

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH PLANTING IN A DIFFICULT LOCALITY

(Leaders Meeting - Whangarei - 28/4/90 – H. Edwards)

1. **The Importance of the Local Church.**

Firstly, Church planting was the Apostle Paul's **strategy of evangelism**. He established in every place and locality, communities of believers who met together to receive teaching, counsel and pastoral care. Functioning under the care of a pastor and elders, these local churches became powerful centres of worship, witness and evangelism to the communities in which they were established. Each local church also received the input of other, *Eph 4:11* ministries, who had a responsibility to travel around all the churches. Beginning, first in the larger centres, groups of believers progressively spread throughout whole regions penetrating into the smaller rural localities. This was evidently the **Holy Spirit inspired and directed means of evangelism** in the book of Acts.

This strategy, I believe is God's way for us in all ages and times. Though there may be many para-church organisations, raised up as an aid to evangelism, my conviction is that the **most effective long term means of effective evangelism is the planting of local churches**.

2. **When Should We Plant a Local Church?**

Several things need to be considered before we launch out to begin planting a new church. Of primary importance is our **motive**. Our motive must be above all, **the glory of God** and the extension of His Kingdom, from a joyful, willing obedience, to God's call to evangelism. We need a true and genuine burden and concern for the believers in the area. Division, unresolved conflicts, broken relationships are not the right foundation for establishing a new church work, nor is the desire for recognition, self glory or personal gain. Simply desiring to have our particular group or denomination represented in an area is not a good motive either.

We are not to approach church planting in a competitive, business-like manner, seeking to plant our flag everywhere, but to approach it in genuine commitment and the desire for the extension of God's Kingdom and His glory. Often God will require us to be faithful in another man's vision and work, before God gives us our own, *Lk 16:12*.

Secondly we need **a clear call and vision from God**. We need the Master's approval and His initiative. Many things may indicate the need, but we still require His prompting and permission. It is His vineyard, His field, His building, and we must move as He directs.

When God desires **to do something He calls a man** e.g. Joshua, Moses, Samuel, David. God places call, vision, and ability in a man to achieve His purpose. It is this call which enables a man or woman to achieve great things for God. Some churches are planted by a denominational committee with a planning map, but God's most effective means is **not a committee** but a **man with a commission**. The counsel of mature men and women is of course of great value in confirmation and encouragement to a man with a call.

3. **A Difficult Locality.** Let's remember that to God nothing is difficult or hard, *Jer 32:17*. In my experience, it was a clear call that enabled me to stand in a new area. God clearly showed me to go to Moerewa, though I desired to stay in Whangarei. Two scripture

promises given were *Deut 28:3, Ps 104:10*. I know God sent me. We need to know that we are in the right place, doing the right thing in the will of God. Only this knowledge written on our heart will enable us to plant a church in a difficult area. We need also the encouragement of a supportive home church and individual believers.

4. **Sent Forth.**

- a. by the call of God and the sending of the Holy Spirit.
- b. by a mature leader or a group of leaders with the laying on of hands, *Ac 13:2-4*.

There is great importance in the **commissioning of a man by prayer and the laying on of hands**, often with an impartation of anointing and ministry. Frequently there will be prophetic words that will be of tremendous significance, in confirmation of direction and strategy. Examples are Joshua, *Deut 34:9*, where he received wisdom through Moses laying hands on him. Timothy received spiritual gifts in the same manner, *1Tim 4:14*.

Often the place you go to, may require that you stand alone. However, there is tremendous value in having a supportive church or group, who will pray, intercede, and encourage you, recognising your call and autonomy, and who will seek to serve and help you in the fulfilment of the vision.

When I first came to Moerewa. I had a commissioning, and although I never realised its real significance at the time, since then I have begun to understand the tremendous importance of being “sent forth”.

5. **Strategy.**

God has a strategy that will penetrate the gates of hell and every area of Northland, no matter what the reputation of that place may be. Every place can be difficult, and yet to God, none is! **God has a strategy for your area.** There are general principles of extending the kingdom that are applicable everywhere, but specific strategy will enable rapid progress in a particular place. Give time to seeking God for His heart for your locality. Don't be caught trying to put into practice what others are doing in other places. Often new churches start in a very small and insignificant way. God encourages us not to despise small beginnings, *Zech 4:6,10*. God proves our faithfulness with little before He gives us much, *Lk 16:10*. When God clearly sends a man or woman to a new area of church planting, you can **confidently expect supernatural intervention as God moves on your behalf.** Look for, and expect such confirmation and endorsement of your life and ministry. Remember faithfulness to what God gives you will open the doorway to greater things. Meet the needs of those God gives you and you will have more.

6. **How Long Does It Take?**

There is no set answer to this question. It will take different amounts of time in different places depending on many circumstances. For example, the maturity of the person with the vision and what foundation has been laid etc. Experience helps us to achieve the same goals more quickly. What we do need however, is **a solid determined decision to stay in that place** until God has done through our life what He desired to do.

We need a call to go to a new area of ministry and we need the same type of call to move on. You will never achieve God's purposes without a solid commitment to stay in a place until the work is done. Finally we need to be constantly training faithful men so that when God calls us to move there will be others to carry on.