

# LESSON 7

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## CHURCHES ILLUSTRATE THE PLANTING TECHNIQUE

“Well, David and John, I haven’t seen you for over three months. The work must be going well in Gane.” Brother Eyo said as he greeted the young men with a big smile.

“Yes, very well. Praise God!” replied David. “The church is growing more every month. Two deacons are teaching the new believers’ class.”

“That is very good news,” said Brother Eyo, “but why are you looking so concerned?”

David showed him two letters. “I have had letters from my friends who feel called to plant churches in other countries where the gospel is needed. But those countries have severe problems. One suffers poverty and turmoil from a recent civil war. The other is a place very hostile to Christians, where there are many restrictions against preaching. What can I write to encourage them?”

Brother Eyo’s answer was to tell David about the churches in this lesson. These are true examples of churches that grew in very difficult circumstances. As you study the lesson, try to find the principles that worked for each church. These principles can be applied in any situation.



*“The church sent out workers . . .”*

### **lesson outline**

In a Rural Area

In an Urban Area

In a Restricted Area

By a New Method

### **lesson objectives**

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Identify basic principles of successful church planting.
- Appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire innovative church planting methods.

### **learning activities**

1. Study the lesson according to the procedure given in Lesson 1. Be sure to read all Scriptures given and answer all study questions.
2. Check the glossary at the back of this study guide for definitions of any key words you do not understand.

3. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson and check your answers carefully. Review any items you answer incorrectly.

### key words

adherent	innovative	resistant
credential	lay leader	restricted
dialect	motivate	rural
disown	obstacle	urban
exhaustion		

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## lesson development

### IN A RURAL AREA

**Objective 1.** *Study an example of church multiplication and state the principles which were followed.*

In this lesson, you will study how four different churches were planted. One is in a rural area, another is in a city area, another is in an area where political or community pressures make it difficult to become a Christian, and the other is established by a new, unusual method. This lesson should help you picture how good church planting works. It will also help you to discover some of the characteristics of churches which grow and multiply. As you study these examples, allow God to put a vision in your heart for starting new churches where you live.

The following story about a church in Central America was reported in an interview with Dr. Melvin Hodges, a well-known former missionary-missions administrator and professor of missions. He has authored several good books on church growth, including *The Indigenous Church* and *A Guide to Church Planting* which have been translated into many languages. Reading these books may provide you with valuable insight about church development.

A church was started in 1934 in a poor rural area in a Central American country by a man who had little formal education. He was not known as a great preacher, but the pastor was a man of great faith who had a strong desire to make new disciples for Jesus Christ.

The church did not grow fast. It was located in such a poor area, it took the people ten years to finish their church building. They did what they could as the money came in. The church never had more than 100 members, and rarely did attendance reach 150. Yet for many years this church was one of the most important churches in helping to spread the gospel throughout the country.

The pastor was a faithful teacher of God’s Word. Every Sunday night he taught the people the doctrines of their faith. The people studied their Bibles faithfully. The pastor taught workers in the church principles from the Scriptures and how to teach them to others (Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 2:2). These workers were appointed to go out and start branch Sunday schools and outstation churches in the surrounding villages. Many of the new churches began with meetings in the homes of the new believers. The workers followed the example of their pastor. They were faithful to their responsibilities and showed love to the people where they ministered (John 13:34-35). The pastor believed his church should start new churches in all the surrounding areas. He believed that half the distance between his church and the next church in every direction was the area for which his church was responsible.

**1** Read each of the following verses of Scripture and then write a brief statement describing what the pastor did to obey the instructions of each Scripture.

**a** Matthew 28:20 .....

**b** 2 Timothy 2:2 .....

**c** John 13:34-35 .....

As the workers whom the pastor was teaching became more experienced, they usually became pastors of the new churches. They continued to receive help and training from the sending church, which they sometimes called the “mother” church. The church became a multiplying church. It not only started new churches itself but also taught the new churches to do the same. You will remember from Lesson 4 the illustration of how strawberry plants grow by a mother-daughter system. A “mother” plant sends out shoots which sprout into “daughter” plants. The new plants take root and in turn send out shoots that become more daughter plants. There is a continual development of plants which spread systematically over a large area.

The church sent out workers (like plant runners) to make new believers and gather them into daughter churches. As the new believers became grounded in the Word of God, they became stronger and were able to grow and draw strength from the Word. As soon as a new church was strong enough, it was allowed to function by itself. The people developed a sense of responsibility and love for their church and for the lost people of their area. They were eventually able to support their pastor and send out workers to witness to those who needed Christ. They became “mother” churches themselves.

There are now at least 25 fully established churches within a circle of 20 miles of the first mother church. Each of those churches is also sending out volunteer workers to start new churches. New groups of believers are constantly being formed. There is a well-established church every eight or ten miles in every direction throughout the whole area.

**2** How did the pastor multiply his teaching?

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**3** How did the workers multiply their witnessing?

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 .....

4 List two or more actions which enabled the daughter churches to become mother churches. Write your answer in your notebook.

### **IN AN URBAN AREA**

**Objective 2.** *Evaluate principles and methods used in starting and maintaining continued growth in an urban church.*

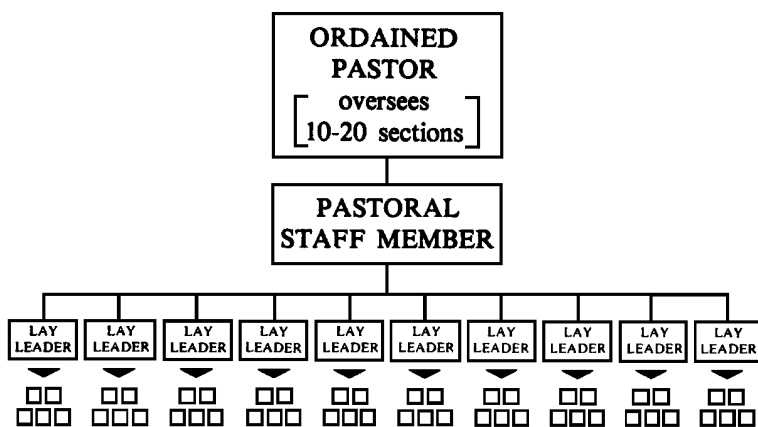
In 1958, a recent Bible school graduate started a new church in a small tent at the edge of a large city. The church started in the midst of post-war poverty. The pastor preached words of faith, hope, salvation, and healing. Early morning prayer meetings were held. Soon word of healings spread to the surrounding area. Dramatic healings and deliverance from demon possession occurred often. People experienced the joy of salvation in Christ and found freedom from sinful habits which had controlled them. In two years the number of believers had grown to 300.

Property was purchased in the city to build a church. When the building was finished, an evangelistic campaign was started in a tent in an open space beside the new church. When the new 1500 seat building was dedicated, the believers totaled 800. Positive preaching and further healings caused even more rapid growth. The church emphasized the teaching of Bible doctrines to build up new believers as well as to continue evangelism.

Two years later the first lay leaders were appointed as deacons and elders. They were taught regularly by the pastor. (Lay leaders are not full-time church workers. They support themselves and give their free time to the Lord's work.)

The church continued to grow rapidly. One day a near tragedy helped to increase the growth of the church. While preaching on a Sunday evening, the pastor fainted from physical exhaustion. This was caused by his efforts to carry most of the responsibility for the ministry of the church. During the months of his recovery he worked out a plan to train others to assume some of the responsibilities for the church.

The pastor trained men and women to become leaders of “cell units,” groups of people who met in homes all over the city at least one night per week. These cell units were made up of 10 to 15 families who actively witnessed, prayed, and studied the Bible together. A lay leader supervised the ministry of five home cell units. Fifty to one hundred cell units were organized into cell unit sections led by a full-time pastoral staff member. Ten to twenty of the cell unit sections were overseen by an ordained pastor of the church. These cell units provided training and fellowship for new believers. By 1983 there were well over 18,000 home cell unit meetings all over that large city.



### **CELL UNITS (fifty equal one section)**

5 What two principles were used by both the rural and the urban church that stimulated their growth?

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**6** Select the TRUE statements below which give reasons why the urban church grew rapidly.

- a** The pastor did all the ministry work himself.
- b** The spiritual needs of the people were met.
- c** The church started in a large, beautiful building.
- d** The believers met for early morning prayer.
- e** Trained lay leaders participated in the ministry of the church.

**7** If certain principles are followed, church growth is the natural result. How did the urban church accomplish these principles?

- a** Spiritual needs were met by .....
- .....
- b** Fellowship needs were met by .....
- .....
- c** Needs for additional workers were met as .....
- .....

By 1969 the church had grown to 8,000 members. In faith the congregation began building a new church building which seated 10,000. The cost was three million dollars. The pastor was told by the Holy Spirit to receive no foreign donations even though his country was still very poor and there was financial hardship. The pastor and many of the people sold their homes and moved into small apartments, donating the money to the church building project. After great sacrifice the church was dedicated in 1973. Fifteen months later the membership was over 20,000.

As the church grew, its ministries continually expanded. A night Bible school was started, new churches were sponsored all over the country, a Christian magazine was published, church growth seminars were given, and missionaries were sent to many countries around the world to minister to their people who had moved to other countries.



By 1979 it was not unusual to see over 3,000 new members join the church each month. In 1983 the church had 275,000 members. One outstanding characteristic of the church is its strong emphasis on prayer. Prayer is above everything in the lives of the church's people, from the individuals in home cell units to the pastors and lay leaders. Fasting and prayer for the people and their needs is common in all the ministries of the church.

**8** The urban church grew at an unusual rate, but not without definite planning. In your notebook list three or four methods that stimulated church growth.

**9** Read over your responses to exercise 8. Then write in your notebook answers to these questions.

- a** Is it possible for churches in other places to use these same methods?
- b** What do you think would be the result if they did? Why?
- c** Write a brief plan for using similar methods in your area.

### **IN A RESTRICTED AREA**

**Objective 3.** *Study the example given, and identify the obstacles to church planting in restricted areas and the methods used to overcome them.*

In some parts of the world it is more difficult to live as a believer and make new disciples. In such places, there is often strong religious or political pressure against those who become believers. In certain areas, both political and strong religious pressure combine to bring severe persecution against new believers. Unbelieving relatives of Christian believers are expected to force them to deny their faith. If they refuse to deny their faith, they are put to death. This strong community pressure against conversion requires different methods for starting new churches. Yet our Lord is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The sovereign Lord of the harvest finds ways to build His church even in the most difficult places.

We can learn some important methods from a new church which was started in a city of a country which imposes severe restrictions on any religion other than its official, non-Christian religion. In this country the people have followed the official religion for many years. It is against the law to become a believer in Christ. The only believers in the country are a few foreigners.

Then God sent a brother (a church planter), who was a believer from a nearby country. He quickly discovered what he must do first. The people could not read the Bible because it was written in a language very different from their spoken language. Not even the well educated could understand it. So the church planter translated the gospel of Mark into the local dialect. But when the first copies were ready to use, he found that it was not possible to distribute Christian literature in public.

**10** What were the first two obstacles that the church planter had to overcome?

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.....

Not discouraged, the brother decided to make as many friends as he could. He prayed, and then when the Holy Spirit directed him, he gave a copy of the Gospel of Mark to his friends. As the friends read the book they were invited to the brother's home to discuss different topics relating to religion and the customs of different peoples. As the people entered the home, they were invited to sit on a straw mat according to their usual custom. As soon as the people entered the room they knew it was a religious place, and they felt comfortable. They were able to discuss their ideas freely.

After several weeks, one person realized he had found the truth his heart had been searching for. He repented and confessed Christ as his Savior. Slowly, a few others became believers. Some received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The group began to grow.

**11** Choose the statement which best describes the basic obstacles the church planter had to overcome in order to reach the people with the gospel.

- a) The people were bound by custom and fear; they observed only the official religion. Their minds were closed to anything that suggested a different religion.
- b) The people were accustomed to their own culture and religion; therefore, they were resistant to any kind of change or foreign influence.

The church planter was very wise. He did not try to control everything in the new church. From the beginning, the new believers led discussions, prayers, songs, and other worship activities. As the group grew it was divided into small groups which met in different homes. This was a good plan. The new groups attracted people from the different areas of town. Their small size prevented them from being noticed by the officials, who would have reacted to the gathering of a large group.

Today the believers are very close to each other. They are strong in their support for those who are persecuted. The leadership of the new church was developed so fast that the church planter has moved on to start another church in a neighboring country. Meanwhile, the new church continues to grow and multiply.

**12** Read Romans 10:14. What did this verse tell the church planter he had to do first if the people were to receive the gospel?

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**13** Select the TRUE statements which describe methods used to overcome obstacles to the gospel.

- a** The need was so urgent to reach the people with the gospel that the church planter used deceitful means to attract them.
- b** A familiar and nonthreatening atmosphere made it possible for the people to listen to the church planter's message.
- c** In the restricted area the church planter had to make friends before he could make converts.

## **BY A NEW METHOD**

### **The Experience of Philippe**

**Objective 4.** *Explain how churches can be planted by using evangelism study courses.*

#### *He Saw the Need*

A young man, whom we will call Philippe, was attending Bible school. Philippe's father was a devil worshiper. When Philippe was saved his family disowned him. During his last year in Bible school, Philippe felt a burden to take the gospel to a remote mountain area in his country. It was a poverty-stricken area where the people had never heard the gospel. Many people there worshiped evil spirits. Philippe saw the spiritual needs of these people.

#### *He Discovered a Means*

While in Bible school Philippe helped in the local office of International Correspondence Institute. He became very excited about the possibility of evangelizing the unreached people in the mountains by using the ICI evangelism course: *The Great Questions of Life*. Philippe had found the means to meet the spiritual need.

#### *He Made a Commitment*

Philippe committed himself to use this means to take the gospel to the mountain people. Every Saturday he rode the bus

as far as he could. Then he walked for two hours up into the mountains. On the first Saturday he found 15 people who were eager to study the course. They completed their courses and then gave him the names of several other prospects. Every Saturday Philippe returned with corrected lessons. He enrolled new students and preached to the villagers whenever he had the opportunity. Many students accepted Christ as their Saviour. Philippe continued to teach them Bible truths by using some other ICI courses: *Highlights in the Like of Christ*, and *Your Helpful Friend*, a study on the Holy Spirit.

In a short time a group of believers built a small chapel with a straw roof. Not long after, the church was organized according to the principles you studied in Lesson 3.

Now there is a church of over 250 members in that mountain area. Philippe did not stay there. Using these same methods he has planted six more churches. Not long ago Philippe went to an island off the coast of his country. There 35 people have accepted Christ as a result of studying *The Great Questions of Life*. They have asked Philippe to come to their village to preach the gospel and teach them more of God's Word. Philippe has inspired others to plant churches by using these same methods.

**14** List three steps that led Philippe to accomplish his method of church planting. Use your notebook for your answer.

### **The Guidelines to Follow**

In the country where Philippe worked, the national church organization and the national ICI office found that guidelines were needed as new churches were planted, thus certain principles were agreed upon.

*First, the church planter must be a motivated, Holy Spirit directed worker.* The Holy Spirit lays the burden on the heart of the church planter. When a person is under the Holy Spirit's direction he can persevere and withstand whatever difficulty and sacrifices are necessary to see a church established.

*Second, the worker must be provided with proper credentials from the national church body and the national ICI office.* Local officials may be suspicious of a stranger who is teaching from materials they have never seen. With a letter of introduction from the national offices, the worker can explain his mission and avoid problems with local authorities. Also, he has the opportunity to make friends with the officials.

*Third, the worker must go into an area that has no evangelical church work.* The worker and national directors prayerfully select an unchurched, unevangelized area. The purpose is not to draw members and adherents from other evangelical churches but to reach the unevangelized.

*Fourth, the church planter must work closely with the national church.* The national church body is informed about church planting plans. This body helps select the areas for evangelism, commissions the worker, and helps with the overall planning. As soon as possible the new church is set in order and affiliated with the national church organization.

**15** Circle the letter of the TRUE statements listing the guidelines which should be followed when using literature to plant churches in new areas.

- a** The church planter should work where people have no opportunity to hear the gospel from some other church in that area.
- b** The church planter should concentrate his efforts only in large cities where many people will hear the gospel.
- c** It is most important for the church planter to be motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit.
- d** As soon as a new church is established the church planter should notify the national church office about his work in that area.
- e** The church planter should carry authorization for his work from the national church and the national ICI office.

**16** Suppose you saw a need and wanted to plant a church among a group of people by using evangelistic courses. Describe the steps you would take to do so. Write your answer in your notebook.

These four true illustrations of church planting that you have studied show how churches can be planted and grow under a variety of circumstances. Each situation was unique, but there were some features common to all. By following the same principles the church of Jesus Christ can grow anywhere.

**17** Review the examples of the churches and workers given in this lesson. In your notebook, list three or four important characteristics that were common in each situation where new churches were planted.

**self-test**

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is TRUE. Write **F** if it is FALSE.

- . . . . **1** The church multiplies as teachers teach others to be teachers.
- . . . . **2** Some local churches are called to evangelize the lost and others have the responsibility to be mother churches.
- . . . . **3** It is important for a church planter to lead all the worship activities in a new church.
- . . . . **4** The mother-daughter principle of church planting can be successful in urban as well as rural areas.
- . . . . **5** Two of the elements necessary for successful church planting are dedicated workers and emphasis on Bible teaching.
- . . . . **6** In a religiously restrictive area, unbelievers can be attracted to the gospel if it is presented to them in a familiar, unthreatening setting.
- . . . . **7** Language differences need not be considered because the gospel is powerful.
- . . . . **8** When a church planter is called by God he has no need for national church credentials.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

- 9** Examples of successful church planting in Acts and that of today show
- a) that the church leaders prayed more in Acts.
  - b) the importance of earnest prayer and the involvement of many workers.
  - c) that reliance on the Holy Spirit is more urgent today.
  - d) that less emphasis on Bible teaching is needed today because more people can read.



**10** When starting a daughter church, the church members to whom the pastor gives responsibility for work are

- a) the most spiritual so they can pray.
- b) those well-known in the town so they will attract others.
- c) all the members in order to develop their spiritual growth.
- d) those who are well trained and experienced.

**11** Church planting by using evangelistic courses can be termed as a method

- a) inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- b) used successfully for many years.
- c) to be used only in rural areas.
- d) that requires many workers.

**12** Experiences of church planting in hostile areas show that people respond to

- a) powerful preaching which shows no fear of the hostility.
- b) love shown by adopting the local customs.
- c) preaching in secret places with only trusted friends.
- d) sincere friendship and presenting Christ in a way adapted to the culture of the people.

## answers to study questions

- 9 a** Yes, in most places. Evangelism methods would have to differ if there are legal restrictions.
- b** They would experience rapid growth because they would be using New Testament principles
- c** Your answer.
- 1 a** He taught the people Bible doctrines.
- b** He taught the workers the principles of Scripture and how to teach others.
- c** He was an example of love to the people, and he taught the workers to show love.
- 10** He had to translate the Gospel of Mark into the local language and then find a way to give it to the people.
- 2** He taught the church workers in the Word then sent them out to start neighboring churches.
- 11 a)** The people were bound by custom and fear; they observed only the official religion. Their minds were closed to anything that suggested a different religion.
- 3** They showed the new believers their responsibility to witness to the lost in their area.
- 12** He had to find a way to get the people to *listen* to his message so they could *hear* the gospel.
- 4** Your answer. The daughter churches became strong through the teaching of the Word. They were allowed to take responsibility for their own church. They sent out workers to witness to the lost and start other churches.
- 13 a** False.
- b** True.
- c** True.

**5** The pastors faithfully taught God's Word, and they also taught the believers their responsibility to share the good news of Christ with unbelievers. The believers were sent out to organize and teach groups that would in turn become responsible to others.

**14** Your answer may not be exactly the same words but should be similar.

- 1) He saw the spiritual need, or he had a burden for the lost.
- 2) He found a means to meet the spiritual need.
- 3) He committed himself to use this means to take the gospel to those in need.

- 6 a** False.  
**b** True.  
**c** False.  
**d** True.  
**e** True.

**15 a** True.  
**b** False.  
**c** True.  
**d** False. He should talk with the national church office before he goes to an area.  
**e** True.

- 7 a** consistent pastoral teaching, regular prayer meetings, deliverance from sin and demon possession, and healing.  
**b** organizing the people into small groups so they could study and fellowship together.  
**c** leaders were trained and given responsibility for ministry.

**16** Your answer should give a plan that follows the principles given in the lesson. Here is a possible answer:

- 1) Inform the national church office of my plans to be sure I have selected an unevangelized area. Ask the national leaders for their help and ask them to give me a letter of introduction that I can use to explain my mission to the local authorities.
- 2) Obtain credentials from the national correspondence school office.
- 3) Carry out my plans, using the courses to introduce the gospel and teach the new believers.
- 4) Continue my work until a new church is established.
- 5) Set the church in order and have it affiliated with the national church organization.

**8** In any order: The pastor preached positive messages in spite of a very difficult situation. The church had regular early morning prayer meetings. Miracles of healing and deliverance attracted unbelievers. Lay leaders were trained. Fasting and prayer were common in all the ministries. The church multiplied its ministry through small groups.

**17** Your answer. I would say that they all had dedicated workers, determination in prayer, emphasis on teaching Bible doctrines, and gave responsibility to local believers.