

The City Change

Biblical Church Planting Strategy for the 21st Century

The purpose of this six (or more), session course is to intentionally direct the participants into a contemporary process for church planting. While the concepts, style, methods and overall information will be based upon personal experiences and learned principles, the essence of the course will be formatted from the Biblically recorded church planting experience at the ancient city of Corinth provided for in **Acts 18:1-11**.

So let's begin the adventure...

Cities, suburbs, beaches, farmlands or just any community represent a huge pooling of people and therefore a pooling of human misery, both spiritual as well as physical. God, within His great love and wisdom has provided for a solution. Before Jesus ascended into heaven after His death burial and resurrection, He left what has come to be known as the **Great Commission**. You would think that the last thing someone would say, would be the most important thing that they would have to say, and the thing that they would want for us to remember most.

Matthew 28:18 tells us, And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, "All authority (εξουσια The power of choice, to do as one pleases) has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Verse 19 "Go therefore" This part of the Great Commission does not represent the primary focus or the primary verb. It is called an aorist participle and could be translated, "after having gone". The point being, it is understood that the participants of the Commission already have momentum and are active for God.

Now what are the three critical components, which represent the activity of the Commission?

Verse 19 "and make disciples of all nations" The expression "disciple" is (μαθητευω To train, instruct, make followers, make learners, make disciples, make apprentices) and is an aorist imperative verb (a command for doing something in the future), the strongest verb in this passage. We are commanded by Jesus to make apprentices of Him and as we make these apprentices we are not to exclude anyone.

Verse 19 "baptizing them" This is a present participle and represents continuous action... something done on a continuous basis, that is, baptizing each new follower. This provides for the new disciple an opportunity to openly and publically express their new commitment and faith and affords for them a sense of belonging.

Verse 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" The Commission becomes completed as the disciple is systematically taught God's word and becomes established or mature in the faith.

What is the vehicle by which the Great Commission is to be operated through?

Ephesians 1:22-23 "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him (Jesus) to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all".

Ok...we are to promote change and fulfill the Great Commission by starting churches which is a full expression of Jesus Christ in our world. How are churches, and therefore City Change suppose to happen?

Acts 18:1-11

1. Change begins with fear

Verse 1 "from Athens and went to Corinth"

Fear is not so much a requirement as we begin the responsibility of starting a new church as a common and natural response.

Later, as Paul corresponds with the Corinthian Church he writes: "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." 1Corinthians 2:3

Why fear? Because as the objective of "City Change" and church planting is looked at responsibly, realistically, and maturely with an understanding of the real difficulties, obstacles and challenges that may be faced, some degree of fear will result. Most of the objectives that we begin to pursue in life for God will cultivate some measure of fear.

Why not fear? There are reasons, as children of God on a mission, to not be afraid. Fear must be conquered:

Jesus has already told us to, "Go" and that "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth" and "I am with you always even to the end of the age" Matthew 28:18,20

And there are many other promises:

Psalms 46:1-2 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Psalms 118:6 "The LORD is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Isaiah 8:13 "The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow, let Him be your fear."

Remember, these are the **very same** verses that the apostle Paul depended upon as he walked into Corinth alone (he was alone because he had to escape and leave his team members back in the city of Thessalonica because of persecution). Now when Paul came to Corinth, was he afraid? Absolutely, but he never hesitated. In fact you will not see any break in his momentum for church planting even though the narrative in Acts 18 stops again in verses 9-10 and provides encouragement from Jesus to not be afraid. So fear was present but it never created any delay.

"Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is going ahead and doing what you are called to do in spite of your fear." Warren

City Change review:

Jesus has left us with a _____ representing detailed instructions to heal a broken world and reconnect it with Himself.

The specific instructions include the necessity to _____, _____ those disciples and _____ the new followers of God.

The Commission is not _____ unless each of these components is responsibly addressed.

The Church is the vehicle, which God has chosen to _____ His Commission.

- Churches** must be established even if _____ exists.
- Fear** and positive spiritual change are not necessarily _____.
- Our fear** (respect) for God must _____ any fear we have of man or any fear that we may have concerning the challenge that confronts us.

City Change questions for discussion:

- **Is the Great Commission an optional consideration for the believer and the church?**
- **What are some specifics that could generate fear in the thinking of a church planter?**

2. Change broadens to _____

Verse 2 "...and he found..."

Paul did not let his fears shut him down. He went to the destination of mission (Corinth) and started looking for opportunity. His opportunity developed within the discovery of a very interested husband and wife, who became disciples, and certainly assisted Paul in Corinth and later in Ephesus (verses 24-26).

As we endeavor to plant a church, what would be important for us to discover?

- Through much prayer (Acts 13:1-3), a particular **target region, area, city or location** will become evident.
- Through **demographical research**, the social distinctives of the people who live there will be determined. (e.g. age, income, occupational, educational, racial and religious dominance). Please remember, as you accumulate data from discs, reports, books and other sources, the information may be somewhat or even largely incomplete or inaccurate. Research provided for one target city, left out the important feature of over 20,000 university and college students living there eight or more months out of the year. Additionally, a huge Hispanic population was vastly underestimated. It is important to visit the location yourself, compiling information gathered first hand and from personal research and interviews.
- **A site for church planting** may be selected because of the location or because of the particular demographic concentration rather than a particular location (e.g. career professionals, internationals, working class/other occupational, university and college, newly established communities, young families, career singles, inner city, cost of living, or other considerations)
- Discovery will also include **developing a group of well trained and equipped, theologically likeminded, visionary, and mature core team members** to participate in the mission.
- Discovery will also involve **recruiting interested people** to be involved with the new church within the location of consideration. This may be accomplished through referrals, soliciting interest through word of mouth, developing a partnership with another church, (which can provide workers and others to participate), and by strategically placing some appropriate announcements throughout the community concerning the intent to launch a new church.

City Change Review:

Prayer is _____ and _____ to determine and clearly establish direction for the new church and prepare for future opportunities. The church planter(s) should recruit a significant number of people to pray daily for the new church.

Research will _____ for ministry. Making visits to a prospective location, interviewing people, reading statistics and evaluation are all important contributors for proper preparation and solidifying a spiritual goal.

The inevitable location for the new church may be determined either because of _____ or a _____.

Core participation must be _____. Selecting the right people will support the issue of _____, while _____ and _____ in the overall vision and mission. More about the importance of the team concept and qualified core participants will follow under "Change becomes strategic".

God will begin sovereignly _____ to the new church. Some will be with the new group for a matter of weeks or months, some indefinitely. All are important for the church's effective establishment.

City Change question for discussion:

- **How can new and interested people from dysfunctional church experiences and backgrounds be effectively incorporated into the new church?**

3. Change becomes _____

Verse 4 "reasoned and persuaded"

CONTEXTUALIZATION:

Here we see Paul going to the Jews strategically first (**Romans 1:16**) because they had a connection with the true God and probably would not have listened to Paul and team members if Paul had of approached the Gentile community immediately. This part of Paul's strategy is called **contextualization**, attempting to develop a point of contact, a point of relationship, and communication with those you are attempting to reach. In this case, of course, it would be with the common involvement with the Jewish faith that they all shared. At Athens in **Act 17:22ff** Paul appealed to the philosophers, legal professionals and city leaders by addressing their custom of polytheism and in particular an altar and inscription "To The Unknown God" (**Verse 23**). He used this comprehensive attempt at worship on the part of the Athenians to introduce to them who the "Unknown God" really is. Paul also used other **cultural keys** to connect with the people of Athens, for example, by quoting two of their own poets (**Verse 28**).

METHOD OF EVANGELISM:

Another key element demonstrating Paul's strategic focus in church planting was his method and style of communication. **Verse 4** tells us "and he reasoned...and persuaded". Other illustrations of this process is mentioned in **Acts 17:17 and 19:8**. Why did he do this? **Chapter 17 Verse 2** records, "as his custom was" (εθος habit, manner, to be accustomed). Paul actually had a specific method of evangelism and it involved "reasoning and persuading". What do they mean? **Please give close attention to what follows...**

Reason: (διαλεγομαι Discuss, Negotiate, Converse, Dialogue...Questions and Answers)

Persuade: (πειθω To win over, convince, encourage by words to believe...the root of πιστευω to believe, commit) The idea here concerns speaking for results!

Was Paul's method successful? In Thessalonica, **Acts Chapter 17 Verse 4** "...and some of them were persuaded (πειθω)". In Berea, **Acts Chapter 17 Verse 12** "...many of them believed". In Athens, **Acts Chapter 17:34** "...some men joined him (κολλω To glue) and believed".

And what was the attitude of Paul as he spoke? **1 Corinthians 2:1** "...not with excellency of speech...or of (human) wisdom...". **Verse 4** "...not of persuasive words of human wisdom...but in demonstration of the spirit and of power...". Paul didn't dialogue for the sake of winning an argument or to demonstrate how capable of a speaker he was. He functioned through the direction and energy of the Spirit of God to strongly convince the other person of the truth of his God.

TEAM CONCEPT:

But there is more very important strategy that we need to recognize from this church planting mission in Corinth. **Acts 18 Verse 5**, "**When Silas and Timothy had come...**". A huge part of City Change being strategic involves the **application of the team concept**. In **Acts 15:40** Paul began his mission with Silas, just those two. By **16:1-3**, Timothy is added. Then in **Chapter 16 Verse 10** we see Luke (we) joins as a team member. Finally, as we progress to **Acts 20 Verses 4-6**, we realize that Paul is traveling with a team numbering at least nine people.

Now lets drop back to **Acts 18 Verse 5**. We see that Paul is joined by two team members. Paul was sold out to a team effort and **he chose the participants strategically**. Let's look at their characteristics:

Silas Demonstrated leadership Acts 15:22
He was gifted (a prophet) Acts 15:32
He was recommended Acts 15:40
He was Jewish, Acts 15:22, and Roman, Acts 16:37, 38 (which means he possessed a huge ability to relate to the Mediterranean world).

Timothy He was uniquely likeminded with Paul, and sincere Philippians 2:20
He possessed a proven character Philippians 2:22
He was gifted 1Timothy 4:14

So we see that not only is the **team concept** part of an effective strategy for City Change, but the selection of individuals who where **highly qualified, prepared, mobile, and reputable**. And if we take the time and make the investment to prepare and select the most competent team members, what will be the result? How was Paul impacted, for example, by the involvement of Silas and Timothy?

Acts 18:5 tells us, "Paul was compelled (συνεχω To hold together, To overcome as if by a disease) by the Spirit, and testified (διαμαρτυρω intensely testify)". The influence of these two men in the life of Paul was used by the Spirit of God to overwhelm and inundate Paul with encouragement and promote great boldness to speak out more effectively.

Lets address some other important and strategic considerations which will enhance City Change effectiveness.

ROCKING (APPLYING) THE PHILIPPIANS 2 PRINCIPLE:

Philippians chapter 2 is about selflessness and creating unity. These are two incredibly important issues that need to be constantly emphasized and practiced when planting a church. Those participating in the new church have to incessantly be giving of themselves, serving others, and cooperating in developing unity. They also need to make those who are visiting and those new to the group feel extremely welcome and accepted. This chapter carefully outlines and illustrates how this should be done.

Verse 3 "Let nothing (nothing means nothing) be done through selfish ambition or conceit," OK, that is what is not supposed to be done...

Now let's look at what is supposed to be done...

"but (alright, we are going to turn the corner here) in lowliness of mind (ταπεινοφροσυνη an interesting word reflecting, ταπεινος not raising from the ground, and φρην mind)"

1. "let each esteem (ηγεομαι to go before) others better (υπερεχω to stand superior) than themselves"

Verse 4

2. "Let each of you look out (σκοπεω fix eyes attentively) not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (ετερος another of a different kind, class)"

This principle is called "mind" (or attitude) in **Verse 5** and is illustrated by the life of Jesus in **Verses 6-8**, the life of Paul in **Verse 17** (Paul viewed himself as an Old Testament drink offering which is poured upon the altar of worship and service and is burned up without any attention given to him or trace of himself being left), the life of Timothy in **Verses 19-23**, and the life of Epaphroditus in **Verses 25-40**.

Let's summarize the Rocking the Philippians 2 Principle again:

- We are to view others as better or superior to ourselves
- We are to view the interests of others as more important than our own interests

Here is how the principle works...as you engage a person in a conversation, ask them a few brief questions about themselves and patiently and sincerely listen to what they have to say. When they are finished, sincerely, genuinely and tactfully ask them more questions, and then more questions. Most people really enjoy relating their life, interests, and experiences with others. What people generally don't appreciate is, we giving them a monologue about ourselves. This dialogue of interest affords an opportunity to get to know them and provides fuel for the next conversation and an opportunity to become updated. People are important and this gives the church planter an opportunity to build upon that importance.

This principle is extremely important. All core participants and leaders and developing leadership and eventually everyone coming to the new church should be taught and should profoundly understand and practice this concept.

MUSIC, FOOD AND SPORTS:

These three elements have developed as important support tools for outreach in the contemporary church. They are the trilogy of strategic outreach. **We must understand the depth of their importance.**

Worship/Music...

The importance of quality worship/music cannot be overestimated. Facility appearance and location, nursery and child care, parking, and staff formerly topped the list of the most important criteria for drawing and keeping interest, but not any longer. The quality of music and customizing the style of music for your region, area, and demographic focus is of inestimable importance. Praying about and recruiting an extremely competent worship leader and taking the time to develop a quality worship team will prove to be of tremendous assistance. The style/type of music should be determined before the church plant begins. This will help to successfully impact your intended target demographic and assist in keeping your focus concentrated upon whom you are primarily attempting to reach. People in the twenty-first century value music very highly. It is not just cultural to America but is also a global phenomenon. If the music is superior, people will tell their friends...and people will come. A great music ministry will do much of the work of generating interest in the new church for you. Great music can fill-up a building. Initially, it can potentially be the most important interest generating factor for the new church. Things to consider along with a competent, gifted, and talented worship leader are: the musicians, the musical instruments (type and quality) and the sound equipment along with a knowledgeable sound person. All of the above must be prayed over very earnestly. Some quality, worship team members can be recruited from your target location.

Food...

Providing food, and yes, a lot of the time free food, will greatly enhance the development of the new church. It is important to factor this into your budget just as you would a facility rental or any other obviously important item. The food doesn't have to be elaborate. Depending upon the age and area of ministry things like: coffee (a variety), water in small bottles, pizza, cookies (homemade), brownies, other desserts, chilidogs, sandwiches, chips and dip, vegetable/fruit trays and dip, and any number of other things will do. It can be simple but always make it quality. Food relaxes people and enhances a feeling of comfort. The church planter, leadership and core members should also open up their homes to share meals and take people to meals at restaurants. Invest in others and you will influence them.

Sports...

Our nation (and world) is a nation with a very strong sports culture. People like playing sports and people like attending professional sports events. Additionally, people like others to attend the sports events their children participate in. All of the above should be applied.

DISCIPLESHIP AND EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY:

A systematic process of discipleship through small groups must be introduced early on. Small groups assist with accountability and create a dynamic for learning that cannot be duplicated within a larger corporate group meeting (i.e. interaction, questions and answers). Some important topics that should be reviewed and solidly understood would include: Basic salvation, Baptism, the Church, the Bible, What a disciple is, Prayer, Temptation, Evangelism, Eternal security, Global outreach, Marriage and the family, Money and possessions, Dealing with conflicts, Spiritual gifts, and other foundational and practical theological themes. Evangelism training should be intentionally reviewed over and over again. This should not only be done conceptually through teaching but practically through personal involvement. Learning to live a consistent and mature Christian life is essential for evangelism. Verbally sharing the "Good News" both clarifies the spiritual problem and articulates the solution, both of which are essential in seeing people come to faith (**Romans 10:17**).

PRAYER:

The involvement of prayer is situated first, in the middle, at the end of the mission and just simply should permeate all effort that is intended. From the initial vision for ministry, to research, recruitment, survey work and strategy development, all aspects of the church planting endeavor should be initiated by effective, strategic, diligent, persistent, and much time invested, prayer. Specifics should be prayed about...future leaders, workers, and participants. Evangelistic objectives, facilities, promotion, finances, everything must be communicated to God...every detail and issue! Recruiting one hundred people to pray for the new church plant would not be excessive.

CONTACT MATERIALS AND INFORMATION:

Often the card or brochure that is placed on a door or within a person's hand is the first exposure and impression that someone receives of the new church. Professionally, well done, colorful, glossy, tastefully informational (relevant), including times and direction (small map) are all important features. Again, this tool is customized to your people group and location. (Please review the sample card.)

OWNERSHIP:

Those involved with the new church must be given various degrees of ownership. By that, it is meant that the senior leadership must be secure enough to convey over to the other leaders, core members and even the newest participants a sense that they have a vested interest in the new church, by affording and trusting them with responsibility. They must not only be given the responsibility but the authority to effectively fulfill the requirements of the ministry assignment. To give someone responsibility without giving them the authority needed to fulfill the responsibility is both manipulative and unwise. All ministry opportunities are delegated with as much training, explanation, accountability and oversight as is reasonable and possible, but those serving must be able to develop a sense that their investment is valuable, trusted and respected. Give people ownership and watch both individuals and the new church accelerate in growth!

TECHNOLOGY:

We live in a highly sophisticated and technological age. People like technology and respect an environment that doesn't ignore the tools that assist people in learning and which creates interest. Things ranging from a quality sound system in the facility, to power point, the use of a very interesting, useable and informational web site and e-mail are all reasonable considerations and often almost essential for an effective ministry.

FACILITATION:

The best and biggest building representing the best location possible, which is reasonably priced, should be the formula for selecting the initial, large group meeting facility. Other considerations would be ease of configuration, permits, safety, parking and accessibility. If proper preparation has been made, great music is developed, workers have invested significant effort in promotion and inviting, the core group has been "Rocking (applying) Philippians 2" throughout the community...then people will be there for that inaugural meeting. Prepare the facility and workers to present the ministry as if it has been in existence for five years. People will be encouraged and benefited. They will return and bring others with them. Once again, a quality experience will be communicated by word of mouth, which is the best method of promoting and alerting the community to your existence.

STYLE OF TEACHING:

Churches have effectively been involved for years with the "dumbing down" of the saints. Why is this so? Is it because of some confusion about the role of the pastor-teacher? Why is there such an imbalance? Many churches seem to be either, a classroom or a maternity ward. Why can't they be both? The main meetings should be a combination of great worship (Inspiration) and great teaching (Education), an opportunity to learn about God and what He is like and how we can become more like He wants us to be. The messages should be clear, relevant, accurate, applicable, but also substantial. Paul declared in **Acts 20:27** "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God". We need to be able to say the same thing. Great worship will draw people...great teaching will keep them! **Preaching** addresses a certain style, **teaching** reflects content, both are needed in the same message. Teaching through a series, books of the Bible, or themes can all work. We need to be sensitive to the ever changing world view transitioning around us. The message just needs to fulfill the above criteria.

City Change Review:

- Contextualization** and discovering and using _____ to effectively understand and penetrate the location and its population are non-negotiable.
- A Biblical Method of Evangelism** based upon _____ attached to sensitivity, timing, knowledge, skillfulness, and experience will provide enormous momentum for the new church. Remember to look for people who are experiencing a time of tension and transition (Warren) and be sure to pray for the boldness to speak to those who are trapped in confusion and darkness (**Ephesians 6:19**).
- Rugged individualism** has no place in church planting. The _____ is inspired by God and promoted in scripture.
- Maturing people** through systematic teaching, small group discipleship and an exercising of spiritual gifts (serving) is indispensable. A healthy new church will be a growing new church both _____ and _____.
- Encouraging Ownership**, will release the believers in the new church to a world of _____ and _____ in living for and serving God.
- Stay** with your intended ministry style (as God directs). Do not try to appeal to every particular _____ and _____ for ministry. This will be impossible and you will end up appealing to no one in particular and reaching a vastly smaller number of people. The message to veteran believers, or for those who have formerly been involved with a church is, everyone is welcome to bring some of their theological, religious and cultural experiences with them, but they must remember that they are joining the new church, the new church is not joining them.

City Change questions for discussion:

- Please define the concept of "ownership" and how can this process be implemented effectively within the new church plant?
- How can the following sociological categories; world view, values, traditions, and preferences, be defined and useful in assisting the church planter?

4. Change breaks with _____
Verse 6 "But when they opposed and blasphemed"

Now, we can understand why this church planting mission began with fear. Even though we will be doing God's will and God's work, there will still be opposition. And the opposition will come from both unbelievers and even at times, for some strange reason, from those who say they love God, just like within this passage. It is interesting to note: (αντιτασσομενων) is a present, middle, participle, and represents that they were "opposing themselves". When someone opposes what you are doing as a church planter, he is really just fighting against himself in some strange way. The point is, we cannot _____ or be _____ by the rejection or interference of others. Other people simply do not always understand what God is doing through your life as a church planter and the focus needs to persist in completing the spiritual assignment. Sometimes that means that, as hard as it is to do, we just need to move past some people.

Verse 6 "From now on I will go to the Gentiles"

Well how far did Paul go?

5. Change benefits those who are _____

Verse 7 "Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue"

It is extremely important to remember that major _____ and _____ are not far from _____.

Verse 8 "Crispus...believed...with all his household. And many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized"

Remember, these are the people who are a part of the church that is described in **1Corinthians 6:11,9,10!** The future church will involve people from all walks of life and varieties of background. You may have an ideal demographic that you will focus on, while at the same time, always be willing to speak to and reach out to anyone who is responsive.

City Change Review:

Opposition and rejection are inevitable. If it isn't faced at first, be prepared, because it will eventually come. Remember also that it isn't unusual for people with _____ to gravitate to the new church plant.

They may finally receive some balance, growth, and stability from the new church or they may prove to become a huge difficulty.

Remember, rejection may just mean you are being _____.

People are in so much _____ today, that someone will always be interested in the message and God's love.

Anticipate _____ as God begins to impact the lives of the people where the church plant is being established!

City Change question for discussion:

- How can rejection assist with church planting?

6. Change _____ God and _____ to operate

Verses 9-11 "Do not be afraid...for I am with you...for I have many people in this city... and he continued there...teaching the word of God among them."

Planting a church demands that the leadership reflect _____, _____, and an understanding of. The developing church family will realize that God is this way as they view your loyalty and dedication to the Body of Christ.

City Change Review:

Our dedication to those who have committed themselves to God and the new church is _____.

City Change question for discussion:

- **What factors culturally exist for Postmoderns which assist in minimizing the potential for prolonged ministry in one location?**

Appendix

The realities of Postmodernism are of enormous importance as we attempt to convey the "Good News" to the people we are called to reach. Essentially the western world has just completed a 500 year experiment with something called the "modern" worldview. This process started with the Renaissance and was further developed in the period of Enlightenment. Basically, it represented a philosophy of life, which conveyed that man could fully understand his world through science and reason. The experiment is over because it was proven faulty and emotionally unsatisfying.

The modern worldview has been replaced by a postmodern worldview in the western part of our world. The following gives a summary of many of its premises:

- People are looking for truth that works for them
- Life is viewed from a persons own perspective, reality is too complex to understand
- Values are isolated to the group or community
- Tolerance
- Permitting others to live as they want to
- A dislike of communication involving which group or beliefs are better
- Practical answers are important, idealism is avoided
- Explanations or simplistic answers for complex questions are viewed unfavorably
- Opinions not agreed with are viewed as "noise" and are avoided
- A close group to share common values is important
- A rejection of institutionalized religion
- There exists a vague desire for non-institutionalized spirituality, but the way to embrace it is uncertain

The modern worldview lasted for 500 years so it is not unreasonable to assume that this new worldview will be around for a least a number of generations.

Additionally there exist a number of barriers, which can impede the message of hope if the communicator is not skilled and observant.

- **Worldview...**a philosophical view on a worldwide scale
- **Cultural Value...**generally this exists on a national level
- **Customs...**these important habits, beliefs and preferences are on a more regional or local level

- Personal preference...what someone believes or represents as an individual

The effective church planter/evangelist will be a student of all of these levels of consideration. The balance involves maintaining our loyalty to the Biblical worldview while sensitively looking for bridges and connecting points to convey the truth. We don't want to start postmodern churches, but postmodern sensitive churches!

Apologetics, or the defense of the faith (απολογία a defense, an answer, Philippians 1:7) is a very important part of communicating the Good News. We will encounter many different kinds of people with a wide variety of worldviews while starting a new church. Some will have no or little knowledge of God (agnostic) some will say that they do not believe in God at all (atheistic), but generally their disbelief has become their deity. Others will come from a variety of world religions or they will follow a system, which is a deviation from the Orthodox Christian faith (a cult).

To evangelize successfully, we must attempt to understand another person's theological world view as quickly as possible so we do not have to retrace too much territory and can major on what is not known or understood.

The place in a discussion that you begin at will differ completely if you are, for example, talking to an evolutionist who is atheistic, a Hindu who believes in 300 million gods, a nominal Christian, someone involved with the occult, someone with a Christian background or a person who is sincerely seeking and open.

Sometimes even before you share the first verse from the Bible it will be important to **substantiate the very existence** of God. This can be done by using some of the following tools of which none are of more importance than approaching the topic through the issues of **Creation** (Romans 1:19-20) and **Conscience** (Romans 2:15). Possessing an understanding that the **universe is a cosmos** (order, manage) and not a chaos (disorder) and addressing the issue of "Are we really just an accident?" is important to do. Recognizing **the first and second laws of thermodynamics** (no new matter or energy is currently being added to our universe and everything is going through an inevitable process of decline...rust and wrinkles). We must also understand that **the theme of evolution is not true science** (i.e. it is not "rot"...repeatable, observational, testable), **the problem with carbon-14 dating** (things which are suppose to have a conventional age of up to 350 million years, repeatedly date to less than 55,000 radiocarbon years which is compatible with a date as low as 4,000 years in real time). There are also problems like **the absence of links (intermediates) or the existence of gaps in the fossil record**, the issue of **biodiversity** and the ecological interrelationships and interdependency of the ecology (the ecosystems had to be assembled during a very short time or life could have failed for lack of mutually benefiting multi-species ecological services), the enormous complexity of **DNA**. Additionally there are only enough **supernova** remnants in our own galaxy to represent only about 7,000 years and not millions of years of explosions, only enough **helium** in our own atmosphere, only enough **salt** in the oceans and only enough **moon dust** to represent a relatively young universe. Those who deny God must come to terms with the inconsistencies between **"truth" and "true truth"!**

After establishing that the universe is managed and not random or chaotic, the next question that needs to be asked is: **"If God exists, which God?"** This would be the time to

examine the different religious texts and witness the unfolding of the superiority of the Bible. A brief comparison provides some amazing clarification. For example, the Hindu text the "**Bhagavad-gita**" Chapter 17, comments on foods that assist in a quality of life and those that don't. Point number 8 in this chapter says "Foods in the mood of goodness increase the duration of life, purify existence, give strength...etc. Such foods are juicy and fatty." Point 9 says, "Food that is too bitter, too sour, too salty, too pungent, too dry or too hot cause distress, misery and disease." Point 10 conveys, "Foods prepared more than three hours before being eaten....are very dear to those in the mode of darkness."

The Koran in Sura (Chapter) 4, which is entitled "Women" states, Verse 38 "But whosoever does that in transgression and wrongfully, him we shall certainly roast at a fire, and that for God is an easy matter." Verse 39 states, "Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty one over the other...Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret for God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish, banish them to their couches, and beat them."

The Bible contrastingly, is initiated with the thought, " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". How reasonable...."beginning" (time), "heavens" (space), "earth" (matter) is the description. It continues on to systematically explain the beginning of everything: the universe, earth and all that exists, mankind, sin, work, families, cities, nations, warfare, etc.

The ancient Egyptians were a very admirable and capable people, just look at the pyramids! Around 1552 B.C. they wrote a medical book called the Papyrus Ebers. Some of the advice included, "if you have an embedded splinter apply worms blood and asses dung". "Poisonous snake bite, drink magic water, water that had been poured over a special idol." Other remedies included, lizard's blood, swine's teeth, putrid meat, stinking fat, excreta from animals including human beings, donkeys, antelopes, dogs, cats and even flies.

Not long after this book became popular, Moses wrote **Exodus**, **Leviticus** and **Deuteronomy**. Within these books also contains commentary about health, hygiene and diet. In Leviticus Chapter 11 there are some very specific instructions about foods to eat and food to avoid. Verse 12 mentions the strict avoidance of eating anything in water that has "no fins or scales". We know the danger of certain kinds of shell fish and the diseases they carry. Verses 13-15 comments about forbidding the consumption of any kind of carrion bird (road kill) such as eagle, osprey, vulture, and raven. Chapter 15:1,19 resumes a discussion (from Chapter 12) about how to deal with blood, and discharge contamination....a person should be segregated, everything that the person touches should be washed in water, and Verse 13 specifies "running water". Deuteronomy 23:12-23 declares, "Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out, and you shall have an implement (Heb. Yated a little spade) among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover you refuse." The U.S. military requires the same policy of its soldiers even today...they use what is called and e-tool. All of this information is so wise, practical and absolutely accurate. God used these as ceremonial laws for Israel because they did not have and understanding of microbiology!

There are many other practical, historical, archeological and scientific issues, which assist in proving the superiority of the Biblical text. Isaiah 40:22 speaking of God says, "It is He

who sits above the circle (Heb. chug sphere) of the earth." That passage was written 2,100 years before Columbus came to the new world and speaks of the world being a sphere. Columbus' favorite book of the Bible was Isaiah, according to his son who wrote a biography on Columbus. No wonder he didn't believe the world was flat and journeyed without fear!

The following is an important list of practical issues the church planter will want to give careful consideration to:

- Church Statement of Faith and local, regional and global missions emphasis
- A church mission statement
- Ideas for potential meeting places
- Insurance for the new church
- Selecting a name for the new church
- Employment Identification Number (EIN) Form SS-4
- Developing a Constitution and By-Laws
- Registering the church as a non-profit entity for both federal and state concerns
- Evaluation of volunteers
- Financial policies and procedures
- Performing weddings

