

**Indigenous Church Planting  
In Review**

by Charles Brock

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## **Introduction**

This is not a comprehensive presentation of indigenous church planting. This booklet has a dual purpose:

1. To serve as a handy reference guide to persons who have studied *Indigenous Church Planting, A Practical Journey* and are putting it into practice.
2. To whet the appetite of people who may have an interest in learning about indigenous church planting.

### **At the beginning let me make some observations.**

1. From New Testament days church planting has been the primary method of the expansion of God's Kingdom.

This is not to diminish the ongoing local evangelistic outreach done by older churches. History reveals, however, that few churches more than ten years old do much to drastically change their community through winning the lost to Christ. Most win and baptize their children and exchange members with other churches.

2. Church planting/church growth is a major theme of Paul's writings.
3. Church planting can be done by more people than we often think possible. "Lay people" can effectively take the lead in planting churches. Unless these ordinary folks catch a vision and get involved in Kingdom expansion through the birth of new churches, Christianity will lose the population to paganism.
4. There are many methods and techniques used in church planting. There is not "only one way" to do it. Ways vary

depending on the personality, background, and training of the planter. The soil (target people) also varies and may demand different approaches. There is a place for the more traditional church start. To touch the world significantly though, there must be a method of church planting deployed on a large scale that is not limited by availability of funds and professional clergy.

5. There are universal essentials for all New Testament church planting. These essentials are: The **Sower**, under the direction of the empowering **Spirit**, taking the **Seed** (Scripture) that reveals Jesus to the **Soil** (people).

In an idol-filled, pagan city of Thessalonica, the apostle Paul relied on the essentials.

The four essentials are seen in I Thessalonians 1:5 *For we (Sower) brought the Good News (Seed) to you (Soil), not with words only, but also with power and the Holy Spirit (Spirit), and with complete conviction of its truth.* The essentials for effective church planting anywhere in the world are: **Sower, Seed, Spirit and Soil.**

## **Definitions**

### **Church -**

A local church is a group of people who have turned from their sins to place full trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Following their new birth they are baptized. These individuals continue to meet on a regular basis as members of the family of God. They will fellowship in prayer, praise, and Bible study for the definite purpose of glorifying Christ and expanding His Kingdom on earth. 1 Peter 2:9

### **Church Planting -**

This is a term often used when speaking of starting new churches. It is the process where a messenger sows the Gospel Seed among unbelievers and allows the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin and conversion. The new believers recognize themselves as a special family. This family is called a church.

### **Church Planter -**

This is a person who is involved in starting (planting) new churches. We must remember that a church planter who follows Paul's example will not need to buy land or build buildings or necessarily pastor newly planted churches. When the Lord brings about the birth of a new church, He will often use people from within the new congregation to lead the group.

### **Church Planting Church -**

This is a church that starts other new churches. Every church should be involved in starting new churches. One church can plant several churches simultaneously.

**Indigenous -**

Other terms used to define indigenous are: native, local, homegrown, contextualized, and natural to the area. It is that which springs from and develops within a particular culture.

**Indigenous Church Planting -**

It is a pattern of church planting/church growth under the leadership of the Holy Spirit that sets people free to be and do all that God wants them to be and do. The church will be New Testament principled with five easily observable characteristics. These five are self-governing, self-supporting, self-expressing, self-teaching and self-propagating.

**Fellowship or Association of Churches -**

This is a group of churches that have fellowship with one another for the purpose of mutual encouragement, education, inspiration and shared mission outreach.

## **The Planter's Sense of Calling**

All believers are called by the Lord to be involved in Kingdom expansion through the birth of churches. There are various kinds of involvement. There is the giving of finances so that others may go. There is the need for constant prayer support. Some will actually do the planting. Each of these is an important part of church planting.

Even as individuals have a calling, every church should sense an urgency to start new churches.

## **The Planter's Preparation**

The planter's awareness must be sharpened concerning:

- w** God's plan for history;
- w** the lostness of people without Christ;
- w** eternal principles of the expansion of God's Kingdom;
- w** methods that work and those that do not work as well in church planting.

## **Determining Your Target**

Out of a deep burden to reach people for Christ through the starting of new churches, **pray** for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct you to God-prepared soil—people who are searching for meaning to life.

**Should I focus on the lost or the saved?**

Church planting can be done focusing on either, but there is a great need for new churches to be planted where the target is the lost. This will result in greater Kingdom expansion. For some, the easier way is to target believers and gather them into a church. This can be done with no numerical growth in the Kingdom of God. It is best to target the unsaved.

### **General targeting**

Prayerfully focus on a larger geographical area and then move as the Holy Spirit leads you to a specific area.

The larger area may be a province, county, or city. Make use of maps and any demographics that may be secured from local governmental planning agencies.

### **Specific targeting**

Take note of:

- w new villages or communities;
- w new housing developments;
- w new industries which have attracted new people and brought about new communities;
- w villages or communities without a Bible teaching church;
- w different language groups;
- w various socio-economic levels.

Prayerfully drive or walk through communities, asking the Lord to lead you to responsive people. Spend much time mingling with people. Follow up leads of people who may be interested in hosting a Bible study. Good leads often come from a church-planting oriented church when the members have friends or relatives in unchurched areas. Paul found the Holy Spirit to be the key in finding responsive targets. *When I*

*arrived in Troas to preach the Good News about Christ, I found that the Lord had opened the way for the work there. 2 Corinthians 2:12*

### **Target adults and teens**

Church planting is best done among adults and teens. Children can often be gathered more easily, but remember the goal is not just a group; the goal is a church.

### **Be aware of potential places for a church planting Bible study.**

homes  
apartment buildings  
mobile home parks  
community club houses  
offices  
schools  
jails  
restaurants  
hotels  
church buildings

### **Think through some basics.**

Know your objectives and how to reach them. Know how to move from one objective to the next. Only when a planter clearly knows his objectives is he ready to plan his strategy, his methodology and techniques. If you don't know where you are going, you do not need a strategy, methodology, or techniques. Basic objectives should remain the same.

Strategy, methodology, and techniques will vary as may be necessary to reach the objectives.

**x** Know the Bible study materials you are going to use, the rationale and the technique.

**x** Think reproducible from beginning to end—in strategy, use of materials, and style of leadership.

**x** Know what you are going to plant—a church, not a building or set of programs. (Look again at the definition of church.)

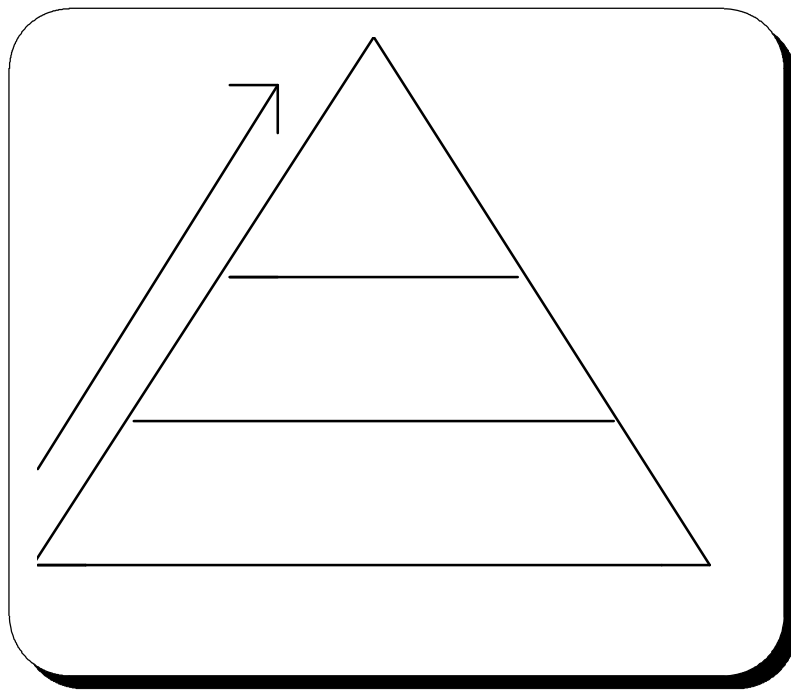
**x** To broaden the base as much as possible, it is usually best to have a community Bible study rather than a home Bible study. There will be times, however, when the only option will be to have a home Bible study. The point is to start a new church with more than one family.

**x** Know that you can be successful only if the Holy Spirit is in control. He must have preeminence from the finding of a place to start a new Bible study to the birth and development of the new church. *So it was that the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord.* Acts 9:31

## **An Integrated System of Church Planting**

The Bible study materials I am going to introduce are designed to be used by anyone, even those without special education. These tools are a part of an integrated system of church planting. They are an outgrowth of a Biblical

theological base for indigenous church planting and Biblical indigenous church planting principles.



Biblical Theology, Principles, and Practical Application (tools) should be systematized parts of the total church planting process.

**The beginning point is the theological and from this, principles and practical will evolve. They are interrelated.**

## The Church Planting Process Outlined

From my experience, the church planting process primarily involves three objectives.

### 1. Salvation of individuals.

### 2. Birth of New Testament-principled churches which have at least five easily observable and measurable characteristics.

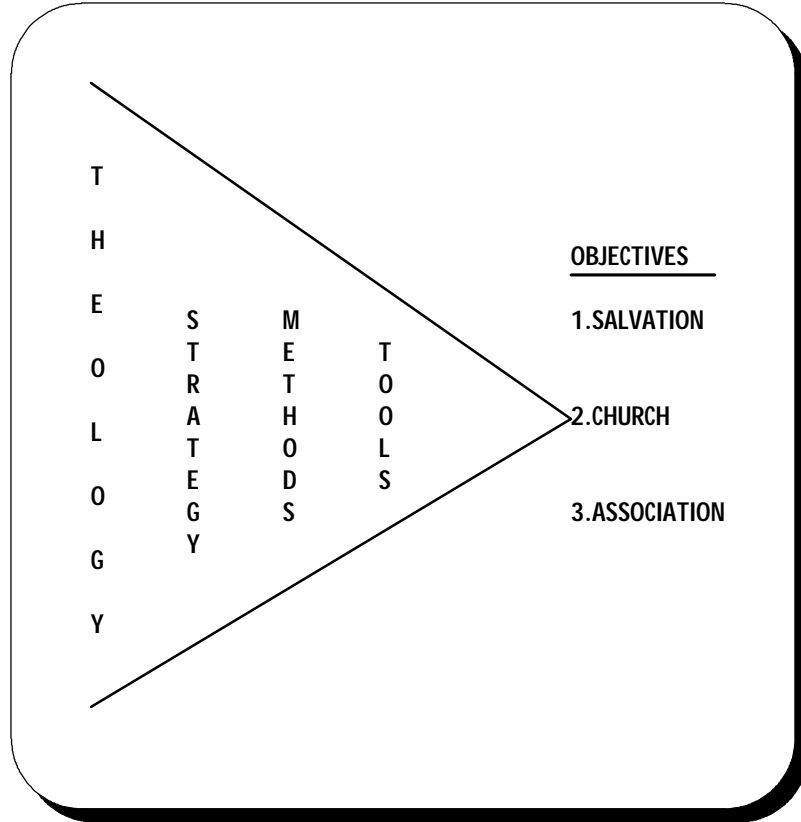
- (1) **Self-governing** - The new church can make its own decisions under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18
- (2) **Self-supporting** - The new church can provide for its material needs through the tithes and offerings of the members.
- (3) **Self-expressing** - The new church can express itself according to local culture. This has to do with times of worship and ways of expression in worship. All should be within Biblical guidelines and teachings.
- (4) **Self-teaching** - Each member influences and teaches the other members. Romans 15:14
- (5) **Self-propagating** - The new church will be involved in starting other new churches.

**Always remember:** *We say this because we have confidence in God through Christ. There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God; it is He who made us capable... 2 Corinthians 3:4-6a*

### **3. Birth of an association/fellowship of churches.**

Each church will voluntarily relate to other churches which are similar in doctrine and practices. This relationship is for the purpose of mutual encouragement, learning, and shared programs of outreach.

The church planter should have these objectives clearly in mind before starting the church planting process and should customize strategy, methods, and techniques to reach the 3 objectives.



In the remainder of this booklet we will move from one objective to the next, identifying the Bible study materials and giving the rationale for their use, as well as the technique in using them.

**An Expanded View of the Church Planting Process**

**Objective 1 - The Salvation of Individuals**

**Principles to remember:**

The larger the core group, the quicker a healthy church will

be born—one which can be self-governing,  
self-supporting,  
self-expressing, self-teaching and self-propagating.

Group participation is crucial in the beginning if you expect to see a church born where everyone is a servant/minister.

From the beginning, even before people are saved, a motto and goal worth remembering is, "The church where every body is somebody." This is more likely to happen if people participate in the group Bible study even before they have received Christ as Savior and Lord and before a church is born.

## Book 1

### *Leading a Bible Study by Indirect Methods*

This booklet is designed for the leader. It is a programmed lesson, teaching some very basic truths about a particular style of leadership. It is very brief and will not take long to work through. Essentially it teaches that **indirect leadership means the leader guides the group as they participate in Bible study**. The focus is on the people and the Word of God. The teacher neither lectures nor preaches; rather, he guides or monitors as the group studies. This style of leadership is low-profile and is easily reproduced by new believers. (The following books are designed for maximum efficiency when using this style of leadership.)

## Book 2

### *Good News for You*

This is a seven lesson study designed to bring the lost to a genuine faith in Christ. All of the lessons are based on the Gospel of John. Only the following items are needed for the study:

1. The Gospel of John.
2. A copy of the Bible study guide, *Good News For You*.
3. A pencil or pen.
4. Song sheets or booklets if the planter wants to introduce group singing.

### **Who may participate?**

Anyone who desires. The lessons are primarily written for people who can read. Adults and teens should be the ones invited. (If children attend, this is no problem. Often children who are preteens can participate very easily.)

### **Should the leader read all the questions and Scripture references and give the answers?**

No. Remember that "everybody is somebody." More is learned when the people actively participate. Your objective is for a church to be born where the people are not always dependent on you as leader for everything. Involve every group member as much as possible.

### **What about those who cannot read?**

As long as there is someone who can read, the group can participate. If the leader is the only person who can read, he will read the question and the Scripture reference, and those listening, though unable to read, can give the answer.

### **Principles to remember:**

1. What the Bible says is more important and more powerful than anything any person has to say about the Bible.
2. Prolonged exposure to the Word of God is the best way to bring about an authentic decision for Christ.

3. The leader does not have to talk all the time. He can relax and let the Word of God speak. God's Word will be maximized and the leader's words will be minimized.
4. People learn more when they hear, speak, think, and do something than if they only hear.
5. Stay with the lesson. Go from one question to the next without interruption or interpretation. Don't allow people to debate or philosophize. This will distract from the goal of the lesson and divide the group.

### **Gathering People for the Bible Study**

Once the leader has found the responsive people and those who are going to host the Bible study, he must decide how to invite other neighbors and those from the community to attend. It is at this point that the leader must be creative. There are many different ways to invite people.

**Flyers** may be distributed throughout the targeted area. It is best if those hosting the Bible study will assist or take the lead in doing this. The leader will want to work side-by-side with the people in distributing the leaflets.

**Posters** may be put up in prominent areas in the community.

**Person-to-person**, mingling among the people, telling them about the Bible study, the time and place.

**Public rallies** may include good music and preaching, with the invitation for people to sign up for the Bible study.

### **First Meeting - Introduction**

It is not always necessary to have an introduction meeting, but often it is of great value. A brief introduction may be followed with the first lesson. Some things to do on the first night:

**1. Introduce yourself** - I am Joe \_\_\_\_\_. I live in the town of \_\_\_\_\_. I have a wife and three children. We have been in this area for \_\_\_\_\_ years. I am a Bible teacher.

**2. Introduce your purpose** - My purpose for coming here is to share the Good News about Jesus Christ with people who are looking for meaning to life. I do not come to debate or philosophize. If you came for that purpose, see me after our meeting and we can set a time for private discussion.

Assure the people that you are not going to preach to them or try to impose your religion on them and that you expect the same in return.

**3. Introduce the study** - This booklet contains seven lessons consisting of simple questions. The answers are found in the Bible. The study is not Protestant, Jewish, or Catholic; it is for everyone.

Show a copy of the Gospel of John and a Bible. Explain that the Gospel of John is exactly the same as the Gospel of John in the Bible. It will be okay if participants want to bring their own Bibles.

As a way of introduction to the study, you may read a question and the Bible reference, allowing the people to give the answer.

### **Begin lesson 1.**

Read the instructions on the inside of the cover page. Encourage all to participate. Be sensitive to those who cannot or do not want to read.

Beware of a person who wants to dominate by doing all the reading and giving all the answers. Encourage group participation. Two possible ways of participation are asking for volunteers or going down the row or around the circle.

Move from one question to the next in the lesson without explanation and discussion—let the Scripture speak.

If the leader and the group desire, singing can be included.

Lesson 1 is designed to teach two things: 1. What is sin?  
2. Every person is guilty of sin.

Let the people leave the meeting with this in mind rather than adding other topics for discussion.

The degree of education of the group will determine how rapidly a lesson is finished. The greater the educational level, the more likely there will be discussion. If there is discussion, it is important to keep it on the topic of study. It will be helpful if the leader gives the participants an appropriate Gospel tract at the end of each lesson.

Each lesson can be completed in less than an hour.

### **Helpful Pointers:**

**1. Take the books up following the completion of each lesson.**

Let someone in the group be responsible for keeping the books until the next lesson. If the books are taken home the participants may:

- a. forget to bring the books back;
- b. work ahead;
- c. lose the books.

**2. Deal with the problem of new people coming in after completion of some of the lessons.**

**Example 1:** What do you do if many new people come for the second lesson? Repeat the lesson, very diplomatically suggesting something like the following: "You will notice that we have many new folks in attendance tonight who did not get to go through the first lesson. You will not mind, will you, if we repeat the lesson allowing them to catch up with you?"

**Example 2:** What if you have one or two new enrollees come in after the first lesson? Do not assume they understand the truths found in the lessons missed. There are two ways to deal with this situation. (1) You as leader make it a point to personally meet with these to help them catch up, or (2) Ask someone in the group to do this.

**3. What if someone wants to discuss topics irrelevant to the lesson?**

You could say, "That is a very good question, but if you don't mind, we will be dealing with this question later in our

study." Sometimes the question can be dealt with after the lesson is completed and the others leave.

#### **4. Don't push for decisions at this point.**

Allow enough seed to be sown and enough time for the seed to germinate to enable the people to make genuine decisions.

Lessons 2-3 - follow the same pattern as lesson one.

Lesson 4 - The only thing different about this lesson and the previous three lessons is that you, as the leader, will ask the question, "Have you been born again?" (# 7 at the end of lesson 4) If the group is small you can ask the people one by one. (By this time there has been a rapport built up and the people trust you. They have not been intimidated or judged.) By the end of this lesson, those who have not received Christ as Lord and Savior are very aware of it.

Lesson 5 - Complete this lesson without pushing for decisions. (There is an invitation built into the lesson just in case some are ready.)

Lesson 6 - It is best if the leader works through his own bridge of life as the students work through theirs. (If the group is large, the leader may want to use a blackboard.) This is the time most will be ready to make a decision to follow Christ. At the end of the lesson the leader asks for those who want to be born again to signify their desire. If the group is large, this can be done by raising hands and then moving to the front of the group. For those who have indicated their desire to follow Christ, it will be good to review what it means to be born

again. Then one by one they will pray a sinner's prayer. Allow them to do it aloud. (A sample sinner's prayer is found at the end of lesson 6.)

Following the prayers by the students, review with them the significance of their decision and the fact that they now have eternal life because of Christ. It is time to introduce Christian prayer. Expect the new believers to one by one pray a simple prayer of thanksgiving. The prayer may be something like this, "Jesus, thank you for saving me tonight. Amen."

Lesson 7 - If some were not ready to make their decision following lesson 6, this lesson will allow another opportunity for them to make a decision. It will reaffirm the commitment of those who have already been saved.

**This concludes the study of the first book.**

What you can expect by this time:

1. Many will have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. The group will have learned many new Gospel songs.
3. People from the group should be leading the singing.
4. An instrumentalist from the group will be playing.

What if there is someone in the group who has not made a decision to follow Christ? It is usually best not to continue using the group's time to focus on one or two people. Deal with these few on an individual basis. Though not yet saved, they should be encouraged to continue attending the group Bible study.

Following lesson 7, the new believers will decide if they want to continue. To help them in this decision show them a copy of *I Have Been Born Again, What Next?* Normally they are excited about their new feelings and new life and will want to continue.

Probably the meeting place will be the same, but this and the date and time of meetings is a matter for the group to decide.

## Book 3

### *I Have Been Born Again, What Next?*

This book has eleven lessons designed to help new believers become stronger in their relationship to Christ and to each other. It will help them to understand Christian privileges and responsibilities and help them prepare for responsible church membership.

Each member will need a copy of the study booklet.

Since new believers may not own a Bible, the Scripture references are part of the printed lessons. The Scripture is the strength of these lessons. They are relevant topics wrapped in Scripture.

**x** Now that the students are believers, each study session should be opened and closed with prayer. The church planter should pray a simple, reproducible prayer such as, "Jesus, thank you for our Bible study tonight. Amen." (Not a long, wordy prayer.) Once the new believers have heard the leader pray such a simple prayer, they will not be afraid to pray. Encourage it, expect it, and they will do it .

**x** Continue with music. Let new believers lead in the singing as well as providing special music.

**x** The church planter should guide the first lesson, with the group continuing to participate. Each lesson is a unit designed to teach certain basic truths and should be read

straight through without lecturing at each point. Students will take turns reading.

At the end of each lesson there are questions for the group to discuss or answer. The leader may read the questions, but let the people take turns giving the answers. (The answers are found in the lesson.)

The church planter may ask one of the group members to guide the next lesson and the planter simply participates as a member of the group.

In these lessons the believers are introduced to prayer, Bible study, the church, baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc. At the conclusion of the studies, it is time for the believers to be baptized and begin to function as a church.

The church planter may be the only one who has been baptized according to the New Testament pattern. If this is true, he will be the one to baptize the people.

## **Objective 2 - the Birth of a Church**

1. The group is recognized as a new church. (Note again, the definition of "church" at the beginning of this booklet.)
2. The new church will have a special meeting to make the following decisions .

{ When and where to meet.

There may be no change in time and place of meetings.

{ Who will lead the first worship service.

It is almost always best for several from the body to lead the worship services. They will take turns leading from

week to week. The leaders should be chosen by the church. They should be mature, respected believers with an obvious love for Christ.

{ Who will be the treasurer and assistant treasurer.  
(For some groups this may come a little later.)

{ Who will be leading the music.  
Multiple leadership is often best, especially at the beginning.

The church planter will discuss the **new weekly leadership training sessions** which will be available to anyone in the group who would like to attend.

## Book 4 *Galatians, From Law To Grace*

The planter will give the worship leader a copy of *Galatians, From Law To Grace*, with instructions on the use of the book. (The instructions are found on the inside of the front cover.) The Scripture is read first, then the comments are read from the study guide. At the end of each lesson there are questions that the leader will ask the group to answer.

The worship service of the new church may contain the following:

1. Opening prayer and prayer throughout the worship period as members feel led.
2. Music, group singing and special music such as solos, etc.
3. Sharing of experiences with God and other members during the week.

4. Giving of tithes and offerings.
5. Bible study in Galatians (one chapter each week).
6. Closing prayer.

### **Introduce Bible Reading Report Time**

Many groups find it convenient to have this meeting one hour prior to the worship hour. This emphasis on Bible study is based on Matthew 4:4, Joshua 1:8, Nehemiah 8:1-12, 9:3, Psalm 1, I Timothy 4:13.

If a person reads three chapters daily, he will read through the Bible in one year. There is nothing that will help new believers more than staying consistently in the Word of God. Stronger leaders will come from this activity. Weekly Bible reading report time provides a needed accountability.

Each week expect members to report on books and number of chapters read. Verses that blessed their hearts that week should be highlighted and/or kept in a notebook. Only those verses will be read to the group. Each member will follow along in his own Bible. Do not encourage commentary.

**Remember that what God's Word says is more important and more powerful than anything any person says about God's Word.**

The church planter will want to attend the church gatherings as often as possible, though he will not need to lead any of the meetings.

## Leadership training

### Book 5

### *Questions People and Churches Ask*

The church planter will meet once a week with anyone who is interested in leadership training. The meeting time is set for the convenience of those desiring to attend.

Leadership will be developing and evolving from the new church family. It is not necessary and would not be encouraged to have long term assignments with titles, such as pastor, at the early stages of the church.

*Questions People and Churches Ask* deals with practical problems faced by new believers and new churches. It deals with some doctrinal teachings that will be helpful for the new leaders, as well as with practical things the leaders will face. The lessons will not necessarily be studied in the order they appear in the book, but as they are relevant to the group's needs. For example, if there is going to be a baptismal service on a given Sunday, the class may want to study the chapter on the meaning of baptism and the mechanics of how to do the baptismal service. There will be studies from the book on the call to preach, how to prepare a sermon, the work of a pastor, etc.

After a few months, those who are gifted and called of God to the work of the pastor will become increasingly aware of it. Some students may drop out and only those who are very serious and feel the need for training will continue.

This leadership training class may continue for 6 to 12 months or as long as needed.

## Book 6

### ***John, Behold the Lamb***

When the church has completed the study of Galatians, I recommend a similar study approach for the Gospel of John. If the worship leaders come from the group of new believers,

they will not be ready to begin preaching formal sermons without some help. *John, Behold the Lamb* will keep the leaders in the Word of God. It is a 21 week study guide—chapter by chapter through John.

The rationale for using this study: the new believers need to get a good look at the deity of Christ—man yet God. The Gospel of John also allows for a review of the way a person becomes a child of God.

The new worship leaders are learning how to prepare a Bible study or sermon on a chapter from the Bible, covering all the verses in the chapter.

At the conclusion of each chapter are questions for application. The leader may use these to lead the group in a period of discussion about the chapter just studied.

## Book 7

### ***Romans, The Road to Righteousness***

This is a book to be used by the worship leaders after they have completed the study of John's Gospel. It is designed to be used in the same way as the study of *John, Behold the Lamb*. The leader may, however, prefer to use this as a resource for Bible study/sermon preparation.

## Book 8

### ***Let This Mind Be in You***

This book is for advanced leadership training. *Let This Mind Be in You* helps to give a solid theological foundation for spiritual growth. If there are several new churches in the area,

the church planter may want to begin a central training institute.

## Book 9

### *Indigenous Church Planting, A Practical Journey*

This book is also designed for training leaders. It is a simple presentation of how to plant churches that are capable of reproducing themselves. Every newly planted church should have an inclination toward starting another new church. This book will assist them in planting more churches.

#### **A New Church in Action**

A new church has been planted and leaders have received training. *Good News for You* has become an every-member tool for evangelism. Each member should be leading others through the *Good News for You* in an effort to lead them to faith in Christ. This can be one-on-one or home Bible studies. As people are saved and join the group, they will go through *I Have Been Born Again, What Next?* as a new member orientation.

The church planter may continue with the church, sometimes as the pastor, or he may go on to plant more new churches. Once a church is planted, it is important that the church have fellowship with other churches of like faith.

After several new churches have been started, there is a need for an association among the churches. This brings us to:

#### **Objective 3 - The Birth of a Fellowship or Association of Churches**

Churches need encouragement and fellowship with other churches. Together a group of churches can do special mission projects—spreading the Gospel to other peoples. The Good News spreads through the birth of new churches and then through a fellowship of churches.

The churches may want to meet together in a central location quarterly or biannually. Members from each church should be invited to attend. The primary purpose for the meetings will be inspiration, fellowship, and planning for further church planting. The meetings should not degenerate into meetings for a select few church leaders who develop rules and regulations.

There should be a strong emphasis on an edifying fellowship of all God's people for the expansion of His Kingdom through the birth of new churches near and far.

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The books referred to in this booklet and listed below  
can be ordered from:

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Leading a Bible Study by Indirect Methods

Good News For You

I Have Been Born Again, What Next?

Galatians, From Law to Grace

John, Behold the Lamb

Romans, the Road to Righteousness

Questions People and Churches Ask

Let This Mind Be in You  
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