

# Church Planting Models

Finny Kuruvilla

August 21, 2014

# My background

- Born and raised in the Los Angeles, CA area
- In the 1980s, my father started the largest Bible school for church planters in North India. Graduates have now planted over 1500 churches in the unreached parts of India
- Spent lots of time traveling with him in the US and India
- Planted two churches in Boston, MA: one in 2004, another in 2013
- Student of church history

# Why plant churches?

If you want to grow something to last a season –  
plant flowers.

If you want to grow something to last a lifetime –  
plant trees.

If you want to grow something to last through eternity –  
plant churches.

Credit: unknown

But if you want to be a church planter...  
beware!

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” (James 3:1 NKJV)

When considering models of church planting... beware of reductionism!



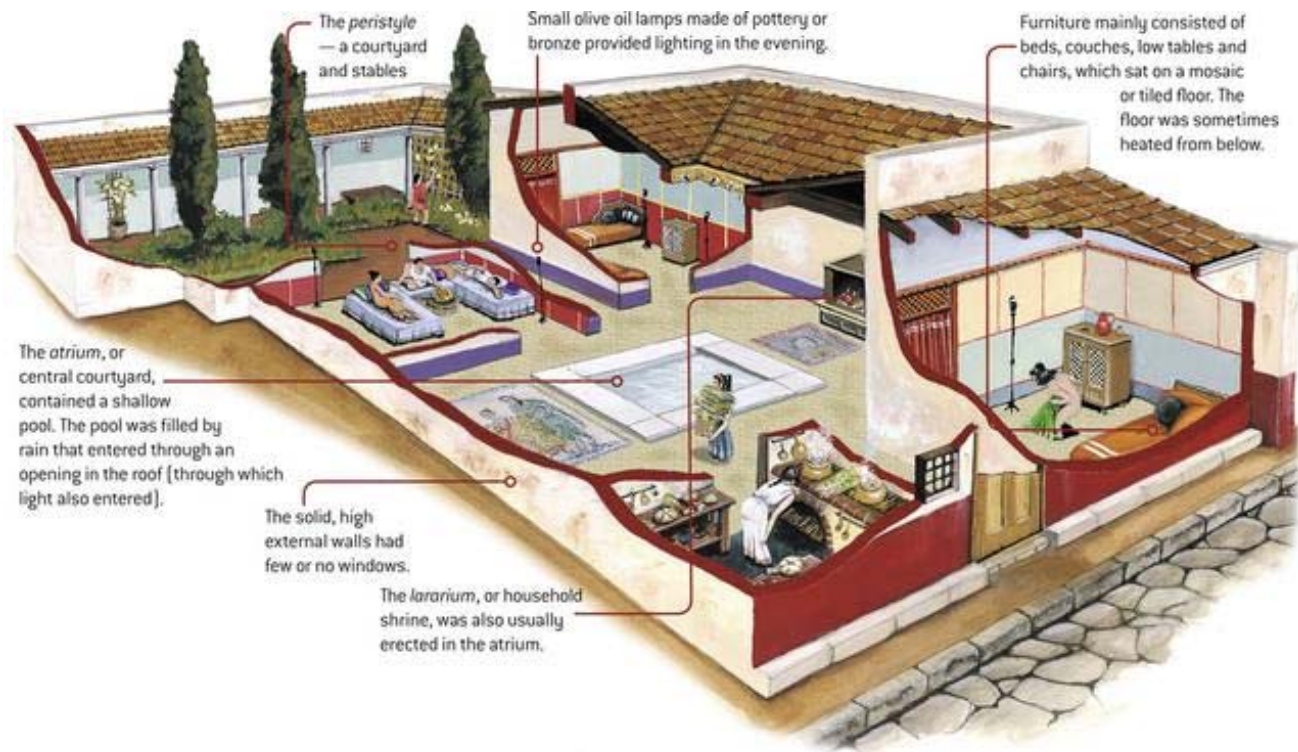
# Goals

- Describe the “vital signs” for thinking about a biblical church plant
- Look at the strengths and weaknesses of several planting models throughout church history
- Learn principles of healthy church planting

## How do we process reports like this?

- A group in India reports 3,500 new churches with 70,000 people in the late 1990s.
- A believer in Asia plants 200 churches “in just three months” and reports 1,738,143 baptism in 10 years.

# Take a journey with me...



<http://drstoney.wikispaces.com/History+Year+8>





<http://redeemer-of-israel.blogspot.com/2012/04/triclinium-passover.html>

# How many people were in a typical NT church?

- Based on a typical layout, this number was likely close to 50, almost certainly no more than 100.

# Estimating the Christian population in Rome

- From the greeting section in Romans 16, there were 3-5 house churches in Rome.
- Let's assume 5 churches with 75 people each.
- That would be 375 Christians in a city of 650,000-1M people.<sup>1</sup>
- NT Wright estimates there were between 30-100 Christians in Rome when Paul wrote his letter.<sup>2</sup>
- In the optimistic scenario, that would imply that Christians were 0.06% of the population, or just under 1 in a 1000 people.
- This is a church that was probably founded in AD 33 at the time of Pentecost. Romans was written in AD 57.
- So after 24 years, this church was able to become 0.06% of the population (as low as 0.005% according to NT Wright, or 5 in 100,000 people)

<sup>1</sup> Population of Rome comes from Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, Harper Collins (1996), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume Ten*, Abingdon (2002), p. 763.

# Estimating the Christian population in a Pauline church plant

- Let's consider Corinth.
- “Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you” (Romans 16:23). Thus the Corinthians probably met in one house.
- Paul addresses 14 men in his letter to the Corinthians. Based on that and several other factors, Ben Witherington estimates the Christian population in Corinth to be 60 people.<sup>1</sup> De Vos estimates it was 100.<sup>2</sup>
- The population of Corinth was about 100,000 people at the time of Paul's letter,<sup>3</sup> implying around 0.06% of the population, a remarkably similar percentage to our independent estimates from Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, Eerdmans (1995), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Academic (2003), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, Harper Collins (1996), p. 131.

## So how did they grow?

- In Acts, churches were small communities that spread primarily through the leading cities of the Roman Empire
- Growth was more notable by its rapid spread to diverse cities than for domination in any one city.

# What did a successful mission look like to Paul?

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient--in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that the gospel of Christ has been fulfilled from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum... But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain.” (Romans 15)

“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” (Mark 1:38)



What was most discussed about a New Testament church?

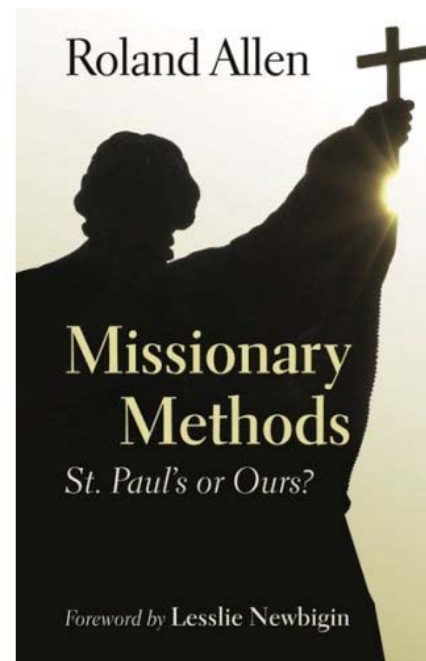
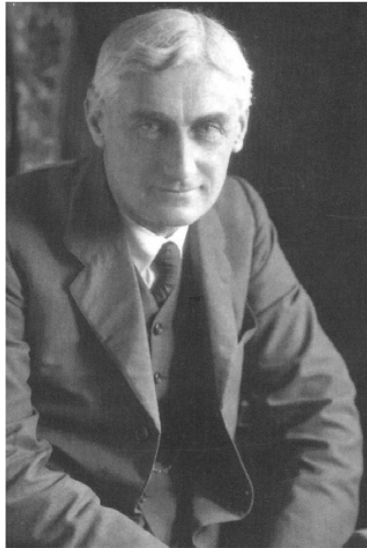
“For your obedience has become known to all.” (Rom 16:19)



# Historic shifts in church planting models

- While William Carey is usually credited with being the “father of the modern missions movement,” he should rather be thought of as someone who effectively created a movement of missions in the church regarding awareness and growth
- There were many groups doing church planting before him, but more quietly:
  - Nestorians in Japan
  - Moravians
  - Raymond Lull in North Africa
  - Franciscans
  - Anabaptists

## The first major shift after Carey



# The second shift begins in the 1980s-1990s

- No one person can justly be credited with it, but this pushed the pattern of the New Testament even further
- House-churches
  - Ability to work in more hostile environments
  - Recognition this is the only option in much of the world (i.e. Islamic countries)
  - Less financially burdensome
  - Works better in the developing world where hospitality is esteemed
- Strong emphasis on “passing the baton” to locals and enabling them to carry the work forward
- Heavy emphasis on prayer and spiritual warfare
- Significant, though not exclusive, urban attention
- Sometimes called the CPM (Church-Planting Movement) – this is truly exploding

The cracks are emerging from the CPM



# Are we ready for the third-wave of advance?

- We're still not there with the NT model!
- Not to mention the lack of attention to nonresistance and separation
- What would happen if took a truly NT model including Jesus' teachings and pushed it even further?
- Let's seek to learn from all the groups of history and not settle for anything but God's best!

# Criteria for evaluating church movements

1. Doctrinally guarded
2. Separation
3. Nonresistance
4. Believer's baptism
5. Evangelism and multiplication
6. Indigenous, lay led
7. Extraordinary prayer
8. Regulative Principle
9. Urban emphasis coming from Matthew 10 and the book of Acts
10. Intentionally small, intimate, less-financially draining churches
11. High inter-church accountability and connection
12. View of tradition

# Evangelism and multiplication

- Is evangelism and multiplication in the church's DNA?
- Are church members competent and successful at witnessing and discipleship?
- Examples of growth:
  - Moravians
  - Great Awakenings
  - Methodists
  - Modern Protestant, evangelical CPM

## Indigenous, lay led

- Are churches led by indigenous, local people?
- Are churches run by “professional,” paid ministers?
- Or is the church a grass-roots efforts of everyday, ordinary Christians?
- If done well, provides the ability for rapid growth as every person personally “owns” the Great Commission



# Extraordinary prayer

- Virtually every move of God has been preceded by prayer, starting with Pentecost.
- The hallmark of these movements is sacrificial, agonizing prayer – both individual and corporate.
- Examples
  - Revivalists
  - Moravians
  - Churches in Muslim areas

# Regulative Principle

- First articulation often credited to Conrad Grebel, later used by Menno Simons, but found even earlier in the Waldensian Confession
- Essential idea is to follow Scriptural patterns only, shunning human innovations and models

Mainstream churches	Regulative Principle advocates
Clerical garb	Against clerical garb
Extrabiblical offices (cardinals, archbishops, etc.)	Elders and deacons only
Extrabiblical holidays (Lent, vigils for saints, Christmas)	Lord's day observation alone
Age-segregation (Sunday school)	Preserves family unit
Musical instruments	<i>A capella</i> singing of Psalms and spiritual songs
Icons, statues, crosses, images of saints and Jesus	Written and spoken word of God instead
Churches take on buildings, lands, assets	Simpler, less resource-intensive model like the NT
Lord's supper as a rite	Lord's supper as a full meal

## Waldensian formulation

10. We have ever regarded all the inventions of men (in the affairs of religion) as an unspeakable abomination before God; such as the festival days and vigils of saints, and what is called holy-water, the abstaining from flesh on certain days, and such like things, but above all, the masses.

11. We hold in abhorrence all human inventions, as proceeding from Antichrist, which produce distress, and are prejudicial to the liberty of the mind.

## Urban emphasis from Matthew 10 / Acts

- Matthew 10, the so-called Sermon of Commissioning, is Jesus' instruction for church growth which is based on city ministry
- "Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities" (Matt 11:1)
- I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent (Luke 4:43)
- According to Josephus, the smallest cities of Galilee had 15,000 people!

## Urban emphasis in Acts (cont.)

1. Rome: 650,000-1,000,000 people
2. Alexandria: 400,000 people
3. Ephesus: 200,000 people
4. Antioch: 150,000 people
5. Apamea: 125,000 people
6. Pergamum: 120,000 people
7. Sardis: 100,000 people
8. Corinth: 100,000 people

# Top ten metropolitan areas in the US

1. New York: 19.9 million
2. Los Angeles: 13.1 million
3. Chicago: 9.5 million
4. Dallas: 6.8 million
5. Houston: 6.3 million
6. Philadelphia: 6.0 million
7. Washington DC: 5.9 million
8. Miami: 5.8 million
9. Atlanta: 5.5 million
10. Boston: 4.7 million

A Metropolitan Statistical Area as one or more adjacent counties or county equivalents that have at least one urban core area of at least 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. (Source: Wikipedia)

# Intentionally small, intimate, less resource-intensive churches

- Probably the single biggest change in the Protestant churches of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Rise of “small groups” and “cell groups.”
- The Protestant Church-Planting Movement (Ying Kai, Victor Choudrie, David Garrison, Steve Smith), claiming to have achieved hyper-growth in India, China, and other parts of the world (> 1 million new baptisms since 2001) is championing a return to the NT model with respect to small, nimble, “asset-light” house-churches
- This is particularly important in China, the Middle East, and Islamic countries where persecution is intense and governments are hostile

# High accountability and relations between churches

- Goal is to achieve doctrinal, practical, and economic solidarity across churches.
- On the doctrinal side, experiencing a revival among the “New Calvinist” churches (Gospel Coalition / YRR) – John Piper, Tim Keller, Mark Dever, etc.
- Particularly attractive to younger people who want to be part of well-defined groups that are historically grounded



# Views of tradition

- Tradition I: *sola Scriptura*, only Scripture is supreme but tradition has value as the exegesis of Scripture and as a check against cultural biases and blind spots
- Tradition II: Scripture + man-man tradition. Standards can be created not taken directly from Scripture (priests must be single, men must remove facial hair, headcovering styles must be a fixed style). Historically, groups prone to division.
- Tradition 0: solo *Scriptura*. Just “the Bible and me.” Suspicion of church history, confessions, and any writings besides the Bible. Exaltation of an individual’s private judgment. Historically, groups prone to drift.

For more: see *King Jesus Claims His Church* (2013)

Church group / movement	Doctrinally guarded	Separation	Nonresistance	Believer's baptism	Evangelism and multiplication	Indigenous / lay led	Extraordinary prayer	Regulative Principle	Urban model of Matthew 10 / Acts	Small, nimble churches	High inter-church accountability	View of tradition
Apostolic church	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	I
Ante-Nicene church	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+/-	✓	+/-	✓	✓	✓	I / II
Waldensians	✓	✓		?	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	?	?
Early Anabaptists	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+/-	✓		I
Moravians	+/-	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	?	?
Methodists	+/-	✓			✓	+/-	✓					I / 0
Great Awakenings		✓			✓		✓					I / 0
Restoration churches	+/-	+/-	+/-	✓	✓	?		✓				0
Pentecostal / charismatic				✓	✓	+/-						0
Church-growth movement					✓							0
Church-planting movement				+/-	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		0
Acts 29 / New Calvinism	✓				✓				✓		✓	I
Mennonite	✓	✓	✓	✓		+/-		+/-		+/-	✓	II
Nascent kingdom churches	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	?	I

# Durability requires...

- Doctrinal guarding
- High interconnectedness and accountability
- Proper view of tradition

# Faithfulness requires...

- Separation
- High interconnectedness and accountability
- Biblical pattern (RP)

# Growth requires...

- Extraordinary prayer
- Evangelism mindset
- Indigenous / lay-led
- Urban strategy

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples! (Psalm 96:1-3 ESV)