

Exercise 1

A. Instructions

Listen to the following story and then discuss the questions that follow.

“Like Josiah, I tear down the high places!” The passionate words flew through the air as “James,” a young man in his early twenties, stood over his \$2,000 laptop with a large twenty-pound rock. With tears in his eyes, he lifted the rock above his head and slammed it down on the helpless computer. As our group witnessed James take his stand against sin, we could almost feel the rumbling of a heavenly war cry in the air. Once the computer was destroyed, a look of joy and freedom came over James’ face. I do not think I have ever felt more proud of a young man in all my life.

James was one of six or seven young men in a small group of which I was a part in my home city. Most of these men were in their early twenties, and most of them were still trying to break free of sexual addictions. At our first meeting, we discussed the importance of holding one another accountable to a high standard. We agreed that if anyone in the group confessed to having looked at internet pornography, after the person was restored in love, he would destroy his computer. We were determined to “pluck out the eye” as Jesus had taught us.

A few months later, James confessed to the group how he had stumbled in this area during the past week. After he repented, we prayed and declared the Lord’s acceptance and forgiveness over him according to New Testament instruction in James 5:16. Then we went outside, and James destroyed his computer.

Later that day, James’ father called from out of state. The night before James destroyed his computer, his father had a dream. He saw James trapped in a room with four walls, being guarded by two sinister-looking demons. The back wall of the room, however, was made of glass. James could still see out through this window of hope. God’s power rushed into James and levitated him in a horizontal position. Suddenly, the Lord shot him through the glass wall like a bullet. The glass shattered and James began to run. In the dream, he called his father and said, “Dad, I’m free.” When he had this dream, James’ dad had no idea about James’ struggle with pornography or the events that would transpire in his son’s life later that same day. After listening to his father’s dream, James told his dad how he had smashed his computer. He told his dad that the computer meant nothing to him compared to his desire to walk in purity and wholehearted devotion to Jesus. After a pause, his father said, “I’m proud of you, son.”

James later told me that this event was a very important moment in his life. Something dramatic shifted in his life from that day forward. Through the fellowship of this simple small group committed to holiness, God had done a quick and accelerated work of transformation in the life of his precious child.

B. Discussion Questions:

1. What did James do to his computer, and why did he do this?
2. How did the Holy Spirit speak to James’ father?
3. How did God use the small group to help James grow in obedience and holiness?

C. Lesson

One important aspect of foundation-building in the New Testament is the apostles' focus on establishing healthy and reproducing *communities*, or churches. In many if not most instances, these churches were relatively small and met in homes.

The apostles made it a priority to lay community-based foundations. This is another key reason why Paul could confidently leave new disciples behind after just a few weeks with them. When he moved on to a new area, he did not abandon isolated individuals with no support base. Rather, he left behind communities. These communities were usually small-groups of disciples who met together regularly. These small groups and house churches provided a context for dynamic spiritual growth and discipleship. In house churches, disciples could worship together, eat together, pray together, laugh together, weep together, study the Scriptures together, and practice the spiritual gifts together. They could hold one another accountable in the areas of doctrine, holiness, sound scriptural interpretation, and evangelistic fervor. They could strengthen one another through seasons of persecution. Under the Spirit's direct leadership, they could spur one another on to greater love and obedience without Paul in the room. This is what happened in James' story. In this story, God used the small group to help James grow as a disciple of Jesus.

Here I want to talk about something called a "church planting movement." Do you remember the last lesson when we talked about church multiplication? That is what we mean by a church planting movement. A church planting movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment. Church planting movements are different than movements where there is just mass evangelism and often mass conversion. In these movements, often great numbers of lost people respond to the gospel, but they do not lead multiplying churches. This is a problem, because churches are where discipleship, worship, and spiritual development continue after conversion. While it's true that church planting movements include massive evangelistic proclamation, they go the second mile—resulting in churches. In church planting movements mass evangelism produces rapidly multiplying new church starts.

Church planting movements bring in the harvest at the fastest rates possible, and they also disciple the harvest at the fastest rates possible. Like two horses that run neck-and-neck through a field, in church planting movements discipleship and the growing harvest run side by side. This happens as those coming to Jesus in the movement are immediately funneled into an accountability-based cell or house church. In other words, from its birth the movement reproduces new communities, not just individual disciples isolated from one another.

Exercise 2:

A. Instructions

Repeat the following verses until memorized and then discuss the questions that follow.

Romans 16:5

Greet also the church that meets at their house.

2 Corinthians 16:19

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Philemon 1:2

To Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home.

B. Discussion Questions

1. What was happening at Aquila and Priscilla's house?
2. What was happening at Archippus's house?
3. What does Paul call the gatherings that were meeting in these homes?
4. Why do you think these churches chose to meet in homes and not in other places?
5. Why do think small groups are house churches are strategic to the advance of the gospel?

C. Lesson

In the early church, small groups and house churches were very strategic to the advance of the gospel. The same is true about church planting movements today. Most church planting movements are able to thrive because they are small-group oriented and focus on using pre-existing infrastructure and space. Church meetings can be conducted in apartments, storefronts, homes, business offices, restaurants, garages, and even cars and taxis. In a church planting movement, church growth is not slowed by the time, processes, or money needed to build and maintain large buildings. House churches or small cells provide model that can actually keep pace with the harvest rapidly coming in as the movement expands. As soon as a group of disciples is ready or needs to multiply, it can. Indeed, one can hardly imagine the explosion of Christianity in places like China, Cambodia, Mongolia, India, Latin America, Africa, and even parts of the Muslim world without house churches and small cells.

In the context of persecution, house churches are not only strategic because of their reproducibility, but also for a number of other reasons. They build resilience and strength into the gospel's advance. When persecutors kill the members of one house church or cell, the other small groups in the network can rebound and relocate quickly enough to ensure the church's survival and growth in a geographical area.

Exercise 3

A. Instructions

Listen carefully to the following story and then discuss the questions that follow.

Within a few days of Muhammad's decision to follow Jesus, he was no longer alone. He had faithfully shared the gospel with the people his list of family friends. We put this list together following his training in *Universal Disciple*. He now needed a simple pattern for house church that he could model for and practice with the other new disciples. They needed to learn how to grow as disciples of Christ together in house church. Muhammad met with me, my wife, and two other friends. We spent the next few hours modeling house church to him.

First, we spent time talking about each other's lives. We talked about the news from each other's lives.

Next, we moved into a time of accountability. We asked each other: were we obedient to Jesus this week? Have we been faithful to share the gospel with others? How did it go?

Next, we moved into a time of reconciliation and confession. We asked and received forgiveness for any offenses we had between us.

Then, we took some time to pray for each other.

Then, we took some time to worship together. We played a CD that had worship songs in Muhammad's heart language. This was the first time he had ever heard worship in his language.

After worship, we spent time learning the Word of God. We asked the Holy Spirit to help us understand the Scriptures. Then we listened to the some portions of the Bible. After we listened to the Bible, we asked and discussed the following three questions:

1. *What does the passage say?*
2. *What do I have to obey?*
3. *What do I need to tell others?*

After we finished the discussion, we took time to respond in prayer to what we had learned. We cried out for the Holy Spirit to help us obey the things he had taught us.

Next, we ate the Lord's supper.

After we took the Lord's supper, we took up an offering. This offering was to be used to help the gospel advance.

After we took up an offering, everyone named at least five people we wanted to pray for and to share the gospel with during the next week.

We finished by praying for the salvation of the people we had just named, and we also asked the Holy Spirit to give us boldness to share the gospel with them.

After we finished modeling this simple church model for Muhammad, we then gave him a chance to practice leading the group. During worship, we used a cassette tape with worship songs in Muhammad's language. When we pushed play, Muhammad's face lit up as he listened to worship songs in his own language for the first time. The look of joy and excitement that came over his face at that moment will be etched on my memory forever. When we had finished the house church session, I gave him the cassette tape with the worship songs in his language on it. His assignment was now to go back to the other new disciples and lead them through a house church meeting as soon as possible. As new churches emerged, the tape was to be dubbed so that every new church could share in the joy of worship songs in their own language.

When we finished training Muhammad in how to lead a house church meeting, we told him that it was now his responsibility to go and train the other disciples in the things he had just learned. As he did this, new house churches began to emerge in his area.

B. Discussion Questions

1. What happened when Muhammad shared the gospel with family, friends, neighbors, and other people in his network of relationships?
2. What did the missionary do to help this movement become a church planting movement and not just an evangelistic movement?
3. How did the missionary, the missionary's wife, and his two friends train Muhammad to lead a small-group house church meeting?
4. What were the different parts of the church meeting?
5. When the missionary finished showing Muhammad how to lead a house church meeting, what did he let Muhammad do?

6. How did Muhammad respond when he heard worship songs in his language for the first time?
7. Once Muhammad had learned how to lead a house church meeting, what was now his assignment and responsibility?

C. Lesson

For a new movement to become a church planting movement, a vision for multiplying churches must become part of the movement at the very beginning of the movement. One way to go about this is to teach new disciples an uncomplicated, easily memorable, and simple pattern for church meetings. The point we want new disciples to grasp is that they did not need big buildings or highly educated clergy to have a church meeting.

Muhammad reported important developments in the house churches to me from week to week. Each house church was meeting twice per week, and the leaders of the house churches came together for an additional meeting once per week. Muhammad told me that the new disciples absolutely loved worshipping together along with the cassette tape, and that devoured the Bible cassettes each time they met. Because they had been taught *how* to do house church and *how* to do a simple inductive Bible study on their own, their life in God was not dependant on a foreigner constantly spoon-feeding information to them.

Exercise 5

A. Instructions

Listen carefully to each passage and then discuss the questions that immediately follow each passage.

1 Timothy 3:1-13

3 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸ Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹² A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

B. Discussion Questions

1. What are the types of qualities that Paul says should characterize leaders in the church?
2. Which of these qualities focus on the heart condition and character of the leader?
3. In this list of characteristics, does Paul say anything about being able to read, formal education, or degrees from fancy universities?

Acts 14:21-25

²¹ They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

C. Discussion Questions

1. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, what did they do? Who did they appoint?
2. How did Paul and Barnabas commit these new leaders to the Lord?
3. Who did Paul and Barnabas trust to guide and direct these new leaders? To whom did Paul and Barnabas commit these new leaders and churches?

Acts 20:27-28

²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

D. Discussion Questions – Part 3

1. In this passage, Paul was talking to the leaders of the church in Ephesus. Who does Paul say made these leaders overseers of the flock? The Holy Spirit, or a man?
2. How do you think the Holy Spirit pointed out those whom He wanted to give leadership to the churches?

E. Lesson

As we talked about in one of our early lessons, the spontaneous expansion of the church depends on unpaid disciples being empowered and equipped to multiply themselves under the leadership of the Holy Spirit from the beginning of their conversion. As a movement grows, new leaders for the next wave of church multiplication constantly need to be identified, equipped, and empowered. It is a telling truth that the empowerment of unpaid, nonprofessional lay leaders is a vital factor in every known church planting movement today. If we want a movement to flourish, we must empower local lay leaders.

How did Paul do this? He defined leadership qualifications primarily in terms of character. He viewed prayer and fasting as the context within which the Holy Spirit himself highlights the leaders whom He is raising up. Paul also saw the excellence of the Spirit’s leadership, not more degrees and conferences, as the primary key to the continued growth and strengthening of local leaders. Paul also appointed multiple leaders in the churches he planted. By doing this, there was a measure of accountability and checks-and-balances in leadership.

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul does say that an overseer or elder “must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil” (v. 6). Here we must be careful not to read our own definition of “recent” into the text—e.g., someone who has been a professing believer for many years. If this was what Paul meant, then he did not follow his own instructions, because he and Barnabas themselves appointed elders in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch only a short time after the birth of the churches in those cities. Three things are worth talking about here.

First, “new convert” depends on the context. In a Muslim context with no previously-existent churches, for example, *every* new disciple is a recent convert compared to leaders from places where the gospel has been preached for many decades and centuries. However, within their own context, new believers from a Muslim culture are “recent converts” compared to other believers in the same context who are only eight weeks old in their faith. To an alcoholic who has been free from alcohol just one day, the man or woman who has been sober for ten weeks is a spiritual giant.

Second, leadership responsibilities must also always be kept in proper perspective. The pressures that a famous evangelist like Billy Graham faces as the leader of a large ministry constantly in the public eye are much greater than the pressures faced by those called to lead small groups that no one but God sees. When God confirms his word with real power, resulting in disruption, a movement must work with the leadership resources available to it. In Muhammad’s case, like every disciple of Jesus he experienced growing pains and moments of weakness and spiritual immaturity. However, to the disciples whom God had entrusted to his care at this stage of his journey, he was clearly a leader whom the Holy Spirit had sovereignly chosen. The other disciples naturally looked up to him as the one who had led many of them to faith.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, again we must not forget that most new churches in the New Testament were birthed through a substantial release of the Holy Spirit’s power. Paul’s instructions and practice only make sense in light of the reality he experienced and imparted. As we will see in a future lesson, the maturation process is accelerated dramatically when a movement is birthed not simply by human wisdom and strategy, but by the Spirit of God.

We can trust the Holy Spirit to appoint leaders for His house churches, and we can trust Him to lead those leaders well. As new leaders are appointed, like Paul and Barnabas we need to pray and fast for those leaders. As we pray and fast, we need to commit them to the care, guidance, and leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Memorization

A. Instructions

Repeat the following verse until memorized.

2 Timothy 2:2

² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others¹

Memorization of Key Principles:

A. Instructions

Repeat the following principles until memorized.

- 1. We must focus on laying foundations for church planting movements, not on making individual and disconnected converts.*
- 2. House churches and small groups play a strategic role in the advance of the gospel.*
- 3. We must trust the Holy Spirit himself to point out leaders in the context of prayer and fasting.*
- 4. Leaders should be appointed on the basis of character, not formal education.*
- 5. More than one leader should be appointed in each church for the sake of accountability in leadership.*

Prayer Response

Break into groups and ask the Holy Spirit how He wants you to respond in prayer.