

Biblical Foundations for Church Planting

Evangelical Free Church of Mt. Morris | June 19, 2016

We are exploring the possibility of planting a new church out of EFCMM: sending a small portion of our congregation to start a whole new body of believers in a different community.

Why do this? There is no single verse that commands the specific model of church planting we are considering. If we do this, we must be convinced that various biblical commands and convictions together compel us to undertake this project as a faithful response to Christ's call.

Christians are commissioned and sent to take the gospel to everyone, everywhere.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." *Matt 28:18-20*

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word... [...] Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." *John 17:18-20, 20:21*

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." *Acts 1:8*

Jesus was addressing the apostles in these verses, so do they really apply to all Christians?

¹ And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. ⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. *Acts 8:1b-4*

From the beginning, churches have sent some of their own to evangelize other places.

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. *Acts 13:1-5*

Do we wait for the Spirit to speak, or are these verses enough to believe this is appropriate? Would we be willing to send some of our best people, even gifted leaders, to follow the call?

The first missionaries did more than personal evangelism—they established churches.

²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. *Acts 14:21-23*

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— *Titus 1:5*

³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” [...] ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. *Acts 15:36, 41*

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: [...] ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. *Acts 20:17-18a, 24-28*

Why is the establishment of churches so fundamental to the mission?

Some feel the weight of the Great Commission and conclude the church is first and foremost an evangelistic organization. True, churches are responsible to carry out this commission, but...

Some have found that new churches are better at reaching the lost than older ones, so planting is strategic for evangelism. Yes, reaching more people is an important reason to plant, but...

Establishing churches is fundamental to the mission because a Christian is part of a church like a human being is part of a family—one that is intentional in raising the next generation.

- Living in covenant relationship, truly committed to Christ and one another in love
- Different members having varying roles—though some will lead, all must serve
- Concerned with nurturing young toward maturity, challenging them with responsibility
- Providing support and protection in a spiritually threatening world
- Exercising loving correction and discipline as necessary
- Sharing material resources, meeting practical needs
- Working together in God’s world, to bring honor to him in the ways he’s prescribed
- Proclaiming the gospel to glorify God as his kingdom-family is extended in his world

Family is not a “great strategy” for the propagation of the human species. It is God’s design!

Church is not a “great strategy” for evangelism. It is God’s design for the life of believers!

A church, like a family, is sustained by new members being born, reared, and launched. These reproduce children *and families*, generation after generation, until Christ returns.