

## Dependent Baptist Churches

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### Introduction:

You are a front line missionary involved in a new church plant. You are the only missionary on-site. You love serving the Lord and are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. You have studied, sacrificed, and prayed for years in preparation for this moment. Honoring God is foremost in your heart and this principle guides your life and ministry. You endorse the "indigenous principle" and so proceed in the endeavor of establishing a local church with Christ as the Head. After a short time (6 months, 2 years, who knows?), the political situation in the host country changes or you die suddenly but something happens that removes you from the scene. No longer is there a missionary or a mission influence present, nor external support of any kind (economic or other). In short, no type of outside influence is available. A tremendous investment has already been made, thousands of dollars, hours, and prayers have been poured into that church plant. What will become of the little congregation you left behind? Some respond saying, "Well I preached God's Word and did my best so the congregation is His responsibility." There's some truth in this but it may also be a convenient excuse for our lack of effectiveness.

Preaching to group of Bolivian pastors in 2004 I began using a similar introduction the difference being that "all missionaries and mission influence" was removed. What would those pastors do? About 5 months later the expulsion of missionaries and missions became a very real possibility. In 2008 some of the missionaries did leave under the threat and pressure of physical violence fomented by the government.

As church planters, we must be prepared to invest the whole of our lives, if necessary, to establish a church. A legitimate church planting ministry demands the total dedication of time, mental and physical effort, and life in ministry. There is little room for half measures but I'm afraid that half measures is the skill in which many of us excel. While being willing to spend a lifetime in such ministry, we must realize that God may abruptly remove us and all other missionaries from the scene by way of a change in government policy, death, or other means. Perhaps, after only a year or two there will be no missionary in that particular church planting endeavor. The question to consider is not: If all missionaries and mission influence were suddenly removed, does the church you started have the tools to continue but if all missionaries and mission influence were suddenly removed, will the church you started continue or will she die?

For sake of clarity some definitions may be helpful:

**Indigenous:** Native, Indian, occurring or living naturally in a particular area or environment. That which is indigenous does not need outside, unnatural influence to survive but thrives on its own.

**Local Church:** A group of called out, living believers in a given locality who meet regularly for worship and training. This group engages in the carrying out of the principles and precepts found in the New Testament. Her

offices are pastor and deacon. Her total dependence is on God. She is referred to as the body and bride of Christ. Christ being the Head of the body and the Bridegroom. In the NT the churches were self-governing and self-financing. Autonomous.

**Declaration:** An indigenous local church is one that functions without any outside influence to prop her up whatsoever. She is totally dependent on God (internal) but independent from influence from without. She is autonomous in government and financing. She survives and thrives on her own in her relationship with God. In other words, with or without the presence of the missionary or mission an indigenous local church will carry on.

We are trying to raise a church that will last for generations, not 4 or 5 years. For churches to remain and to prosper they must be indigenous churches (refer to definition). If our practices make the churches dependent on us or the mission then we have a church in process and have failed to *establish an indigenous church*. If the church needs a mission to lean on then it is not yet an *established* church but one that is still immature which has been harnessed with certain disadvantages. All churches should be constantly developing but the church that depends on an external influence for survival is a church whose development has been stymied.

There may be many practices that hinder the modern missionary movement. It would be impossible to treat them all at this time, however, I would like to take a positive approach and discuss a few principles that will help you in the establishing of local, truly indigenous churches.

### III. Guiding Principles

Note: Over all we are to Glorify God.

Slogan: Win the lost at any cost? What is wrong with this motto?

Principles, not methods, to guide us in the accomplishment of the goal. The goal is to establish a local church that depends wholly on God. Methods are fine but they may change according to the situation. Principles, based in Truth, are constants.

#### A. Be conscious of local culture.

Note: Beware of the “cultural relevance” movement that is active in many Ministries today. Do you perceive any danger in this? This may simply be a guise for conformity to the world, Rm 12:1,2; James 4:4; IJn 2:15-17. Salt your consciousness of culture with ICor 9:21, “being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ...”

Are there customs in our culture (has become what it is because of change and will continue to develop) that have affected our church culture that perhaps we shouldn't buy into? Are you prepared to say no to some things, even opportunities, in an effort to respect I Cor 9:21? This may hurt, be painful but to honor God (foremost) and His Word we must recognize these tendencies and act on them. If we fail to do so we regulate God's Word and God Himself to an inferior position in our lives, Christian community, and world and we place our changing culture on a higher plane. Where will this eventually take us? Will we become another catholic church?

**DCL: In an effort to be relevant to the world be careful not to become like the world. World like–Worldly. Who are we to be like? Christ! Christ like! Christian!**

Be careful not to buy into the “going native” philosophy.

Note: It is important to be a student, however, many are excellent students. It is even more necessary to be a learner.

II: Adults and their children who are new on the field. Who masters the language & culture the quickest and easiest? Children. Are children better students? No, but they are excellent learners. They'll try anything, they are uninhibited in what they are willing to do to communicate and fit in. They let others laugh at them, etc.

A learner is humble, patient, accepting/tolerant, a sponge. Do this wisely.

Mat 11:28-30–“...and learn of me...” Learn *manthano* means “understand.”

Mat 24:32 and Mk 13:28–“learn” or understand the parable of the fig tree.

Acts 23:27–“Understood” or learned of Paul's situation.

**DCL: Yes, it is important to be studious but if you desire to truly, effectively communicate Christ it is vital, of utmost importance & urgency to be a learner!! Why!!??? So we can honor God by helping others honor Him!**

Many students never learn a thing. Cramming your head with information is not learning. The information must be processed (analyzed, sorted, allowed to affect, and change your mind about some things, your perspective). This will influence your effectiveness.

**DCL: It is of little benefit to be a great student if you are not at least a mediocre learner.**

Three “S’es”

1. Sensitive. The “S” word.

Be sensitive, in the proper sense. There are errant connotations to this in our society. It appears to me that we are trying to make men something that God never intended them to be. A result of this is frustration on the part of both men and women. Women are meant to follow leadership in the home. They rob this position from their husbands and force them into a different role and then they are upset ‘cuz things are not going well. They’re stressed out, etc. This results in conflict, divorce, and some guy going to work at the P.O. armed to the teeth and blowing his boss and co-workers away. Don’t want their husbands to really be this way and they don’t even realize it.

Be sensitive or aware of the local culture so we can establish a church amongst these people while glorifying God.

Learn the culture...Learn the language.

II: "Si quiere...."

II: How would we feel if our pastor didn’t celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup>? Thanksgiving? Would not participate in and would criticize hunting, fishing, and shooting sports?

2. Seamless

A seam is a visible line that marks the place where two objects are joined. It is sometimes called a joint. It is a noticeable, an obvious connection. It is usually a mark of inferior workmanship or technology and is not desirable.

II: Glass bottles, glasses, or jars. Originally, fine bottles were all blown and seamless. Later technology produced cheaper bottles with seams.

John 19:23,24–Jesus’ robe was precious because it was seamless.

II: Poncho de Bolivia y poncho camera. The seam allows heat to escape and humidity to enter.

Attempt to be seamless in language (nearly impossible but one can try).

II: Djetyet? No djew?

You are a foreigner. You want to make your presence as nonintrusive as possible. Not everyone looks up to America and they don't have to. We must adjust and look for as seamless a blend as possible so we can establish a church amongst these people and do it in a God honoring way.

### 3. Strive

Being sensitive to local customs and culture in an effort for seamless assimilation is not an automatic.

I Cor 9:19-27–vv. 24-27 speak of the extraordinary effort made by the athlete so he may compete according to the rules and excel. The direct application of this passage has to do with the cross-cultural communication mentioned by Paul in vv. 19-23.

- a. Gal 2:7-12–In Acts 10; 11:1-18 we find Peter learning and teaching a valuable lesson. See Acts 11:2,3, and 18. Then in Gal 2:11 and 12 Peter falls into the same error. Our failures affect others. See v13.
- b. Gal 2:13,14–Barnabas, the great discipler, and others also failed. Barnabas made the missionary journeys and ministered to Gentiles and now he slips. Yes, the missionary must strive in this X-cultural communication effort and do so in a way that glorifies God! Diligent effort must be made.

Note: American pride can be a great hindrance in church planting.

**DCL: One must be careful to glorify God while being sensitive to the local culture and striving for as seamless a blend with those people as possible.**

### B. Teach Dependence On God

When one applies the definitions here mentioned to missions images of food depots, medical clinics, housing projects, literacy classes and the such come to mind. Most fundamentalist say, "That's not the kind of mission work we do so these terms do not apply to our ministry because we're church planters!" For the most part this is true, however, could it be that the spirit of paternalism which creates dependency is present, perhaps predominant in fundamental church

planting missions today? If it is then denying the fact only makes the situation worse. Have fundamentalists been planting "Dependent Baptist Churches"? Dependent not in the sense of dependency on God but on a mission or an individual missionary.

The American Heritage Dictionary:

Dependent: 1. Contingent upon something or someone else. 2. Subordinate.  
3. Relying on or requiring the aid of another for support.

Dependency: 1. Dependence. 2. Something dependent or subordinate. 3. A territory or state under the jurisdiction of another country from which it is separated geographically.

Paternalism: A policy or practice of treating or governing a people in a fatherly manner, esp. by providing for their needs without giving them responsibility.

Mt 28:18-20—"...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost..."

Phrase "in the name of" means in the authority of.

Note: This is the only time in Scripture we are told to do something in the name of the Holy Trinity.

**Dcl: The missionary is to do nothing that will deauthorize God.**

Jms 1:17—good, "agathos"—Good, benefit.

perfect, "teleios"—Complete, of full age.

gift ... gift--not the same words in Greek: the first, "dosis" the act of giving, or the gift in its initiatory stage; the second, "dorema" the thing given, the boon, when perfected.

every, "pas"—All, the whole, thoroughly.

Absolutely every beneficial way of bestowing (giving) a complete and perfect thing (gift) is done by God. If this is so, and it is, would I dare to presume that I can improve on this?

**Dcl: Honor God by leading others to depend entirely on Him.**

Lead brethren to legitimate dependence on God.

Note: Many times the result of our sincere missionary efforts are the creation not of Independent but Dependent Baptist Churches. Certainly not indigenous.

1. I do not want those under my care to depend on another. Not another god, not another person, not me, not a mission, not a Stateside church. What could please a father more than to know that his children look to him for all good things?
2. Do things, make decisions that enhance the process of healthy development.
3. Do not impede or become an obstacle. Be vigilant in this. Make it a matter of prayer.

II: Samaipata, Bolivia

4. Not a maternal but a paternal attitude.
  - a. Mothers don't allow their children to have their own experiences. Mothers try to protect their children from all conflict, illness, injury (physical, emotional, spiritual), etc.

Conflict is necessary for proper development. Sickness can be helpful as it is developing the immune system. Blisters produce callouses. Life's battles, experiences make us heartier.

- b. Mothers don't want to hurt their feelings.
- c. Mothers don't confront very well.

Are there no confrontations in life?

- d. Mothers want to make everything easy.

Is everything in life easy?

- e. Mothers will not recognize faults. They excuse bad behavior. If they do recognize shortcomings they generally will not take proper action to remedy them. Have you ever heard the following?

"He's sick."

"He's tired."

"He's hungry."

"He's grouchy."

"He's had too much candy."

"Yes, but he is so cute."

\*\*\*Did you ever notice his cute way of defying authority? Of leaching off society? Of dismembering his victims?

Advice to parents: If you don't teach him to be responsible someday someone will and it'll be much more painful for everybody.

f. Mothers will not always do what is best for children.

II: Karen with hepatitis. Mother let her eat whatever she wanted. Wise words of Bro Doug S, "As a kid we had problems with other kids from time to time. When we wanted the problem to get worse we went to our mothers (bleeding hearts). When we wanted to fix the problem we went to our dads."

The father son relationship that God has established with us was not by accident. For the most part, fathers are more practical, logical, reasonable. Granted we are not perfect and God gave us wives (more merciful) to help us. But usually, men are better at making difficult and painful decisions.

**Dcl: In our effort to develop a paternal attitude in discipleship and church planting be careful to lead the converts to total dependence on God the Father.**

5. Teach them not to tempt God.

If I jump God will catch me (Mt 4:1-4; Jms 1).

"It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission." Church planting is not about what's easier but is about glorifying God.

6. Teach them to make decisions from the very inception.

a. Place or location of meeting place.

b. Furniture

c. Schedule

d. Order of service.

e. Offerings (teach this early).

f. Support of pastors.

h. Support of missionaries.

II: Maranatha Institute of Missions, 1991. John R's session and mine (natural) to follow. You can do it all if you like and have fairly quick visible results but you have created an artificial church. When the props are removed the walls may cave in. If the props are always present you have the appearance of an indigenous church but it is only because of the props. God is the only prop a real church needs.

Note: If necessary, create situations that will teach them to make decisions. Be wise but walk them through this.

Note: Again, beware of being too motherly. "Honey what do you want for breakfast? Cereal, eggs, pancakes, can I fix you some toast and sausage, etc?"

**Dcl: By allowing the believers to make decisions and take on responsibility (be prudent) from the very beginning you are minimizing the pain of the inevitable weaning process.**

C. Allow the established church to remain established.

Permit the independent church to remain independent.

Note: Tendency amongst missions to swell their numbers (members, churches, etc.) by taking advantage of work done by others for prideful purposes.

Do not use money to win them.

Do not use influence to coerce them.

Do not use promises to gain their loyalty.

When we do this we become politician-like and we weaken the Gospel message. Perhaps, we even preach another Gospel (Gal 1).

II: If you accept Christ, if you go to our church, if you... then God will heal you, Prosper you, etc.

D. Discipleship.

Make disciples—Matt 28:19.

1<sup>st</sup> century church vs. modern church. Multiplication vs. addition.

This is a life investment, Mark 3:14, “with him”.

E. Transparency - I Ths 1:6.

See your reactions, attitudes, etc.

A model is susceptible.

If all Christians were like you what kind of church would we have?

F. Implement the “necessary things.” Acts 15:28.

G. Permit God to guide in “Where” to establish a church.

Consider:

1-Need.

2-Logistics. Supplies, utilities, etc.

3-Demographics. Population and its movement.

These considerations are secondary. God’s will is primary.

II: Ronnie Hall y Quirosillas. PV in the early years.

Luke 5:1-11—Choose to follow Christ and all other decisions are His.

Acts 16:6-13.

H. Be flexible.

Flexible in the application of Guiding Principles. Be adaptable.

Note: There is no room for flexibility in foundational doctrine.

Be conscientious & constant in being guided by principles. Strive!!!

I. The missionary is a transient but be careful not to be constantly communicating transience.

J. Do all in love.

I Cor 13:1-3.

#### IV. God Given Results

God is glorified with His results accomplished His way.

#### **REMEMBER TO GLORIFY GOD IN ALL**

*Lance, "Bud," is a genuine Yooper, born and raised in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. His family has been involved in "back country" church planting since 1982. The Lord has used the Raders to establish 5 churches in the Bolivian Andes, with a couple more works in progress. In addition to church planting, they are involved in a Bible institute, aviation ministry, orphanage, Bible camp and a hands-on missionary training program. He met his*

*wife, Karen, at Northland Baptist Bible College and God has blessed them with 6 children, several of which are serving the Lord as missionaries.*