.



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Wesley was first and foremost an evangelist. It is little wonder that after his profound conversion he sought to share that experience with the world. Wesley experienced incredible favour from God as he preached in the open air to thousands of people. The crowds that he preached to were at times vast. According to Wood (1967:138) Wesley claimed to have preached to over thirty-two thousand at Gwennap pit – the largest crowd he had ever seen there. Although the figure may have been exaggerated, the fact is that he preached to very large crowds where many came to a profound conversion to Christ.

As the revival spread, the Methodists experienced unprecedented growth. Not only was Wesley an outstanding evangelist, he was also a genius at organisation. He gathered the new converts into what he called societies, which in effect became churches. The converts were in most instances placed in societies where they were established in the Christian faith. Almost by default, Wesley and his workers became prolific church planters.

The societies in turn were divided into class meetings, which became one of the Methodist's strongest features. Here the members were cared for and were able to enjoy the fellowship of smaller groups, where each class was supervised by a class leader. Wood (1967:191) describes the class leaders as an "organisation of under-shepherds to the flock" and the class meeting as "a system of pastoral care, especially for the newly-converted".

### 3.1.1 Leadership training

Probably one of the most outstanding strengths of the early Methodists was the high priority Wesley gave to the training of his people. According to Snyder (1980:63)

> the extensive system of bands, classes, societies and preachers, together with other offices and functions, opened the doors wide for leadership and discipleship in early Methodism. By the time Methodism had reached 100,000



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> members at the end of the century, the movement must have had over 10,000 class and band leaders.

He goes on to say that “Wesley put one in ten, perhaps one in five, to work in significant ministry and leadership”. This may well have equated to 20% of his people being trained for the work of the ministry.



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### 3.1.2 Missionary success

As early as 1760 (which was only 20 years after the movement started in England), Methodism spread across to America. According to Davies (1963:158),

> Methodism in America sprang directly from the preaching and organising activities of John Wesley... but the first Methodist societies in America were founded by immigrants from Ireland, where they had been converted by John Wesley.

One such person was Robert Strawbridge, a local preacher. The fact that he was so 'successful' in his ability to plant churches is an indication of the level of training that he would have received whilst under the ministry of John Wesley and his workers.

Another notable person was Asbury, who on hearing the need for preachers in America went across immediately. He was merely a blacksmith by trade, but was trained by Wesley as a local preacher. Davies (1963:159) describes the passion of the man:

> His relentless determination and his unquenchable spirit of adventure soon gave him a commanding position in American Methodism, and he moulded its destinies for the next fifty years.

(He became the founder of the well-known Asbury Seminary in America, which is still in existence today.)

## 3.2 Strengths of the Brethren Movement

The outstanding strength of the Brethren movement was their passion for Jesus Christ. According to Lineham (2003) they had an intense belief in the Lordship of Christ and were deeply committed to Him … they wanted to glorify Jesus absolutely so nothing should threaten Him.



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Along with this passion for Jesus, like the Methodists, their greatest strength was their commitment to the Bible as the 'only rule of faith'. They purposed to be free from any man-made laws and constitutions and endeavoured to base their life and ministry on God's Word. Their meetings were a reflection of their endeavour to be a people whose way of life was based on New Testament principles and practices.

### 3.2.1 Missionary endeavour

Although the early Brethren did not use the term 'church planting', the establishing of 'Assemblies' amounts to churches planted, as shown in the figures given by Coad in the summary below.

A summary from Coad (1968:190) shows the tremendous penetration of Brethren into nations around the world. In the 1800's churches were established in Spain, Portugal, Italy, eventually spreading throughout the whole of Europe. As a result of the British revival movement the Brethren experienced greater impetus in America and Canada. The work later spread to Australia and New Zealand. According to Coad (1968:201) in the early years of the movement an effective work was done in India, Malaysia and Singapore. Much of the work established in the China Inland Mission sprang from the Brethren movement.

According to Coad (1968:202) the most prominent pioneers among Brethren missionaries were in Africa. Extensive work was done throughout Africa, including South Africa. According to Lineham (2003) "they had the highest level of missionary service of any denomination. All over the world - Russia, Africa etc., the Brethren became the backbone to Christian mission".

Tatford (2005) says,

> The Lord blessed them, and the number of assemblies (people) and halls (places of meeting not regarded as sanctuaries) multiplied, missionaries in their thousands went abroad without human ordination but responding to the



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> Lord's command depending for their support solely upon the faithfulness of God whilst other believers in their business and professional capacities travelled and witnessed for the Lord (Acts 1:8; 8: 4; 11:19), new assemblies were formed, and the movement reached to the uttermost parts of the earth even to the most inaccessible, remotest and perilous jungle and mountain fastnesses. The impact which has been made has been out of all proportion to their number or to the size and importance of the assemblies from which they went.

### 3.2.2 The strengths of the Pentecostal movement

Part of the reason for the growth and success of Pentecostalism, according to Wagner, (1986:126) was the sovereign work of God (1 Cor 3:6). But he goes on to reveal other reasons for the Pentecostal's growth and effectiveness. Once again, like the Methodists and Brethren, to the early Pentecostals, the "Scriptures [were] final". Coupled with this, they believed in a conversion that was a radical, life-changing experience, much the same as Wesley. But probably the most important strength was that they were a people experiencing the power of God with signs and wonders. Wagner (1986:128) says, "Probably the greatest contribution that Pentecostalism has made to Christianity in general is restoring the reality of the miracle power of the New Testament".

In South Africa, with the visit of John G. Lake, the Apostolic Faith Mission was born, again with tremendous results. According to Synan (2005) Lake, in April 1908, led a large missionary party to Johannesburg, where he began to spread the Pentecostal message throughout the nation... founding two large and influential Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa. The white branch took the name "Apostolic Faith Mission" (AFM) in 1910, borrowed from the name of the famous mission on Azusa Street. The black branch eventually developed into the "Zion Christian Church" (ZCC), which by 1993 claimed no less than 6,000,000 members and, despite some doctrinal and cultural variations, was recognized as the largest Christian church in the nation. In its annual Easter conference at Pietersburg (Polokwane), this church gathers upwards of 2,000,000 worshippers, the largest annual gathering of Christians on earth.



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### 3.2.3. Missionary activity

Like the Methodists and Brethren, the Pentecostals were strongly missionary-minded. According to Synan (2005)

> This first wave of Pentecostal pioneer missionaries produced what has become known as the "Classical Pentecostal Movement" with over 11,000 Pentecostal denominations throughout the world. These continued to proliferate at an amazing rate as the century came to an end. In retrospect, the pattern established in South Africa was repeated in many other nations as the movement spread around the world. That is, an enterprising Pentecostal pioneer such as Lake broke the ground for a new movement, which was initially despised and rejected by the existing churches. This phase was followed by organized Pentecostal denominational missions' efforts, which produced fast-growing missions and indigenous churches.

## 4. What causes once great movements to lose their initial focus, and experience a diminished effectiveness?

The purpose of this section is to show how once powerful, vibrant Christian movements, like the ones reviewed above, lost much of their initial spiritual drive and vitality and settled down to become denominational institutions. This is not to say that these movements have completely lost all of their power. But it is true that institutionalism diminishes effectiveness. What causes powerful movements, who believed that they had a commission from God to penetrate the world with the Gospel, to lose their initial fervency and zeal and settle down into an institutionalised way of life, often forfeiting or diminishing their effectiveness?

In my studies of a number of church movements in history, I have discovered that many movements, for various reasons lose their momentum and effectiveness. By reading the work of several Christian sociologists it appears that there are numerous factors that cause this.



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Finke and Stark (2005:45) show how a movement undergoes serious change when they move from sect to Church.

> The sect-Church process concerns the fact that new religious bodies nearly always begin as sects and that, if they are successful in attracting a substantial following, they will, over time, almost inevitably be gradually transformed into churches. That is, successful religious movements nearly always shift their emphasis toward this world and away from the next, moving from high tension with the environment toward increasing lower levels of tension.

**4.1 The problem of institutionalism.**

One of the greatest problems that movements face is institutionalism. The Oxford Dictionary (1986:281) describes an institute as: “an organised body for promotion of scientific or other aim”. The Church on the other hand by nature is a living organism. It is the Body of Christ. It was never meant to become an institutional organisation, negating or stifling its organic life and power.

Institutionalism is often at the heart of stifling the life and work of the Holy Spirit. The most telling sign of the onset of institutionalism is a diminished reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit, causing man to depend on organisation, man-made structures, hierarchical authorities and programs to carry the work forward. Perhaps the most telling indication of institutionalism is when the life of the Spirit becomes routine and mundane, often causing the initial passion and drive of the movement to diminish. It is like a cancer, slowly eating away at the body of the movement, eventually causing either death or serious debilitation. It was Paul who said that ‘the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life’ (2 Cor 3:6).

Speaking from a Pentecostal view, McClung (1986:143) says,

> though consolidation, structures, and organizations were necessary (and Biblically founded), they were never intended to drift toward the institutionalisation and bureaucratisation which plague Pentecostal denominations today.



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Institutionalism is neither a New Testament nor a post-New Testament phenomenon among the people of God. Constant warnings abound in the New Testament by the Apostles to the churches, not to lose their fervency (Rom 12:11) and not to put out the fire of the Spirit (1Thes 5:19) and not to get bogged down in the traditions of men that take the focus off the essence of faith in Christ (Col 2:8).

Getz (1974:193) describes how this mistake has been repeated several times by God's people on earth, causing them "to fall into the subtle trap of institutionalism… People, plus structure, plus age, seemingly, more often than not, equals institutionalism". He goes on to say (1974:198) that

> the Protestant church at large is, without doubt, institutionalised... it not only has become a victim of its form and ceremony, but it has lost its direction. It no longer has an absolute guide to determine its objectives and from which to get its principles to guide it in its function.

### 4.2 The problem of bureaucracy and organisation

Institutionalism manifests itself in many ways. One of the strongest elements of institutionalism is bureaucracy. The Oxford Dictionary (1986:67) defines bureaucracy as: "government by central administration; *officialism*; set of dominant officials". And Webster's Dictionary (1978:38) adds the following: "government departments as a source of political power, **obstruction to progress".**

One of the elements of bureaucracy is an unhealthy form of organisation. Organisation is vital as long as it serves the essential purpose of a movement. Jackson (1999:103) says that true organisation allows the organism to continue to grow. Even Jesus had some form of organisation in His 'movement'. The fact that he gathered to Himself a group of disciples can be seen as a form of organisation. That He organised ministry trips could be seen as a form of organisation. That they had times together for teaching and instruction is a form



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of organisation. But organisation was always the servant of the goals of the team leader and the team. If organisation is not the servant of the organic life of the group, it will end up being the master and will destroy it. So often the real problem, according to Getz (1974:193) is when the form and structure becomes more important than the people that make up the organisation.

The problem with bureaucracy, according to Simson (1999: XX) is that it leaves no room for spontaneity and humanity, no room for real life. This has a stifling effect on the life and flow of the Spirit. Simson (1999: XX) sums up the problem very well when he says: “What has become a maximum of organisation with a minimum of organism, has to be changed into a minimum of organisation to allow a maximum of organism”.



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Speaking for the Brethren, Lineham (1982:11) says,

> We are system builders but God is above and beyond our systems. In effect system builders recreate denominationalism in a new and more insidious form – more insidious because there is no formal structure among Brethren for considering issues. Too easily, Brethren vested authority in certain great preachers but these men were almost always the narrowest and strictest…they became grim fundamentalists…

One of Wesley's great strengths was his ability to organise. However, when organisation becomes more important than the essential life of the movement itself, it stifles the flow of that very life. Institutionalism in Methodism began very early. As an example, Wesley could not find a suitable successor to take on the leadership of the movement. So, according to Davies (1963:127), he drew up a legal 'Deed of Declaration' and appointed a Conference of a hundred specified men, and made that Conference his successor. And so from its early beginnings, Methodism subtly slipped into institutionalism. The fact that they continued to make such an impact on the world with the Gospel was, I believe, due to the passion and zeal of its ministers and that they preached the Word with the power of the Holy Spirit. But in time the bureaucracy, organisation and institutionalism would eventually rob the movement of its initial vision, passion and power.

According to Eberle, quoted by Wagner (1999:136), when a leader of a movement is no longer able to lead, the control invariably ends up in the hands of those with gifts of administration, with pastors serving under them.

> The Apostolic anointing is replaced by superintendents, district representatives, overseers, bishops, and others with various titles, but all of whom have administrative hearts…. the Holy Spirit is restricted through well-meant rules and programs. Administrators become a 'lid' on the people involved under them.

Speaking of the problems that the wrong form of organisation can cause, Snyder (1977:67) says,



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> an institutional or organisational model is based on hierarchy, delegation of authority, impersonal relationships and formality. This is a legitimate form of human organisation admirably suited to some kinds of endeavours, but it is not a proper model for Church structure.

Very early in the Methodist's history, presidents, conferences and constitutions formed the fabric of the movement that would later stifle its initial vision of evangelism and church planting.

Observing the Assemblies of God in America, Poloma (2005:44) says that the AG has become

> a well structured bureaucracy…with a proliferation of programs to mobilize groups and resources…a complex organisation which attempts to maintain the vision and carry out the mission of the Assemblies of God…

and concludes that institutionalism and over-organisation has supressed the initial power and charisma of much of the Pentecostal movement.

### 4.3 The Problem of professionalism

One of the pitfalls for young vibrant movements is the drift toward professionalism where the movement begins to rely on human expertise rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word. This has inevitably led to a loss of spiritual effectiveness.

According to Simson (1999: XIX) heavy *professionalization* of the church since Constantine had been a pervasive influence in the Church which has divided the people of God artificially into laity and professional clergy and has developed power-based mentalities and pyramid structures.

Finke and Stark (2005:160,161) describe how a movement can move into compromising its initial vision and passion. When movements get to the point of



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having an increased “affluent membership” and a “professionalized clergy”, compromise sets in where the

> ‘well-trained’ clergy begin to lift restrictions on behaviours and soften doctrines that had set the sect apart from its social environment – a process known as sect transformation or secularisation.

Early Methodism in America is a very good example of a movement falling into the trap of professionalism. The growth of Methodism in America was, according to Finke and Stark (2005:57), miraculous.

> In 1776 the Methodists were a tiny religious society with only 65 churches scattered through the colonies. Seven decades later they towered over the nation. By 1850 there were 13,302 Methodist congregations, enrolling more than 2.6 million members – the largest single denomination, accounting for more than a third of all American church members. For such growth to occur in eighty years seems nearly miraculous.

But as we will see, through various factors, the Methodists experienced a dramatic drop in numbers and a loss in their effectiveness.

Although the Methodists said that they would never ‘manufacture’ preachers, according to Fink and Stark (2005:77) that is exactly what happened. In the next seven decades (1866) this all changed. According to Finke and Stark (2005:116),

> Most congregations were no longer the province of the local class-leaders and exhorters – the amateurs had been replaced as the circuit riders settled into comfortable parsonages. The professional clergy now ran the Methodist church in a fully realised Episcopal fashion. Many Methodist clergy had begun to read their sermons, and many of the younger ministers now came to the pulpit from Methodist seminaries.

In contrast to the Methodist decline, the Southern Baptists maintained a steady growth. One of the main reasons according to Finke and Stark (2005:188) is that



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"early in the twentieth century the Southern Baptists still had an abundance of farmer-preachers". Because many of them continued in their secular employment they remained in touch with the 'ordinary people' and did not become 'professional' ministers.

The Pentecostals suffered the same fate. McClung (1968:131) explains that

> ministers were considered more respectable if they went to college. Then the process escalates until graduate schools are established…down the line a two-tiered ministry is likely to develop

and so a form of professionalism crept in, compromising some of the initial passion and zeal and fundamentals of the faith.

For the Pentecostals, a desire for acceptance and respectability from other denominations would cause a similar effect to take a grip on the movement. McClung (1986:130) explains that "for many years the Pentecostals were lumped along with the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons and were greatly persecuted for what they stood for". But the time came when, according to McClung, they became 'respectable' and were accepted as a fully-fledged denomination. But as he points out, that came with a heavy price of compromise.

> One price of respectability is that you will continue to be accepted so long as you do not stress your doctrinal distinctiveness. For Pentecostals this meant keeping a low profile on Baptism in the Holy Spirit…miraculous healings and exorcisms, prophecies…and many more.

Clearly this led to a compromise of some of the movement's core values held so dear by the Pentecostals.

### 4.4 The problem of traditionalism

Another dynamic that causes movements to lose their effectiveness is traditionalism**.** Paul speaks of tradition in the good and bad sense. To the



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Colossians he warns the Christians of being taken in by the deceit of “human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8). In this sense Paul is referring to practices of human origin that would nullify the work of Christ. On the other hand, Paul uses tradition in the positive sense, warning the brethren to keep away from the idle and which is “not in accord with the tradition that you received from us” (2 Thess 3:6).

Any tradition or pattern that originates in man’s thinking and not by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ends up stifling the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:6). When this takes place, the danger of humanistic tradition setting into the movement is very possible. As a result, according to Snyder (1977:119), un-Biblical traditions and structures limit the growth of the Church until they are either corrected or (more often) burst open as New Wine bursts old wineskins. Therefore, the challenge of any movement is to be continually renewing and refreshing itself in the Word and the Holy Spirit. Addressing the Corinthian church, Paul reminds them that they did not receive “the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1Cor 2:12).

Humans have an inclination toward tradition, constantly deferring to the natural, as opposed to the spiritual way of thinking. Man by nature does not like the unpredictable. Tradition is not a bad thing, but when it represses the essential life of something then it has the potential of being destructive. That is why Paul told the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).

When the traditions of men take the place of the Word and the work of the Spirit, the movement is robbed of its essential life, power and momentum in its essential mission. When man leans to his own understanding, he negates the Word of God and extinguishes the fire of the Holy Spirit (Prov 3:5).



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Because man has a desire to comprehend the 'life of the Spirit', he often ends up containing it and controlling it in such a way that it loses its life-giving power. In describing the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit is like the wind. It (He) is unpredictable. "The wind blows where it wishes" (Jn 3:8). The moment one 'contains' or seeks to 'comprehend' the Spirit, one causes its life to become mundane, losing the essence of 'Its' power. The moving of the Spirit is dynamic, always bringing with it the freshness of God's life and power. That is why Jesus referred to the constant flow of His life and presence as the New Wine of the Spirit. New Wine requires new wineskins (structures) to facilitate the continual renewing flow of God's life and power within His Church (Mt 9:17).

Again, this has been a problem from time immemorial. Getz (1974:195) speaking of the powerful reform that took place after the exile under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, with its spiritual renewal in the nation, says that by the time Jesus Christ came, Israel as a whole, and its religious system particularly, had become so encrusted with institutionalism that it was almost impossible to recognize truth from tradition. It is against this background that Jesus said, "your tradition nullifies the Word of God" (Mk 7:13).

Even in a movement like the Brethren that sought to steer away from organisation and tradition, a Brethren leader, Lineham (2003) speaking of his own movement says that they have become burdened by a heavy weight of tradition. Although they do not have formal systems, he has found that informal tradition has become a heavy weight and has developed a whole range of rather complicated traditions, where for example church services lack freshness and are totally predictable. According to another leader in the Brethren movement, Coad (1968:219) says that

> when a movement turns its guiding principles (however sound they may be) into dogmatic tradition, it ceases to be capable of a realistic assessment of its own shortcoming.

**4.5 Routinization of charisma**



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Another factor that causes a movement to lose its impetus and effectiveness is what sociologist Weber (2005) has called the *'routinization of charisma'*. What he means is that any movement, be it secular or 'sacred', can move from being a dynamic expression of the initial life of the movement to becoming something that is merely routine and machine-like. *Routinization* sets in when the Church relies on its own intuition and not on the Word and the Spirit and ends up causing that which is holy and sacred to be changed into something that is mundane and loses the impact of the life of God.

John Wimber, according to Jackson (1999:349), felt that "*routinization* normally sets in within a generation of the genesis of an organisation". The challenge that faces every movement is to maintain the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in all its endeavours. This is the danger that man continually faces when he formalises that which is meant to be alive and dynamic. For this reason, the Church is in constant need of spiritual renewal to avoid falling into the trap of becoming mundane and routine, hence Paul's encouragement to the Church to be continually 'washed by the Word' (Eph 5:26).

The poet Santayana (2005) said, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it". Part of the challenge that the Church faces today, as it seeks to have a lasting effect in its vision of discipling the nations, is to learn from the movements discussed above and to endeavour not to fall into the trap of institutionalism and all that it encompasses. It is clear from God's Word that He desires that, instead of movements becoming institutionalised with a loss of their power and effectiveness, they should go on to impact each succeeding generation.

Commenting in the present day on the new Apostolic groups, Donald Miller, quoted by Wagner (1999:132), sees "the inevitable evolution of the new paradigm [his term for 'new Apostolic'] groups toward denominationalism". The danger, according to Miller is that, "In time, they will start centralising authority, insisting on uniform practices, and creating bureaucratic layers of approval for acts that previously were spontaneous and



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Spirit-led". This is the trap that faces all new movements and must be avoided if they are to stay on the cutting edge of what the Holy Spirit is doing.

The challenge that faces any movement is to keep the vision alive and to move with the Spirit. Jackson (1999:353), speaking on behalf of the Vineyard movement says,

> We are determined to resist the *routinization of charisma* by maintaining our radical dependence upon the presence and power of God and the administration of the Holy Spirit.

**5. Summary**

The movements discussed above all started out with the desire to be strongly Word-based and make an impact on the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Each movement had a desire to emulate apostolic Christianity but allowed itself to fall prey to becoming over-organised, institutional, 'professional' and traditional in its thinking and practice, which in the end caused it to lose its effectiveness as a movement.

In the next chapter I will address some of these problems and will examine some of the ways that movements can ensure their effectiveness for succeeding generations.



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## Chapter Seven

## Generational effectiveness – the challenge of impacting the third and fourth Generation

### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined how once vibrant movements lost their initial focus, fervour and vitality through over-organization, tradition and bureaucratic structures. In this chapter I will examine what I call 'generational effectiveness'. I will discuss what is required for a movement to stay effective into successive generations, keeping the vision alive and passing it on to the next generation. I believe that it is God's express purpose that the Church grows 'from one degree of glory to the next' (2 Cor 3:18) and lives with a sustained momentum from generation to generation.

According to Phillips (1989),

> The third generation always brings particular problems for a movement. In the first generation a perceived truth is a conviction; in the second generation it settles down to a belief; in the third generation it becomes merely an opinion.

As we study history we will note that this is a pattern that repeats itself over and over. Moving into the third and fourth generation with a growing faith and witness is indeed a great challenge, but one that I believe God desires us to overcome.

Sauer (2005) elaborates on this idea and says that often the third generation, especially of a spiritual movement, fails. It so often gives up spiritual energies and Biblical truths and convictions which were held dear to the pioneers of their movement.

Finke and Stark (2005:46) quoting Niebur says that "Rarely does a second generation hold the convictions it has inherited with fervour equal to that of its fathers".



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## 2. The problem of losing generational impact throughout Biblical history

Throughout Biblical history, Old and New Testament, as well as Church history, there has been a failure on the part of God's people to sustain a momentum of a vibrant faith and witness one generation to another. Great movements have come and gone and have failed to sustain their initial spiritual life and vitality.

From the beginning, God made His intention very clear to Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed and that this blessing would flow from one generation to the next, bringing the blessing of God to all people. "…And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed". (Gen 12:3). The blessing that He is speaking of is that all nations will come to a saving knowledge of God.

The first four generations from Abraham to Joseph managed to sustain the vision and carry the covenant blessing to succeeding generations. This was probably one of the longest lines of 'generational faithfulness' in the Old Testament. The story of the Old Testament however, is one of continual breakdown in handing a vibrant faith down to the next generation.

After four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, God raised up Moses as the leader of the people of Israel. He is a 'new' first generation in which God's covenant with His people is renewed and carried on to greater definition under his leadership. Through his leadership Israel is birthed as a nation and has a greater revelation of Jehovah God and the unfolding purpose for them as a nation and for the nations of the world.

Moses does an outstanding job as the leader of Israel. It appears from Scripture that God fully intended Moses to take the people of Israel into the Promised Land, but through an indiscretion (Num 20:9-12) he forfeited the right to take the children of Israel into the land of promise. He had a clear understanding that God's purpose was that succeeding generations would know Him and serve Him and enter into the fullness of their inheritance as God's people and be a witness to Him in the entire world. Speaking prophetically, Moses expresses the heart of God to the people of Israel: "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and



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lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. **Make them known to your children and your children's children**" (Deut 4:9).

Much of what he believed came about in the second generation through the outstanding leadership of Joshua. Under his leadership Israel experienced great blessing and they entered the land of promise. Speaking to the people of Israel, Joshua reminds them "that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed" (Jos 23:14).

Although Joshua did all that the Lord commanded him to do, and had an able team of elders working with him, it is curious that they never followed the tradition of raising up a leader like Moses and Joshua to lead the people of Israel into the next vital phase of their inheritance. They needed a strong leader like Moses and Joshua to take Israel into the next generation and to fulfil the calling of God upon them as His nation. But according to Eaton (2.12.2005) what might appear as failure on Joshua's part was not his fault:

> There was no possibility of Joshua having a successor for this reason: Once the land of Canaan had been subdued Joshua's soldiers were all dismissed and sent to the conquered tribal areas. A new situation came into being where each tribe had to thoroughly defeat the Canaanites in their own area. They each needed to seek their own military giants tribe-by-tribe. The nation was somewhat de-centralised after the days of Joshua.

According to Eaton (2000:10) the third generation after Joshua continued to live for God, but their victories were only partial as third generation believers. They were people for whom salvation was not as real as it had been for believers of an earlier time. Israel had partially but not entirely conquered the Promised Land. He goes on to say that one of the great failures in this third generation was that they failed to follow through with what God was calling them to do…

> 'third generation believers' fail to carry forward the work of God to an advanced state of victory. They carry things forward a little but are more or less content with what they had been left by their parents.



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Because of this fragmentation, and with no leader in the third generation, Israel went into a time of lawlessness where everyone did what seemed right in his own eyes (Jos 17:6).

The next major era in Old Testament history is under the Kingship of David who marks the beginning of another first generation. Under his leadership Israel move into a new phase of experiencing God, leading Israel into a deeper understanding of worship and faith as something of the heart. David himself had a clear understanding that God's purpose was for the redeemed community to live with an increasing revelation of God and to go from one generation to the next and effectively be a light to the world.

Psalm 78 encapsulates what David felt about an on-going effective witness by the redeemed community. "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the **coming generation** the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he **commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them**, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children," (Psa 78:6). In another Psalm he says **"One generation shall commend your works to another**, and shall declare your mighty acts" (Psa 145:4).

David's son, Solomon, the second generation of this era, is raised up to be David's successor. Like his father, he would have known the desire of God to impact succeeding generations. For a season the people experienced the glory of God through his leadership and enjoyed the glory that accompanied the building of the magnificent temple. Although Solomon started well and did a great deal for Israel, sadly he got sidetracked.

According to Willard (2003),

> King Solomon began well. He knew about God, at least, from his association with his father David, and he understood he could not carry out his work by himself. He prayed for wisdom and knowledge. God gave it to him. He became very great (II Chr 9). But to



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> strengthen his position, he formed alliances through marriage with royalty of many nations, and his seven hundred wives turned his heart away from Jehovah to worship their gods (I Kings 11:1-6).

The vitality of the faith of Israel soon suffered another blow only in the second generation after David.

McKellar (5.12.2005) points out that according to Proverbs 2:1; 3:1, 4:1, 5:1 6:1; 7:1, David was a good mentor to his son. Solomon failed in his responsibility of building on what his father experienced in God, and failed to bring the next generation into something more of God's purposes.

Speaking about 250 years after this era, Isaiah reiterates the purpose of God for an on-going witness from generation to generation: "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore" (Isa 59:21).

The next major event in the history of Israel is the Exile in 586 B.C. It was in the Exile that Israel experienced a major spiritual revival. Through the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Israel underwent a radical renewal of faith. Under the ministry of Ezra, the worship life of Israel was restored and the Word was brought back into a place of prominence. The people themselves, after serious repentance, made restitution for the sins they had committed against God and they were 'back on track' as God's people.

The Exile, according to Baxter (1960:28) brought about

> such a transformation in the religious conceptions of the Hebrew people as can only be described as one of the most astounding revolutions in the history of any nation.

According to Baxter (1960:32) all they had were the Scriptures with all the predictions of the coming Messiah and their renewed faith in Jehovah, the one and only true God. But



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even after such a great revival, Israel once again lost its fervour in serving God, leaving behind a faithful remnant that awaited their coming Messiah.

## 2.1 The New Testament

Even though the New Testament Church was fraught with many problems of doctrine and heresy, the faith of the Church by the third generation was still vibrant and it was fulfilling its mission of going into all the world with the Gospel.

Willard (2003) makes this important observation - that the early Christians hold the record for sustaining the inward fire of vision in the “founders”. For two or three centuries the vision of Jesus Christ as Lord burned brightly in their hearts.

Generational effectiveness in the New Testament is a very interesting dynamic to observe. The advent of Jesus and the gathering of his disciples form another first generation. They in turn pass on to a second generation all that they learnt and experienced as the Holy Spirit led them into an increased knowledge of Christ and His unfolding purpose for the world. Peter fathers Mark; Paul fathers Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2), Titus (Tit 1:4) and Onesimus (Phile 1:10). John refers to his ‘children’, who are clearly those that he has led to the Lord and has watched over and mentored, which would make them the second generation (3 Jn 1:4). It is also believed that John discipled Polycarp. Paul encourages Timothy to emulate this process by entrusting to reliable men what he has learnt from Paul that they may to teach others (2 Tim 2:12). Knowing the level of Paul’s mentoring, his statement of ‘teach others’ is not an academic exercise but one of imparting the life and vision of the ministry of Jesus which would appear to be a pattern that God wanted perpetuated in coming generations in the Church.

But by 300 A.D., the picture changed dramatically. The major factor that brought about the rapid decline in the on-going witness of the Church to the world was the ‘merging’ of the state and the Church. This marked the beginning of the Church



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moving into an era of deadly institutionalism, robbing it of its power and effective witness.

### 3. God's mandate – generation to generation

In the current resurgence of Apostolic Christianity throughout the world, one of the challenges that these movements face is to not repeat the mistakes of previous movements. This will only happen if they ensure that the next generation is being prepared and equipped in every possible way to take the movement on into greater effectiveness and influence in the world.

I believe that God's intention when Jesus returns will not only be for a pure and spotless bride, but one that is filled with vitality and health; one that has, even in the face of severe opposition managed, by God's grace, to persevere and to be an effective witness in the world from one generation to the next. The mark of a mature church is that She has managed to sustain the momentum of a fervent faith in Christ; one that bears a radical testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and has a passion to see every tribe reached with the Gospel.

The purpose of the five-fold ministry referred to by Paul in Eph 4:11 is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Eph 4:13).

According to Eaton (2002:31) the Church is going to experience a greater level of blessing than it has ever known. Commenting on Ephesians chapter 4, Eaton (2002:75)
says that as the Church grows in the unity of the faith and in the knowledge of Christ, there is going to be a "fuller, deeper, richer knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ than has ever been known in the story of the Church…the Church has a glorious future".

When we look into the future, John's revelation gives us a fairly good idea. The words of Jesus to the seven churches are an indication of what He would like to see



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the Church become. He commends the church for patient endurance and for not tolerating evil men (Rev 2:2); for faithfulness in tribulation (Rev 2:9); for holding fast to His name and not denying the faith; for works of love, faith, service, patient endurance, and that previous works exceeded the first (Rev 2:18). He promises to those who conquer and keep His words that they will have power over the nations (Rev 2:26).

On the other hand Jesus indicates what He is looking for in the Church: a Church whose love will not grow cold (Rev 2:4); a fearless Church that will remain faithful in the face of persecution (Rev 2:10); one that will not tolerate heresy in any form (Rev 2:15); a Church that will not tolerate manipulation and deception through false prophecy, causing immorality (Rev 2:20). Putting all these attributes together gives a picture of a powerful, mature, uncompromising Church that will grow stronger as we approach the end of the age. That is what the present day Church should be working toward.

The call upon the present day Church is to break the patterns of previous generations that lost their initial passion and focus and prove that by being strongly Word-based, Christ-centred and continually empowered by the Holy Spirit, It can go from strength to strength, from one generation to the next with an increased evidence of being changed from one degree of glory to the next (2 Cor 3:18). The challenge that faces the Church today is for Her not only to be this glorious Bride in preparation to meet Her Groom, but to be militant, pressing into new frontiers with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with ever-increasing effectiveness. I believe that it is clearly God's intention that in this segment of Church history, God wants the Church to be growing in effectiveness, fulfilling the Great Commission and handing on the baton of a vibrant victorious Christian community to the second and third generations aswell as those that follow.

**4. Keys to ensuring a sustained level of effectiveness from one generation to the next**



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What is required for churches and movements to keep the fervency and vitality of faith and vision alive from one generation to the next? According to Sauer, (2005) no church has any guarantee of retaining the freshness and vigour which it had at its beginning. He believes that every new generation in the Church as well as spiritual movements must "lay hold" (I Tim. 6:12) afresh for themselves,

> quite directly, personally and individually, of the blessings, which had been received and held fast by their spiritual fathers. Spiritual possessions cannot be merely ‘inherited’.

As important as this is, it is only one of a number of key elements that need to work together to ensure an on-going effectiveness to coming generations.

### 4.1 The importance of fathering in the Church.

A key issue for perpetuating a vital, vibrant Christian faith is the raising up of spiritual sons in the Church. According to Simson, (1999:254) the real issue is not merely the training of leaders, but the heart of the Father is to simply raise up spiritual sons. True sons are prepared to take on the responsibility given by the father. True sons have caught the vision of the father and feel a Godly compulsion to carry that vision on into the next generation.

Part of the problem in the Church over the years has been the problem of the generation gap. This should not be so in the family of God. Where there is healthy family life, the Church should enjoy fellowship across all generation groups. The fathers should be strong in the faith, willing to pass on their faith to the younger generation and the younger generation should be willing to learn from the older generation. When this dynamic is in place there is a strong flow of spiritual life and vision from generation to generation.

One of the outstanding features that we are seeing in movements across the world at this present time is that the so-called generation gap is non-existent in many movements. Many leaders have avoided the temptation of building toward themselves and creating their own empire, thus creating an environment for the second generation to be fully involved in the life of the church. Simson (1999:123)



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observes that ‘apostolic fathers’ usually have a true Kingdom mentality and are least liable to build a massive movement and kingdom around themselves. They have realised that unless they bring the second generation through and allow them to go further than themselves, the movement will lose its impetus and become just another monument. Because of an understanding of true family, fathers are eager to mentor their young sons in the faith and the young sons are eager to be mentored by true spiritual fathers.

The calling of the next generation is not to merely perpetuate what the previous generation experienced in God. Their calling and function is to go on and experience further revelation from God that will take them into the future and fulfil His plans and purposes for reaching the ends of the earth with the Gospel. In line with this thinking, Daniel (2004:32) makes the observation that sons are those who carry the ‘family genes’ and that true success in fathering lies in begetting or producing sons who can be successors and are able to take over from the father.

We see something of this in the Old Testament: Moses and Joshua; Eli and Samuel; Samuel mentoring in the school of the prophets; David and Solomon; Elijah and Elisha. And in the New Testament: Jesus and His disciples; then Paul and Timothy; Peter and Mark; John and ‘his children’.



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## 4.2 The pattern of Jesus as father and mentor

This was the very pattern that Jesus used in raising up His disciples who would go on to the next generation with His gospel. He was not merely training a group of leaders to take over from Him and lead the Church, but He was raising up sons who would catch His heart and lead the Church into the fullness of its call and mission in the world. Jesus Himself declared to His disciples that they would go on and do greater things than He did (Jn 14:12).

### 4.3 New Testament generations

The advent of Jesus marks the beginning of a new generation. Christ's disciples became the second generation. As I mentioned in chapter three, when Jesus trained the twelve, He was not merely their Teacher, but their friend, Father and mentor. He did not give them mere head knowledge, which sadly is what so many Christian institutions do, but He poured His life into them and firmly established them in His ways and prepared them for their mission to make disciples of all nations which would pass on to succeeding generations. The disciples in turn discipled and fathered the third generation to carry on the work of the ministry that they had received from Christ.

Paul clearly has a fathering relationship with Timothy, Titus and Onesimus and refers to them as sons in the Gospel. "But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the Gospel" (Phil 2:22). And of Titus: "my true child in a common faith…" (Tit 1:4); (2Co 8:23).

### 4.4 Building on the previous generation

Another vital key to effective generational blessing is that the succeeding generation builds on the preceding generation. The ideal situation is that there is an overlap between generations. As we see with Jesus, the first generation is working with and training the second generation. They are being raised up in the presence of the first.



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They are working together. They are not waiting in the wings to take over as it were. It is much like a relay race. For part of the race the second runner is already running when the baton is passed on to him. Furthermore, this does not mean that the second and third generations do things exactly the same way as their fathers, merely perpetuating a tradition. They build on the strengths of their fathers, always anticipating the pouring out of the New Wine to take the movement on into greater effectiveness to impact the world with the Gospel.

### 4.5 Receiving the New Wine of the Spirit

Generational effectiveness is about sustaining vision and momentum by keeping the essential message and the mission of the Church within the boundaries of Biblical norms that continually line up with the teaching of Jesus and are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The challenge of one generation is to pass on to the next a glowing torch, not a smouldering wick.

According to Jesus one of the keys to an on-going vibrant spiritual life is the need to receive the constant flow of New Wine (His Life) into new wineskins (the Church) (Mt 9:17). One of the most important aspects to sustaining the vision is for the Church or movement to continually be in a place of receiving the New Wine of the Spirit and constantly allowing the wineskin to expand and make room for the New Wine. Daniel (2001:34) explains the process very well: "God is building a wineskin that can contain all that He wants to do in and through the Church **in a sustained manner"**. That means that we must hold the New Wine in such a way that we 'contain and sustain', i.e. we 'handle' the New Wine in a way that we don't let it fall away, but 'contain' it in such a way that we are able to sustain what God is doing in the constant fresh flow of His Spirit. Many movements have been short-sighted and tried to contain what God is doing and end up containing the New Wine in such a way that they stifle the on-going move of the Spirit. Daniel (2001:27) believes that there is a desire in the heart of God that whatever truth He restores to the Church is sustained and continues to produce fruit.



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Herein lies the challenge. It is something of a dynamic tension. It is the ability and willingness to receive the New Wine of the Spirit but at the same time to allow God the liberty to take the movement on. The temptation (as mentioned previously) is to contain the wine in such a way that it is not possible for the Spirit to take the movement on to the next phase of 'glory' and of revelation, thus taking the movement on in a continual flow of God's life and power. This is where the quenching of the Spirit takes place that so often prevents the movement from going into the next phase of growth and development.

Jackson (1999:349) quotes a provocative question once posed by John Wimber: "Would it be possible to build a **perpetually self-renewing organization**?" I believe that not only is it possible, but it is absolutely necessary for movements to be in this cycle of perpetual renewal – keeping the vision alive and passing a vibrant faith on to the next generation.

According to Wilson, quoted by Poloma (2005) although a movement can trace its pedigree and can show the relationship of each ascending generation to its predecessor, each new generation still has to '**be born in reproductive passion'**. He says that revivals last, not because the movement had an impressive beginning, but rather because **periodic renewal keeps the enthusiasms vibrant** despite energy-sapping generational, organizational and circumstantial changes.

### 4.6 Importance of the apostolic/prophetic

Another vital key to the on-going health and vitality of the Church and of generational effectiveness is the five-fold ministry (Eph 4). The purpose of the five-fold ministry is very clear: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Eph 4:13).

Of the five gift ministries, the Apostle and Prophet are the spearhead of ministry to the Church (Eph 2:20). Each ministry is of vital importance. The Apostolic ministry is of



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paramount importance in the process of keeping the Church on track and in spiritual health.

It is vital that the two gifts work hand in hand to steer the Church into the unfolding purposes of God. Daniel (2001:75, 77) combines the two offices and talks of an 'Apostolic/prophetic' model for the Church.

> The Apostolic and prophetic gifts are designed to work together in establishing churches. The Apostolic is designed to work with the prophetic, and the prophetic is designed to work with the Apostolic.

When these gifts are at work in a church or a movement, according to Daniel (2001:79) it enables the Church to have a passion for Jesus and an uncompromising heart to do things God's way. When this happens, the Church as a prophetic people has the ability to "see the future, to prepare for the future and to become the future".

To keep the Church on the cutting edge of what God is doing, the prophetic ministry, working in conjunction with the apostolic ministry takes the Church into the future. The prophetic ministry is like a compass to the Church. It is constantly used by God to break carnal mindsets and helps guard the Church from leaning on its own understanding and ensures that the Church stays on its Biblical course.

According to Wagner (1999:105) God has blessed the apostle with "an extraordinary authority in spiritual matters that is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches." The apostle is gifted in understanding how the Church should function. Paul refers to his apostolic ministry as a 'master builder' (1 Cor 3:10). A true apostle is one who understands the 'blueprint' of the Church. He will constantly measure the Church and the churches that he is involved with by referring to the 'blueprint' – the 'building plans' of the Architect, Christ the Head of the Church (Eph 4:15).

When one examines great movements of the past, in many instances this vital element of the Apostolic working with the prophetic gifting was not in full operation.



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These particular gift ministries have only come back into greater prominence over the past thirty to forty years through the Renewal and Restoration Movements.

Jackson (1999:369) makes the comment that an apostolic model of leadership is essential in the early stages when the 'genetic code' of a movement is being set. Setting a church or movement's genetic code is not subject to a democracy. "God gives a leader vision and he has to 'set his face like flint' lest the vision be lost in a sea of discordant voices." Although this is a valid view of the apostolic model being vital at the birthing of a movement, it limits the full scope and function of the apostle. In the process of the five-fold ministry, all the gift ministries are to be functioning in the Church "until we reach maturity and the full stature of Christ." (Eph 4:11). This would indicate that the gift ministries of Apostles and Prophets are to be at work until the Church reaches full maturity.

Paul aptly describes how in this process we are the household of God "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the Cornerstone," and how through this, we are "being joined together," and growing "into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:20, 21).

**4.7 The importance of relational Christianity**

The heart of vibrant Christianity is based on relationship. Everything that Jesus did was built out of relationship. This was the key to the training of His disciples. The early Church was founded on relationship before function and organization.

Churches and movements go off course when the high value of relationship is compromised, when organization and structures take prominence of place over strong accountable relationships. When vital relationships are in place, it feeds into the organism of the Church. When the fellowship of the leadership is founded on accountability and vulnerability the church or movement is in a state of health. Apostolic input and direction is not something forced on to a church but is invited on the basis of relationship.



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**5. The responsibility of passing the baton to the next generation**

The first generation of any movement has an immense responsibility to maintain the passion, vision and values of the movement and to pass it on to the next generation. Many movements have been birthed, yet very few have had the staying power to reach the second, third and fourth generation with the vibrant vision that it started out with.

The responsibility of the first generation is not only to keep the vision sound, but to hand it on to the next generation. It is vital that the second generation is already part of the movement and is absorbing the vitality of the current vision. For example, Joshua, the second generation to Moses, was present with Moses. He was vitally involved in what God was doing with Moses as a first generation leader. When the time came for Moses to hand the 'baton' on to Joshua, Joshua was ready to take the baton and to take the 'movement' into the next phase of moving into the Promised Land. McKellar (2.12.2005) observes that "Joshua's training was more by example and observation of Moses", which is a good example of a willing second generation. He did not have to think up a new vision. An 'intact vision' and mandate were passed on to him. His calling was to be faithful and to keep the vision alive and to take the people of Israel into the next phase of their inheritance.

One of the missing keys in this process according to Simson (1999:257), is the breakdown of generational communication, thus making it very difficult to pass on the baton to the next generation. But things are changing. The generation gap in many movements is narrowing. With a new emphasis on fathering and mentoring this can only bode well for an effective raising up of sons in the house of God. If they are willing and teachable they will be able to take the baton and move ahead in the purposes of God. As they do this they will continue the process of bringing the third generation through to play their vital role in the process of effectively taking the Church in to the next phase of their development in the unfolding purposes of God.

A number of movements around the world are moving into their second generation of leadership: Terry Virgo of *New Frontiers International (U.K.);* Gerald Coates of *Pioneer*; (U.K.) and Derek Crumpton of *Foundations Ministries* in South Africa. In all these



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movements the first generation leaders have successfully raised up an effective second generation and are moving to the time when they will appoint second generation successors to carry on the work. New Covenant Ministries International have already handed the baton over to their second generation leader, with Tyrone Daniel taking over from his father, Dudley Daniel.

It is a critical time for these movements as they move into the second generation phase of the movement. If they adhere to the principles stated above, and avoid the pitfall described in chapter 6, I believe that we can anticipate that many current movements will experience an increased impetus and effectiveness and will go on to conquer more territory for the King in the pursuit of ‘making disciples of all nations’ (Mt 28:19).



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## 6. Summary

The purpose of God for the Church is that She will grow in effectiveness as we move to the end of the age. History has shown a constant weakening in spiritual life down the generations. The Church that Jesus is building is one that needs to break the historical cycle of spiritual ineffectiveness but that will go on to the third and fourth generation with a sustained effective spiritual fervency that will impact succeeding generations with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the key factors in realising this goal will be a Church that has healthy relationships within its ranks; where there are not generation gaps; where mature fathers are mentoring the ‘sons in the house’ and where young enthusiastic sons are willing to learn from the fathers in the church. In this way the Church can be assured of handing a healthy Church on to succeeding generations and to be the powerful witness to the world that she is called to be.



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## Chapter Eight

## New Covenant Ministries International as a working model for church planting

### 1. Introduction

New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI) is essentially an apostolic team that serves a fellowship or family of churches throughout the world. The NCMI team would not regard the churches that relate to them as a movement. However, WordWeb (2005) describes a movement as “a group of people with a common ideology who try together to achieve certain general goals”. In this sense NCMI could be regarded as a movement. For the sake of the ‘argument’ I will refer to NCMI as an apostolic movement.

In the short space of just over twenty years, NCMI has developed into a significant ’movement’ that forms part of a wider apostolic movement that is growing throughout the earth. My purpose in this chapter is to provide an overview of NCMI, outlining its development from one man into a worldwide apostolic movement and to examine the vision and values that make this movement so effective.

### 2. Origin

In the early 1980’s, Dudley Daniel was given a promise that he would be a blessing not only where he pastored in Bryanston, but to the greater Johannesburg area, to South Africa and to the rest of the world. With a sense of courage and a commission from God he accepted the position to pastor that small Baptist church.

Dudley had a strong growing desire for Biblical Christianity. He began to meet with like-minded pastors who were also in search of a more Bible-based Christianity. Every Friday Pastors used to gather to worship, have fellowship and share their insights concerning the Biblical pattern of Church. During this time Dudley’s understanding of Apostolic Christianity began to grow and have great effect upon his friends and colleagues. In 1983 there were about ten churches in the greater Johannesburg area relating together under Dudley’s leadership. This group was represented by about



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twenty pastors and it was in 1983 that they began to talk of New Covenant Ministries as a grouping of like-minded men and women relating to each other and helping each other build the churches they led.

Other pastors from around the country began to meet with the group, which precipitated two annual pastors' gatherings. The group grew to about 70 relating church pastors from various backgrounds by the late 1980's, a time when many Christian leaders were seeking to embrace a more Biblical Christianity.

It was in these times of fellowship and teaching that God began to crystallise much of Dudley's and the team's understanding of Apostolic Christianity. Then, in the late 1980's Dudley had a growing understanding that at the heart of Apostolic Christianity was the Great Commission of Jesus, that we should 'disciple all nations' (Mt 28:19).

Since its inception about 25 years ago, NCMI has experienced tremendous growth.
It is very difficult to number the relating churches. Instead, NCMI prefers to speak more in terms of nations where churches have been planted and where NCMI have relating churches. According to recent statistics NCMI is working into about 75 nations around the world.

In the early 1990's Dudley's understanding of the commission of the Church to disciple nations began to crystallise. According to Daniel (2001:60) the mandate of the Church is to go into the entire world – not only to your city, your suburb, your street, and not even only to your country or continent but to the entire world. And the means of accomplishing this, according to Daniel (2001:65), is to plant New Testament churches

> in every village, every town, every city of every country that God calls us to work in and not planting for the sake of planting, but 'to plant New Testament churches where new believers are immediately brought into a New Testament lifestyle.

The heart of NCMI's vision is to fully embrace what they understand to be Apostolic Christianity in every way possible. Apostolic Christianity, according to Daniel (2001:47) requires the Church to embrace a 'whole-Bible' theology. In order to experience New



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Testament results, the Church needs to return to Biblical patterns that draw from the Old and New Testament.

The core vision of NCMI is to reach the nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Daniel (2001:65) the only way of fulfilling the Great Commission "is to plant New Testament churches in every village, every town, and every city of every country that God calls us to work in". For this reason, a high value is placed on church planting as the primary means of reaching this end. In order for these goals to be achieved there need to be healthy churches producing 'healthy' disciples who will play their role in helping the Church reach this end. NCMI is therefore also very focussed on bringing the churches that relate to them into a place of maturity.

**3. The priority of leadership training**

NCMI places a very high priority on leadership training. In the early years of the movement in South Africa the relating pastors and leaders from around the country would gather twice a year for a time of envisioning, training and fellowship. Much time was given to the ministry of the Holy Spirit where the gift of prophecy often played a major role, giving direction and clarity to the vision. These two meetings merged into one large annual meeting of all the relating churches from around the country as well as relating leaders from around the world. This gathering grew from 1,000 in the 1990's to nearly 5,000 in 2005. In the early 1990's NCMI had many relating churches around the world, which meant that these training times drew people from many countries, which helped fuel the vision of going to the nations.

Thus was birthed what is known in NCMI circles as LTTs – Leadership Training Times. These LTTs are now held in many different parts of the world and have become one of the most effective ways of leaders being trained in the various geographical areas that the team works into. What has emerged over the years is a culture of leadership training that has filtered down to the local church.



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The effectiveness of the churches relating to NCMI is largely due to the high mobility of the Apostolic team and the on-going connection through LTTs, regional training times and, in the bigger centres, city celebrations where all the churches in an area, like Gauteng in South Africa, get together for a celebration and gain apostolic teaching in some form.



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## 4. How LTTs function

The purpose of the LTT is to gather leaders in a geographical area for training. As an example, the major LTT in South Africa draws over 4,500 people. Over the years the team has discovered that four days is a very practical amount of time for substantial training. There is no fixed agenda or format at these meetings. The emphasis is on worship, the ministry of spiritual gifts and time for envisioning and teaching.

In the formative years of the movement Dudley would do a large portion of the teaching but would also use other members of the team to teach. During these training times the team works very closely together, constantly seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit as to how the meetings should go and who should preach. Each team member comes prepared to preach, but it is left to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the consensus of the team who ministers in each meeting.

To give some idea of the global extent of the work, the 2006 calendar where LTTs will take place shows the spread and activity of the work around the world: Arabian Gulf, Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, D.R. Congo, Denmark, Dubai, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Holland, India, Indonesia, Ivory coast, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South East Asia, Swaziland and Tanzania.

In each of these LTTs the same pattern is followed with variations according to the leadership and the needs of that particular community. But the basic pattern is adhered to with a team leader being given the task of facilitating the members of the apostolic team. Together they are led by the Spirit and seek to ‘tap in’ to what God wants to impart to that particular group of leaders.

According to Daniel (2004:7) team members are sent to different countries to gather the leaders to equip them for the work of the ministry, practically and theologically. Men and women who have ‘succeeded’ in their area of ministry are called upon to speak on their area of ‘expertise’.



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**5. Regional training times**

Apart from these major LTTs there are also many regional training events, which are similar to LTTs but more localised. Several churches in a region will get together at a venue where members of the apostolic team would be present to train and equip leaders. This 'training culture' has filtered down to the local churches that have their own training events where apostolic leaders will often come and do a week or weekend of training.

**6. City eldership**

Pastors who relate to NCMI get together in the various regions on a regular basis to pray and worship together. Again the meetings are flexible. There will be times of worship, prayer and ministering to one another. On other occasions there will be teaching by one or two members of the apostolic team.

**7. Trans- local (apostolic/prophetic) team training**

A few times each year, in different parts of the world the NCMI team leader will hold a time of training for potential team members. Because there are a growing number of churches relating to NCMI, there is a constant need for training new team members to help with the enormous task of ministering to the ever-increasing number of churches around the world.

**8. Church planters training**

As church planting is high on NCMI'S agenda, regular church planting courses are held around the world. According to a report in Let's Talk (1994:9) the first church planters training took place in 1994 with a group of five couples who trained for six months. From then on it has been a regular training program in the life of NCMI around the world. Potential church planters spend various amounts of time being taught by apostolic team members and have the opportunity of seeing how several successful base churches function.



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**9. International Theological Correspondence College (ITCC)**

Another form of training was introduced in 1996 with the establishment of the International Theological Correspondence College (ITCC). The objective was for the college to partner with local churches as part of the equipping process for the training of their people for the work of the ministry. ITCC is able to provide study material that is of sound Biblical and theological content, but the motivation is always to assist — not replace — the local church in their task of training and equipping their people for ministry.

# 10. Values

According to Daniel (2001:41) values are about how the Church fulfils God's vision by embracing Biblical principles. Elsewhere (2003:16) he says that everything that the Church does must be justified by the Word, from Genesis to Revelation. He says that our desire should be for the "Bible plus nothing and the Bible minus nothing".

## 10.1 Organic before organisation

NCMI is first and foremost an organic movement that relies on relationship and constantly seeks to avoid the trap of allowing the value of relationships to be replaced by mere function and not friendship. All churches that relate to NCMI do so completely on a voluntary basis. They are free to walk away from that relationship at any time. When one examines how the early Apostles functioned, strong relationships were of paramount importance in their teams and the vast network



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of churches that related to them. Reading the Epistles one is struck by the high value placed on relationships within the Body of Christ by the Apostles. The whole model of Church is relational. Churches that relate to the NCMI team do so out of a common sense of vision and similar values.

NCMI has no headquarters, no governing body, no president, no Synod. Organisation is necessary but kept to a minimum in order to concentrate on the task of mobilising the Church to fulfil her mission. Any form of organisation is merely to facilitate the effective working of the movement's mission to touch the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As I mentioned in chapter six, organisation needs to be the servant of the organic life of a movement**.**

Up until September 2004 the movement was led by an apostolic leader in the person of Dudley Daniel, it is now led by Tyrone Daniel. Over the years Dudley gathered around him what is referred to as an apostolic team, made up of five-fold gifting ministries from around the world.



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In a recent publication of Let's Talk, Wienand (2004:17), a member of the NCMI team, revisited some of the main values of NCMI. Here is a brief summary:

Letting our theology determine our behaviour; preparing the bride; being radically word-based; building covenantal relationships; friendship, not just function; seeking radical converts; the priesthood of all believers; understanding and releasing the anointing; a people of prayer; a people of character; all believer evangelism; bringing all to maturity; training and equipping all believers in leadership; all part of a team; building away from ourselves; the kind of leaders we choose will determine our immediate and ongoing effectiveness; placing equal importance on 'wine' and 'wineskin' – power and pattern; preach the Kingdom of God; having a 'whole-Bible' theology on Church-local and trans-local; commitment to city church; live in the reality of apostolic/prophetic team ministry; fulfilling the Great Commission by planting New Testament churches in every hamlet, village, town, city and country; networking with the broader body [of Christ]; going beyond the third generation; continuity – passing on the baton; an apostolic/prophetic Kingdom of God culture.



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# 11. A wineskin that will enable the Church to accomplish its mission of reaching every nation with the Gospel

According to Daniel (2001:34), God is building a wineskin that can contain all that God wants to do in and through the Church in a sustained manner and is able to facilitate the purposes of God. The challenge that faces the Church is to have a wineskin that is in a constant state of readiness to continually receive the New Wine of the Spirit, enabling the Church to be God's effective witnessing community. According to Daniel (2001:34), God is building a wineskin that can contain all that He wants to do in and through the Church in a sustained manner and is able to facilitate the purposes of God.

## 11.1 An apostolic model for Church

Over the years a model to facilitate the outworking of the vision of NCMI has evolved and is referred to by Daniel (2001:75) as an 'apostolic/prophetic model'. It is a model that seeks to embrace and effectively work out of the whole of Scripture. The model is in no way exclusive. Other movements around the world have similar models, but the essence is the same: a desire to be strongly Word-based, Christ-centred with a strong desire to embrace the early Apostolic pattern of continuing the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.

## 11.2 The outworking of apostolic ministry



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The outworking of the Apostolic ministry begins with an Apostolic leadership who have an unfolding revelation of what the Church is and what She is meant to be doing. It is important to note that although Dudley was the leader for 25 years, he was not the 'head' of the team in a hierarchical manner. He embraced the attitude of Paul, 'follow me as I follow Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). Neither has he ever declared himself to be an apostle. Again he would echo the words to Paul, 'to some I am an apostle and to some I am not.' (1 Cor 9:2). So the leadership structure of NCMI is not hierarchical, which emulates the injunction of Jesus to the Church that we are 'not to lord it over one another' (Mt 20:25).

McKellar (1997:39) points out that in much of Church history there have been basically two models of Church government: Episcopal, where the leadership comes from the top down and the Congregational model, which is more democratic, where the Church is led by 'majority rule'. A third model, which is being restored to the Church, is what he calls the apostolic/prophetic model, one where the leadership does not come from the top or from the majority, but from the front. The adapted diagram below illustrates the point very well.



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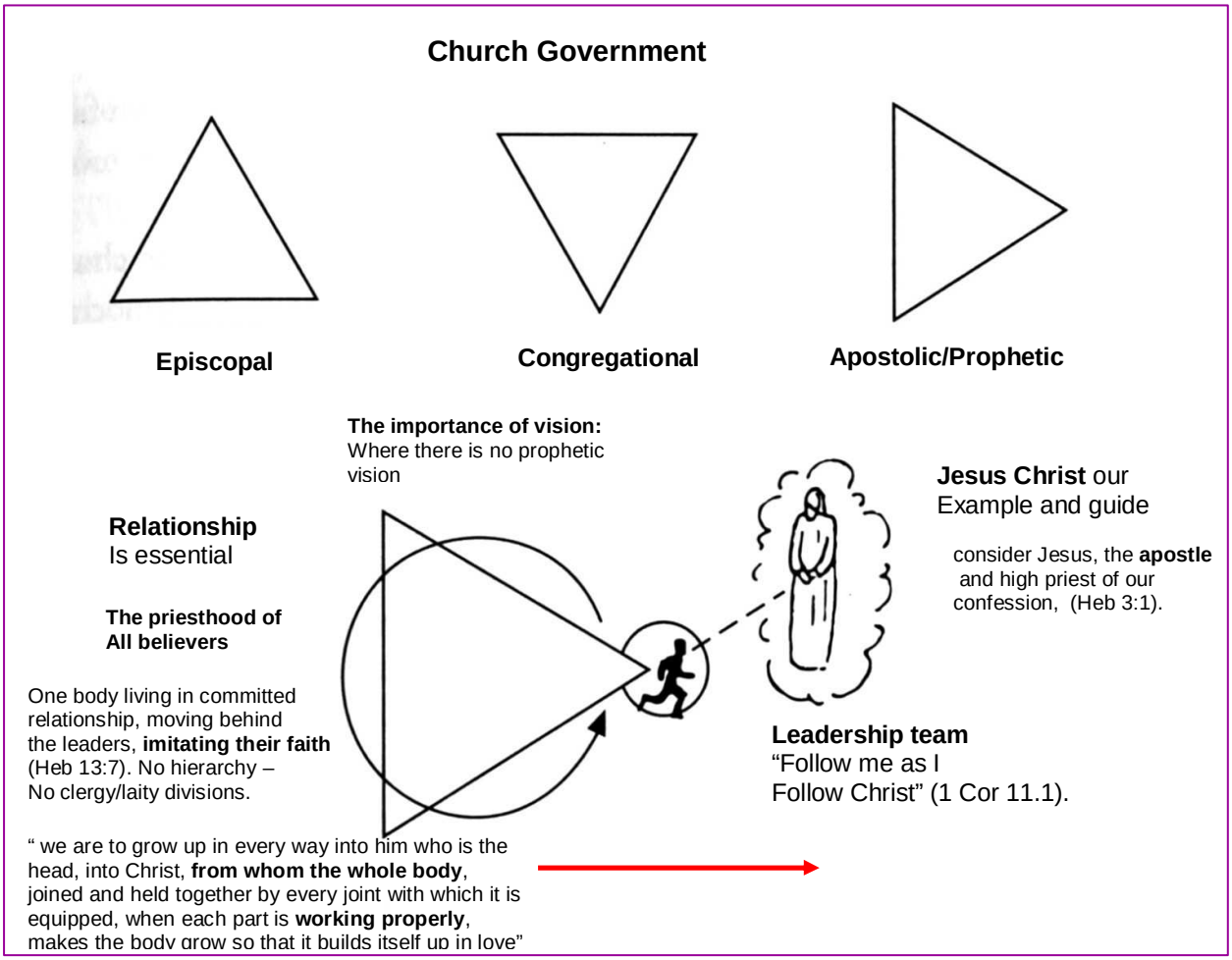
**Figure 5. McKellar (1997:39).**




## Explanation of diagram

The forward looking triangle depicts the entire community of the priesthood of believers, living together in committed relationship, moving forward, 'imitating their faith' (Heb 13:7). Paul encourages the believers to 'follow me as I follow Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). And the writer to the Hebrews encourages us to 'run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith' (Heb 12:2).



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### 11.3 The apostolic team

Up until about 1996 the ‘Apostolic team’ numbered 13 men and their wives. By the end of the year 2005 this team had grown to over 280 people, which consists mainly of husband and wife teams. In more recent years young single people, as young as 22 years of age, have been invited on to the team because they have a recognised ministry. Again it is important to point out that this team is in no way an executive body. Its function is first and foremost to serve the Church and to help Her grow to full maturity in Christ (Eph 4:13).

Apart from various ‘qualifications’ required to be on team, a team member must be in a position to be released from their church from time to time to minister trans-locally. This means that they are able to be released in terms of time and the necessary finances that will allow them to travel. This is a wonderful example of the local church being a ‘mission base’.

### 11.4 How the team operates

The entire team meets three to four times a year for four or five days in various parts of the world. At these meetings there is an opportunity for the leader to connect with the team and the team with each other. It is a time when the leader has an opportunity to fill the team with vision. Much time is spent in worship and fellowship and time is spent in discussion and prayer about what the team is involved in throughout the nations. Team members have the opportunity, in their time together, of sharing what is happening in their ministry and in the areas where they minister, and also have an opportunity to share what God has been showing them in terms of the unfolding Biblical pattern for the Church’s task and ministry.

This is, however, not the only time that the team members meet with each other. There is a constant ‘mix-and-flow’ as various team members travel around the



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world together, conducting leadership training times (LTTs) and regional training events, which is explained in more detail further on.

### 11.4 How the team operates

Much like Paul and the Apostles and their teams in the New Testament, the function of the team is to 'flesh out' the Apostolic ministry through the variety of their giftings and to minister into the local churches to help bring the Church to maturity. The younger a church is, the greater the need to have Apostolic ministry to help the church set strong Biblical foundations in place.

Apart from the set team meetings, many team members have the opportunity of interacting with one another as they minister together in various churches and training times around the world. Added to this, team members make a habit of being in constant touch with the leader of the team which helps the team flow together as a unit, constantly pursuing the vision of partnering with Christ to build His Church in order to impact the nations of the world.

### 11.5 Collective apostolic anointing

Just as a movement can have a strong prophetic anointing, my observation is that there is a 'collective Apostolic anointing' upon the NCMI team. That is to say, there is an 'apostolic mantle' that rests upon the team. For example, if ten members of the team are conducting an LTT, that Apostolic mantle rests upon the team and they minister out of that anointing. There are many men on the team who may not be at the same level of revelation and insight on the Church as Dudley Daniel or some of the more mature team members, but who nevertheless have a measure of apostolic anointing.

The team is a 'melting pot' for the emergence of an apostolic lifestyle. It is not one man's vision. There is a strong collective element at work within the team. Many other gifted team members who have a growing understanding of the Church contribute to what NCMI is and does. It is very much like a 'greenhouse' for a



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continual discovery of truth that has been there all the time but which has, in many instances, been clouded because the Church has allowed itself to become preoccupied with issues that are not of the Spirit and the Word. This is where many great movements have lost some of their initial power and effectiveness.

Churches relating to the NCMI team do not rely solely on one apostolic leader. NCMI has gone through 25 years with Dudley's strong leadership. But it has been honed and shaped not only by the revelation that he has received from God, but built up and added to, as he has worked closely with his Apostolic team and other Apostolic men in South Africa and around the world.

Early in the development of NCMI, Dudley was involved in what was known as the Christian Ministries Network in Southern Africa, which, according to McKellar (1993:16), was formed to provide a vehicle for the leadership of various streams of ministry within the Church to communicate and fellowship with each other and to provide a platform for mutual support, encouragement, envisioning and a context for united action. The Network comprised of Dudley Daniel, Derek Crumpton, Johan Filmater, Joseph Kobo and Derek Morphew. Dudley also forged strong relationships with overseas apostolic leaders like Terry Virgo and Gerald Coates.

The apostolic team is a wonderfully divergent group of people, and although they differ in gifting and anointing, they have the same vision of reaching the nations and a strong desire to see the Church reach its full potential. There are some men on the team who have their own network of leaders who help facilitate the work of NCMI into Africa and beyond. Hennie Keyter has a team of about 240 couples that work with him into Africa, who are not on the 'main' NCMI team. Added to this team, Hennie also has between 15-20 NCMI team members that work with him in the training that they conduct on a continual basis in Africa. According to Daniel (2006) in more recent years, NCMI has grown into being 'teams within the team'. This means that leaders like Hennie Keyter can work out the vision and values of NCMI into so many nations with their teams.



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Kier Taylor is another member of the NCMI team with a strong evangelistic ministry who has teams working with him into Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Namibia, the DRC, Ivory Coast, Libya and Senegal. Being on the 'main' NCMI team, he consults with Hennie Keyter about their work into these areas. Peter Howard-Browne has a team working with him primarily into Madagascar and Kennie Le Roux works with a team into Zimbabwe.

## 12. Church planting

### 12.1 Dudley's move to Australia

A pivotal point in the whole process of going to the nations came about with Dudley's move to Australia in 1990. According to an information brochure on NCMI (2006), due to the growth of the work a greater passion for the nations was growing in the NCMI team. With Dudley's move there in 1990 a church base was established to resource church planting into Australasia, with the aim of reaching into the Pacific Rim to plant churches. The move was very strategic in the life of NCMI in that it 'broke ground', as it were, in the minds of the people regarding going to the nations. The leader was leading by example.

Since the work of NCMI began in the early 1980's there have been many churches planted in South Africa and around the world. Africa in particular, especially Malawi, is experiencing church planting at a staggering rate.

Because NCMI does not have a head office, records of church plants are difficult to come by, but I have managed to get information from some of the base churches in South Africa and one in Australia that have enabled me to formulate a fairly accurate sample of church planting activity within the NCMI family over the past number of years.



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**Figure 6. Church planting sample** (see below)

**Church Plant Sample**

| Church | Churches planted | Region | Second Church planted (same person) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **New Covenant Church** Bryanston **(Gauteng - S.A.)** | Craig Elliot | Gauteng | |
| | Patrick Ndlovu | Gauteng | |
| | Craig Clark | Gauteng | |
| | Bernard Yeowart | Bloemfontein | |
| | Mois Baloi | Gauteng | |
| | Anthony Rist | UK | |
| | Rob Beckwith | UK | |
| | Frank Grills | Canada | |
| **Cornerstone Church** International **(Gauteng - S.A.)** | Wayne Neuper | Gauteng | Germany |
| | Ian Weeden | Gauteng | Zimbabwe |
| | Mike Seeger | Gauteng | |
| | Bruce McAlpine | Gauteng | |
| | Abe Vos | Gauteng | |
| | Wayne Rabe | Gauteng | |
| | Mark Goodfellow | Gauteng | |
| | Gert Dolk | Holland | |
| | Wayne Carr | Ireland | |
| | Roger Warren | Nigeria | |
| **Glenridge Church** International **(Durban - S.A.)** | Terry Kreuger | Empangeni | USA |
| | Ashley Bell | Pretoria | |
| | Andrew Thomson | Cape Town | |
| | Lois De Fleuriot | Canada | |
| | Mike Ward | | |
| | Thuks Xulu | | |
| | Nigel Day-Lewis | UK | |
| | Cedric van Duyn | USA. | |
| **Coastlands** International Christian Centre **(Australia)** | Martin Stockdale | Adelaide | |
| | Terry Delhanty | Cairns | |
| | Steve Potter | Adelaide | |
| | Colin Birch | Adelaide | |
| | Chad Mansbridge | Victor Harbor | |
| | Rob Rufus | Hong Kong | |
| | Tony Ide | Western Aus | |
| | Russ Doty | Melbourne | |



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## 13. Countries that NCMI is presently working into

According to Siaki (nd:58) in the year 2000 there were 200 churches across South Africa relating to the NCMI team. The following countries have churches relating to the NCMI team: Arabian Gulf, Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, D.R. Congo, Denmark, Dubai, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Holland, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, South East Asia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe.

## 14. Base churches

The matter of base churches has been discussed in Chapter Five. Over the years the development of strong base or resource churches has become a very effective strategy for NCMI in its pursuit of going to the nations. The ideal is for every church to become a 'mission base', sending people out for ministry to the wider Church, planting churches and ministering into young churches. Every Church, out of its own free will, gives financial backing to the wider ministry of NCMI which helps facilitate churches going to the nations.

## 15. Summary

NCMI has been raised up as part of a worldwide apostolic movement. Its vision is to embrace a Biblical pattern that will enable the Church to accomplish its mission of making disciples of all nations by planting churches throughout the world where God opens doors.

The NCMI apostolic team is the key to this whole process. The team enjoys a collective apostolic anointing which enables it to minister to its many relating churches throughout the world. Leadership training events (LTT's), as well as the training of church planters are conducted throughout the world, equipping leaders to establish strong mature churches that will continue the process of planting other churches.



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In the next chapter I will focus on the future of NCMI as a movement and examine some of the challenges that it faces and what should be done to prevent the movement from straying from its initial focus and vision. I will highlight the challenges involved in the avoidance of NCMI slipping into the trap of becoming denominational and institutional in its thinking and practise.



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## Chapter Nine

## The future of NCMI and some of the challenges it faces as an apostolic movement

### 1. Introduction

NCMI has grown tremendously in it's effectiveness as part of the apostolic movement that is gaining momentum throughout the world. According to Wienand (1.04.06) the NCMI apostolic team is currently working into seventy-five countries around the world. Over the years, NCMI has managed to stay on course in terms of their initial vision of impacting the nations with the Gospel by (2001:65) "planting New Testament churches in every village, every town, every city of every country" where God is opening doors of opportunity for ministry and Church planting. The movement is still experiencing exceptional growth with new churches being planted around the world and existing churches being added to the family of NCMI, as well as new nations continuing to open up to the NCMI team.

The object of this chapter is to assess the movement in light of the criteria set out earlier and to make some observations of what is required for the movement to not only maintain its present momentum but to progress to the next level of their unfolding understanding of apostolic Christianity and their effectiveness of reaching all nations with the Gospel.

Many great movements have waned in their vision and in their effectiveness. In this chapter I will examine what NCMI will need to keep in place in order to avoid some of the pitfalls discussed in chapter 6, viz. the problem of institutionalisation; over-organisation; becoming bureaucratised by establishing hierarchical structures; professionalism; tradition and allowing the spiritual dynamic of the movement to become something of a mundane routine.

I mentioned earlier how Donald Miller (1999:132) sees



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the inevitability of 'new apostolic groups' becoming denominational by centralising authority, insisting on uniform practices, and creating bureaucratic layers of approval for acts that previously were spontaneous and spirit-led.

For NCMI to sustain its present momentum and success it will need to ensure that it does not fall prey to these pitfalls.

## 2. Challenges that the movement faces into the future

### 2.1 The size of the movement can be a problem

The bigger a movement becomes, the more challenges it faces in terms of administration and organisation. This is where so many movements in the past have made mistakes. Out of 'expediency', they put organisational systems in place to cope with the on-going growth of the movement. Many of these movements eventually develop into a denomination with hierarchical structures, which in turn lead to institutionalisation and a stifling of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Wagner (1999:140) believes that for a movement to be 'preserved' it must keep a ceiling on the number of churches in each network. He maintains that one apostle can only handle a certain amount of churches, which is true. But with a movement like NCMI, it is not a matter of one apostle overseeing a number of churches, but an apostolic team of over 250 people helping with the 'oversight' of all the relating churches. The NCMI leadership is well aware that the team needs to keep growing in order to keep pace with the demands of serving and equipping the ever-growing family of churches.

When one looks at the extensive network of churches that related to the apostolic teams in the New Testament, it would appear that they were managing to administer the ministry into these churches with great effectiveness. The key in this instance was the importance of relationships and continual communication amongst the apostolic team and the churches that they related to.



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The size of a movement can be a problem and is one that NCMI now faces. How they respond to the continual growth of the movement is of paramount importance to their on-going vitality and effectiveness. The critical factor is how the team is 'managed' without becoming over-structured and over-organised, which could stifle the life and flow of the movement. A member of the apostolic team, Wienand (1.4.06) believes that as the movement grows, there will be more 'blurring' of the team, resulting in the 'teams within teams' concept. By 'blurring', I believe he means that, because there will be a need for many more teams to facilitate the work of the Apostolic team, they will not be as clearly 'demarcated' as those at present. However, they will need to be inter-related, well connected and will need to ensure that there is good communication. The leadership will have to monitor developments very closely to ensure that the teams remain relational and not merely functional.

In an interview with Tyrone Daniel (24.06.06) he outlined how he and the team propose to make the team more effective as the work grows. In the next phase of development in the work of NCMI there will be a re-structuring of the team to facilitate the work of the team more effectively.

Tyrone plans to meet with team members in strategic regions around the world on an on-going basis. This will not be an attempt to regionalise the NCMI team but merely to make the facilitation of the team's ministry more realistic and functional. As an example, Tyrone will meet in Holland with team members from Europe for three days. This will allow him the opportunity of building stronger relationships with the team members in that region. It will also give the team members opportunity to share what is happening in their region. This means that Tyrone and the team will be able to give each region specific attention. A further advantage would be for Tyrone to meet prospective team leaders in that region who can work on team with him.

This process will take place twice a year in each region around the world. Then once a year the entire team, made up of members from around the world will gather in South Africa for a team meeting with Tyrone.



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## 2.2 Change of leadership

Change of leadership in a movement has always been a critical factor. Many movements have experienced problems when there has been a leadership change. What often happens, as Wagner (1999:136) points out, is that the successors in movements were not always visionary people, but were more inclined toward an administrative gifting, which tended to stifle the effectiveness of the movement.

In 2004 NCMI entered into that critical stage when the founder, Dudley Daniel, handed over the leadership of NCMI to his son, Tyrone Daniel. Dudley Daniel, together with the apostolic team felt in God that it was time to hand the leadership of the team over. Tyrone Daniel. This means that the movement has moved into its second generation of leadership. It is a time of testing, but the foundation that has been laid over the past twenty-four years is sound and should cope very well with the change of leadership. With the help of the apostolic team, he will hopefully be able to take NCMI to new levels of effectiveness in their pursuit of being an effectual apostolic movement that will increase its effectiveness in reaching the nations of the world with the Gospel.

It is important to point out that in this process Dudley was not conferring his 'apostolic mantle' upon his son, but conferring his authority as the leader of the apostolic team upon him. Although Tyrone may not be an apostle now, he nevertheless has a strong apostolic vision and is surrounded by a number of strong apostolic men on team. By taking over the leadership of the team, he has in effect become the 'father' of the team. It may be that in time his apostolic anointing will become more defined. The important thing is that there is such a strong Apostolic anointing on the collective team, that will enable the movement to move forward in the unfolding purposes of God.



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The change of leadership of the NCMI team was done with great care on the part of Dudley Daniel. According to Daniel[13] God had been speaking to him for about two years about a successor for his leadership. During this time, God spoke to him from the Scriptures about some of the detail and strategy for this kind of hand-over.

He felt that God had told him that it was to be his son. He knew that this could be misconstrued, but was convinced that God had spoken to him. He then began a process that would confirm his feelings and began to facilitate the outworking of this process.

The first thing he did was to gather what he called his 'life team'. According to Daniel (2004:34) the life team is a group of twelve couples on the NCMI team. They are in no way different to any other team members. Just as Jesus had a closer relationship with Peter James and John, so Dudley developed a closer relationship with twelve couples that he could take into his confidence about all matters relating to NCMI and his own life.

He asked members individually whom they thought the person would be to take over the leadership of NCMI and all but one felt it was to be his son Tyrone. However, he was not prepared to go ahead without a full consensus on the matter. During their time together, the twelfth person came to him and said that after serious prayer and consideration he believed that Tyrone was the right choice.

Three months later Dudley invited the entire NCMI team to gather with him in Australia to proceed with the process of 'choosing' his successor. When he shared what he felt God had told him about his successor and who it should be there was not a single voice of dissent. However, Dudley was not entirely happy and explained to the team that silence on a matter did not necessarily mean agreement and asked the team to make any misgivings known. There were none.

[13] In his address at the hand-over session at the LTT in Bloemfontein, 2004



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Having got through that process Dudley was able to share with the team something of the strategy that God had given him concerning the way ahead from God's Word. He noticed that in three key 'hand-overs' in the Old Testament in the lives of three key leaders, viz. Moses, Saul, and David, the hand-over was initially only partial. In each situation, the leader continued to lead while the successor had been appointed.

Moses was instructed to invest Joshua "**with some of his authority" (**Num 27:18, 19). After this inauguration, Moses continued to lead the people of Israel.

Through this, Dudley realized that the transition of the NCMI leadership was to be a gradual one and so the team commissioned Tyrone and many months later Dudley 'gave' him some of his authority. For a season of many months, Dudley and Tyrone 'walked together', with Tyrone taking on some of the authority of leading the team.

Another Scriptural precedent for a gradual take-over was King David. David was anointed to be king while Saul ruled Israel (1 Sam 16:1, 13. Years later, David was anointed king over the house of Judah (2 Sam 2:4). Then many years later, he reigned as king over all of Israel (2 Sam 5:3).

The hand-over with David and Solomon was similar. When David was 'full of years' he made his son Solomon king over Israel (1 Chr 23:1). Yet in chapter twenty five, David is still leading the people of Israel. Then in 1 Chr 29:22 we read that they "made Solomon the son of David king the **second time**, and they anointed him as prince for the LORD, and Zadok as priest (1Chr 29:22).

Since the 'baton change' from October 2004, the movement has continued to grow and break new ground into other nations. According to a recent article, Daniel (2005:6) says that the transition is progressing well and that NCMI is experiencing 'explosive growth' and seeing new nations being penetrated and many churches being planted.



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### 2.3 The threat of hierarchical practices

Hierarchical structures have invariably been a factor in causing movements to become institutionalised. The 'founder' of NCMI, Dudley Daniel, has always guarded against any form of hierarchy and has a very strong view on the matter. According to him (2001:89), when he speaks about NCMI or any model that includes trans-local teams, he is not talking about an executive.

> We need to deal a deathblow to anything that brings hierarchy into the Church - committees, church boards, superintendents and the like - both locally and trans-locally. This executive mindset is not an apostolic/prophetic one. It is not a mindset that has come from Scripture.

The apostolic team was never meant to be an executive group, elevated above the rest of the Church. The purpose and calling of the team is to serve the Church and to help facilitate the fulfilment of the Great Commission. However, human nature being as it is, there are those who see the team as some kind of executive body, which it is not and there are those who see the apostolic team as an 'oversight' team, which is wrong. The way to overcome this thinking is for leaders to see the local Church as God's priority and to be constantly governed by the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The team is not there to govern but to serve the wider Church by giving apostolic direction to the Church. It will be up to the team and the team leader of NCMI to constantly break down this kind of mindset to prevent churches in the movement from developing a denominational way of thinking. The key to staying free of these kinds of traps is for the leadership to continue their radical stance that the Word of God is the plumb line of truth. Everything must be measured by that rule. The admonition of Paul to the Romans is most pertinent in this instance that we are not to be conformed to the world but are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2).

## 3. Important elements that will ensure sustained momentum and growth in the movement



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### 3.1 Keeping the prophetic voice alive

NCMI has always placed a strong emphasis on the importance of listening to the prophetic voice of God for vision and direction. As the movement moves into the future, it is of paramount importance that the prophetic voice be kept alive and active. Tyrone, together with the leadership of NCMI, will need to be constantly listening for the voice of God in order to move forward into His unfolding plans for the on-going effectiveness of the movement. The leadership, together with the relating pastors will need courage to walk in obedience to the 'prophetic voice', constantly allowing the Holy Spirit to give life and direction to the movement. "Where there is no **prophetic vision** the people cast off restraint" (Pro 29:18). In so many movements of the past, the danger has been for the movement to 'settle down' and people have stopped listening for the prophetic voice of God to take them on to the next level of development. A key in this process, according to Daniel (2004:27), is for the movement to remain flexible and to embrace the God-inspired, Spirit-directed adjustments that will keep the movement focused on its essential calling.

As part of this dynamic, the team will need to continue to embrace and maintain a healthy diversity within the team. Different voices will need to be heard as part of the prophetic process of God declaring His purposes and direction for the team. At the same time there needs to be a strong united vision that will take the team into the future as it pursues the goal of making disciples of all nations.

### 3.2 Being committed to the Word of God as the 'only rule of faith'

One of the outstanding features of Dudley Daniel's life and ministry has been his unswerving commitment to the Word of God pertaining to all of life and ministry. Whenever something did not measure up to the Word of God, he would have nothing to do with it. In the life of the apostolic team, this has been a core value. For NCMI to continue its effective ministry it is imperative to continue to hold this value before them and to have the courage to 'leave' anything that does not



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measure up to Scripture and the Spirit of Christ and at the same time allow the Holy Spirit to reveal further truth with regard to Apostolic Christianity.

### 3.3 A relational movement

As I have mentioned in chapter 8, NCMI is a strongly relational movement, believing in 'friendship before function'. Whenever a movement grows in number there is the danger of a loss of contact amongst the leaders. The need for strong active relationships within both the ever-growing apostolic team and the pastors of the relating churches is a vital key for moving into the future as God continues to unfold His plans and purposes for the movement. The 'structure' for facilitating healthy meaningful relationships between the team and pastors of churches is in place. The challenge will be for maintaining those structures that promote regular contact amongst relating pastors and the team. Healthy relationships are always costly in terms of time and effort but if it is a core value then good relationships and 'connectedness' must be maintained at all costs. Ways of making this practically possible without it being regimented will need to be explored lest churches and pastors get disconnected from the life-flow of the movement.

### 3.4 The necessity of multi-generational churches

Closely linked to the dynamic of being relational, NCMI must continue to pursue the concept of 'multi-generational' churches as a Biblical pattern for the Church. These are churches where there are no generation gaps, churches where the 'wiser' members are mentoring the younger generation and where the zealous young are spurring the 'wiser' generation not to settle down and take a back seat in the Church. These are churches where true sons are being raised up in the household of God and are being nurtured and given opportunity to play their vital role in the Church. By doing this, the Church has a stronger chance of ensuring stronger generations for the future of the Church.

As I mentioned in chapter 8, the apostolic team is multi-generational. In order for churches to follow suit, it will be necessary for the team to 'model' a lifestyle of



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being multi-generational. Because the Church has failed in the past to engender this kind of lifestyle, it needs to be taught and modelled as a normal way of life for the Church.

### 3.5 The need for multi-cultural churches

An area that needs attention in NCMI circles is multi-cultural churches. According to Wienand (1.04.2006) NCMI will need to give attention to addressing this issue. His view is that NCMI has embraced many countries but not many of our churches are multicultural. He also observes that the team is still largely a South African one and this will need to be addressed in the future. This is not something that can be manufactured, but must be seen as a Biblical ideal for the Church as they trust God to break the patterns that are preventing this from happening. With Tyrone's new strategy of meeting more regularly in various regions of the world, there is a strong possibility that this issue will be addressed and the team will see many new culture groups being added to the team which will make ministry into the various regions of the world more effective.



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### 3.6 Embracing other apostolic movements

As I have mentioned above, there is a tremendous ground swell of apostolic Christianity growing throughout the world. Tyrone Daniel (24.06.06) is very committed to linking arms with other apostolic movements around the world. Over the years, NCMI has had relationships with other apostolic leaders internationally, but Tyrone has felt a strong urging to allow God to link NCMI with allies; other apostolic groups that can walk arm in arm. He feels that this is imperative as the Church moves into the end times. It will not be a uniting of movements but a development of strong relationships where each group can learn from the other in the pursuit of the unfolding understanding of apostolic Christianity.

## 4. Summary

NCMI, through the leadership of Dudley Daniel and the apostolic team has discovered a Biblical model for the outworking of Apostolic Christianity, which is able to facilitate the fulfilling of the Great Commission. They are aware that the model is in no way exclusive. There are other great movements making a great impact on the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, having found a model that facilitates the fulfilling of Jesus' command to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations, NCMI will need to keep itself poised for God’s unfolding apostolic pattern and continue to be obedient to the prophetic leading of the Holy Spirit. By doing this I believe that NCMI will stay focussed on its essential call and mission to fulfil the Great Commission and will continue to be a vibrant movement that will affect the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



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## Chapter Ten

## Conclusion

In this study I have noted that there is a return to Apostolic Christianity in many parts of the world. At the heart of Apostolic Christianity is a desire to return to Biblical norms for all life and ministry. Furthermore, there is a desire to embrace New Testament patterns for all of Church life and to see New Testament churches planted throughout the world that will see the advancement of the Kingdom of God and fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus, the Head of the Church.

I have argued that the primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission is through church planting. Church planting is the primary thrust of the Church to spear-head the penetration of the nations with the Gospel. The end-goal of the Church is propagation, not merely of the Gospel but of the Church. For the Great Commission to be fulfilled it is necessary that healthy churches are established that can send people out to plant healthy, vibrant churches into the communities of the world.

NCMI, along with a number of other movements in the world has discovered similar models that are enabling the facilitation of fulfilling the Great Commission.

If the Church is to be effective in its mission to the world then it needs to return to Biblical patterns. In my study I have noted that Jesus had a definite pattern of training and equipping His disciples. He firstly gathered His disciples and consolidated them into a community using Galilee as a base. He then spent a lot of time developing His relationship with them and the disciples with one another. They accompanied Him on many ministry trips where Jesus was able to model His ministry. Their calling was to partner with Christ in building His Church (Mt 16:18). Church planting began spontaneously with the gathering of three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). But when persecution arose as a result of the death of Stephen, the Church scattered, planting churches as they went (Acts 8:7).



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My study on the ministry and mission of the early Church confirms how effective their training was. The pattern of ministry that they learnt from Jesus was very evident as they set out to fulfil His commission. They clearly understood that they were called to work as a team and work in partnership with the Holy Spirit to accomplish the enormous task of discipling the nations. In broad terms the Apostles had a two-pronged approach. On the one hand they planted churches and on the other hand spent much time and energy in helping the churches grow into spiritual maturity. Part of this process was the appointing of shepherds over the various churches (Acts 20:28); (1 Pet 5:2); (Tit 1:5).

The Apostles spent much effort advising the churches and warning them of potential doctrinal problems and false prophets (Eph 4:14). Three times Paul urged Timothy to guard the flock from false doctrine (1Tim 1:10; 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3). He did the same with Titus (Tit 1:9; 2:1, 10).

In their ministry, base churches began to emerge from where they were able to launch out and penetrate into un-reached provinces and nations with the Gospel. Although the concept of base churches was in embryonic form in the New Testament, I have shown how NCMI has adopted this practice and is using it to great effect for the equipping of the Church to fulfil its mandate to disciple the nations.

As part of the study I chose three movements to observe how they would fit into an 'Apostolic paradigm' of life and ministry. In all three cases there was clear evidence of a return to Apostolic Christianity and how they adopted Biblical principles for their life and practice. In each case the movement was strongly motivated to honour the Great Commission of Jesus of preaching the Gospel to all nations.

Having studied the movements, I observed how they drifted from their initial focus on the Word and the Spirit and fell prey to a number of influences that robbed them of their initial effectiveness. I concluded that the following factors caused a breakdown of their initial vision and spiritual fervour: institutionalism, bureaucracy, over-organization and professionalism (where the movement began to rely on human expertise rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word), traditionalism, and what Weber (2005 )



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refers to as the *Routinization of Charisma,* where a movement can move from being a dynamic expression of the life and power of God to becoming something that is merely routine and machine-like.

Growing out of that study, I was keen to observe how long movements were able to sustain their spiritual effectiveness to succeeding generations. Over the course of Church history there have not been many movements that have sustained their initial vision and spiritual fervour beyond the first or second generation. In most cases the reason for the diminished effectiveness was due to the elements mentioned above.

In the study I noted that for a movement to sustain its momentum to succeeding generations the following need to be in place: raising up of spiritual sons in the Church that can take the movement into the next phase of its development as a movement; building upon the foundation of the previous generation; the movement's ability to continually receive the New Wine of the Spirit and allow the necessary adjustments to be made to the Wineskin (the structure) and to ensure that vital functional relationships are maintained. I concluded that in order for the next generation to be healthy and grow in its vision and mission, the current generation must take the responsibility of ensuring that every means is utilised to pass on a healthy, thriving movement to the next generation.

I chose NCMI as a case study of a modern apostolic movement. From small beginnings it has grown to a worldwide movement, working into 75 nations of the world. Like many movements before, it is strongly Word based and strongly desires to return to true Apostolic Christianity in every way. Although the movement has experienced great 'success' in its mission, it is nevertheless a movement that is still in a developmental stage where its leaders are keen to discover an unfolding understanding of God's pattern of how He wants the movement to carry out its mission in the world and increase its sphere of influence for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



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In terms of my chapter on ‘generational effectiveness’, it is of particular interest to me that NCMI has moved into the second generation of leadership with Dudley Daniel, the founder, handing over the leadership to his son Tyrone, and the movement itself is seeing many third generation leaders emerging. By all accounts the baton change has been an effective one. My observation is that due to the strength of the apostolic team, the future looks positive as NCMI moves forward in their pursuit of discipling the nations.

If the movement is to grow in effectiveness and stay on the cutting edge of Biblical truth and continue to pursue a Biblical pattern of ministry then there are a number of areas that need attention. By doing this they will continue to be an effective apostolic movement, increasing their influence in the world for Christ, and breaking new ground for the Gospel.

It is vital that the team keeps the prophetic voice alive and pays close attention to the prophetic guidance of the Holy Spirit in all matters pertaining to its vision and ministry. Another important requirement is for the team to stay committed to being a ‘people of the Word’ and the Spirit; that they continue to measure all they do against the Word. NCMI places a high value on relationships and will need to give constant attention to ensuring that relationships are strong and that they avoid the trap of allowing relationships to become merely functional. It is important for the team to ‘think outside the box’ and experiment with new ideas, thus avoiding the trap of getting locked into traditionalism and subtly allowing institutional thinking to creep in, causing the movement to lose its cutting edge.

There is a strong call upon the Church to return to the ‘plumb line of Scripture’ as the only ‘rule of faith’ and not to rest on man-made structures, principles and programs, but to continually allow Jesus, the Head of the Church, the liberty to build His Church according to His plan and pattern.



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In closing I would like to refer to the words of Bosch (1980:184) who said that "…it is not true that there is a mission because there is a Church; rather, there is Church because there is mission". The mission of the Church is to redeem the world for Jesus and the most effective, lasting means of accomplishing this goal is to plant healthy, vibrant churches in every town and village of the world, and to be a living, on-going witness to the redeeming power of Christ in the world.



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