

Summary of the Acts Church Planting Pattern

Foundation

First, as we begin to look at how the Church is planted, we must remember that the Bible is God's Word and our only source of authority for how to plant the Church. The Bible will thoroughly equip us for every work that God asks us to do including church planting (2 Tim 3:16-17). In Acts each time the believers preached the Gospel, faced temptation or persecution they would turn to the Scriptures for what to say and do (Acts 1:16, 20; 2:25-28; 4:25-26). For this reason we will walk through Acts to see the model for how the Church was planted so quickly in the New Testament and how it spread around the world. The Bible will be our only manual for Church Planting. If we are presently doing something different than the Bible, we need to change to follow what the Bible says.

Second, we should never think that the Church is planted by our efforts, plans, or according to a certain method. Church Planting is something supernatural. God is the one working and bringing forth His eternal plan. We can do nothing to plant the church except in knowing God's will and obeying in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is brought to each city and village through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8); The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts people of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). God opposes those who take credit or glory for something He has done (Acts 12:21-23). God will choose methods and ways to plant the Church so that He is glorified and so that people will know that it was Him who planted the Church. The Holy Spirit will be the one to instruct, guide, lead and empower the people planting the Church (Acts 1:8; 4:31; 6:8-10; 13:2-4).

Third, we can walk in faith that the Holy Spirit will work through us, even if we are new believer, to plant churches through the mighty working of His grace (Acts 1:8; 6:9-10; 11:19-21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5).

The Pattern of Church Planting (Principles)

1. **Constant Prayer** – The first churches began in prayer (Acts 1:14; Acts 10:9; 13:2-3). They were constantly praying and going to the place of corporate prayer (Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 12:5, 12, 16:16, 25). Church planting needs to be constantly bathed in prayer, because God plants His Church. How can we make prayer a daily part of our life both individually & corporately?
2. **Spiritual Empowerment** – The churches in Acts were true disciples of Christ who were continually being filled with the Spirit and hearing & obeying God, therefore they walked in His power.
 - A. We need to be continually filled with the Spirit as we plant churches (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 5:32; 6:3; 13:2-4; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Are you continually filled with the Spirit?
 - B. We need to hear & obey God in a love relationship (Acts 8:26-40; 13:2-4; 16:9-10; 18:9-11). Do you have an intimate love relationship with God where you are continually hearing & obeying Him?
3. **Find People of Peace** – People, prepared by God, who are open to hearing the Gospel and who will take the Gospel to others in their Oikos or community (Luke 10:1-12; see Matthew 10 as well).
 - A. Look to see where God is opening doors or evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit:
 - 1) People interested in spiritual things (Acts 8:26-40; 10:22-24; 16:30; 17:18-34; Rom 3:10-11) – No one on their own seeks after God, so when you see people seeking God you know God is working in their life.
 - 2) When miracles or wonders occur (Acts 2:1-13; 3:6-10; 8:5-8, 13; 9:32-35, 40-43)
 - 3) When people are God fearing (Acts 2:5; 10:2; 13:26; 17:4, 17)
 - B. Take advantage of groups that already understand parts of the Gospel or are open to the Gospel – i.e. Paul going to the synagogues (Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10); of Oikos connections (Acts 13:4 – Barnabas' home province; Acts 13:13-14 – Paul's home province); of places you move to (Acts 11:19-21; 18:19); or of business connections (Acts 18:1-3).

- C. Go to Unreached peoples that God has told you to go (Acts 8:26-30; 9:15; 16:9-10).
- D. This may mean that we have to drop our agenda and follow God's even if our agenda was spiritual (Acts 3:1-10). Do you know anyone who is showing interest in spiritual things or a people God has told you to go to?

4. Share the entire message of salvation clearly & boldly in a culturally appropriate way

- A) Take the initiative to share the message of salvation with others boldly (Acts 2:14; 4:13, 31; 8:4-5; 11:19-20). In Acts, people did not wait for others to come to them; they took the initiative to go.
- B) What is the message of salvation? (**Hand Illustration**) **It is a message of grace (Acts 14:3; 15:11)**
 - 1. Emphasize who God is (Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31)
 - 2. Emphasize that we are guilty sinners, separated from God, who deserve death and hell. (Acts 3:13-15; 7:51-53; 17:30-31; Isaiah 59:2; Rom 3:23; 6:23) **We can do nothing to save ourselves because we have sin and a person has to be holy to come in God's Presence** (Lev. 19:2; Matt 5:48; Heb 12:14).
 - 3. Emphasize Jesus fulfilled messianic prophecies, lived a perfect life, did many good deeds and miracles, died on the cross for our sins, was buried and rose again according to the Scriptures as the only way to be saved. Forgiveness of sin comes only through Jesus. He is the Messiah and Lord and has been exalted to the right hand of the Father and will return as judge of the world. (Acts 2:22-36; 10:36-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 Pet 3:18)
 - 4. Challenge them to respond in faith (trust) and repentance and the result will be the forgiveness of sin and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39; 3:16-20; 20:21; Luke 24:46-47; Rom 10:8-9; Eph 2:8)
 - 5. Emphasize the turning from idols or other things that would be contradictory to them relying on Jesus alone for salvation. (Acts 14:15; 17:29-30; 19:18-19, 23-28; Gal 3:1-5)
- C) Evangelism should be done in abundant amounts so everyone has the opportunity to hear the Gospel (Acts 2:40-41; 4:4; 5:28, 42; 6:7; 19:10).
 - ✓ In their heart language (Acts 2:7-11; 22:2)
- D) Focus on those who are responsive (Acts 13:46-52; 18:6-11; 19:8-10) (Precision Harvesting)
If any places do not listen to the Gospel go to more receptive areas.
- E) When miracles occur there has to be an explanation of the message of salvation for it to lead to them being saved (Acts 2:12-41; 3:11-26; 8:6; 14:8-18).
- F) Deal directly with syncretism in the new believers (Acts 8:14-24; 18:24-26; 19:18-19; 28:6-10) – there will be some in the church who don't understand the true Gospel or who want it for wrong motives.
- G) If people do not hear the true Gospel they cannot be saved (Acts 4:12; Rom 1:20; 10:14-17)
How are you sharing the Gospel?

5. Baptize by immersion those who decide to follow Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 36-39; 19:1-7)

6. Intentionally group them as the Church (Acts 2:41-47)

It is important to set good church DNA from the very beginning so that the churches will multiply. If no one was available locally other churches would send leaders for a time to teach the basics of discipleship to strengthen the churches and train the new leaders, especially when it was the first church in the area. Good DNA from the beginning was very important (Acts 8:14; 11:22-24; 18:11; 19:10).

A. They devoted themselves to the 6 purposes of the Church:

- 1. Discipleship – becoming like Christ & obeying all His commands. Immediately after they are saved begin to train and equip the new believers to obey (Acts 2:42; 6:7).
- 2. Fellowship – Experiencing life together (Acts 2:42)
Met constantly (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 5:12); Unified (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 44; 4:32-37)

3. Worship – Our response of giving ourselves to God; praising God; and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, 46; Rom 12:1). Done in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23) with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28). Encourages Sacrificial Giving (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37); not for self-glory (Acts 5:1-11)
4. Prayers (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 16:6) including set times to pray together
5. Loving & Serving others
 Forgive those who wrong you (Acts 7:60) Share your life with them (1 Thess 2:8; John 13:34-35).
 Meet practical needs through sacrificial giving (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37)
 ✓ Especially for widows, orphans, poor (Acts 6:2; 9:36; James 1:27); hospitality (Acts 16:15).
6. Sharing the Gospel and making disciples in our Jerusalem, Judah, Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth (Acts 1:8; 2:47; 6:8-10; 11:19-21; 13:2-4; 19:10; Matthew 28:18-20)
- B. They met in the temple courts (Acts 2:46), in houses (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3), in a lecture hall (Acts 19:9); and by the river (Acts 16:13). (They met where ever they could find a good place to meet, but they did not have any church buildings until several hundred years later.)
7. **Immediately help them to be obedient, to share the Gospel and make disciples following their Oikos lines and all over where ever they go** (Acts 1:8; 6:8-10; 8:4; 11:19-26; Matthew 28:19-20)
 Philip went to all Samaria (Acts 8:5-40). Paul had followers just after saved as did the Thessalonians (Acts 9:25; 1 Thess 1:4-10). Paul did go back to encourage and strengthen those he had led to the Lord.
8. **Have them appoint multiple local elders/leaders from within the new church as quickly as possible and help the new leaders to train others** (Acts 14:21-23) In Acts we have no examples of elders being paid.
 - a. The responsibility of an overseer/elder – a) equipping others (Acts 2:42; 5:42; 20:20, 27; Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2); b) guarding the flock of God (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4); c) focus on prayer & the ministry of the Word – proclaiming the whole will of God (Acts 6:4; 20:20, 27).
 - b. An overseer/elder needs to have good character (through being full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and faith) – (Acts 6:3-6, 10; 11:24; 16:2; 20:26, 33-35; 1 Tim. 3:1-16; Titus 1:5-9); Serve God's flock entrusted to him with humility and hard work not coveting worldly things or self-glory (Acts 3:12; 8:18-21; 20:19, 33-35; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Isaiah 42:8).
 - c. Model and mentoring these new leaders were very important (OJT) (Acts 11:25-26; 12:25; 16:1-3; 16:3; 18:5, 19-20; 19:22, 29; 20:4). Help the new leaders in the initial stages and establish continual training for them (Acts 14:21-23; 15:32, 35, 36, 41; 16:4; 18:11, 19, 26; 20:2, 7, 17-38; 9:32).
 - d. The new leaders deal with problems by suggesting solution and the other believers in the church affirming it through consensus (Acts 6:1-6). When the problem is doctrinal, the elders of the churches and the apostles should meet and make decisions based on agreement with Scripture. The church then affirms this and all the churches would be gathered in their localities to know the truth to stop the false doctrine (Acts 15:1-32; 16:4-5; 20:29-31). The elders and apostles would write a document sharing their findings.
 - e. Leadership is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit and can not be bought (Acts 8:20-23; Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28). Some people will want to be in leadership to have power for wrong motives. Be frank with them and do not allow them to lead (Acts 8:18-24).
 - f. Helping them to begin teaching & training others (Acts 9:25; 11:25-26; 13:5; 14:22-23; 15:39-40; 16:1-2; 18:24-27; 19:22; 20:4, 20; Matt. 28:19; 1 Thess. 1:6-8; **2 Tim. 2:2**; Titus 1:5)
 - g. Pray for and commend to the Lord the elders/leaders (Acts 14:23, 26; 20:32-36; 6:6). Laying on of hands (usually after fasting and prayer) were how people were set apart for special functions in the church in the grace of the Lord (Acts 13:2-3; 6:6; 14:23; 15:40).

9. **Help the new churches plant other churches right away and give them a vision for all people groups** (their Judea, Samaria, & ends of the earth) (Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4-5; 9:20, 25; 11:19-21; 13:1-4; 19:10)
- The church planting should be done by laity not just elders/pastors (Acts 6:8-10; 8:1, 4-5, 26-40; 9:20, 25; 11:19-21; 19:10); unschooled, ordinary men (Acts 4:13)
 - Share the Gospel in every town until all have heard (Acts 8:40; 11:19-20; 13:49; 19:10)
 - Take others with you to train them to plant churches in other areas (Acts 16:1-3; 19:22; 20:5).

10. Prepare the new believers for Persecution

All believers will be persecuted & suffer so help them to know how to respond (Acts 4:3, 17-21; 6:9-14; 12:1-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-13)

We can respond the same way the early church did:

- 1) Continue to share the Gospel **boldly** (Acts **4:1-22, 31**; 5:25-32, 42; 6:9; 7:1ff; 9:17; 13:9-11, 46-47; **14:3**; 20:24; 21:13; 24:5-23; **Philippians 1:12-14**).
- 2) Pray and ask God for help (Acts 4:23-31; 12:5, 12; 16:25)
- 3) Sing or rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer (Acts 5:41; 16:25).
- 4) Love and pray for those who persecute us (Acts 7:60; Matthew 5:44-45)
- 5) Forgive those who persecute you (Acts 7:60)
- 6) Encourage the believers by meeting together (Acts 4:23; 12:12-17) and by being reminded of *God's Sovereignty* (Acts 4:24-28; 5:19-21; 23:11-16) and that Jesus Himself suffered (Hebrews 12:2-3)
- 7) Faith that God will give wisdom about what to say and the Spirit will speak through you (Acts 6:10; Matthew 10:17-20; Luke 21:12-15). Rely on the Holy Spirit to speak through you what to say to those who persecute you (Acts 4:8-12).
- 8) Assert our rights as citizens (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29; 25:11). We can share the parts where we are in agreement to get some of the persecutors on our side (Acts 23:6-10).
- 9) Sometimes God has us stay in the midst of persecution and sometime He has us leave if there is a threat on our life or if it would cause a big problem for other believers there (Acts 8:1; 12:17). Some will die for their faith (Acts 7:57-8:1; 12:2).
- 10) Criticism from believers (Acts 11:2-3) – share with them precisely what God has done and have other witnesses to confirm it was from God. You may want to do something to show that you are not opposed to them (Acts 21:20-26).

The Results

1. Many people saved quickly – the Word spread rapidly & increased (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:42; 11:21, 24; 13:49; 19:10, 20)
2. Giving Praise & Glory to God (Acts 3:8-9, 13; 4:21)
We should never take credit for what God does and thereby take away His glory (Acts 3:12; 5:1-11)
3. Joy (Acts 8:8)
4. Awe and amazement (Acts 2:43; 3:10; 8:13)
5. Fear of God (Acts 5:5, 11)
6. Many healed and demons cast out (Acts 3:6-10; 5:15-16; 8:7)
7. Favor with non-believers (Acts 2:47; 4:21; 5:13)
8. Church strengthened (Acts 9:31; 14:22; 15:41; 16:5; 18:23)
9. Report to others what God is doing, especially to the church that send you out (Acts 14:26-28; 15:3-4; 21:18-19)

