

ISSUE EDITORIAL - OCTOBER 2011

“Church Planting: The Intersection of Missiology and Ecclesiology”

George Robinson, Asst. Editor of GM-English

What is the end goal of our missionary activity? John Piper is oft-quoted in this regard: “Missions exist because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions”ⁱ Thus, missiology is the means to ever-expanding doxology. The Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20 has arguably been the primary impetus of missionary activity since the time of William Carey.ⁱⁱ While it is clear from this classic Great Commission text that our goal is to make disciples of all nations, what may not be as clear therein is the role of the church in that process.

Most would agree that the Church formally came into existence in Acts 2 at the time of Pentecost. And again, most would agree that the church in Jerusalem was not the end goal, but rather the starting point. If disciples were to be made beginning in Jerusalem, and from there spreading out into all of the world, how else could it be done apart from establishing churches in various locales where these new generations of disciples resided? It is true that the bible contains no explicit command to plant churches. Yet that is precisely what Paul and the other apostles did as they carried the gospel to the edges of the Roman Empire and beyond. With each new local gathering of worshiping disciples a local church was birthed. And because of the Great Commission, each church was pregnant with the gospel from its conception. Those churches, it seems, took ownership of their role in God’s global plan of redemption.

With this in mind, it is right that our modern understanding of missions is so tied to the activity of church planting. By planting multiplying churches both near and far, we are cultivating worshipers for God from every ethnicity through gospel-centered gathering and scattering. Over the last decade much attention has been given to church planting movements around the world. These movements are certainly not a new phenomenon. They trace all the way back to the movement that emerged out of the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. It is important to note however that a good portion of the New Testament is composed of epistles, or letters, to the churches that were birthed. The subject matter of these epistles is diverse, but behind the words of each letter was a desire by the author to see those churches be healthy. One way to see the epistles would be as letters addressing the intersection of missiology and ecclesiology. If the church is to achieve the end goal of cultivating worshipers, then ecclesiology matters. That intersection will provide the backdrop of this edition of Global Missiology. Our prayer is that the articles you find herein will spur you on in your mission to plant healthy, reproducing churches that actually serve God’s end vision of Christ being surrounded by worshipers from every nation under heaven. So to that end, read, reflect and share these articles with your peers. And as always, let us know what you think.

¹ John Piper. *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions, 3rd Edition*. Baker Academic, 2010, page 35.

² Carey used this text as his primary argument in his famous treatise, "An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens". Carey's influence has rightly led to his being touted as "The Father of Modern Missions".