

Roadmap for Church Cultivation in 21st Century India

By Jay Caven - Foreign Mission Foundation

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” Luke 10:2-

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Harvest Time

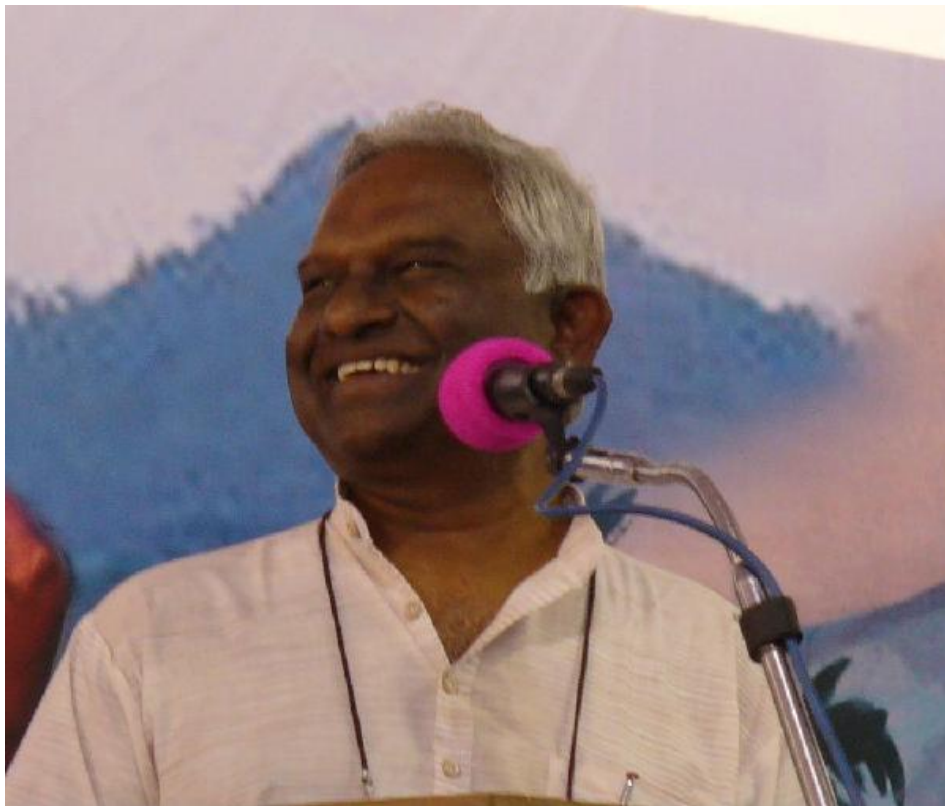
With these words Jesus Christ began sharing a plan of action for reaching the lost that is still reaping a harvest today. In India, there is a man who has studied and lived out that plan as much as anyone in the country – Dr. Victor Choudrie. Often referred to as the “Grandfather of Church Planting” in India, Dr. Choudrie left his successful medical practice and career in 1992 to devote his life to full-time church planting. His wife Bindu is also a masterful equipper and trainer for women house church planters in India and abroad.

In his article Roadmap for Church Cultivation, Dr. Choudrie gives us a powerful and practical perspective on the purpose of the Church. His insight challenges all of us involved in Christian service to consider the true meaning behind Christ’s command to “make disciples of all nations (peoples).” Our Western, traditional models are never comfortable in the light of Dr. Choudrie’s piercing viewpoint through a Biblical perspective. After reading his writings, or hearing him speak, it is inevitable that I must adjust my thinking. We hope you find Dr. Choudrie’s words to be inspiring and challenging as well.

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About the Author -- Dr. Choudrie:

Victor Choudhrie is a cancer surgeon by profession. He is a senior Fellow of the American and British colleges of surgeons. He quit his job as the Director (CEO) of the Christian Medical college, Ludhiana in Punjab, India in 1992 to take up full time Church planting ministry in central India. His wife Bindu is also in full time church planting ministry, equipping women to be house church leaders and trainers. God has blessed this ministry abundantly. Large numbers of grassroots level leaders have been trained who have planted thousands of house churches all over India as a result.



ROADMAP FOR CHURCH CULTIVATION BASED ON MATTHEW & LUKE TEN

Church Planting Vs. Cultivation:

On India Independence Day there is an epidemic of tree planting ceremonies by the VIPs. We do not know what happens to those saplings but if all would have survived, India would have been the Garden of Eden by now. Church planting is no different. The attrition rate at the present moment is anywhere from 20% to 60%, which is a major concern. A farmer, even before putting the plough to the ground, does all his mathematics with the harvest in mind. Church planting is an event, whereas cultivation is a process, which includes, preparing the soil, weeding, sowing seed, watering, fertilizing, protecting and reaping immediately when the harvest is ready. The steps, the risks, and the financial, human and other investments are well thought out so that the sower may have a thirty, sixty and even hundredfold return on investment.

Research: Jesus' statement in the first few verses of Luke 10, requires an information based strategy. ("The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.")

1. Harvest Field:

The harvest is ready but we need information about it. Moses and later Joshua sent people to spy out the Land of Canaan and gather as much information as possible about the people, which included the demographics of the people groups (few or many) and anthropology (small or big), the lay of the land, the defense system and even about the crops and fruits (Numbers 13:1, 2; 17- 20).

2. Spiritual Mapping:

Before entering into any town or village, it must be remembered that the domain at that time is under the Devil who has put his strongman to defend it until somebody stronger than him comes and plunders him (1John 5:19; Luke 11:21, 22). Without clearly understanding this and factoring in an information-based strategy, there is a strong possibility of a backlash and failure.

3. Harvest Force (Laborers):

Without a well- equipped labor force it is impossible to reap the harvest. There is a huge unequipped harvest force available in the church, which is non- functional at the moment. People need to be transformed into their real identity as Royal Priests to be harnessed for the harvest.

First Release the Harvest Force: Jesus never asked us to plant churches and start a worship service on Sundays. He commissioned us to make disciples. Ecclesia is the by-product of discipling, and it is the job of Ecclesia to then make more disciples. Sadly we make it the end product and worse still, abandon discipling and turn it into a Sunday worship ritual, thus defeating the mandate of the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations, and baptize, equip and send them to the ends of the earth as His witnesses" (Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Jesus' plea is that the harvest is ready, therefore pray to the Master of the harvest to send forth laborers (Mat. 9:37-38).

Go Two by Two:

Jesus has promised that He is present where two or three congregate in His name, thus constituting a mini congregation. However, let not its size mislead us as she has all the power in heaven and on earth. It is an authentic church (Bride) that is going with all the power and authority it needs, to reproduce herself. (Matt. 18:18-20). Just like only a whole sheep can reproduce sheep, similarly only the whole church (Bride) can birth a church. Apostles and prophets lay the foundation and others can build on it but finally it is the whole Bride, who has the capacity to reproduce (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). Be encouraged if you have a small flock but do make sure that you are rapidly multiplying by sending them out two by two.

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THE PERSON OF SHALOM

Find the Person of Shalom: This is the core of the core in the whole strategy for Saturation Church Planting because this “Shalom Bayit” the House of Peace will be the “Discipling Hub” and not just a “Worship Center”. The key to finding the House of Peace is by persistent prayer walking and blessing the houses in the community with, “Shalom Aleikhem - Peace be with you,” (Luke 10:5; John 20:21), until the “House of Peace” welcomes you and provides hospitality. This is where signs and wonders, followed by repentance, baptisms and discipling will take place (Luke 10:5-9). The purpose of discipling however, is not just to turn people into members of the local church (laymen) or even simple believers but equipping them to be Royal Priests so that they will also have an inheritance among the saints (1Pet. 2:9; Acts 26:19; Eph. 3:6).

Priestly Functions:

The Primary Function of the priest in the OT was to offer animal sacrifice. This function has not ceased in the NT except that instead of animals we offer Gentiles as a living sacrifice (Rom. 15:16; Isa 66: 20, 21). We are now in the new dispensation with the priesthood of all believers, hence every one has to bring lost sheep as an offering (Mal. 1:11). The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart, these He will not refuse (Psalm 51:17). Therefore, the first function of the priest is finding and bringing together the lost sheep who are not yet in the fold and equip them until there is one Fold and one Shepherd (John 10:16).

The Second Priestly function is not to turn the sheep into members of their own church but to equip them into Royal Priests. We do not become priests by going to seminaries but by the blood of the Lamb, which makes us Priests and Sovereigns (Rev. 5:10). And, the Final Priestly Function is to scatter them to the ends of the earth. The benchmark of well equipped priests is the same as the Elders of the church. This includes character traits, being hospitable, sound in doctrine (this education is not available in theological seminaries but can be acquired only in the school of hard knocks), a good manager of his own household (Titus 1:5-9; 1Tim. 3:12; Mal. 1:11; 2:7) and finally, prayer with an awareness that God’s army marches on its knees and a clear understanding that He will heal this nation only when His people will repent, fast and pray (2 Chron. 7:14).

Royalty Functions:

The ultimate purpose of preaching, teaching, discipling and church planting is to bring in the reign of Jesus here on planet earth. The Sovereign of sovereigns and Master of masters, died to make us priests and sovereigns. Sovereign is gender neutral and therefore a better term, unlike king, which is gender specific. Jesus is the head of the Ecclesia and we are the Body, His hands, feet and shoulders (Eph.1:22, 23). Hence the government is really upon us. The Ecclesia is not just a worship group but an authentic government, a legal assembly (Acts 19:39), responsible for the wholistic transformation of the society and bringing in the righteous reign of Jesus Christ.

If you would like to write to Dr. Choudrie you can contact him at:

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You can also read more about Dr. Choudrie's ministry and the House Church movement at **HYPERLINK**

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