

**Planting Church Trees by
Migrating to Leading Cities
and Laboring on Leading Campuses**

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 3:6-7; Rev. 1:11-12, 20; Rom. 16:3-5a; 1 Cor. 16:19; Acts 8:1, 4

I. For the universal spreading of the church as the testimony of Jesus, we need to plant “church trees” for the corporate expression of the Triune God as life—John 5:26; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12; Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11-12, 20:

- A. In the eyes of God the universal church, the Body of Christ, has been formed; now, after the formation of this universal church as a complete entity, there is the need for the spreading of the church—Acts 8:1; 9:31:
 - 1. The local churches are established, not formed; the apostle Paul could plant a church, and Apollos could water it, but it was God alone who formed it and gave it life, and it is God who gives it growth—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
 - 2. The way to spread the church and to establish a church is to bring it to a certain locality and plant it—Rom. 16:5a; Col. 4:15.
- B. Although we cannot form the church, we have the position, the right, the opportunity, and even the commission to go to the uttermost part of the earth to establish local churches—Acts 1:8; 13:1-3; Gal. 1:2; Rev. 1:11.
- C. What we are doing today is simply establishing churches in different localities by planting “church trees”; this planting of church trees is the establishing of the church—1 Cor. 1:1-2; 1 Thes. 1:1.
- D. The local churches as church trees are golden lampstands, which are actually living, golden trees—Rev. 1:11-12, 20:
 - 1. The golden lampstands signify the local churches as the reproduction of Christ and the reprint of the Spirit—Exo. 25:31-40; Zech. 4:2, 6, 10; Rev. 5:6; 1:11, 20.
 - 2. In figure, the golden lampstand signifies the church as the embodiment and the expression of the Triune God—vv. 11-12.
 - 3. As saints in the local churches, we all are parts of a wonderful golden tree.
 - 4. The symbol of the golden lampstand indicates that the Triune God is a living tree, growing, budding, and blossoming, and the description of the lampstand conveys the idea of growth—Exo. 25:31-32; Eph. 4:14-16:
 - a. The lampstand is growing through the branches and within them; this indicates that Christ is growing in us—Col. 2:19; John 3:29a, 30a.
 - b. It is crucial for all the branches to give the lampstand a free way to grow in them and through them—Eph. 4:15-16.
 - c. The more the lampstand grows in the branches, the more it will blossom and shine, and the more light there will be—v. 15; 5:8-9.
 - 5. To plant a church tree is to establish a local church as a golden lampstand.
- E. Our burden is to bring the church as a tree to every city, town, and village and plant a church there—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Col. 4:15-16:
 - 1. We all need to be faithful to carry out the burden to establish local churches by planting church trees—Rom. 16:16b; Gal. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2:14.
 - 2. The married couples should be like Prisca and Aquila, who planted a church tree wherever they went; wherever they were, they were willing to bear the burden of the practice of the church by opening up their home—Rom. 16:3-5a; 1 Cor. 16:19.
 - 3. If we all have the desire to establish churches by planting church trees, the establishing of the churches will be very fast and prevailing—Acts 19:20.

II. We need to migrate for the spreading of the gospel to the leading cities and to labor on the leading campuses:

- A. The first mentioning of migration for the spreading of the gospel is the basic principle for the spreading of the gospel, including the divine truths—Acts 8:1, 4:
 - 1. In Acts 8 we do not have the words “migrate” or “migration”; nevertheless, migration is implied by the word “scattered”; the scattering of the saints was actually a migration.

2. The persecution in chapter eight actually worked out for the spreading of the gospel, because thousands of believers were scattered throughout the lands of Judea and Samaria; through this scattering the good news was brought to many cities.
3. Here we have the pattern of the preaching of the gospel through the migration of the saints.
- B. The way to spread the Lord's recovery is not by a work nor by a movement but by emigration with the God-ordained way:
 1. Some can emigrate to live to the Lord and serve the Lord full-time.
 2. Some can emigrate to take a job or do a business and serve the Lord.
 3. Some can emigrate to study in school and serve the Lord; they may go to become "professional students," to remain in school for the Lord's work on the campuses and spend their time contacting the students for the Lord's interest.
 4. All those who want to emigrate should be burdened by the Lord and have a clear guidance from the Lord.
- C. We are burdened to emigrate to the leading cities that have colleges and universities for us to work on:
 1. It would be very profitable if the saints could acquire a house that would be a station for the work among the students located no more than a few-minutes walk from the campus.
 2. It is best if a couple that loves the Lord lives in this house; this couple will be able to be the students' "godmother" and "godfather" to take care of them as parents.
 3. Having a home to bring the students to makes it easy to bring people into the church life.
- D. We need to see the way to live, to work, to serve, and to meet:
 1. We need to *live* a life in resurrection under the cross; to live in resurrection is to live in the Spirit of Christ and to live under the cross is to experience the death of Christ in our union with Him in His Spirit for the denying of ourselves and our flesh and for the rejection of the world and its influence.
 2. We need to *work* by contacting people in preaching the high gospel, in teaching the deeper truths, and in testifying the Christian experience; we should always practice to contact people one by one.
 3. We need to *serve* in the Spirit according to the divine revelation; to serve in the Spirit we must take time to pray to be filled up with the Lord and to serve according to the divine revelation we must take the scriptural way of preaching the gospel, feeding the new ones in home meetings, perfecting them in group meetings, encouraging everyone to prophesy in larger church meetings.
 4. We need to *meet* according to the God-ordained way as revealed in the New Testament, fully in mutuality—with the meeting open for everybody to speak.
- E. The saints in all the churches should be encouraged to migrate:
 1. Perhaps ten percent of the saints in a locality may migrate each year; this will allow for the necessary outflow without devastating the church.
 2. Using the illustration of a hose, we may say that every church should be like a hose that is open at both ends; when a hose is open in this way, water is able to flow in and out.
 3. However, the migration of the saints is not a legality; the point we are making is that the churches need to follow the pattern in Acts 8:4; this means that, in principle, we should be willing to migrate.
 4. The Lord may want us to stay in a certain place for another year or for another ten years; only the Lord knows; on the other hand, the Lord may lead us to go to another country, to another city, or to another state.
 5. The elders should fellowship with the saints often concerning migration; we should never command the saints to go to a certain place, but we should make them aware of the need.
 6. We believe the Lord is living; through this kind of fellowship, the Lord will lead some to pick up the burden and they will go; when they go to a new place, they will discover that they are very useful to the Lord.
 7. "I encourage you all to pick up the burden to migrate. We should migrate not for the sake of our living but for the sake of the gospel"—*Life-Study of Acts*, pp. 181–182.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCHES

There is an important difference between the formation of the universal church and the establishment of the churches. The universal church is not established; rather, it is formed with two categories of elements: all the believers as the extrinsic element and the all-inclusive Christ, the embodiment of the processed Triune God consummated as the all-inclusive, compound Spirit as the intrinsic element. Instead of being established, the universal church is formed by these two categories of elements.

Being Local

The local churches are established, not formed. Establishment is different from formation. We should not say that we are going to a certain place to form a local church there. On the contrary, we go to a certain city not to form a local church but to establish a local church. The church as a whole was altogether formed more than nineteen hundred years ago on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius. This means that, in the eyes of God, the universal church, the Body of Christ, has been formed. This is an accomplished fact. Now, after the formation of this universal church as a complete entity, there is the need for the spreading of the church. The way to spread the church is to bring it to a certain locality and plant it. This planting is the establishment of a local church.

Just as we can plant a tree but not form a tree, so we can establish a church but not form the church, A carpenter can form a stand, but he cannot form a tree. Not even the best scientist with a doctoral degree in botany can form a tree. Only God can form a tree. In like manner, only Christ could form the church. The Apostle Paul could plant a local church and Apollos could water it, but it was God alone who formed it and gave it life, and it is God who gives it growth (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

The entire church as the Body of Christ, including all the Jewish and Gentile believers, has been formed once for all universally. This is an accomplished fact. What we are doing today is simply establishing churches in different localities by planting "church trees." This planting of church trees is the establishing of the churches.

No one is able to go to a place to form a local church. Assuming to do such a thing would be abominable in the sight of God, for it is presuming to do something that only God Himself can do. But although we cannot form the church, we have the position, the right, the opportunity, and even the commission to go to the uttermost parts of the earth to establish local churches.

The Lord has formed the church. Our burden is to bring the church as a tree to every city, town, and village and plant a church there. We all need to be faithful to carry out the burden to establish local churches by planting church trees. We should be burdened not just for the saving of sinners but for the establishing of churches. The married couples should be like Prisca and Aquilla who planted a church tree wherever they went. If we all have the desire to establish churches by planting church trees, the establishing of the churches will be very fast and prevailing. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, (Msgs. 189-204), pp. 2121-2122)

THE INITIAL EXAMPLE OF THE SPREADING OF THE GOSPEL, INCLUDING THE TRUTHS

Not by the Apostles but by the Migrated Disciples

Now we need to consider the initial example of the spreading of the gospel, including the truths (Acts 8:1, 4). According to Acts 8, this spreading was not by the apostles but by the migrated disciples. The church in Jerusalem had thousands of believers, but due to persecution, they were all scattered to carry out the spreading of the gospel. The believers were scattered, but the apostles remained. The practice today in Christianity is the opposite; the clergy go and the laymen remain. But the spreading of the gospel according to the initial example in Acts 8 shows the apostles remaining in Jerusalem and the other disciples migrating.

Not Waiting for the Completion of the Gospel in the Holy Land

The disciples sovereignly were scattered to other places without waiting for the completion of the gospel in the Holy Land. Portions of the Holy Land had not yet heard the gospel, but the Lord was still burdened for the disciples to carry the gospel to other places. Acts 8 also speaks of Philip going to Samaria and eventually preaching the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch for the spread of the divine truths.

**The First Mentioning of Migration
for the Spreading of the Gospel Being the Basic
Principle for the Spreading of the Gospel,
Including the Divine Truths**

The scattering of the believers from Jerusalem to other localities is the first mentioning of migration for the spreading of the gospel; hence, it should be considered as the basic principle for the spreading of the gospel, including the divine truths. Regardless of whether or not the divine truths have reached the entire United States, we still need to go to Europe. We also have to believe that our going to Europe will stir up something positive in the United States. (*World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, p. 43)

THE WAY TO LIVE, TO WORK, TO SERVE, AND TO MEET

To Live a Life in Resurrection under the Cross

Now we want to see the way to live, to work, to serve, and to meet. First, we need to live a life in resurrection under the cross. To live in resurrection is to live in the Spirit of Christ, who is the reality of the resurrection of Christ, and to live under the cross is to experience the death of Christ in our union with Him in His Spirit for the denying of ourselves and our flesh and for the rejection of the world and its influence.

**To Work by Contacting People in Preaching
the High Gospel, in Teaching the Deeper Truths,
and in Testifying the Christian Experience**

We also need to work by contacting people in preaching the high gospel, in teaching the deeper truths, and in testifying the Christian experience. We should always practice to contact people one by one. We should not try to preach to a group. We may speak to fifty persons at one time, but eventually we may gain none of these fifty. The most effective way is to contact people one by one.

We need to preach the high gospel. We should not be influenced by the old concept that people will not understand us if we share things that are deep and high. The thoughtful people want to hear the deeper truths concerning the real meaning of human life.

To Serve in the Spirit according to the Divine Revelation

We also need to serve in the Spirit according to the divine revelation. In the past, did we serve in the Spirit according to the Scriptures? The Spirit surely did not guide us and lead us to serve in the old, traditional, and unscriptural way of meeting and serving. We have to change our way to the new way of meeting and serving. Human culture changes and advances as time goes on, and people need to change to live in this culture. By saying that we need to change, I do not mean that we have to follow the world or fashion ourselves according to the world.

In our work to spread the divine truths, we should always serve in the Spirit. Before I minister the word, I always take some time to pray, "Lord, here I am again. You must fill me up with Yourself. You must infuse me with Your desire, with Your intention, with Your feeling, with Your thought, with Your word, Your utterance, and Your expression. Fill me, Lord, and pour Yourself out upon me to be my impact. I don't want to speak just by myself. I want to speak in You as in one spirit with You. I pray that You would speak in my speaking." We need to serve in the Spirit in such a way.

To Meet according to the God-ordained Way as Revealed in the New Testament

We need to meet according to the God-ordained way as revealed in the New Testament, fully in mutuality, avoiding the one-man ministry, and abhorring the system of clergy and laity, for worshipping God, remembering the Lord, praying, saving sinners, feeding the new believers, perfecting the saints, and building up the church as the organic Body of Christ, without any element of the traditional way, formality, and ritual (1 Cor. 14:25; 11:25; Matt. 18:19-20; Acts 12:12; Rom. 15:16; John 21:15; 1 Thes. 2:7; Heb. 10:24-25; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 31). We need to study the truth concerning the God-ordained way. We have published many messages on the God-ordained way, and we need to read these messages.

The God-ordained way of meeting is in mutuality not in plurality. In the eldership we should have plurality, that is, a number of elders. But the church meetings are not a matter of plurality but of mutuality. We may arrange to have ten or twenty speak in the meeting. This is plurality. But when the

meeting is open for everybody to speak, this is mutuality. I speak, and you listen; then you speak, and I listen. This is mutuality. Mutuality, not plurality, is the biblical way. The biblical way is for the church meetings to be open for everybody to function. (*The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, pp. 49-53)

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE SCATTERING OF THE SAINTS

Acts 8:4 says, "Those therefore who were scattered went about the land bringing the good news of the word." It was sovereign of God that the scattering of the believers from Jerusalem to other localities through the persecution should carry out the spreading of the gospel for the fulfillment of the Lord's word in 1:8 (see 11:19).

A Pattern for Today's Gospel Preaching

The first pattern in Acts 8 is that of the preaching of the gospel through the scattering of the saints. In Jerusalem, the gospel preaching was carried out mainly by the apostles. Although this also is a pattern, it is not the unique pattern for our gospel preaching. If it were the unique pattern, then the preaching of the gospel would be limited. Therefore, in 8:4 we have another pattern of the preaching of the gospel—the preaching of the gospel through the scattering, the migrating, of the saints.

In Acts 8 we do not have the words "migrate" or "migration." Nevertheless, migration is implied by the word "scattered." The scattering of the saints was actually a migration.

Before the scattering of the saints in 8:4, there were many thousands of believers in Jerusalem. Like most people, they probably did not desire to move; instead, they may have wanted to settle there. But the Lord is sovereign, for He is the Leader, the Ruler of the kings. Although Satan instigated the persecution against the church, the Lord is over Satan, and whatever Satan does is under the Lord's sovereignty. Therefore, the persecution in chapter eight actually worked out for the spreading of the gospel, because thousands of believers were scattered throughout the lands of Judea and Samaria. Through this scattering the good news was brought to many cities. Here we have the pattern of the preaching of the gospel through the migration of the saints.

For many years in the Lord's recovery we have been practicing the matter of migration. For example, many saints were gathered to Los Angeles from 1962 until 1970. Then in 1970 we began to migrate, and the migration was a great success. When the saints migrate, the gospel goes out with them. The migrating saints bring the gospel wherever they may go.

All the churches should follow the pattern in 8:4 concerning migration. The saints should not stay in a certain place for too long. On the contrary, we all should be migrants, following in the footsteps of our father Abraham. Abraham was a river-crosser; he migrated from Chaldea to Canaan. Like Abraham, we should not be permanently settled. We all should learn to migrate.

Outflow and Inflow

For some years many of the saints in this country were reluctant to migrate. But we thank the Lord that recently the saints have begun to migrate again. In the last year a number of churches have been raised up through the migrating of the saints.

The saints in all the churches should be encouraged to migrate. If the saints in a certain locality do not migrate, eventually that locality will become a "Dead Sea." The Dead Sea is a reservoir for the water from the river Jordan. Once the water from the Jordan reaches the Dead Sea it does not proceed any farther. If the church in a particular locality is to avoid becoming such a Dead Sea, a "canal" must be dug to allow the "water" to flow out. Perhaps ten percent of the saints in a locality may migrate each year. This will allow for the necessary outflow without devastating the church. Furthermore, if water is allowed to flow out, more water will flow in.

Using the illustration of a hose, we may say that every church should be like a hose that is open at both ends. When a hose is open in this way, water is able to flow in and out. But if water is not able to flow out of a hose, nothing more will be able to flow in. How much water flows in depends on how much flows out. If we want the church to increase, there must be the outflow. Only when there is an outflow can the church in a certain locality be preserved from becoming a Dead Sea.

However, the migration of the saints is not a legality. The point we are making is that the churches need to follow the pattern in 8:4. This means that, in principle, we should be willing to migrate.

Migrating for the Sake of the Gospel

I encourage you all to pick up the burden to migrate. We should migrate not for the sake of our living but for the sake of the gospel. The Lord called Abraham, and Abraham migrated. In following the Lord, Abraham had no lack. Likewise, as we migrate for the gospel's sake the Lord will meet our needs. To migrate for the gospel is to migrate for the Lord, since the gospel is actually the Lord Himself. The first pattern found in chapter eight of Acts is the migration of the saints for the spreading of the gospel. (*Life-Study of Acts*, pp. 179-182)