

TROAS STRATEGY

Church Planting Movement Principle in the Metropolis

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TROAS STRATEGY: CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT PRINCIPLE IN THE METROPOLIS

The Church, the Body of Christ, is today's agency in reaching the lost world. God's people are nurtured and or mentored through the local church so in turn they plant another church. I first heard pioneering missionary and church planter Vernon Anderson¹ of Things to Come Mission, Inc. in the Philippines say, "Church planting is the best form of soul winning". I believe this is valid because any endeavor to win souls less the local church loving participation is hollow. Yes, we may see souls won but there could be less or no preservation to maturity and fruit bearing when the local church cycle is not followed.

The Apostle Paul was the Lord's leading instrument in planting the most churches in the Gentile world. Mainly because he said in Romans 11:13 (KJV), " For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify mine office". The record in the Book of Acts gave evidences how Paul and his team through the guidance of the Holy Spirit did it. They planted churches strategically in key cities and towns of the Roman Empire. This is not to minimize the importance of small towns and barangays. Churches were planted first in key places like cities or in metropolis. But these cities and metropolis churches in turn planted churches in their neighboring places. Paul's church planting principles is as relevant today like the first century. They were followed as a DNA where church planting movement flourished.

The Troas Strategy started the church planting movement in the European continent during the first century. Paul and his team were in Asia but were not permitted to minister there. Acts 16:6-10 (NKJV), "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. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us". Ben Anderson², the son of Vernon Anderson, also a missionary to Kenya, Africa, the

¹ Vernon Anderson came to the Philippines in 1958 under Things to Come Mission, Inc.

original missionary who used the word "Troas Strategy" said, "Paul and his companions had just begun their second missionary journey and were effectively evangelizing "from town to town" in the regions of Syria and Lycaonia. This type of ministry was similar to what Jesus had done in Israel -- village to village and town to town.

Suddenly, in Acts 16:6-7, the Holy Spirit prevents Paul from moving to west (Asia) and to the east (Bithynia). After all the success he had been having, one can imagine that there was a certain degree of confusion in Paul's mind. He was able and willing to go to the next town in the next region but the Holy Spirit said, "No!"

Paul and his companions went down to the seaport of Troas to seek God's will. During the night, God revealed a new strategy to the Apostle Paul. We sometimes call this *the Macedonian vision*. It was much more than that. It was a new method of evangelism which Paul would use for the rest of his life. I call this *the Troas Strategy*. Paul had wanted to go to Bithynia, a very remote area of the Roman Empire. He also wanted to go to Asia, entering through the *back door*. Instead, the Holy Spirit wanted Paul to target resourceful people in key cities, who would be capable in carrying on the work of the local church. These people would release Paul to move quickly to the next city."

The Troas Strategy: Target Resourceful People in Leading Cities

The succeeding events in Acts demonstrate Paul's change in strategy.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord has called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came to a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were at that city abiding certain days.
(Acts 16:10-12)

² Ben Anderson, "Sharpening Our Vision: The Apostle Paul's Method", 2005 presented his paper at the Grace Revival Conference in Branson, Missouri, October 4-7, 2005

Note the language of urgency and purpose -- "immediately we endeavored" and sailed "with a straight course for Samothrace." Paul had left the "wandering evangelist" strategy and now moved with a sense of purpose and determination. He moved quickly from Troas through Samothrace and Neapolis so that he could reach Philippi, which Luke described as a *chief city* of Macedonia. Paul and his companions stayed there for several days.

In Acts 15:50, it was the leaders of the city who rejected Paul.

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coast. (Acts 13:50)

In Philippi, however, Paul dealt with the leaders of the city -- the head of the jail and the magistrates.

Later, in Berea, several prominent women got saved. The Jews, on the other hand, "rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace" in order to resist Paul's ministry. This is a clear indication that Paul changed his strategy after Acts 16:9.

Was the Troas Strategy effective? After the Holy Spirit refused Paul entry into Asia in Acts 16, in Acts 19:9-10 we are told that after just two years of ministry among the influential people in Ephesus, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." The Strategy worked wonderfully among the Gentiles of Paul's days and we can be sure it will work among the Gentiles of our day."

Paul started the church planting movement in big cities Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, etc.

David Garrison³ listed ten universal element at work in every church planting movement: I believed these were present in the Apostle Paul's Troas Strategy.

- 1) Extraordinary Prayer
- 2) Abundant Evangelism
- 3) Intentional Planting of Reproducing Churches

³ D. Garrison. Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World. Wigtake Resources, P.O. Box 1268 Midlothian, VA. 23113, p. 172

- 4) The Authority of God's Word
- 5) Local Leadership
- 6) Lay Leadership
- 7) House Churches
- 8) Churches Planting Churches
- 9) Rapid Reproduction
- 10) Healthy Churches

The Apostle Paul and his team's church planting movement fits with what Garrison listed as common to every movement. Just a word of warning when using Paul's life as example, we follow Christ first of all. 1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1 (NKJV), " Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NKJV), "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life".

- 1) EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER. Paul was prayerful as a religious Pharisee. Only after he was converted the Lord took note of his prayers. Paul and Barnabas were sent by their sending church, Antioch of Syria, only after they prayed and fasted. I believe that man in Paul's vision at Macedonia was praying for help. John C. Maxwell⁴ said, "When a group of people lifts up their church and partners with their leader in prayer, incredible things happen."
- 2) ABUNDANT EVANGELISM. Paul was called by Christ from heaven after his ascension (Acts 9:3-4). Paul said that, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and

⁴ John Maxwell, "*Partners in Prayer*", OMF Literature Inc. 1999, 7776 Boni Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, p.110

then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance", (Acts 26:19-20, NKJV).

- 3) INTENTIONAL PLANTING OF REPRODUCING CHURCHES. The principle of 2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) fitly joined this truth. "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also". Through this principle, Paul gathered disciples and taught them at Tyrannus Hall. Acts 19:9-10 (NKJV), "But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." I believe much on the job training were involved because "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of God.

The saying "If you aim at nothing you will surely hit it" is true of the kind of church we planted. When we aim to plant for a reproducing church we will hit it.

- 4) THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD. David the King said, "... for thou has magnified thy word above all thy name..." (Psalm 138:2c). Knowing God's name is useless without knowing God's word. That is why Paul said in Romans 10:17 (NKJV), "So then faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The whole Bible is for us: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV), "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." But the Bible must be rightly divided for us to be profitable. C. R. Stam⁵ said, "II Timothy 2:15 explains how God's workman may get the most out of the Bible, while II Timothy 3:16 declares that all of it was given for his profit. All Scripture is indeed profitable when "rightly divided," but when wrongly divided or not divided at all, the truth is changed into a

⁵ C. R. Stam. Things that Differ. Berean Bible Society, N112 W17761 Mequon Road, P.O. Box 756, Germantown WI 53022, 1951, p. 15.

lie and become most unprofitable."

- 5) LOCAL LEADERSHIP. D. Garrison⁶ posed the question to church planting movement task force, "When do you pass the torch to new leadership?" Their universal response was, "In church planting movement you begin with the torch in their hand." Everywhere Paul went he had men and women being trained and mentored to lead the church so that they in turn plant more churches. He trained and mentored Epafra who in turn planted the Colossian Church (Colossians 1:7-8).
- 6) LAY LEADERSHIP. I believe the single most relevant Biblical passage of lay leadership is found in Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV), "And He Himself gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Verse 11 are the church planting movement strategist, Pastors, Evangelist, prophets, apostles and teachers. Verse 12, their job is to prepare, disciple, mentor God's people for works of service. The result, the body of Christ will be built up. Souls are won and churches planted which in turn plant more churches.
- 7) HOUSE CHURCHES. The names listed in Romans 16 included several house churches in Rome but Paul had not visited or ministered in Rome yet. Romans 1:11 (NKJV), "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts, so that you may be established."
 - a) Romans 16:5 - house church at the house of Priscilla and Aquila
 - b) Romans 16:14 - "Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them."
 - c) Romans 16:15 - "Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them." Paul called them churches in the city of Rome which numbered three house churches (v. 16).

⁶ D. Garrison, "Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World", Wigtake Resources, P.O. Box 1268 Midlothian, VA. 23113, p. 188

- d) In Corinth, the city church began at the house of Titius Justus (Acts 18:7).
 - e) In Colosse, the church met at the house of Philemon (Philemon 1:2).
 - f) In Philippi, Lydia and her household were baptized first. (Acts 16:15)
 - g) Still in Philippi, the jailer and his whole family were baptized. (Acts 16:31-34)
- 8) CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES. Somebody said, "The real fruit of a mango tree is another mango tree bearing more mango fruits capable of growing more mango trees." Real church planting movement is when the momentum does not stop. Churches planted should start another church which in turn start another church. This is the first century Pauline pattern. 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 (NKJV), "And you became followers of us and of the Lords, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything."
- 9) RAPID REPRODUCTION. This Thessalonian church (v. 1) is a model or pattern as they multiply themselves in other places planting churches. That was why the unbelievers were charging the Thessalonian believers with Paul as men who "turned the world upside down". Acts 17:6 but in reality Paul and his team turned the world right side up. Now consider the fact that Paul was ministering in Thessalonica in 3 Sabbaths only (Acts 17:2). But Paul said, "For from you the word of God have gone out, so that we do not used to say anything." What a wild fire like spread to reproduce.
- 10) HEALTHY CHURCHES. One of the biblical standards for a healthy church is found in Ephesians 4:13-16 (NKJV), "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ".

Verse 13 - maturity is one of the signs of a healthy church

Verse 15 - speaking the truth in love is how we verbalize our faith

Verse 16 - the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament. A healthy body description on each part does its work, of course this is done in love.

The greatest demonstration of this truth was how the believers in Macedonia showed their generosity to help the starving believers in Judaea. Why were there starving believers in Judaea? They sold their lands and properties believing that the Kingdom that will be established on earth will come. Acts 2:43, Acts 4:34-35. But the nation Israel through its leaders (Sanhedrin) rejected the Messiah and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Therefore God temporarily set aside the program for the nation Israel through the 12 apostles and chose the Apostle Paul in Acts 9 for this age of grace.

The Macedonian churches include Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. Most of the believers there were poor. Not only poor but they were in extreme poverty. II Corinthians 8:1-5 (NKJV), "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." Why were they in extreme poverty? Probably because most of them were slaves⁷.

"Some authorities believe that at the height of the Roman Empire there were 3 slaves to every free man."

These Macedonian churches were strategically located along Via Egnatia, the international highway. The cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea were located in the gold producing region of Macedonia⁸. But this wealth is only in the hands of a very few. Sounds like the same in our

⁷ The World Book Encyclopedia. Volume 15. Field Enterprise Inc, Chicago, 1953, p. 7498

⁸ NIV Study Bible, The Zondervan Corporation 1985, p. 1804

present day economic situation. But this did not deter them to show the grace of God (verse 1) in their lives.

Describing their gift in Philippians 4:18, Paul said their gifts were fragrant offering and acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

That was the reason why in Galatians 2:7-10, the leaders of the Jerusalem Church Peter, James and John had a solemn agreement with Paul who was God's instrument to reach the Gentiles with his companion, Barnabas. Galatians 6:7-10 (NKJV), "But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me towards the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do."

Healthy churches therefore, follow Christ's teachings to the Apostle and will give materially after they are blessed spiritually. So Paul also said to remember the poor which was also what he was eager to do, Galatians 2:10.

Let me add a few in most church planting movements by David Garrison⁹

- 1) **A CLIMATE OF UNCERTAINTY IN SOCIETY.** In Paul's time these climate abounded. The Jewish rebellion against the Roman authorities was swelling due to their Messianic expectations. Among the Gentiles, they desired reforms against the Roman way of life which is in decadence. Paul as a Hebrew and Roman was in a position to deal with those issues. It was uncertain time

⁹ D. Garrison. Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World. Wigtake Resources, P.O. Box 1268 Midlothian, VA. 23113, p. 222, 224, 225, 235

when I was assigned as intern pastor to the mountains of North Cotabato in the 70's. The Muslim secessionist movement was at its height. Civil war was going on. Almost all the people in the village where I stayed go to their church on any Sunday. Very few stayed in their houses. It was very easy to share the good news from God's Word. They were expecting the next battle any time. Six months after my internship, two of our young people and two of our elders were killed.

- 2) **THE HIGH COST FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST.** 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV), "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit". To be a witness (GK) "marterio" is to be a martyr. The early believers knew the price they have to pay in following Christ. Their very lives. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 (NKJV), "That no one should be shaken by these affliction; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know". Everywhere Paul went he said, "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God", Acts 20:23-24 (NKJV).
- 3) **BOLD FEARLESS FAITH.** 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NKJV), "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Acts 19:18-20 (NKJV), "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."
- 4) **MISSIONARIES SUFFERED.** Our God is a missionary God. He sent His Son as a missionary and suffered. Paul enumerated some of his sufferings as a missionary in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 (NKJV): "Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they seed of Abraham? So *am* I. Are they ministers of Christ? -- I speak as a fool -- I am more: in labors more abundant,

in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in death often. From the Jews five times I've received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of water, *in* perils of robber, *in* perils of my own countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold, and nakedness --- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with *indignation*? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus, the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and I escaped from his hands."

May we never retreat from our calling as church planting movement partners by following the Apostle Paul's Troas Strategy which is mainly targeting key cities/places with its resourceful people not just responsive people. In doing so, we are following the Lord Jesus Christ.

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