

CHAPTER 15

Church Planting and the Fivefold

The model developed in the early church, according to the book of Acts, has the fivefold ministry intimately involved in church planting.¹ Where no church existed, the apostles preached the gospel and founded new churches, laying the foundations that were necessary to see the church succeed.

They utilized the evangelistic ministry to bring in the lost by preaching the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Additionally, planting a new church required a prophetic orientation that allowed the apostles to discern spiritual needs of a community. Once the churches were formed, they handled problems as they arose and appointed local elders to care for the new church, opening the way for the pastoral and teaching ministries.

Apostles, prophets and evangelists are essential in the early days of a church plant. Apostles lay foundations and prophets break through spiritual strongholds. Evangelists bring in the unsaved and help a new church reach out to their new community. Later, pastors and teachers are involved in long term care and nurture. Pastors help provide a place of safety and comfort to the people, and teachers help bring the saints to maturity.

The New Testament documents the flurry of churches being planted throughout the known world. In fact, it reads like a church planting manual:

Acts 2:42 Birth of the modern church
(church planted in Jerusalem)

Acts 8:14 Planting of Samaria church

Acts 9:20 Church in Damascus

Acts 9:31 Church in Judea

Acts 13:44 The whole city of Antioch gathers to hear the
word of the Lord

Virtually all the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are calls to plant churches. This is why a leading missiologist, C. Peter Wagner, said, “Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.”²²

Planting churches according to the New Testament pattern requires a church-multiplying movement that involves the fivefold ministry functioning in all of its power and anointing. The fivefold ministry will never be fully developed unless fivefold ministers are released into church planting as they multiply themselves.

Impact of apostles on church planting

The apostles especially have an important role in church planting because they are the establishers and architects. Their essential call is to plant new churches as they reflect the intent of their sender, Jesus Christ. While they do not necessarily plant all the churches, it is important for them to obtain experience in church planting before they are declared to be apostles. They need to know what others will go through. Because they have already done it, they have faith to see it happen again and are able to train others.

When you are around an apostolic person, faith overflows and feeds into you and causes you to believe that you can accomplish what God is telling you to do. An apostle is always thinking about planting new churches and expanding what already is.

Someone with a pastoral anointing will have a hard time seeing the need to plant a church. A pastor will be satisfied to pastor a church for many years without starting another one. It takes someone with an apostolic anointing to jump-start a pastor into realizing that perhaps God wants the worship leader, youth leader or other church leader to move out and start another church. Pastors need apostolic oversight to keep their vision stirred for the lost.

An apostle will think in terms of sending out the best to get the job done while a pastor many times will want to hold on to the best. Pastors need the apostolic gift to help them think outside the box and dream for more.

Sam, the senior pastor of a megachurch in my area, is such a pastor. He says, “God’s dream is that none should perish. Knowing the dream of the Lord requires that we continue to plant many more churches. We cannot be content with the status quo. In fact if we are content with the status quo, many more people will enter a Christless eternity and the kingdom will not advance, and that is the worst case scenario there is.”

The apostolic gift will activate and impart spiritual gifts

Paul anticipated that Timothy would need to act on what he had learned.

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction...according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.³

Paul’s apostolic gift was used in his relationship with Timothy to fulfill his God-given destiny. He understood the tactics of the

enemy and encouraged Timothy to press through. Timothy was used tremendously by the Holy Spirit in the early church plants. Apostolic leaders encourage people to activate their gifts.

The apostolic gift brings unity in a region

When a new church plant started in Edmonton, Canada, one of our church's apostolic leaders met with other pastors in the area and introduced them to the new church planter. They expressed their desire to work together, rather than compete with one another. In this way, they demonstrated to the other churches in the region that they desired to be accountable to see the kingdom built in the community.

Existing pastors who have been laboring for years in a community and have invested their lives in the community often do not welcome a new upstart church if they do not understand where they are coming from. When the existing churches observe that the new plant has spiritual protection and accountability from a larger apostolic source, it brings security and encourages open dialog and relationship.

The apostolic gift helps church planters avoid burnout

There are “pioneer” church planters and “ranchers.” The pioneer church planters like to go in and carve out a new church and then move on after a year or so. The apostolic leaders help ensure that other leaders are raised up to take over when the pioneer planter is ready to move again. Otherwise, the pioneer church planter is likely to grow weary and lose effectiveness. In some cases, because of the constant need to pioneer something new, a pioneer planter may unintentionally begin to tear down what was previously built, just so something fresh can be built.

A “rancher” church planter is one who is content to clear new land and stay for awhile. If required to move on, that church planter could feel pressured and also lose effectiveness. It is not his or her

nature to continually start new churches. Instead, their is a desire is to establish roots, dig deeply into the fabric of the community and stand against the enemy's tactics.

Apostolic leaders sense and discern what each leader needs and helps each one build accordingly. If a church planter does not understand the difference between these two dynamics, it is likely that frustration will develop. That leader may even conclude that he or she is not cut out for church leadership when, in fact, it is just a problem of being misplaced.

Apostolic/prophetic warfare

The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). This can be no more true than in church planting. Apostolic/prophetic teams are especially helpful in identifying spiritual strongholds in a new area and helping church planters break through spiritual darkness. Prophetic prayer teams can come in and stir up the spiritual cobwebs of a community, tearing down influences that hinder a plant from moving forward.

Sometimes I encourage one of our new church planters to have a prophetic team come in and pray over the region. Teams like this are quite effective as they set up their spiritual antenna, picking up the weaknesses and strengths of the area. Ministry focus can be determined more effectively when this happens.

Teachers lay groundwork

As a new church plant begins to grow, it is important to have gifted teachers to come in on a regular basis to lay a firm foundation. When weekend teaching sessions are introduced, momentum builds and new Christians become hungry for the Word of the Lord. This is an excellent time to use developing teachers because they can lay basic, foundational truths.

It also is a time where long-lasting relationships can be developed over. In one particular new church plant, we had fivefold teachers come in who made a powerful impression on the new Christians. And while these teachers do not come as often now, they are clearly remembered as having a tremendous impact in that church family.

Conclusion

As all of the gifted fivefold ministers are released into their God-given callings in church planting, each one provides vital ministry. The apostles spot other apostles and train them. The prophets train other prophets. Pastors, teachers and evangelists do the same. This pattern in church planting not only helps jump-start new churches, it also benefits existing churches as fivefold ministers reach maturity through practical, hands-on training.