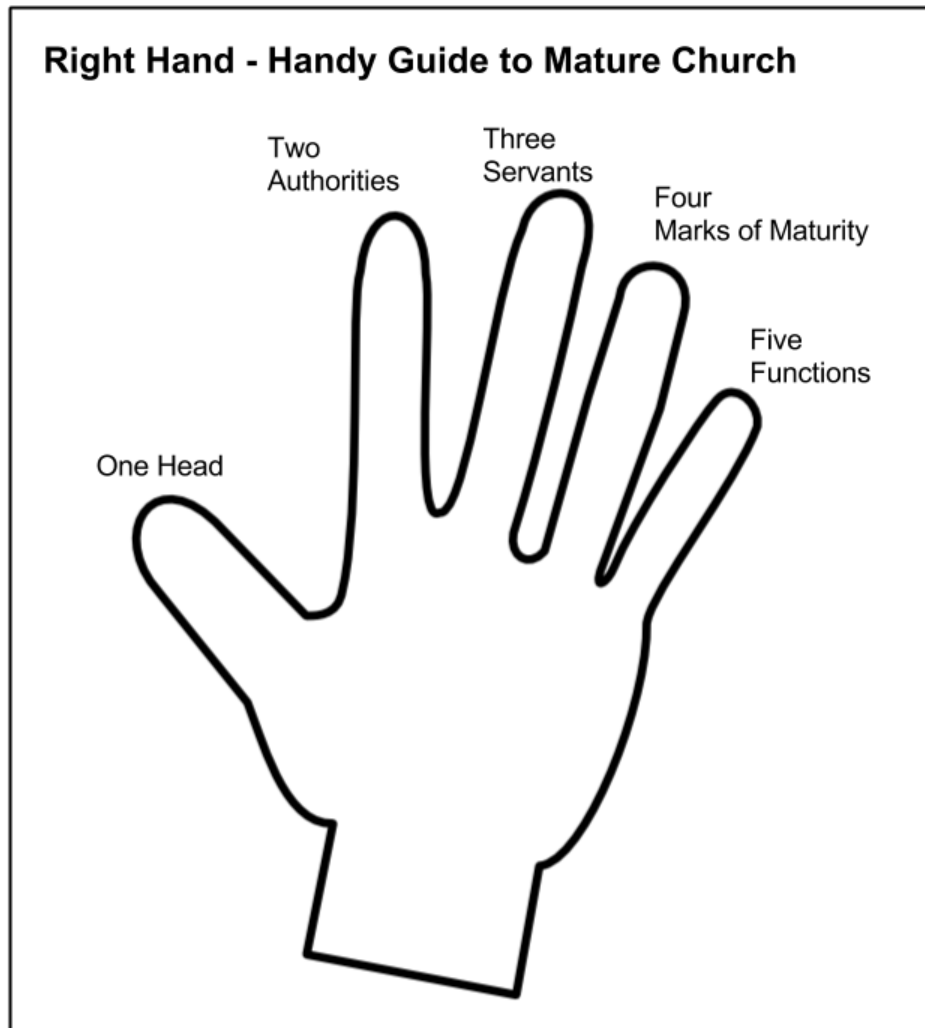


# The Right Hand -- The Handy Guide to a Mature Church

This guide presents the church planter with an easy way to organize elements of maturity and health vital to the longevity of a church.



## The church has One Head

Christ is the Head of the Church Ephesians 1:22-23 says:

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything in the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Christ is the head of the church. There is no other. God has ordained only one “chief shepherd” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Within the body of Christ there is no hierarchy. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’” (1 Cor. 12:21). Rather, all parts work together for the good of the body. Each believer is a part of the body, and membership includes mutual accountability (1 Cor. 12:27). The church is the fullness of Christ displaying corporately the full extent of His ministry

on earth. Ultimately each member is responsible to Christ above all else in matters of function and polity. This means we each have access to the Head and carry responsibility among his body for promotion of right practice.



## The church has Two Authorities

### The Word of God and the Spirit of God

The Word of God – To guide the church, God ensured the recording of His instruction and plan for mankind. It is without error and is the sufficient tool for discerning all matters of faith and practice. The scripture speaks to all matters concerning the church and must be central in the decision-making process of the body of Christ.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tell us, “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God will be fully equipped for every good work.”

The Spirit of God – God has provided each believer His Spirit as a counselor. The Spirit indwells us at conversion and guides us toward right thought and action. When we sin, the Spirit brings conviction leading us toward repentance and confession before God. His voice must be discerned as it guides the believer into God’s will.

In John 14:26 Jesus promised His disciples, “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Together the Spirit of God and the Word of God guide the church. God’s Spirit uses the Word as a tool to instruct and at times rebuke the believer. The Word is the Spirit’s tool for shaping and directing the church. Together these two provide all that is needed for the church to move forward in assurance of God’s will.

The Spirit and the Word will never contradict each other. They parallel each other similar to railway tracks. They will never cross nor part. Emphasis only on the Word will lead the church towards legalism. In the same way, emphasis only on the Spirit will likely result in emotionalism.

Any revelation or interpretation should be tested by these two authorities. When one claims to have a message from the Spirit, it must be tested with the Word. When an interpretation of the Word is shared, the Spirit confirms its truth in the heart of the believer. This process keeps the church from error.



## The church has Three Servants

### Elder, Deacon, and Priests

Servant #1 – Pastor <sup>34</sup> – Three New Testament words are used to describe this servant.

- 1) Shepherd – Ephesians 4:11 – “poimenos” – literally, “shepherd,” here translated as “pastor”
- 2) Elder – Titus 1:5 – “presbuteros”
- 3) Overseer – Titus 1:7 – “episkopon” - alternately translated as “bishop”

1 Peter 5:1-2 uses a form of all three of these terms to describe one office. The pastor is to be a shepherd, elder and overseer for the church.

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers —not because you must, but because you are willing...”

Here Peter establishes the role of leaders given the responsibility of oversight and at the same time helps the church avoid hierarchy by claiming equal status with others called to this office. There is but one Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4).

As the name suggests, a pastor is simply one who leads his flock to pasture. Their charge over the sheep is that of protection and direction to nourishment. Every flock needs a shepherd. It is a worthy goal of the church planter to ensure their appointment. The church planter should note that no where in Scripture is Paul or any member of his church planting team referred to as a pastor. Church planters in the New Testament did not fill this role. Rather, as Paul instructs Titus, recognizing this role from within the church was a key for church formation (Titus 1:5).

Role – The job of the pastor is given to us in Ephesians 4:11-12.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for the works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up”.

What is the pastor’s role?

<sup>33</sup> Baptists have historically proposed two offices in the church – pastor and deacon. The Baptist’ expression is motivated as a safeguard against the division of the pastor, elder or overseer role. Such a division introduces hierarchy among these offices. It is suggested such a distinction be carefully avoided.

<sup>34</sup> The term “pastor” is a matter of preference as any of the three NT terms could be used to describe this servant. The point being made here is the division of these three terms for the creation of hierarchy among the body is a precedent beyond the scope of scripture and should be avoided.

Many believe the pastor must do the works of service. A more careful reading of this passage reveals the works of service are the job of every believer. According to verse 12, the pastor is an equipper of God’s people.

It is often said, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. If this is true of the church, the failure belongs to the pastor. As an equipper, it is their job to mobilize the church with simple tools and accountability to perform ministry.

Qualifications – The qualifications of pastors can be found in Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Take time to go through these lists. Use the following chart to categorize each qualification.

### Self-Discovery Bible Study

Read the passage and assign each qualification to the appropriate category. List them below.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Character	Gifts/Skills	Education

### Self-Discovery Bible Study

Read the passage and assign each qualification to the appropriate category. List them below.

Titus 1:6-9

Character	Gifts/Skills	Education

--	--	--

What differences exist between these passages? Why?

A careful reading of these lists reveals Godly character as the essential qualifier for this role. Character cannot be replaced with any amount of biblical education or giftedness.

This means that the simplest of men in whom God is manifesting His character are qualified to serve!

<b>Tool for the Trainer Evaluating Emerging Leaders</b>		
Having examined the list of qualifications for Overseers provided in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, take time to consider the emerging leaders in your church plants.	Step one – list potential “emerging leaders” who you feel fulfill Paul’s expectations and demonstrate an aptitude for leadership.	Step two – evaluate their potential for leadership based on 1 Tim. 3:1-7. List any quality that may be lacking in the column on the right.
List of Emerging Leaders	Observations of Character	
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

An application of church discipline

Read Matthew 18:15-20. If emerging leaders listed above lack expected elements of character required for leadership in the church, perhaps it is time to implement the Lord’s instruction for church discipline.

Based on your observations (above) how might you apply the instruction given in Matt. 18:15?

What Bible passages will you use to show him his fault? -- Make a list.

Take time with those you train to describe the step-by-step progression if a brother fails to repent as detailed in verse 16-20. Why does the church have the final say (v.17)?

Through prayer make specific plans to apply the Lord's instruction. Remember, this may be the first time new believers have considered the Lord's method for correction. This creates a sensitive, yet valuable teaching and training opportunity.

Servant #2 - Deacon – The deacon is a servant of the church. While not mandated in scripture, the role of Deacon was introduced to ensure equality among the Jerusalem congregation.

Role – Acts 6:3 gives us the role of the first deacons.

“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them”.

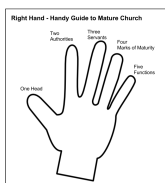
As a servant, the deacon is an advocate of the poor. Fulfilling any need of the congregation falls within the realm of the deacon's job description. This enables the church and its leaders to move forward in the ministry of the Word.

Qualifications – The qualifications of deacons can be found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The list is remarkably similar to that of the pastor. Again, it is primarily character that qualifies and disqualifies individuals for service.

Servant #3 - Priests – As we have already seen in our study of the Scripture is that every believer is to be equipped and functioning in ministry. Every disciple of Jesus Christ is to be a priest. The role of a priest is to bring people to God. We do this through going to the lost, sharing the gospel, making disciples, gathering as church, and multiplying more laborers for the harvest.

Role – Bring people to God by functioning as healthy members of the body of Christ and being His disciple (Mat 4.19, 1 Pet 2.9, Rev 1.6, Eph 4.11-12).

Qualifications – One can assume Christian characteristics consistent with those of NT leaders is applicable.



## The church has Four Marks of Maturity

Self-Governing, Self-Supporting, Self-Reproducing and Self-Correcting

For those who have studied missiology, these first three will be quickly recognized as a simple adaptation of the “Nevius Principle.”<sup>36</sup> The fourth “self” later offered to the church speaks to churches’ need to address theological issues through their own cultural lens. Here we have replaced Self- Theologizing with Self-Correcting. The change in terminology reflects an emphasis on filtering or correcting one’s own culture with scripture. The community of faith is not asked to re-invent theology.

<sup>35</sup> Paul's service may be argued as a "special assignment" outside the typical scope of church function. It does however set a precedent of accountability within obedience to the foundational command to give.

Rather, following Paul's example they must seek to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). This is witnessed in the New Testament as Greek background believers dealt with the issues surrounding Jewish customs and tradition. The culmination of this issue in Acts 15 reveals an inherent faith in the Holy Spirit to guide each new people in the biblical filtering and redemption of their own culture.

### Self-Governing

By self-governing, we simply mean a mature church has the capability to make decisions for itself. Doing so means proper exercise of the two authorities granted the church. They must be able to discern guidance from the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

## Self-Discovery Study – Self-Governing

Read Acts 6:1-7 and answer the following question.

Who chose the first deacons?

Answer – The 12 gathered "all the disciples" and instructed them to choose the first deacons. When the decision was made, there was no debate. Rather, the 12 simply recognized the choice by the laying on of hands.

How did the 12 know the believers would choose the right men?

The 12 entrusted the task of guidance to the Holy Spirit! The church was about to be scattered by persecution. It is suggested, the selection of deacons in this manner, was on the job training for believers about to be scattered by persecution (Acts 8:1). Through this exercise the believers learned to discern God's voice by exercising responsible selection of leaders under Holy Spirit guidance.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Nevius, building on the work of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, formalized 3-self's for indigenous mission in his classic book, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (New Jersey: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958).

<sup>37</sup> For description of four other New Testament accounts of this type of congregational rule see: John McRay, *Paul: His Teaching and Practice*. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003), p. 383-386. These accounts include: Acts 1:15-26 (the appointment of Mathias), and the use of the Greek term *cheirotoneo* and *kateseses* translated "appoint" in 2 Cor.

Why is this important? – The understanding affirms the doctrine of "Priesthood of the Believer." When churches' decisions are made for them, they are robbed of their birthright. Access to God for all people through the washing by blood and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are key doctrines related to salvation. All believers have access to the throne (Heb. 4:16). All believers have access to the Lord's guidance through his Word (Heb. 4:12). It is true that

hearing and discerning God’s voice is a learned discipline, of course. Our point here is simply that the church planter must allow this learning to take place through corporate ownership of the decision-making process.<sup>38</sup>

## Self-Supporting

The church must have ownership of its function. Self-supporting means the ministry and outreach it performs are fueled by stewardship of its own resources.

### Self-Discovery Study – Self-Supporting

Read the following passages to discover New Testament examples of giving.

Acts 2:44-45/4:34-36/11:29/2 Cor. 9:10-15/Phil. 4:14-19/1 Thess. 2:8-9/others?

The book of Acts 11:27-30 and 2 Corinthians 9 record the giving of offerings between churches. Contrary to modern trends, it is the daughter churches that gave to the “mother church” in Jerusalem. Further, Paul’s example of self-support for the Thessalonian church and others was intended as a model for their own independence (1 Thess. 2:6-10, 5:12-14).

Why is this important? – Several reasons exist.

First, there is intrinsic motivation when one perceives his or her ownership of ministry. As the giving of members begins to fuel ministry, joy is the inevitable result. This creates an atmosphere of giving, thereby catalyzing healthy church function (2 Cor. 9:6-15).

This issue of local ownership of giving is also perceived by non-believers outside the church. As those transformed by the gospel begin to reach out in love, their neighbor’s jealousy and accusations are replaced with gratitude and openness to the source of transformation.

8:18-19, Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. McRay demonstrates the original meaning of “stretching out one’s hand for the purpose of giving one’s vote in the assembly.”

<sup>38</sup> Freedom, even to fail, in decision making is freedom to grow in the knowledge of God’s grace. See the writings of Charles Brock for strong argument concerning this freedom. Charles Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2001).



A third reason is simple mathematics. Outside funds will never replace a local, intrinsic motive for giving needed to change a nation. Dependence on outside funds will impose a ceiling limiting the spread of the gospel. Breaking through this ceiling requires local ownership of the task including finance.

### Self-Reproducing

The healthy church will multiply. Maturity means a church will take ownership of the responsibility to evangelize its field. For the church planter, this means expecting every believer to accept the Great Commission. Paul demanded and praised such ownership among the churches to which he wrote.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, “And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”

It is important here to remember Paul spent as little as three weeks in the establishment of this church (Acts 17:2).

To the church in the home of Achippus he wrote, “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ” (Philemon 1:6).

Here Paul asserted a Christian walk without the practice of sharing one’s faith lacks understanding of God’s provision.

Why is this important? – The farmer is made for farming. Mobilizing local new believers into the harvest is the only way to multiply. As new believers take ownership of the fields, generations of new believers will flood the church.

### Self-Correcting

We have sought to simplify this “fourth self” by inserting the word correcting in place of “theologizing.” We are not asking new believers to start from scratch. There is much to gain by exposure to the theology of the universal Church. Rather, we expect new churches among previously unreached peoples to examine their own beliefs and practices for the purpose of taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Doing so means they have taken a firm grip on Scripture as their guide.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, ““All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The proper use of scripture is a mark of maturity. It must be the source of teaching and training and can be trusted for rebuking and correcting as well.

Why is this important? Host peoples must learn to filter their own culture. Consider this example.

Among the Hindus of India, idolatry is rampant. Church planters in this context are faced with the difficult task of guiding new believers through an examination of their worldview and redemption of certain aspects of their culture. To outsiders, certain surface level out-workings of the culture are obviously detrimental to the new believer’s relationship with Christ. Under the surface, however, there are countless other layers of culture the church planter does not perceive. This makes these few surface issues key for the church planter. They represent potential teaching points in the process of filtering culture through scripture.

When faced with the need for redemption of culture, the church planter has two options. Option #1 - Forbid the practice of obvious sinful aspects of the host culture.

Giving quick instruction concerning the host culture may solve several immediate blatant trespasses. But it also has a more lasting unseen effect.

Firstly, Hinduism, like all other false religions is works based. The Hindu background believer has been programmed since birth with the thought he or she must accomplish salvation. Quickly adding a list of do's and don'ts perpetuates their dependence on self rather than God.

Secondly, solving these issues for the new believer quickly exhausts the surface level aspects of culture the church planter may perceive. This means the church planter has inadvertently lost the opportunity to walk along side new believers in the redemption of culture. No point remains for the church planter to offer guidance. This leaves the new believer alone in their effort to hear God's voice redeeming the more subtle, hidden points of their culture. Syncretism in the heart of the new believer is the likely result. <sup>39</sup>

Option #2 - Model a careful searching of scripture with faith in the Holy Spirit to help the new believer or church body, discover and implement self-correction. <sup>40</sup>

Utilizing this option means from the beginning the Spirit and scripture are seen as the agents of change. Dependence is never formed on the church planter's instruction and lifetime filtering of the subtle, hidden points of culture is set in motion.

For example, suppose a host culture considers wife beating to be a socially acceptable practice. The church planter could produce a list of expected do's and don'ts for husbands. A second option available to the church planter would be to call the body of believers together for a participative and comparative study of Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19 and Titus 2:1-8. Choosing the latter option would lead to discussion on deeper issues such as motive for submission, the family's reflection of our relationship with Christ and the sanctifying value of responsibility within family. Dealing with scripture on this heart level is the path toward a self-correcting body.

<sup>39</sup> See Roland Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1949), chs 4-6 for a more thorough argument on this topic.

<sup>40</sup> Syncretism is not a danger, it is a reality. Every new believer who has understood and accepted Christ by grace perceives Christ in the midst of his or her un-examined world-view. It is the job of discipleship to create a venue for examining world-view issues. In this sense all disciples are being led away from syncretism. Rather than fear syncretism the church planter is served to expect it in order to deal with it directly.

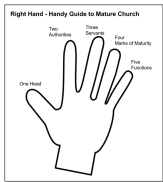
## The Four-Self's

Consider an infant. Each of us began life in this way. We were totally dependent upon our parents for food, direction, love and daily care. These things are natural. God has ordered life this way.

As the child grows, however, he or she must take ownership of each of these areas. It begins feeding itself, choosing and buying its own clothes, choosing its own friends, doing its own school work and so on. Eventually it even lives on its own caring for its own needs and beginning to reproduce.

Imagine an adult man who still depends on his mother to feed him. We would instruct the man to grow up. Maturity demands a certain level of autonomy. We suggest to you, however, the mother is as much to blame as the son. Unwillingness to release the responsibilities related to maturity have stunted the growth of the offspring.

The same is often true of the church. A church that depends upon outsiders to make decisions, support, and correct its mistakes is not mature. Learning to walk requires practice. Without it, dependence is a given.



## The Church has Five Functions

Worship, Fellowship, Ministry, Mission and Discipleship <sup>41</sup>

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus gave us the greatest commandment.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all of your mind... and the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Obedience to this command drives the first three church functions. Worship – Expressing love toward God.

Anything the church does as an expression of love toward God is worship. That could include singing, giving, praying and acts of obedience to His Word.

Fellowship – Loving the Body of Christ

Every believer has two kinds of neighbors, lost neighbors and saved neighbors. Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is fellowship. Any act of love toward our spiritual family constitutes fellowship. Praying for one another, giving and carrying each other’s burdens are all acts of fellowship.

Ministry – Loving the Lost

The second type of neighbor is the lost. Showing the love of Christ through our actions and attitudes is ministry. The church should consider such acts of love as a strategic aspect of its function. Any activity of the church that expresses such love is ministry.

The Great Commission gives us the remaining functions of the church. Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Mission – Going!

Mission means carrying the message of Christ’s salvation to peoples who have not heard. According to Acts 1:8, this can be fulfilled locally and at great distances. For the church, practicing mission should be a part of everyday life.

Discipleship – Teaching others to obey everything Christ has commanded.

Our discipleship must be focused on moving believers forward in their relationship with Christ. Plan to

provide tools and accountability.

<sup>41</sup> The five functions listed here are a loose adaptation of Rick Warren’s teaching on the Great Commandment and

Why are these important? - The health of any church is defined by its function. Any church, regardless of size, age or venue with healthy function is successful.

## Self-Discovery Study – Church Functions

Examine the 1<sup>st</sup> church in Acts 2:41-47.

Which of the five functions do you see at work in this congregation?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Other?

## Tool for the Trainer

To ensure the implementation of these functions take time to practice them. In small groups of 6-10 assign the facilitation of each function to different members of the group. Assign someone to lead in:

Worship – Loving God

Fellowship – Loving other believers Ministry – Loving the Lost

Mission – Going!

Discipleship – Training others to obey

Allow multiple one-hour practice sessions with feedback opportunities to sharpen understanding of these functions. Brainstorm together different ways to fulfill each function in the small group setting.

## The Goal - Multiplying healthy churches – and the mess we create.

The Apostle Paul wrote many letters to churches he had been a part of starting. It is of interest that Paul never wrote a single word to a fellowship, preaching point or even a cell group. Paul's open letters were addressed to churches.

### Self-Discovery Study - How healthy must a church be to be a church?

Take a few minutes to look over the letter, 1 Corinthians. What challenges was the church facing? Make a list.

1. Example – factions among followers/leaders – chapter 3:1-5
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

As we examine Paul's church plants, we are many times surprised by the lack of maturity or Christ like morality they exhibit. Instructions concerning struggles with sin, order, false teaching, the errors of leadership and misuse of ordinances or gifting are common within Paul's letters. According to Paul, however, these struggles did not prevent him from respecting them as autonomous churches. Consider Paul's opening statement in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9:

*I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge – because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

Considering the condition of the Corinthian church, which we just examined, these verses are remarkable. Paul was confident because he knew the faithfulness of God (v.9). Paul was confident, even where maturity was lacking, that God was committed and faithful to the Corinthian church. Though they were struggling to emerge from the baggage

of their pre-Christian culture and worldview, they were church. Calling them church (1 Cor. 1:2), claimed Christ's promise in Matthew 16:18. Because Jesus was invested in them, the gates of hell would not stand in the way of fulfilling their purpose.

For church planting teams, it is valuable to discuss and come to consensus on vocabulary used in the church planting process. Even when the congregations were unhealthy, Paul commissioned churches to all that Christ expected them to be. Doing so raised the expectation for each body to the full measure of identity, responsibility and authority.

Introduction and acceptance of terms such as; fellowships, preaching points, "house" churches, cell groups, cottage meetings for new groups carry the potential to undermine the goal of new churches. If our goal is multiplication, these terms should be examined to determine motive as they often reflect an alternate definition of success with limited potential.

For this reason we have chosen to limit our terminology to the following.

1) A new "church start" – A "church start" is a new gathering we (the church planters) intend to become a church but that may be lacking some element of function or identity. These are new groups, often formed in or around houses or men of peace. Calling a new group a "church start" does not mean that everything we start is church. Rather, this choice of vocabulary reflects our intention. We have committed, we intend everything we start to become church. Often, even as church function is underway the necessary identity may be lacking and is often the last element in place for a group to become "church".

2) A "church" – A "church" is a body of baptized believers committed to a collective identity under the Lordship of Christ, for the purpose of fulfilling all of Christ's expectations for his body. That said, there has never been a church that fulfilled Christ's expectations throughout its lifecycle

(for examples of churches lacking elements of health see the 1 Corinthians example listed above, or Galatians 1:2, 1:6-7 or Rev. chapters 2-3, 2:4-5, 2:14-16, 2:20, 3:2-3, 3:15-16). The biblical precedent for churches in such condition is rebuke and reproof after the example of Paul (1 Cor. 5:1-5, Gal. 1:6-9, Titus 1:5).

3) A "healthy church" - A "healthy church" is a church (see above), fulfilling the expectations of Christ as outlined within scripture. Remember, this is the goal; it is not a box that can be checked or forever completed. Churches will inevitably fall in and out of compliance with the fullness of Christ's expectation. Regular examination, evaluation and discipline will be needed.

Healthy churches are the plan. Anything less fails to fulfill Christ's eternal purposes (Matt. 16:18, Eph. 3:10). As witnesses to movements of multiplying churches over the years, we have grown in our understanding of Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 11:28,

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

After a long list of persecutions and sufferings (2 Cor. 11:23-27), Paul confesses his ongoing burden of concern for churches he and his disciples had planted. The nature of his calling (Rom. 15:18-23), and the violent responses of those who have opposed him demanded an itinerant ministry and the inevitable longing to be among those whom he could minister to only from a distance (Acts 14:5-6, 19-20, 17:10-15). As we pursue similar goals (the multiplication of healthy churches), how will we monitor and faithfully serve churches we are not able to shepherd in person?

In presenting church formation up to this point, we have suggested the ideal. We believe the “handy guide” introduces the elements necessary for promoting and maintaining the health of churches. Church health, however, is a dynamic goal that must be pursued as well as maintained. Often such evaluation of church health reveals elements of false teaching or sin. It also reveals elements of dependence or control preventing the release of autonomous church starts.

Below is a tool for evaluating and internationalizing elements of church health within body life. This tool is based on the activities and priorities of the first church in Acts chapter 2:38-47 as well as elements of maturity recorded in the Acts 13:1-5, Antioch church.

As you work through the Generational Mapping tool, consider the following questions for evaluation of your church plants and church planting disciples. Remember, for multiplication to occur, releasing healthy churches is as important as starting them!