

APOSTOLIC ENTREPRENEURS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS AS IT SPEAKS
OF ENTREPRENEURIAL CHURCH PLANTING

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DEFINITIONS

Before we begin, let's define some terms:

Apostolic: (Gk. *apostellein*, apo–from; *stellein*–to send) sent from, sent ones, one who is sent forth to carry a message on behalf of the sender

Entrepreneur: (Lat. *entre*–to enter *prendre*–to take) enter an undertaking, a person who organizes and manages a business undertaking assuming the risk for the sake of profit

Profit: To move forward or advance, to gain benefit, often for financial gain

APOSTOLIC ENTREPRENEUR

Taking the scriptural word, *apostolic*, and connecting it with a contemporary word, *entrepreneur*, will help us understand that the scriptural apostolic methodology used for church planting in the early church is alive, well, and appropriate for our contemporary context where we speak of church planters as entrepreneurs.

My definition for an apostolic entrepreneur will be lengthy in an attempt to incorporate these two words and baptize their use for the church today. An apostolic entrepreneur is one who is called by God to carry, for Him, His message. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he follows the methodology, values, and commitment of the apostles. His mission, involving special skills (which we have captioned *entrepreneurial*), is to gather and make disciples of those with whom he shares this message of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

For years, now, the business world has borrowed scriptural terminology to help explain their undertakings—words such as “values,” “mission,” “vision,” “disciple,” “evangelism,” and “apostle” are all biblical words that can be found in business periodicals and books today. As we study the Book of Acts, we will find that the characteristics used to describe the entrepreneur are characteristics that were clearly evident in the apostles as they carried out God’s vision for building His church.

My intent in this presentation is not to take the characteristics that are used today to describe an entrepreneur and try to impose them upon the early apostle but rather to take the characteristics of the apostles and show how they describe what the business world calls an entrepreneur. It often appears that the church has abandoned many of these apostolic characteristics, which belonged to the original church planters, and allowed the business world to claim them solely for those whom they name **entrepreneurs**, those who are motivated to take on the risks, challenges, and the inherent difficulties necessary to start a new, “for profit” business.

THE PERAMETERS OF THE STUDY

My study of the Book of Acts, this time through, was to identify those characteristics of the early church planters, namely Peter and Paul. I wanted to understand these men God had chosen to be planters of new churches among the Jews and the Gentiles. As these characteristics are identified, we will see that many of them are characteristics that are identified and taught in business school entrepreneurial training across the country. I believe that leaders in God’s kingdom throughout the Old and New Testaments would all

be considered entrepreneurs today. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, the twelve disciples, including Judas, and the list could go on, all possessed many of the characteristics enumerated in today's entrepreneurial textbooks.

Without a doubt, as we plant churches, we can certainly learn from the business world. They have scientifically identified physiological, sociological, and psychological characteristics that are helpful in understanding the consumer, developing marketing strategies, and identifying the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur. The reality is, however, that what they have learned often boils down to be no different than the gifts with which God's Holy Spirit has empowered His apostolic church builders throughout Scripture.

I do not see the Scripture as a "how to" book which gives us clear-cut directions for every life struggle or tips on how to carry out entrepreneurial missions. Its primary purpose is to set before us God's plan of salvation through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Paul reminds Timothy of this in 2 Tim. 3:15–17 where he says, "... and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." In the next breath, however, Paul continues, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." It is this teaching and training component that we will look at in this presentation.

In the Book of Acts, God allows us to follow his early apostles as they move from place to place, encountering joys and difficulties, failures and successes, supporters and dissenters in their goal to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and build His church. In the process of unfolding their journeys, He also shares some of the important characteristics of these men together with their vision, their goals, and their strategies. In this way, the Holy Scriptures become for us an historic mentoring process as we follow Peter, Paul, and the other apostles on their apostolic church planting mission. Their mission was to proclaim Jesus Christ. Their vision was that people throughout the then-known world would be baptized and incorporated into the body of Jesus Christ.

Let's open together the Book of Acts and see what it can tell us about Apostolic Entrepreneurship.

PETER

HAS POWER BEHIND THE MESSAGE

In Acts 1:8, the driving force and empowerment for the apostolic task is spelled out: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* In Acts 2:2, Pentecost provided this promised power needed to carry out the mission to go into the entire world, to teach and baptize all ethnic groups. Acts 2:18 reminds us that this Spirit of God was poured out on men and women, “so that they would prophesy.” The end result is the gift of the Holy Spirit and salvation. The message, which Peter speaks so

clearly in Acts 2:38, is “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.”

WORKS FOR PROFIT

In Acts 3:5, the mission begins. We watch Peter and John as they encounter a crippled man who hopes to get money from them. Peter made it clear that his apostolic entrepreneurial task was not to sell stock for his enterprise so that people could gain wealth, neither did he provide a product, nor did he himself have money to offer. He said to the crippled man, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, walk.” The profit for this investor was not financial but spiritual and, in this case, physical.

ELICITS WONDER AND AMAZEMENT

The people’s response to Peter’s handling of this encounter with the cripple is recorded in Acts 3:10 where we read, “They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened.” This would be the dream of any entrepreneur today that people would respond to them with wonder and amazement. To attract people’s attention is the beginning of success in the business world as well as in the church. God gave his early apostles the gift of miracles, which generated curiosity and allowed their audiences to see the power of the God that they proclaimed. Peter, however, claimed no credit for this miracle; he simply gave God the credit as he said, “It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given complete healing to him.” As we look at the apostolic entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial church planter today, this certainly would be an

important apostolic characteristic to model—that in all successes we simply say, “To God be the glory; great things He has done!”

HAS CORE VALUES

As Peter and John continued their ministry (Chapter 4) they ran up against the Sanhedrin who publicly ordered them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. It is here where we get a glimpse of the values which drove Peter and John. Peter said, “Judge for yourself whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Peter was saying, “God’s will is the driving force of what I am doing. My value is obedience to God.” In Acts 5:28, the same value is expressed as he tells the Sanhedrin, “We must obey God rather than men!” This would also be an important value for the Christian entrepreneur, one who could stand up and say, “We are willing to study the ways the world does things and put into practice that which can be helpful in carrying out God’s will. We will not, however, compromise God’s will and plan. We must obey God rather than man even if it means our business, our church plant, or our ministry must suffer.”

ENLISTS VENTURE SUPPORTERS

Peter and John had venture capitalists (supporters) who had heavily invested in them and were deeply committed to their ministry. Their commitment was not necessarily money, although some may have shared finances. Their investment was in prayer. When Peter and John were released from prison after being incarcerated for healing the crippled man, they returned to “their own people” (Acts 4:23) where they raised their hands together in

prayer. Again, in Acts 12:5, when Herod put Peter in prison, the text tells us that the church was “earnestly praying to God for him.” What an important asset today for every entrepreneurial church planter to have venture supporters who are investing in their ministry with prayer. One of the first tasks of any church plant should be the enlisting of prayer partners.

DEALS WITH JEALOUSLY

In Acts 5: 12 we are told that the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people, and verse 17 follows with the words, “the Sadducees were filled with jealousy.” Whenever there is success, there is jealousy. People do not want to see others succeed. Every entrepreneur who succeeds must battle the jealousy of people. In the same way, the Christian entrepreneur or church planter who is dependent on God and experiences God’s miracles of growth and the response of people to his ministry will also experience the jealousy of some who will bad-mouth his progress and try to impede the work of the mission.

WILLING TO TAKE RISKS

After even another bout with imprisonment and flogging, we are told in Chapter 5, verse 41, that the apostles left rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Hardship did not stop them from continuing what they were doing. They were not easily discouraged. The task before them was so important that they were willing to give their lives for it. The next verse says, “Day after day in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good

news that Jesus is the Christ.” These apostolic entrepreneurs were modeling the characteristics that are attributed to an entrepreneur in today’s business world. Business school textbooks characterize the entrepreneur as one who is a hard worker (time is not an item), willing to take a risk, action oriented, and driven by opportunity. In the same way, the apostolic church planter is not a clock-watcher or discouraged by hardship. His vision is steeped in the assurance of God’s protection and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The apostolic entrepreneur says with Jesus, “With God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26) and moves ahead with the confidence that this is, indeed, true.

DEVELOPS A TEAM MINISTRY

Team ministry was the apostolic plan. The apostolic leaders were willing to find other people to work with them. Ministry was not seen as something they had to do by themselves. Only occasionally do we see individuals on a mission alone (such as Philip’s ministry to the Ethiopian). Peter and John worked together as a team. In Acts 6, they commissioned (their work was seen to be as important as the apostles’) the seven as a team to work on congregational problems. In time, these men also caught the greater vision of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we see in Stephen and Philip. In Acts 8:14, Peter and John joined Philip to form a team for ministry in Samaria. Acts 13:4 tells us that the church at Antioch sent out the team of Barnabas and Paul. John Mark joined the team of Paul and Barnabas as a helper. In Acts 15:39–40, Paul and Silas formed a team while John Mark and Barnabas formed a second team. Later it was reported that Paul went with his companions (16:6). Other teams were, Paul, Silas, and Timothy (17:5), Aquila and Priscilla (18:8), Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22), Gaius and

Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companion (Acts 19:29). In Acts 20:4, Paul's team had grown to seven men, each from different places where he had ministered. Entrepreneurial schools today teach the importance of teams, surrounding yourself with people who have skills which complement yours. Scott Browne, director of entrepreneurial study program at Concordia University, Irvine, recently shared with us the result of his study on entrepreneurial teams. "Studies," he said, "show that your business undertaking will grow in relationship to the number of people you have on your team. The more leaders you have, the faster you will grow." Dynamic Church Planting International, a non-denominational church-planting organization that has had 84% success with their church plants around the world, starts every new church plant with a ministry team. They place great emphasis upon the careful selection and gifts of each team member. In our LCMS church planting strategies, we have discovered that the "lone ranger" church planter often gets buried in administration, peripheral demands of people, and program management to the extent that the excitement of the initial vision and the energy to carry it out is lost. Team ministry on the other hand provides prayer partners, shared responsibilities, encouragement, and multiple gifts. A team, sharing the multiple tasks of a church plant, will experience less frustration and the ability to accomplish more ministry and faster growth in a shorter time.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

IS AN ENTREPRENEUR

Our introduction to Paul is through his Jewish identity, Saul, a man who by nature is an entrepreneur. The big debate in entrepreneurial studies today is whether one is born an

entrepreneur or if he/she learns those traits and characteristics. Whether inbred or learned, this man named Saul has these characteristics when we first meet him. Acts 9 tells us of a man with a vision, a vision to destroy all Christians. Here is a man who worked day and night to accomplish his vision. He gathered around himself a team of people who bought into his vision and were there to help him make it a reality. In Acts 9:2 he was working with Jewish officials to get the proper papers to allow him to carry out his dream. God knew the skills of this evil entrepreneur and his self-aggrandizing vision and determined to claim them for His purpose. On the road to Damascus, the Lord turned the man and his vision upside down. A bright blinding light, a conversation with Christ, a new vision imprinted upon his brain, an encounter with a disciple named Ananias, and a few days of mentoring by the disciples in Jerusalem, and Saul became Paul the apostolic entrepreneur for Jesus Christ.

BUILDS TRUST

When Paul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples and become a member of their team, Acts 9:26 tells us they did not trust him. Here we vividly learn an important characteristic of an entrepreneur—TRUST. People must trust you. They need to know that you are for real, that what you say is truthful. It took Paul quite a while to prove to the disciples that they could trust him. It took a vision and a Gentile experience for Peter to be willing to let go of some of his old traditions and see God’s plan for the church and for Paul. This “new covenant” gospel was to reach not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles in all nations. Paul continued to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews with success in spite of persecution, trials, and hardships. Once he was able to prove

himself to be a disciple of Christ, he gained the trust of the other disciples, and they backed him in his outreach to the Gentiles (i.e., Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council). The task of any entrepreneur, church planter, missionary, or businessman is to build trust—first with his team, and then with the people he will serve. Trust builds confidence and confidence builds partnerships. We read later, in Acts 11:3, that the disciples trusted Barnabas and Saul with their monetary gifts for Judea. By this time, Paul had gained the trust of the disciples, even to the extent that they trusted him with their money.

UTILIZES MENTORING

Mentoring becomes of great importance throughout the Book of Acts. Paul's ministry began with mentoring relationships: a time with Ananias, and a few days with the disciples. Barnabas then took Saul with him to Antioch in a mentoring relationship. Together they taught great numbers of people for a whole year. When Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul on their first mission, they took John Mark along as a helper. This was a time for him to be mentored. John is further mentored when he teamed up later with Barnabas.

Throughout Paul's ministry, he took people along to mentor. Silas, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, and numerous other people were mentored as they accompanied Paul on his journeys. As they begin their venture, apostolic entrepreneurs seek mentors who can advise, encourage, and teach them along the way. Entrepreneurial church planters can alleviate a lot of heartaches and mistakes by having a mentor or coach who walks with them on their church-planting journey. In a recent Mission Planters Institute, Steve Ogne,

from Church Resource Ministries, shared the distinction between a mentor and a coach. A mentor is a teacher; he/she walks with you as an instructor and encourager. A coach simply brings out the best that is already in you; he/she serves more as an encourager and as one who will challenge you to think through situations and decisions.

ENLISTS VENTURE SUPPORTERS

Paul, like Peter, had venture capitalists, or perhaps we should call them venture supporters. They were the people in the churches at Antioch, Macedonia, and other places where they had ministered. These were men and women who put their trust, confidence, and support in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. They were convinced these missionaries would, under God's grace, carry out their mission. These people fasted, prayed, and sent them off. They saw this mission as one they were doing with the missionaries. They were a part of the vision. Just as entrepreneurs need venture capitalists to fund and support their ventures, so church planters need venture supporters, people who will provide prayer, encouragement, and financial support. They are people who understand the mission and are committed to being a part of that mission with the missionaries.

Paul, Barnabas and their helpers did not depend upon Antioch for their sole support. Paul especially encourages the churches, with whom he has worked, to be partners with them in ministry. In 1 Cor. 9:14 Paul says, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." In

2 Corinthians 11:9 Paul shares that the churches in Macedonia are supporting his ministry to the Corinthians. He reminds them, “And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.” Today there can be many different venture supporters for a new church plant. A supporter can be a single sending church like Antioch; a group of churches like a circuit; or a mission society, a group of people organized to support a specific mission endeavor. An entrepreneur in the business world looks for several venture capitalists who are able to support his project, so that, to use a colloquialism, “all his eggs are not in the same basket.” The entrepreneur is anxious, from the start, however, to move away from financial dependency to the point where the project or business is able to be financially independent and perhaps become a venture supporter itself for the beginning of another project. In the same way the entrepreneurial mission plant does not look only to the district as its sole venture capitalist and supporter but, like the entrepreneur, develops several different venture supporters. The pastor, like Paul, encourages the members of the new mission start to participate in the support of the mission so that they can quickly become a strong and self-supporting congregation. One of the key goals of this new church plant is to become venture supporters for another new church plant.

HAS A PLAN

As we study the Book of Acts, it becomes evident that Paul has a ministry plan. Together with his team he enters a new town. The first thing they do is go to the synagogue to take the message to the Jews. On their very first journey (Acts 13:5) “When they arrived at

Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.” On their next stop in Pisidian Antioch we read (Acts 13:14), “From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.” This was their plan even after Paul said to the Jews, “Since you reject this and do not consider yourself worthy of eternal life we now turn to the Gentiles.” In Iconium, the next town they visit we are told,” Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.” When the Jews in a town would no longer listen they would go to where the Gentiles were, as we read in Acts 17, he preached in the marketplace and at the Areopagus . In Acts 19:9, we are told about him teaching in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, a place where people from all over the world would go to hear the great philosophers of the day. He would stay in a place until he accomplished his purpose. He stayed in Philippi for several days (Acts 16:12), in Thesalonica for 3 weeks (Acts 17:2), in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 17:11) and in Ephesus for 2 years (Acts 19:10). An important part of Paul’s plan was to witness to and build relationships with individuals such as the procounsel of Salamis (Acts 13:1), Lydia (Acts 16:14), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:9), and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1).

Selecting and training leaders, as we will study later, was an important ingredient of his plan. Paul’s plan was to get the message of Jesus Christ out to those to whom he could with whatever it took regardless of personal hardships and personal safety. Every entrepreneur starts with a plan. He develops a market plan to determine how he will get people to know about the product he has and motivate them to want that product enough

to purchase it. Without a market plan, an entrepreneur has nothing more than a good idea.

The entrepreneurial church planter, in the same way, needs a mission plan, a plan which spells out how the team will reach this new community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a plan which understands the community, is ready to stand up against the opposition, and will carry out that plan in spite of discouragement, disappointment, or failures.

FUNCTIONS WITH CONFIDENCE AND CONVICTIONS

In Acts 13:8, Paul meets Elymas, the sorcerer, also an entrepreneur, who opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to destroy the work they were doing with the proconsul in Paphos. Here Paul showed a very important characteristic. He was not afraid to stand up against his opponent. Filled with the Holy Spirit he made a strong case against the sorcerer, to the extent that the proconsul ended up believing. Paul was so convinced about what he was doing that he was willing to face the opposition and boldly speak his case. His commitment, conviction, and ability to defend the faith convinced the proconsul. A key characteristic of entrepreneurs is that they have strong convictions about their mission. If they are able to stand up and boldly defend their vision or product against the competition, people will gain confidence in them and in what they have to offer.

This is also a necessary characteristic for an entrepreneurial church planter. Church planters who face the mission and deliver the message with the conviction of an Apostle Paul and live with this message penetrating the very core of their own life will instill

confidence in those with whom they share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Confidence and trust in the one who carries the Gospel message provides an open door in the heart of the listener. In this post-modern world, young people are saying, “Show me that it works in your life; then I will consider it for my life.”

GATHERS DISCIPLES

After Paul and Barnabas shared their message in Pisidian Antioch, the people were so impressed that they begged the apostles to teach them more. Paul and Barnabas were gathering disciples, people interested in learning more. The door of opportunity was open for them to teach and to help the people of Antioch understand the message of Jesus Christ in more depth. Every entrepreneur dreams of gathering disciples. He looks for those with whom he can share his vision in greater depth so that they will claim that vision as their own. The best market plan is a satisfied and interested customer. We read in Acts 13:44, “On the next Sabbath the whole city gathered.” People must have been talking. This is the dream of the entrepreneur. This is the success of the church planter: to gather disciples, people who have claimed the planter’s vision and are sharing it with others. In verse 49 we read, “The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.” Word was getting out. The vision was spreading. In Ephesus (Acts 19:10) we read that Paul stayed for two years teaching in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Here again he was taking the opportunity to make disciples.

EMPLOYS NICHE MARKETING YET DIVERSE

I suppose the business world of today would call Acts 13:46 “niche marketing.” When the Jews began to speak abusively against what Paul was saying, Paul said, “We had to speak the Word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.” Paul was ready to go to those who were eager to hear his message. Even though the Gentiles became his primary niche, we find that he never really gave up on the Jews. He continued to go into the synagogues in each city and share with the Jews first. He definitely had a vision for all people, Jews and Gentiles, and he never seemed to lose this vision even though it always caused him difficulties. Paul and Barnabas had their victories and their defeats. In Iconium they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. Then we are quickly shown the other side, “the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds.” In today’s world, the entrepreneur as well as the church planter needs to have a niche market with a multi-cultural vision.

Many center-city congregations in Los Angeles connected with the Nehemiah program have had a “niche” which they served very well. They were ministering to the African American neighborhoods which surrounded their facilities. Today, as demographics are changing and the Latino population is increasing in number around their campuses, they continue to minister to the demographic niche they have served for years, the African American and, at the same time, they strive to reach the multi-cultural diversity that lives in their neighborhoods.

Our campus ministries are geared to serve the niche we call college students. Many of these ministries, however, continue to serve graduate students or other people from the neighborhood around their campuses. Our suburban ministries are often programmatically geared to serve the niche of families with children living in their neighborhood. They continue, however, to provide ministry to anyone who enters their churches, whether they fit that niche or not.

Niche marketing, an important entrepreneurial tool, is also a tool that can be effectively used in new church plants. An entrepreneurial church planter will study the demographics and understand the people and the community with whom he will be sharing the Gospel. The programs, publicity, worship style, and the way relationships are built will be geared to the niche he and his team are gifted to reach. Even though an entrepreneurial church planter focuses on a particular niche where the new church might receive a greater acceptance or success, the long-range vision must be, “How can I share my vision, my message with all people?” In spite of more work, more challenges, greater difficulties, and some defeats, our niche and our vision must include the diversity of the demographics—to be ready to reach all people fully understanding that, like Paul, we will always face difficulties and opposition.

WILLING TO DIE

In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas faced the ultimate opposition. The Jews from Pisidian Antioch stirred up the crowds to the extent that they took Paul out and stoned him, leaving him for dead. The ultimate characteristic of the apostolic entrepreneur is that he

or she is willing to die for the vision. Paul was so convinced that he says in Romans 8:38–39, “Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A strong characteristic of the apostolic entrepreneur is that he is willing to die for his mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All the disciples except John were executed for this vision and mission. It is interesting that this same kind of commitment has become the deciding factor for what makes a modern-day entrepreneur. Kim Polese, the CEO of Marimba, the company that worked to develop the Java programming language and make it a success was asked, “When did you know that you were an entrepreneur?” Her reply was, “When I was a marketing manager at Sun Microsystems, evangelizing for the Java programming language. One day it suddenly hit me, she recalled. I was willing to die to make Java a success. That’s when I knew.” Michael Malolne, editor of *Forbes ASAP*, after making a study of a number of entrepreneurs, made the statement that in the end the only thing shared by great entrepreneurs was their willingness to do anything to make their endeavor succeed.

SELECTS AND TRAINS LEADERS

There are few endeavors that will succeed with only one or two people. The “Lone Ranger” church planter will have a difficult time. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto. Jesus gathered twelve disciples around him and gave them the command to go and make more disciples. A disciple must become a disciple maker. The success of the apostolic entrepreneurs was the willingness of these men to appoint and train new leaders or elders.

In Acts 14:23 we read, “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord.” They knew how to select people to take over leadership when they went to the next place. They trained them, committed them to the Lord, and then they trusted them to continue in the doctrine and teaching of the apostles. They expected them to work as hard as they did in sharing the Gospel and getting the Good News to those who had not heard it so that the church might grow. Today’s entrepreneur, though often a loner, knows that success depends upon selecting others to be on your team. They know that leaders train leaders.

The entrepreneurial church planter finds himself with the same need. He must begin with a team; a team of leaders who will train leaders who will train leaders. Luc Nguyen a Vietnamese graduate of the Ethnic Pastor’s Certification Program at Concordia University, Irvine, California is, in the true sense of the word, an apostolic entrepreneur. He has started his own congregation in Huntington Beach, California, where he is selecting and training leaders to carry on the ministry while he goes to Portland, Seattle, and Ft. Wane to work with other groups of Vietnamese. Here he continues the process and selects leaders, training them, and allowing them to carry on ministry until he returns to mentor and train them in more depth. Many of our culture-specific ministries (African Immigrant, Asian, and Hispanic) are finding that, due to the lack of trained pastors, the apostolic approach of selecting and training leaders to carry on ministry is the only way they can fill the demand for new churches in their culture groups throughout the United States. One of the best methods in the church today for this type of on-going

training is the cell church where each cell provides spiritual growth and leadership training on an on-going basis.

REPORTS TO HIS SUPPORTERS

After their first journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to their venture supporters at Antioch to report what had happened. How important this is! Those who pledge support and prayer need to know what is happening so that they can continue to feel a part of the mission. The contemporary entrepreneur is constantly in touch with the venture capitalists, those who have put up money for the project. Reports to the supporters keep their interest in the project, help them feel like partners in the successes, and help them to know how the entrepreneur has dealt with difficulties. This kind of interest in the venture partner builds trust and confidence in the entrepreneur and what he/she is able to do. In the same way, how important it is for the entrepreneurial church planter to also maintain contact with the district, the mission society, or the congregation that has partnered with him in his mission project so that communication takes place and they can celebrate their partnership.

WILLING TO LEARN

Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch for a long time with the disciples. This was an opportunity for them to learn and share. The apostolic entrepreneur is always willing to learn. He is always talking with others who can provide information and guidelines to help him do his mission better. Paul was always ready to listen and to debate (as we see in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15). If there was more to learn, he was open to listening

and studying. One of the characteristics listed for contemporary entrepreneurs is that they are anxious learners. The entrepreneur who feels that he knows everything will watch his vision fold beneath him. There is always something new to learn. The entrepreneurs of Silicone Valley were successful because they were willing to learn something new and take it the next step.

In the same way, the church planter must not be a “know it all” who comes with all the answers. The only thing that stays the same is the message he has to share. The Word and Sacraments make up the foundation of his vision. How this will be shared most effectively in the context of the new mission plant is a decision that must be made. He must, first of all, be a learner who is willing to listen and understand the people he will serve. The apostolic entrepreneur is willing to take the never-changing message of Jesus Christ and the solid teaching of the Lutheran Confessions and contextualize them for the community into which he has been called. We watch the Apostle Paul do this effectively at the Areopagas in Acts 17:22–32 as he talks about the Unknown God.

DEALS WITH DISSENTION

Dissention in the ranks is not uncommon. In Acts 15:39, Paul and Barnabas had a strong disagreement over John Mark accompanying them on the next missionary journey. Paul had a strong work ethic and expected the same from his team. More than likely, John Mark had not lived up to Paul’s expectation. In this case, what seemed divisive, a possibility of destroying a good team and ending the whole mission endeavor, God used to expand the work. Now there were two teams and twice as much work getting done.

One of the characteristics of a contemporary entrepreneur is that he has high expectations of team members and associates to work as hard as he does. How often haven't we seen, in new church plants, a small group break off because one of the team or the leader was not meeting certain expectations? Even today, this is not always a tragedy; in some cases, God has formed new congregations as a result of this kind of dissention. As in the case of Paul and Barnabas, new leaders were selected, trained, and mentored and the church continued in spite of human failings. What we sometime consider disastrous, God sees as opportunity, which keeps us humbly reminded that it is His mission, not ours.

IS AN ENCOURAGER

Encouragement stands as a necessary ingredient in the life of the entrepreneur. In Acts 16:40, we find Paul and Silas, after they were released from prison, going to Lydia's house for one purpose, to encourage the brothers. To be an apostolic entrepreneur, a leader in the church, can be a very lonely, discouraging, and sometimes defeating task as you fight with all the opponents Satan and the world put up against you. Barnabas was an encourager as his very name, "son of encouragement," described. Acts 9:31 reminds us that the church was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 14:22, we find Paul and Barnabas encouraging the disciples in Pisidian Antioch. In Acts 18:27, we are told that the brothers encouraged Apollos. In Acts 20:1, Paul encouraged his disciples before sending them off. Acts 20:2 tells us that Paul traveled through Macedonia offering words of encouragement to the people. These words of encouragement are necessary for anyone who is challenged with strong competition that constantly seeks to destroy the vision. The contemporary entrepreneur, likewise, encourages his team and upholds the

vision. An entrepreneurial church planter is a Barnabas, an encourager. As he helps his team and core group clarify the vision and focus on Jesus Christ, their leader, he understands that one of his primary tasks is to encourage his team to “keep on keeping on.”

COMMITTED TO BEING TRUTHFUL

The Bereans were students of the Word. In Acts 17:10, we are told that, “with great eagerness they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” Veracity is the key to the success of an apostolic entrepreneur. Not all people are the quality students of the Word that the Bereans seemed to be; those to whom you speak, however, will want to know that you are telling them the truth. How important it is that the apostolic entrepreneur stays faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions. In the same way, the contemporary entrepreneur must be truthful about his product and vision or he will quickly lose his backers and his customers.

The entrepreneurial church planter, determined to share the truth of the Gospel, builds his ministry on truthfulness. He is eager for Bible students (contemporary Bereans) to be in the Scripture checking to see if what he teaches is true.

PIQUES CURIOSITY

Paul, in his messages, used a similar strategy as our Lord’s when he spoke to the Samaritan women. He piqued the curiosity of those who listened so that they would ask for more. In Acts 17:19, the Epicureans and the Stoic philosophers took Paul to the

Areopagas and said, “May we know more of this teaching that you are presenting.” The key to any entrepreneur’s message is to build curiosity so that people want to hear more of what is to be said. The contemporary entrepreneur seeks to get people wondering what will happen next. A Bill Gates of Microsoft works hard to stir up consumer curiosity before he releases a new XP operating system. In the same way, the apostolic church planter builds curiosity and interest in the community before he plants a new church. He wants people to be saying, “I would like to go there and see what’s happening. I would like to hear what he has to say.” Building curiosity in the people you seek to reach is not a new tactic. It is as old as creation. God, in his process of creation, has always kept the curiosity of his people fresh as he prepares them for their next step in life and their final victory of eternal life. He has placed an eternal curiosity in every person, that “God hole,” that emptiness, that natural knowledge of God (Romans 1:20), which continues to search for the One who can fill it.

TOTALLY INVESTS HIMSELF

Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:1). He was so determined to carry on his mission that he did not want to be completely dependent on the finances of someone else to keep his vision and ministry going. He was willing to go hungry or to earn his own keep by making tents. One of the characteristics listed for a contemporary entrepreneur is that he is willing to use his own capital for the project and to raise new capital. It is so easy for a church planter to become dependent on subsidy from the district or financial support from a mission society or supporters to keep his vision or mission going. The apostolic entrepreneur will not let diminishing dollars or decreasing bank accounts diminish or

destroy his vision and mission. He will, with the conviction that this is God's mission and He is in control, continue to prayerfully seek new ways to finance his mission even if it means becoming a worker-priest for a time to accomplish it.

PREPARES TO TURN THE MINISTRY OVER TO OTHERS

The apostolic entrepreneur, the missionary, pastor, or anyone in ministry finally has to turn over the ministry and the vision to those who have been trained and mentored. In Acts 20:23–38, the Apostle Paul realized that his ministry on this mission field was coming to an end. He was ready to turn it over to those whom he had trained. He encouraged his new leaders with this message, “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.” He reminded them of what it meant to be a shepherd, he refreshed the vision, warned of the dangers, and shared with them the values which motivated his life, the values which included God's Word and His grace, his companions or disciples, prayer, hard work, not being greedy, concern for others, and speaking the truth. As he passed the baton, he mentored them as he knelt and prayed with them. Every entrepreneur will face the day when he/she must pass the dream and the work on to those who have been mentored and disciplined. Pastors, DCEs, church planters, and all church workers and apostolic entrepreneurs are willing to listen for the call of God to the next ministry, the next challenge. Before they go, however, they are anxious that the ministry they have started is able to carry on with the leadership they have trained and mentored.

ONCE AN ENTREPRENEUR, ALWAYS AN ENTREPRENEUR

Paul continued on his trip to Rome, where, after shipwreck and physical trials, he set up housekeeping in Rome. The Book of Acts concludes with these words, “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord, Jesus Christ.” Once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur; the apostolic entrepreneur never ceases being an apostolic entrepreneur. In the mind of Paul and in the mind of any entrepreneur, the task is never done. One mission completed only initiates another vision to be reached. The planting of one church stirs the vision to daughter or plant another. The apostolic entrepreneur, like Paul, boldly continues to preach the kingdom of God and teach about the Lord, Jesus Christ.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENTREPRENEUR

APOSTOLIC ENTREPRENEUR

Power of the Holy Spirit
Amazes people
Gives God the credit
Value: obedience to God
Venture supporters
Deals with jealousy
Risk-taker
Team ministry
Builds trust
Mentors and is mentored
Mission plan
Confidence and strong convictions
Makes disciples
Niche marketing/open to diversity
Willing to die for mission
Selects and trains leaders
Reports to supporters
Willing to learn
Deals with dissention
An encourager
Truthful
Peaks curiosity
Totally invests himself
Prepares to give over ministry
Always an apostolic entrepreneur

BUSINESS ENTREPRENEUR

A strong leader
Non-conformist
Need for personal control
Driven by opportunity
Venture capitalists
Can take criticism
Risk-taker, action oriented
High expectations of team and associates

Street smart, independent
Business Plan
Self confident, independent
Likes people
Develops a plan and works the goals
Do anything for success, willing to die
High expectation for his team
Keeps venture capitalist informed
Anxious to learn
Likes competition
Optimistic

Not bound by tradition, non-conformist
Willing to use own capital for the project
Restless
Not easily discouraged

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