

Using Titus to Plant Churches

This article is prepared for sharing with Ukrainian Christians who have dedicated themselves to begin the good work of planting a church. Those committed Christians are not taking up a small task. It is something that requires a strong prayer life, a wisdom only God can give, a dedicated and loving family who is willing to sacrifice to grow God's Kingdom, and a personal willingness to burnout for the glory of God. Their dedication to God will be blessed by our Lord.

Each church planter will be offered a course in missiology at a separate time. That training will give the basic 'whys' of this work. The intent of this article to be give some basic biblical guidance to the church planter - a plain, simple pattern to consider. As you read this, allow God to direct your path to His plan for your new church field. He alone knows what is needed and what will work. He may choose to do something unique in your efforts if He has a willing servant in you.

There is no shortage of church planting resources available today. From articles and books, to conferences and trainings, to entire ministries - all devoted to multiplying churches around the globe. No two books seem to agree on methodology, and every church planting expert had their own trademarked strategy.

Every time you put down a church planting book, you will be exhausted. It may be time to set the books down and pick up the Bible to get God's plan for how He wants this work to be accomplished. Daniel Akin has called Titus "An Apostolic Manual for Church Planting." Further, he says, it is "a blueprint for planting and building churches that will survive and thrive for the glory of God."¹ More than any other resource, Titus will prove helpful at every step of your church planting process.

What is your job?

Before we get into Titus, let's see what Paul tells the Corinthian church is "the job." Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:20.

What is an Ambassador? He / She has the opportunity to represent the country they are from ... but more ... **they speak with the authority of the leader of that country.** So, what do we see the job to be then?

- **We are to speak**
- **We are to represent God**
- **We are to plead with people for God**
- **God will speak through us to the lost**
- **We are to reconcile people to Christ Jesus**

This is a big job and every believer is called to this response to the grace and mercy of God received into their own life. A church leader is to be totally devoted to this task.

What does it mean to reconcile people to God? Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and count the number of times this idea is presented by Paul. Notice that God does the reconciling ...

not man (v18) but has given to us the ministry of acting as God's representatives to the lost community reconciling them through the power of the Holy Spirit. **God is actively working through us – it is not a work we do for God.**

Our relationship with God must be such that we can be used by Him. Our prayer life must cleanse us of sin and place us in the hands of the Holy Spirit to speak and act through us as His representative (Ambassador) in the community around us.

As we now move to Titus, remember it is God working in and through you to represent Him to the community He has given you to reach for Him. **It is not a good work you are doing to pay God back for your salvation, but a submitted work God is doing through your willing life.** You are His tool. Let God do His work through you.

Listed below are several key focus areas. While each of these can be expanded indefinitely, here's a basic cross-section of Titus' approach to planting churches. The purpose of this writing is to begin your study in Titus. Dig into God's Word ...

Know the Mission (Titus 1:1-2)

One of the first things you're taught to do in the church planting process is develop a mission statement. This helps focus your efforts and set the tone for what you will be doing moving forward. The true purpose of a mission statement, however, is to answer the question: ***What are we called to do?***

In Paul's opening greeting, he sets the tone of the letter by calling attention to his own apostolic ministry. With all the things that could keep busy a first-century apostle, what did Paul consider to be the most important things? He notes that he is ministering "*for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life*" (vv. 1b-2a). Commentators have noted Paul's three-pronged approach to ministry: *faith*, *knowledge*, and *hope*.

In essence, Paul's focus was on leading God's elect to saving faith by preaching the gospel, building them up in knowledge that will lead to them to live godly lives, and encouraging the body to hope in the Lord. From conversion to enduring faithfulness, Paul knew his mission.

When the time comes to draft your church mission statement, you need to model it after the apostle Paul: *Our mission is to reach the lost, strengthen the weak, and encourage the faithful unto godliness through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and according to their Spirit-given gifts to the glory of God.*

Focus on Expository Preaching (Titus 1:3, 9, 2:1, 15)

Expository preaching was the most faithful way to communicate God's word to His people. Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert have noted, "*Expositional preaching is preaching in which the main point of the biblical text being considered becomes the main point of the sermon being preached.*"² Even more concisely, J. I. Packer says that it is simply "letting texts talk."

Paul makes note of this mandate several times in his letter. As part of his commission, he says that he is “*entrusted with the proclamation according to the commandment of God our Savior*” (v. 3). The Greek word translated “proclamation” is *kērugma*, which is often rendered “preaching” in the New Testament. Further, he charges Titus with the task of publicly proclaiming the Scriptures; “*speaking the things which are fitting for sound doctrine*” (2:1), “*speaking and exhorting and reproving with all authority. Let no one disregard you*” (2:15).

From the very first Sunday, your church needs to be devoted to a steady diet of biblical exposition. This biblical exposition needs to be God-centered (see **Appendix A**) so the gospel message of clear and accurate.

Call Qualified Leaders (Titus 1:5-9)

You may be the only true leader in your church set aside for the ministry. You will begin working through the faithful efforts of a select group of eager believers. But very soon after your beginning, it became apparent that you need a team of qualified leaders to lead the church.

After establishing the mission and the mandate for proclamation, Paul quickly shifts his attention toward the calling and appointing of elders. On the island of Crete, where Titus was ministering, there might have been slim pickings for spiritually-mature men, but Paul was not prepared to relax the standards. In conjunction with 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 outlines the required character for leaders in Christ’s church.

After spending several months praying and faithfully preaching God’s word, your church should be blessed to call its first leaders. By God’s grace, you will have faithful men leading the efforts of growing God’s work in your community.

Engage in Whole-Body Discipleship (Titus 2:2-8)

One of the first and most urgent issues needed is to address discipleship. After all, you understand Jesus’ mandate to “*make disciples of all nations*” (Matt. 28:19). The question was, **how were we going to do that?** You will find several discipleship models and books that will fail in your church. You don’t want to become another casualty.

When you turn to Titus 2, however, you see Paul’s all-inclusive plan for church-wide discipleship. In verses 2 through 8, he lists four basic categories of people within the church: **older men, older women, younger women, and younger men**. The model is very clear: **older men are to spend their time instructing young men, while older women are to spend their time instructing younger women**. There are no qualifiers; Paul is pointing to the reality that *all* members within the body are valuable and have the responsibility to bring up the next generation.

For your church, you will work to create as many opportunities to get your people together. In addition to weekly men’s studies, you may have members leading small group Bible studies, as well as one-on-one personal discipleship. In every corner of your

church, you should be working to encourage every member to plug in and help one another grow.

Be Committed to Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1, 11-14, 3:4-7)

Inherent in Paul's letter to Titus is the mandate for the young minister to "*speaking the things which are fitting for sound doctrine*" (2:1). **What is sound doctrine?** In short, it is the collection formulated from and teaching of a topic derived from the Scriptures. Or, as Wayne Grudem says, "what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic."³

Eric Bancroft's has written a helpful article, "The Joy of Theology Reading Groups"⁴ and such groups work to implement growth for our men, which then will quickly find its way to women as well. While sermons tend to contain elements of theology in them, you ought to encourage you people to explore and explain theology. Questions need to be asked and a genuine effort to answer them using the Scriptures should be encouraged. A commitment to learning theology will not hurt your church, rather, it will help grow it exponentially. A word of caution: If you're going to use theological words, be sure to explain them in everyday language!

Devote Yourself to Serving (Titus 2:7, 14, 3:8, 14)

When a church spends their energy focused on Scripture and theology, there will always be the charge by other churches and leaders of over-intellectualism. The Bible, however, never makes such a case. In fact, elsewhere Paul had prayed specifically that the church "*would be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*" (Col 1:9). Further, Jesus prayed for the church to be sanctified, which happens by an immersion in the Word of God (John 17:17).

But for the church members on the island of Crete, they were naturally and culturally prone to laziness. In fact, Paul quotes the famous Cretan poet Epimenides, who said, "*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*" (1:12). Paul affirms the sentiment in the next verse. It's hard not to draw parallels to your own over-indulgent modern culture; we ought to heed the warnings of the past.

In view of the problem of laziness, Paul exhorts the church more than four times (2:7, 14, 3:8, 14; also 1:16) to be devoted to good deeds. In fact, Jesus Himself "*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us... and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds*" (2:14). Now, we know that our good deeds don't justify us before God (Eph. 2:8-9), but they *do* bear witness to validity of our faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul tells the church to "*be careful to engage in good deeds*" (3:8), so that we "*may not be unfruitful*" (3:14).

Maintain a Vibrant Witness (Titus 2:7-8, 3:1-2)

You may be planting your church in a small town. Like most small towns, word travels fast and it travels far. If you were to gain a reputation for being a gossipy church, an unloving church, or a contentious church, the stigma would haunt you for the next 20

years. So, you should feel the pressing need to maintain a vibrant witness for Jesus Christ.

Paul is also concerned about this. In fact, he warns Titus himself to model godliness, “*in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us*” (2:8). Further, Paul likewise exhorts bondslaves who are part of Cretan households to model faithfulness, so that “*they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect*” (2:10). In short, we are to do all we can to make the gospel attractive to others.

Taking the point even further, Paul exhorts the church to “*be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men*” (3:1-2; cf. Rom 13:1-10). It’s important to remember that no one plants a church in a vacuum; there are always eyes watching. How are you portraying yourself and the gospel of Christ before outsiders?

The vibrant witness you will make in your community must be accompanied by a clear, bold gospel which every person, men and women in your church, can explain to those in their community. A witness gospel presentation is not something people learn from your preaching, but through individual or small group dialogue. You learn to give away the gospel by giving away the gospel – not by learning about giving the gospel away. For a clear presentation of the gospel see **Appendix B**.

Guard Against Division (Titus 3:9-11)

One thing that has become very apparent is that church unity is a precious, valuable, and gentle thing. This is why Paul tells the church to “[*be*] *diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph 4:3). Recognizing this truth, Paul warns Titus to “*shun foolish controversies... strife... disputes... for they are unprofitable and worthless*” (3:9). This does not mean that healthy debate between brothers is not useful. But bickering and infighting are toxic for church unity.

One of the luxuries you will experience as a small church plant is the blessing of not starting with very much. While you have the necessary support from your sending church and church leadership, you can not start off with high expectations for buildings, materials, abundant workers and assets to pay for ministry. Things were simple because you are small. Because of this, there isn’t much for you to fight about. But as you grow, things will become more complex and there are more opportunities to rub each other the wrong way.

Knowing that God’s desire is for us to love one another (John 13:34-35), be kind to one another (Eph 4:32), bear with one another (Col 3:13), and serve one another (Gal 5:13), you must make it a priority to work hard to keep your eyes on Christ, engage in rich fellowship, and guard yourselves against division.

We Will Obey the Command of Christ

Turn to Matthew 28:19-20.

After telling us of His authority over heaven and earth, the next words out of the mouth of Jesus are, “Go, therefore”. The word “Go” in the Greek means “As You Go” ... the expectation of Jesus is that we will go. It is as if He is saying, “In light of My authority, Go!”

This is not a comfortable call inviting most Christians to come, be baptized, and sit in one location. Yet, that is exactly what we are tempted to turn our mission into, and if we are not careful, this is what our Christianity will consist of. We may

- Come to a worship service,
- Participate in the life of the church,
- Serve in the church, and
- Give regularly,
- All the while neglecting to make disciples.

Many churches are filled with people who have been a Christian for many years and have never led someone outside their family to be a reproducing disciple. We have missed our mission.

If Matthew 28:19 is not a comfortable call for most Christians, then what is it? **This is a costly command directing every Christian to go, baptize, and make disciples of all nations.** This has been God’s plan from the beginning. In Jesus’ initial introduction to the disciples in the gospel of Matthew, He said, *“Follow Me ... and I will make you fish for people!”* From the very beginning, Jesus made it clear that everyone who followed Him would fish for men and women. Jesus starts in Matthew 4 with a call to all His disciples to fish for people and in Matthew 28 He calls all people make disciples.

According to Jesus, from the beginning to the end, to be a disciple is to make disciples. Scripture knows nothing of disciples who are not making disciples. Yet, if you were to ask many Christians today what it means to be a disciple, the answer may be very confusing. We urgently need biblical guidance on this foundational command.

There is one imperative verb in Matthew 28:19 ... “make disciples” ... and it is surrounded by three participles: going, baptizing, and teaching. Based on this verse, we will look at four non-negotiable facets of disciple making.

First, **we share the Word.** This is absolutely foundational to making disciples. **We speak about the gospel as we live according to God’s direction.** The Spirit of God lives inside God’s people so that they can bear witness to the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The evangelistic strategy of the church is built upon every member of the church engaging the world with the gospel.

Making disciples does not end when people respond to the gospel. When people turn from their sin to Christ, we baptize them. This is another part of making disciples – **we show the Word**. Baptism is a part of what it means to make disciples because **baptism symbolizes identification with the person of Christ Jesus and the inclusion in the body of Christ**. Every disciple of Jesus is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Third, as we make disciples, **we teach the Word**. Jesus speaks of “*teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you*”. **We don’t just receive the Word; we reproduce the Word**. God has certainly gifted some in the church to teach, especially the leadership (Titus 1:9; James 3:1). However, every disciple of Jesus should saturate their words with God’s Word. Our conversations ought to be filled with Scripture as we teach people all that Christ has taught us.

Fourth and finally, making disciples means that **we serve the world**. Jesus speaks of making disciples of “*all nations*,” a phrase which in the original refers not simply to nations or countries as we usually think of them, but rather to tribes, families, clans ... what we call “People Groups” today. Today there are 11,000 people groups throughout the world. These groups share similar language, heritage, and cultural characteristics. So, **this is not a general command to make disciples among as many people as possible. This is a specific command to make disciples among every people group in the world**. At the time of this writing there are over 2500 unreached people groups who have not heard the gospel.

In light of the massive needs and the commission Christ has given us, **let us dedicate ourselves to making disciples and multiply churches** in our communities and among all people.

We Will Depend on the Presence of God

We believe in the authority of Christ Jesus and obey His command. At this point God gives us Matthew 28:20. We can and must depend on the presence of Christ Jesus. This is a comforting and encouraging thought that **this mission is not based on who we are or what we can do**. This mission is based on Christ’s presence through His Spirit. When the Spirit works among a people group, that church can shake them for God glory.

Rather than being based on what we can do, **this mission is based on who Jesus is and what He is able to do in and through our lives**. Christ is able to do “beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us” (Eph 3:20).

Conclusion

Church planting is not simple, it is not following a set formula, nor is it mindless. It will take, and continues to take, a lot of work, prayer, mistakes, repentance, forgiveness, and faith. One thing you will learn along the way is that church planting is a lot more about “church” than it is about “planting” – by that it is meant church planting is about the people who need to know God than about the place we call ‘church.’ The task becomes easier to grasp with a robust ecclesiology and a devotion to Scripture. God is faithful.

And in the end, what we needed most was not a stack of church planting books, but rather, a well-worn Bible.

A few years ago a false alarm of a nuclear attack from North Korea went out on electronic devices of every person in Hawaii

We are living in a period of human history unlike any before us. Life can end quickly and violently. The time before our Lord's coming is short. Time is wrapping up and coming to an end. Eternity is right in front of us.

It only takes one half-crazy man or woman who has access to in one moment push a nuclear button and change our world forever. Prophecies and alliances like Ezekiel 38 are being set up right now. The Time is Short.

With this in mind, there should be a sense of priority and immediacy in each of us. Church leaders today must see the time as short and the task of bringing salvation to all people as a moment-to-moment priority. This takes a personal commitment that is more than a simple acknowledgment.

A Bedrock Commitment ... Disciples Making Disciplemakers

There are a lot of very good definitions of "disciple." **I do not believe it is a set of duties you have to fulfill, but one in which your heart and your will is transformed.** It's not about works or attaining some set of man-made spiritual milestones. **It cannot just be about behaviors, values, and beliefs,** although I believe those are solid outcomes. That said, I do believe that **a disciple is a follower of Jesus who wants to lead others to follow Him.** Replay in your mind the story of the demon-possessed man story in Mark 5:1-20 to get a sense of this kind of deep gratitude.

The late Avery Willis defined discipleship as a progression:

"Following Jesus is a personal, lifelong obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transforms my character into Christ-likeness, changes my values to kingdom values and involves me in His mission in the home, church, and world."

Truth That Sticks, p. 115

Being a disciple means being involved as the Holy Spirit involves you. Being in tune with His mission is the ultimate privilege for a disciple. Discipleship falls short of Jesus' model when it focuses solely on one person while ignoring that disciple's role as a disciple-maker.

¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 226.

² Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*. (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 36. Italics original.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 25.

⁴ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-joy-of-theology-reading-groups/>

Appendix A

	A Man-Centered Gospel	A God-Centered Gospel
View of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Point of contact with non-Christians is love (“God loves you”). Therefore, God’s authority is secondary. ◆ Love is God’s chief attribute. ◆ God is impotent before the sinner’s will. ◆ The persons of the Trinity have different goals in accomplishing and applying salvation. ◆ God is friend who will help you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Point of contact with non-Christians is creation (“God made you”). Therefore, God has authority over your destiny. ◆ Holiness and love are equally important of God. ◆ God is able to empower the sinner’s will. ◆ The persons of the Trinity work in harmony—salvation accomplished for and applied to the same people. ◆ God is a king who will save you.
View of Humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fallen, yet has the ability (or potential) to choose the good. ◆ Seeks truth but lacks facts. ◆ Needs love, help, friendship. ◆ Makes mistakes, is imperfect, needs forgiveness. ◆ Needs salvation from the consequences of sin—unhappiness; hell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fallen, and will not come to God by own will power. ◆ Mind at enmity with God, none seek God. ◆ Needs new nature (mind, heart, will), regeneration. ◆ Rebels against God, has a sinful nature, needs reconciliation. ◆ Needs salvation from guilt and power of sin.
View of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Savior from selfishness, mistakes, hell. ◆ He exists for our benefit. ◆ His death was more important than His life. ◆ Emphasizes His priestly office—Savior. ◆ An attitude of submission in Christ’s lordship is optional for salvation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Savior from sin and sinful nature. ◆ He exists to gather a kingdom and receive honor and glory. ◆ His death and His life of obedience are equally important. ◆ Emphasizes His priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices. ◆ An attitude of submission to Christ’s lordship is necessary for salvation.
View of Response to Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Invitation waiting to be accepted now. ◆ Our choice is the basis of salvation—God responds to our decision. ◆ We give mental assent to the truth of the gospel—decision. ◆ Appeal is made to the desires of the sinner. ◆ Saved by faith alone—repentance omitted for it is thought of as ‘works’. ◆ Assurance of salvation comes from a counselor using the promises of God and pronouncing the new believer saved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Loving command to be obeyed now. ◆ God’s choice is the basis of salvation—we respond to God’s initiative. ◆ We respond with our whole person (mind, heart, will) - conversion. ◆ Truths are driven home into the conscience of the sinner. ◆ Saved by faith alone—saving faith always accompanied by repentance. ◆ Assurance of salvation comes from the Holy Spirit applying Biblical promises to the consciences and affecting a changed life.

Appendix B

This is a simple biblical gospel presentation. It is a basic ‘tool kit.’ If you go to a tool kit and need a tool, you use the tool best suited to the task. You would not use all tools in every situation. This tool kit has some key points and Bible verses for sharing the gospel message, with each one to be used to meet your situation and person whom you are witnessing to. It is best to have this set of tools memorized so you have some basic ideas to share in a conversation with someone who needs Christ as Savior.

Two Exploratory Questions:

1 – “Have you come to a place in your life that you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to Heaven when you die?”

- Refer to 1 John 5:13
- Tell the person you know for sure that you have eternal life and when you die you will go to Heaven.
- Then try the next question ...

2 – “Suppose you were standing before God right now and he asked you, ‘*Why should I let you into my Heaven?*’ What do you think you would say?”

- God loves us and has a purpose for our lives.
- Quote John 3:16
- God’s purpose is that we have eternal life.

A Look at the Gospel

1. God’s Purpose

- a. We receive eternal life as a free gift. (Romans 6:23)
- b. We can live a full and meaningful life right now. (John 10:10)
- c. We will spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven. (John 14:3)

2. Our Need

- a. We are all sinners by nature and by choice. (Romans 3:23)
- b. We cannot save ourselves. (Ephesians 2:9)
- c. We deserve death and hell. (Romans 6:23)
- d. God is holy and just and must punish sin. He loves us and has provided forgiveness for our sin. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6)

3. God’s Provision

- a. Jesus is God and became man. (John 1:1,14)
- b. Jesus died for us on the cross. (1 Peter 3:18; Isaiah 53:6)
- c. Jesus was resurrected from the dead. (Romans 4:25)
- d. The only way Jesus can affect our lives is for us to receive him. The Bible says, “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” (John 1:12)

4. Our Response

- a. We must repent of our sin. (Acts 3:19)
 - i. Repentance is not just feeling sorry for our sin. (Acts 26:20)
 - ii. Repentance is turning away from our sin and turning to God through Jesus. It is a U-turn.
- b. We must place faith in Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8)
 - i. Faith is not just believing facts about Jesus. (James 2:19)
 - ii. Faith is trusting in Jesus. It is like getting on an airplane believing in the pilot or like trusting a chair by sitting down.
- c. We must surrender to Jesus as Lord. (Romans 10:9-10)
 - i. Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is not just saying we give our lives to Jesus. (Matthew 7:21)
 - ii. Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is giving Jesus control of our lives. An example is driving a car – is Jesus driving or you?
 - iii. As evidence of giving Jesus control we will want to identify with him. The New Testament way is to confess Jesus publicly and to follow him in baptism and church membership.

5. Leading to a commitment

a. Questions:

- i. Does what we have been discussing make sense to you?
- ii. Is there any reason why you would not be willing to receive God's gift of eternal life?
- iii. Are you willing to turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus right now?

b. Clarification: To receive Jesus you must ...

- i. Repent of your sin.
- ii. Place your faith in Jesus.
- iii. Surrender to Jesus as Lord.

c. Prayer

- i. The Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)
- ii. If you truly want the Lord Jesus to give you eternal life, tell him out loud.