

A Vision for Church Planting

Various Scriptures

Is there anything that Calvary Bible Church does that makes absolutely no sense apart from the resurrection?

LTS: 1 Cor. 15:12-22

Intro:

On June 14, 2015 a remarkable church was born in Mansfield, Texas. On the day of her birth she was nearly 50 people strong and was full of life and the power of the Spirit of God to make her healthy and strong. Her name is Living Hope Bible Church, and on this very Sunday morning she is 4 years old.

I say she is a remarkable church because she is the first successful church plant that Calvary Bible Church has born. We might say, in an ecclesiological sense, that she is Calvary's firstborn. And identifying her with the term "first" is strategic because, you see, our prayer is that Living Hope will prove to be the first of several churches planted by us in the Fort Worth area.

Today, I want to talk with you about church planting. And I'll tell you up front that this is going to largely be a topical message rather than the verse-by-verse exposition we are accustomed to at Calvary.

If you have been attending Calvary Bible Church for any length of time than you know that we have a vision for church planting. We have successfully planted one church and it is our intention to plant more. But some of you may wonder, why? Why plant churches? Why should we intentionally subject ourselves to the difficult, years-long preparation and sacrifice whose culmination will be the loss of fellowship with many of our dear friends? Well, that's a good question.

I want to offer sever explanations for why we believe God has called us to be a church planting church. So, let's consider first of all...

I. Church Planting and the Meaning of Life:

1. In the world today, there is much confusion about the meaning of life. But Christians know what life is about. We understand. We get why God created us. It wasn't that he was lonely, or that he needed anything. No! The reason he created man was to go public with His own glory.

2. For this reason we are told in Genesis 1 that God created man in His own image. We exist to image forth the glory of God in the world. We were created to fill the earth with the glory of God as water covers the sea.
3. For N.T. believers we further understand that God the Father is most interested in the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ. So, we exist to live in such a way that sets His glory on display in the world.
4. In fact, here at Calvary Bible Church we have a specific way we like to say that. It goes like this:

We exist to proclaim
The excellencies of Christ in all things
To the glory of God
In the joy of all peoples.

5. If God wanted to share with man the greatest good, the most satisfying love, the deepest joy humans can experience, he would freely give to us Himself. And that is what he did. He gave us Jesus Christ. This, beloved, is the foundation upon which everything else is built. God created us to image forth the glory of Christ in all things. That is the meaning of life.
6. But to understand why Calvary Bible Church is committed to church planting we need to take it a step further and talk about...

II. Church Planting and the Great Commission:

1. Turn in your Bible's with me to in Matt. 16:13. Here's how that passage reads:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter (little stone), and on this rock (large bolder) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

2. Listen, friend, the reason our mission in the world finds its center in the church is because Jesus' mission in the world was centered on the church. He said, "I will build my church."

- A. He didn't say "I hope to build my church."
- B. He didn't say, "I wish you guys would build my church."
- C. No! He said, "I will build my church." This is what the sovereign Lord declared that he would accomplish in the world.
- D. And notice that "the gates of hades will not prevail against it." Hades means death or the grave. So, Jesus is saying, I will build my church and not even death can keep me from accomplishing it. Not my death, and not the deaths of 10,000 Christian martyrs! "I will build my church and nothing can keep me from doing so because He has all authority over everything."

3. Can I just make this crystal clear? The only thing Jesus is doing in the world is building His church. Everything else are merely props on the world stage.

4. Now this sets the stage for what followers of Christ call The Great Commission. So please turn with me to...

Matt. 28:18-20.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

5. These were the last words of Jesus before he ascended into heaven. This is the Prime Directive, as it were, of the Christian life. The term "Image Bearers" reveals who we are. "Disciple makers" reveals what we do.

- A. To make disciples means that we help people become followers of Christ. We do this first by the ministry of the gospel. We call all men everywhere to repent and believe in Jesus. Then, when they do believe in Jesus, we help them grow to maturity in Christ. This is what disciple-making is about.
- B. But notice two essential aspects of disciple-making that we often overlook when talking about the Great Commission. Namely, that we

“teach” and “Baptize.” Now this is interesting, and I just learned it last week when I heard Pastor Tom Pennington make an important observation. He pointed out something that is so obvious its easy to miss. He said that the ministry of teaching and the practice of baptizing (according to the N.T.) are specific, God-ordained duties of the local church.

C. It is safe to infer, therefore, that what Jesus had in mind was that disciple-making would NOT merely be something individual Christians do on their own, but what Christians do in connection with their local church.

6. The point I am trying to make here is that church planting is not an optional side ministry of local congregations. It is Jesus’ main strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission.

7. So you see, we are committed to planting churches because Jesus is building his church. That’s what the great commission is all about. Jesus is using our ministry of His gospel to build His church. And what could be more natural then for the church to send men, women, and whole families out to plant churches? Jesus is building the church by planting churches.

8. That leads us to the third thought to consider...

III. Church Planting and the Strategy of Paul:

1. If this really is the Lord’s strategy of making disciples of all nations, then we would expect to see it in the ministry of Jesus’ disciples and especially in the ministry of Paul. And that’s exactly what we discover in the book of Acts.

2. In Acts chapter 2 we read that on the Day of Pentecost the H.S. came with power, Peter preaches, and 3,000 people are baptized and the first church – the church of Jerusalem is formed. As you pay attention to the details you discover that this church NOT only had apostles, but they established elders in the church as well.

3. As the church continues to grow a man by the name of Saul brings a severe persecution of all Jews who call themselves followers of Jesus. In fact, it is Saul who instigated the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). When the people realized that following Christ could cost them their lives, the church scattered. Acts 8:1 tells us a great persecution began and everyone scattered except the apostles. And those who scattered preached the gospel wherever they went.

4. Phillip is the first who sees a large group of people (in this case, Samaritans) come to faith in Christ. And whenever a group of Christians gathered together the apostles

would send a delegation to check it out. And out of that, churches began to be born. And churches began to multiply.

5. In Acts 9 Saul himself meets and finds himself arrested by the resurrected Jesus. On that day as he fell on his face blinded by the Lord on the Damascus road, he became Christian and joined the very people whom he had been persecuting. Again, as we read

Acts 9 we see the church develop further. And its growth continues and multiplies.

Turn with me to Acts 11:19

Read Acts 11:19-26

6. The city of Antioch (in present-day Turkey) was a very large city, and MANY who heard the gospel believed. When Barnabas realizes the need for these people to be taught, he tracks down Saul and invites him to come to Antioch to help teach the new believers there. Somewhere along the way the church in Antioch was formed.

7. In Acts 13 we find a direct mention of “the church at Antioch.”

Read Acts 13:1-3

8. This is the beginning of Paul’s missionary journeys. And what did they do as they traveled? They preached the gospel in the synagogues, and as groups of people believed they formed churches. Later, when they went back to visit all the churches they had planted (acts 14:23) they established elders in every church.

9. What I want you to see here is that Paul understood the great commission. He understood that making disciples involved preaching the gospel, yes! But it also involved planting churches everywhere he could.

10. Now, I hope by this point you are convinced that God want’s churches to plant churches. But I want us to take yet another step and consider...

IV. Church Planting and the Resurrection:

1. Turn with me to 1 Cor. 15:19. The context of this verse is that Paul is defending the resurrection. There were people who had probably been influenced by the Saducees to believe that there is no such things as resurrection. When a human dies, its over. His life story is done. There is nothing to look forward to. You just expire like an old battery and get thrown on the ash heap of the universe. But Paul knew better. And he knew how important resurrection to the gospel. So, he writes...

2. Read 15:12-18

A. Paul’s argument her has several points. If there is no resurrection that

Christ is not raised,

B. Our preaching is a worthless endeavor

C. Your faith is also worthless

D. And those who died believing in Christ have perished.

3. So a lot is at stake in the resurrection. But the argument I want to focus on is in verse 19. Here he adds:

E. “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

F. Why did Paul say that? Listen, Paul’s life just didn’t make any sense if there is no resurrection. If there is nothing to look forward to after death; if there is no heaven, no eternal reward, no eternal life with God, that living like he lived was just stupid! It was the picture of complete insanity!

G. But look at the next verse (20-22)

4. So here is the question I want you to consider. Is there anything you do in this life that makes no sense if there is no resurrection? Or, as printed on the top of your notes page: Is there anything that Calvary Bible Church does that makes absolutely no sense apart from the resurrection? My answer to that is, YES! We plant churches. We are actually encouraging 50-75 people to band together and leave the church together for the sake of establishing a new church where we believe one is needed. That doesn’t make any sense if there is no resurrection. But Christ has been raised! And we too will one day experience resurrection to where we will dwell forever with the Lord.

5. So you see, when we consider t

- The biblical meaning of life
- The great commission
- The Strategy of Paul
- And the implications of the resurrection

How can we NOT take church-planting seriously? How can we not plant churches?

6. And that brings us to something else to consider:

V. Church Planting and Strategic Planning:

1 The elders of Calvary Bible Church believe God is glorified when church leaders engage in strategic planning. In fact, we believe God Himself is the ultimate strategic planner.

2. What that means in practical terms is that that we spend a significant amount of time considering what God wants us to do and we make plans for how to accomplish those goals.

3. To be clear, we never claim that God hands us his will through direct revelation. We will never say that God told us to plant a church in N/W Fort Worth. Rather, we take the explicit teachings and implicit principles of God's word and we apply them as best we can. We famously call this our Fallible Dependent Plan. It's fallible because human sinners are making these plans. We call it dependent because we believe that "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build; and, as Jesus Said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." So, the plan that we are laying out for our next church plant we believe is biblical, fallible, and absolutely dependent upon the Lord for its success. And that is why we need to engage in much prayer.

4. Now, to be specific, after two years of praying, discussing, evaluating, studying, dreaming and planning, we are ready to announce that in approximately 1 year from now we intend to plant...

Christ Fellowship Bible Church

5. Our hope is to locate this church just outside of Fort Worth, North of the 820 loop, and West of I-35. More specifically, we are looking to plant somewhere in the range of Eagle Mountain Lake and Saginaw.

6. If the Lord continues to bless our plans, we intend to launch 12-13 months from now.

7. Now, I know you probably have a lot of questions and that is why we have designated the Sunday School hour next week (June 23) as an informational meeting for the church plant endeavor.

8. What I can tell you now is that Keith Christensen will be the preaching elder, and Matt Scheffler will be his fellow elder. A few other families have indicated their desire to go.

8. For those of us who will not be part of the plant, there is one more thing to consider; namely,

VI. Church Planting and Spiritual Health:

1. I want to assure you that Chris and I will be among those who stay, if the Lord says so too. Also, Rod, Russ, and Jason have also committed to stay. Their presence here is critical so that we can maintain a stable mother church.

2. As we think of sending these dear friends away, be encouraged by the fact that the elders believe with all their hearts that this is going to be good for us.

- Forces us to take risks and trust (dependence)
- Protects us from Stagnation
- It will inspire leadership training
- It will demand greater exercise of spiritual gifts
- It will motivate us to live in deeper community and develop new friendships
 - Damon & Jenn Cupp arrive back home June 21.
 - New Office Building:
 - Goal is to raise \$75,000
 - Have raised: \$46,800,
 - Left to raise: \$28,000