

**BUILDING MATURE CHURCHES IN AFRICA:
A PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

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Thesis submitted for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Pastoral Studies at
North West University [Potchefstroom Campus]

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2004

Preface & Acknowledgements

I would like to “give thanks to God always for all of you” (1 Thess. 1:2) who assisted me and persisted with me in bringing this big project to completion:

- For my darling wife, Michelle, who never once complained, despite my indecisiveness and pessimism over how this project would turn out. Her patient example and godly joy set the tone for the whole endeavour, from start to finish. What a gem you are, Honey! It would have taken twice as long and been ten times more gruelling without your selfless support in the home.
- For my three precious children – Evan, Titus, and Jana Marie, who followed Mommy’s example of patience and not complaining over Daddy’s long hours. May you too one day join Christ in this noble task of building His church among the nations!
- For our loving, godly parents Wendell & Jann Cantrell and Bob & Mary Somerville. How grateful we are for all of your ongoing support, your prayer, your example in marriage and ministry and so much more, and your investment in our lives through the years. Dad & Mom Somerville, all of your babysitting and help in those final days were crucial!
- For our supporting churches back in the USA that have taught us so much about what a mature church looks like, and who make it possible for us to have the thrill of serving Christ here in Africa. Thank you Grace Community Church, Visalia E.V. Free, and Katy Bible Church.
- For the previous institutions and faculties that have so shaped and moulded me in the Word and for ministry: The Master’s College and Seminary. May God continue using these fine schools to equip many soldiers to take His truth to the nations!
- For Joel James in Pretoria, who selflessly laboured night and day to edit his way through the minefield of my rough draft. Joel, after surviving your deluge of red ink, I think I’ve finally begun to learn at least *something* about writing!
- For the most loving and supportive church family in the Southern Hemisphere: Christ Baptist Church! Nicki, thank you for all your mentoring and input in this project, and in many other ways. To our secretaries, thank you for freeing me up many times. Hennie, thank you for your pioneering work of taking the gospel to new frontiers, and for humbly allowing me to come along and research these church plants.
- For the great team we have on the faculty at Christ Seminary, who freed me up to complete this project. Johann, baie dankie spesial vir jou. This whole doctorate was your idea in the first place.
- For our students at Christ Seminary who helped me with my research and allowed me to spill on them my thoughts along the way.
- For all the pastors, leaders, coordinators, and Executive in the Baptist Union of South Africa who welcomed and encouraged this research.
- For my promoter, Prof. G.A. Lotter, who has been *so* friendly, gracious, and helpful to this atypical student. Thank you, Prof. George, for all of your assistance!
- For my other examiners who took the time to give their valuable input: Prof. P.J. Buys; Dr. Dennis Erasmus; Rev. David C. Deuel.

*“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us,
to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus,
to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”*

Ephesians 3:20-21

Summary and key terms

In this thesis the researcher argues that churches in Africa are being planted rapidly but are not growing to maturity, which produces troubling consequences. The Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) is then given as a representative case study of church planting in Africa, because from 1990 they have seen as many as 413 new churches started. Yet there is growing concern over the stability of many of these young churches and their leaders. Key leaders in the BUSA are calling for an analysis of the church planting and a greater emphasis on church strengthening and equipping.

Next, the researcher lays the exegetical foundation for building mature churches, drawing from Acts and the Pauline epistles. In Acts, keys for the growth of the church are given. In Paul's writings, the researcher identifies the core principles and content used in establishing churches. Next come the field research findings that show the condition of churches and church planting in the BUSA. The research was conducted through church leader surveys and key interviews, supplemented by observations of Christ Seminary faculty in their training of pastors from these churches. Some disturbing statistics and characteristics of these young churches emerge.

The researcher then seeks to demonstrate how to analyse the health of churches and church planting in Africa by interacting with the field research in light of Scripture. An analysis is given of the strengths and weaknesses of the BUSA's younger churches, in the areas of their evangelism, their establishing of the members, and their entrusting of leadership. Cautions were given against unbiblical church growth trends. Finally, the researcher offers suggestions and strategies for building stronger churches in Africa. He states, "In order for the gospel to steadily advance through the BUSA or through any churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches."

Key terms

church/churches
building
mature
Africa
church planting
church strengthening

Opsomming

Die bevindinge van die navorser in hierdie verhandeling is dat gemeentestigting in Afrika teen 'n vinnige tempo geskied, maar dat groei na volwassenheid ontbreek en gevolglik kommerwekkend is. Die Baptiste Unie van Suid-Afrika (BUSA) word gebruik as 'n verteenwoordigende gevallestudie vir gemeentestigting in Afrika. Die rede vir die keuse van BUSA is omdat hierdie liggaam sedert 1990 sowat 413 nuwe gemeentes begin het. Daar heers egter 'n groeiende besorgdheid oor die stabiliteit van hierdie jong gemeentes en hulle leiers. Leiersfigure binne BUSA doen 'n beroep op 'n deeglike ontleding van hierdie gemeentestigtings-aksie en 'n groter klem op die toerusting en ontwikkeling van hierdie jong gemeentes.

Die navorser beklemtoon die eksegetiese hantering van die boek, Handeling en die briewe van Paulus as basis vir die bou van gesonde gemeentes. Die boek Handeling bied belangrike sleutel elemente vir die groei en ontwikkeling van gesonde gemeentes. Paulus se geskifte identifiseer weer kern beginsels en inhoud in die ontwikkeling van gemeentes. Die bevindinge van die steekproewe wat gedoen is, dui duidelik die toestand van hierdie gemeentes en die gemeentestigtings-aksie binne BUSA aan. Die bevindinge van hierdie navorsing is verkry deur vraelyste aan gemeenteleiers te versprei en onderhoude te voer met sleutel figure wat gerugsteun is deur die waarnemings van die Christ Seminary fakulteit gedurende die opleiding van hierdie leiers. Kommerwekkende statistiek en eienskappe spruit voort uit die navorsing van hierdie jong gemeentes.

In die lig van die Bybelse boodskap toon die navorser dan aan hoe hierdie steekproefbevindinge gebruik kan word om die toestand van gemeentestigting in Afrika te ontleed. 'n Ontleding word gedoen van die sterk- en swak eienskappe van hierdie jong gemeentes binne BUSA, veral op die gebiede van evangelisasie, die opbou van die lidmate en die vestiging van leiers. Die navorser waarsku ook teen on-Bybelse kerkgroei tendense.

Ten slotte doen die navorser ook voorstelle en strategieë vir die bou van gesonde gemeentes in Afrika aan die hand. Hy stel dit as volg: "Ten einde die evangelie volhoubaar deur BUSA en ander kerke in Afrika te laat voortleef, moet moedergemeentes en gemeentestigters verantwoordelikheid aanvaar vir die versterking van jong gemeentes totdat hulle oor toegreoste ouderlinge beskik en volwasse is om gesonde nuwe gemeentes te plant."

Sleutelbegrippe:

Churches – gemeentes
Building – geboue of om op te bou/ te vestig
Mature – volwasse
Healthy – gesond of lewensvatbaar (viability).
Africa – Afrika
Church planting – gemeentestigting
Church strengthening – versterking van gemeentes

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Growth & need in Africa

It has been called the “surprise story” of modern missions—the emergence of ‘Christian Africa’ (Bediako, 2000:3-4). In the last century, Christianity in Africa has seen the fastest numerical growth of any continent ever in church history. From a continent in 1875 that numbered its Christians in tens of thousands (Hildebrandt, 1996:ix), to a continent with about 8 million professing Christians in 1900 (10% of the population), Africa now has over 375 million who profess Christ (48.4% of the population, and 60% of sub-Saharan Africa) (Jenkins, 2002:3; Johnstone, 2001:19-21)¹. Estimates are that at least 4,000 new professions of faith are made every day in Africa, and that this is now the most ‘Christian’ continent in the world (Bediako, 2000:3; O’Donovan, 2000:1)². Nearly one in every five professing Christians in the world is an African (Johnstone, 2001:2,19).

In his book, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins (2002) states that the heart of global Christianity will not be in Europe or North America, but in Africa. He says, “in 50 or 100 years, Christianity will be defined according to its relationship with that [African] culture” (cited in *CH*, 2003:2). The August 2003 issue of *Christian History* “tells the story of sub-Saharan Africa’s ‘Christian explosion’ in the twentieth century—a century that brought Africa from the periphery to the center of the Christian world, largely through the efforts of native African evangelists” (Armstrong, 2003). The inside cover declares, “The rapidity of Africa’s twentieth-century ‘baptism’ was stunning. There’s no better place to see the future of the global church” (*CH*, 2003:2).

Surely this is a cause for rejoicing, for Christ is being proclaimed and the gospel is spreading (Php. 1:18). But there is also cause for caution. Understandably, gospel advances aren’t always tidy and they take place through feeble, imperfect human instruments and often under adverse conditions. So much patience and trust in the Holy Spirit is required in the face of slow progress. Yet this does not erase the fact there are serious concerns about the way the gospel is advancing in Africa. If Africa represents ‘the future of the global church,’ it is an uncertain future.

African theologian Tienou (1998:6) states: “The evangelical dilemma in Africa can best be described as proclamation without reflection. One observer put it this way, ‘Africa has the fastest growing church in the world: it may also have the fastest declining church!’ Numerical growth far outpaces spiritual depth and

¹ Out of these, 118 million are Catholic and 116 million are evangelicals, with 125 million claiming to be charismatic or Pentecostal (some evangelicals, others not) (Johnstone, 2001:19-21). 78 million professing Christians are in African Independent churches, which are especially prominent in South Africa (particularly the Zion Christian Church) where they comprise 36% of the total Christian population, i.e., 15 million (Kombo, 2001:173)!

² Cf. also Winter & Fraser’s (1999:366-368) section on “God’s African Story: Filled With Harvest,” in “World Mission Survey”. Cf. G. Schwartz (1993): “We are told that there are 20,000 new believers in Africa every day. That is significant church growth. That works out to 140,000 new people every week or 1400 new churches of 100 people every week—quite dramatic.”

maturity in African Christianity". Tienou (2001:162) goes on to say, "I consider the deepening and the nourishing of the faith of those who identify themselves as Christians [in Africa] to be of the utmost urgency". Van der Walt (1994:109) likewise warns, "A fat, but powerless Christendom – that is the danger facing us when Christianity grows as rapidly as it is doing at present on the African continent"³. Many are now observing that Christianity is shifting southward and becoming increasingly non-Western (Maluleke, 2000:x; Jenkins, 2002:2). But Africa will also miss the opportunity to set the pace and the example unless her churches are better established in the faith.

Anyone doubting the shallowness of Christendom in Africa need only look at the moral and political chaos in countries where the vast majority of the population has claimed the name of Christ for years (Johnstone, 1998:114; TAG, 1999:52). Probably the most graphic depictions of this nominalism are the horrific genocide in supposedly "80% Christian" Rwanda and the brutal bloodshed in the supposedly "96 % Christian" Democratic Republic of the Congo (Johnstone, 2001:19; Winter & Fraser, 1999b:366). Missiologist Ott (2004) points out,

...the matter of church health in rapidly growing movements has not been adequately addressed. The classic church growth movement was more concerned with numbers than quality. Events such as the genocide among "Christian" tribes in Rwanda, the rampant nominalism and syncretism in Christian churches, are well known problems. ... Rwanda is one example of very superficial Christianity having horrific consequences. Another example is the astonishing growth of AICs (African Independent Churches) and various independent movements that are for the most part quite heterodox, but attracting huge numbers of followers; many from established churches.

Many today view the phenomenal growth of African Independent Churches as promising (e.g., Jenkins, 2002:68-69; Anderson, 2000), but others have exposed the widespread syncretism and false teaching (e.g., De Visser, 2001). As for nominalism, Brierly's extensive study (Siaki, 2002:47) reports that only 49% of all those in Africa who claim Christianity actually hold membership in a local church. Another study reveals that in Kenya, "80% claim to be 'Christian', but only 12% are actually involved in a local fellowship" (Winter, 1999a:368). It is reported that in South Africa, out of the 30 million who claim Christianity only 6 million regularly attend church (Siaki, 2002:46).

Africa is not unique in this dilemma of breadth without depth. While the Western church declines rapidly, many of the churches planted in the 'mission fields' remain unestablished in the faith (Reed, 2000:73; Johnstone, 2001:13-14)⁴. Reed (In preface to Hesselgrave, 2000:9) warns:

...A growing number of us who were involved in attempting to reshape the missionary enterprise at the end of the twentieth century realize that something is drastically wrong with the contemporary Western paradigm of missions. We see entire movements of churches with an appalling lack of leaders. Almost all of these movements are on course for producing but a nominal fourth generation.

³ As Schwartz notes (1993), after more than 30 years of observing the African church, "There is a rather significant amount written on the lack of depth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa."

⁴ Cf. Eller & Grossman's (2003:300-310) extensive study of the nominalism in Guatemala after more than a century of mission. They show how the churches began to think that more church planting can replace church maturing. Note also Ott's (2004) comment, "The rapidly growing house church movement in China is also known to be very susceptible to false teaching. Personal interviews with various persons who minister there confirm this over and over."

Some argue that this downturn is inevitable, yet many of us believe that the biblical ideal suggests that the fourth generation of churches should be the strongest generation to date. With the coming postmodern global village, these churches must be sufficiently strong to realize the potential of fostering a worldwide expansion of the gospel such as has not been seen since the early church.

Ott (2004) attributes this nominalism in Africa mainly to “weak leadership and shallow discipleship”⁵.

When professing Christians quickly revert to pagan behaviour in times of trouble, the gospel is only a veneer and has not penetrated deeply enough to transform their worldview⁶. Van der Walt’s (2002:16) diagnosis is penetrating:

Because the Gospel was not brought as a new, total, encompassing worldview, which has to take the place of an equally encompassing traditional worldview, the deepest core of African culture remained untouched. Christian faith only influenced and changed the outer layers of African culture such as, for example, customs and behaviour. For this reason it often led to superficial Christianity – totally at variance with the nature of the Christian faith, which is a total, all-embracing religion, influencing the whole of life from a reborn heart – in the same way that a heart pumps life-giving blood to every part of the body.

The average African convert did not experience the Gospel as adequate for his whole life, and especially not when it came to the most complex issues of life. For that reason we discover all over Africa today that Christians, in times of existential need and crisis, as in danger, illness and death, revert to their traditional faith and view of life. The Gospel has no impact in those areas where it really matters!

One major solution to the instability of African churches is to develop trained pastors, since the majority churches are still without one (both in Africa and worldwide) (Buys, 2002a)⁷. But training such pastors becomes difficult when there are few local churches mature enough to raise up qualified candidates and to apprentice them and model for them what biblical principles look like in practice. Rare is the seminary or college that can offer what a strong local church can in terms of integrated (theory, practice, and supervision) training. Studies also show that graduates who return to unstable churches often face such inertia that they never effectively implement change (Stamoolis, 2001:489).

Any diagnosis of these unestablished churches must go *beyond* the obvious need for leaders. Mission groups must not only ask, ‘*After* a church is planted, then what?’ More must start asking, ‘*How* should a church be planted and nurtured to maturity *until* qualified local elders are entrusted with leadership?’ (Patterson, 1999:595-605). The lack of qualified pastors in churches is often only a *symptom* of the root problem: deficient church planting. In fact, a multitude of problems in the African church and society can largely be traced back to the planting of weak, ineffective churches. Just supplying more pastors or more churches is not the most effective solution, and might serve to increase the problem.

⁵ Cf. other observers concerned about this nominalism in the African church: many of Johnstone’s descriptions of African countries in *Operation World* (2001) describe the severe extent of nominalism and the dangerous consequences (e.g., Botswana, 2001:118); Tienou (2001:154-162); Buys (2000:16); Winter & Fraser (1999:368); Armstrong (2003).

⁶ Cf. Hiebert (1999:373-383); Hiebert is working on a book regarding the serious need for worldview change in discipleship (Ott, 2004).

⁷ Van Horn (2004) says that in Africa, “Up to 90% of the pastors in any given country have never received even one day of training.”

But once the core problem of church health is addressed, many other symptoms will recede. *Better churches* produce better people, better marriages, better parents, better employees and employers, and better societies. The need for stronger churches in Africa is the 'longest pole in the tent,' the one issue which affects every other issue, the one solution upon which all other solutions will depend.

1.2 The need depicted in one African denomination

One African denomination that is facing many of these challenges is the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA). The BUSA has seen both rapid growth and need for depth. The BUSA is seeking to find solutions to strengthen churches, so that they can also pave the way for other African denominations that face similar challenges. The researcher has personally encountered the instability of African churches in his ministry of training pastors in the BUSA. In the past five-and-a-half years, the author has visited many young (mostly black, BUSA) churches and has seen firsthand their dire needs for nurture. He has also spent hundreds of hours in discussion with the leaders of these young churches and has heard of the challenges they face because they were not well established.

Since 1990, BUSA claims that 413 new churches have been started (Rae, 2003), which has more than doubled the size of the denomination (Robbins, 2003:157; Rae, 1999:164). Adding up other BUSA statements yield smaller, but still significant figures: 376 or 335 new churches (since 1990) (BUSA Handbooks, 2002 & 2003a; Rae, 2001:7). The BUSA president for 2002-2003 has said, "A new BUSA church is planted every thirteen days" (Coertze, 2003). A recent ecumenical publication on mission in post-apartheid South Africa highlights the BUSA as an example of effective church planting (Kritzinger, 2002:58; Robbins, 2003:157). In order to deserve such praise, the BUSA's proof must not be in just the numbers but in the quality of the churches being planted. Since these new churches represent over half of the BUSA, the health of these churches has serious bearing on the overall health and direction of the denomination.

The BUSA has acknowledged the lack of depth in many of its new churches, and has begun giving attention to nurturing them. For nine years, the BUSA had a General Secretary whose main burden was for more church planting (expressed by mottos such as "95 [new churches] by 1995" and "201 by 2001"; Rae, 2003; Rae, 1999), which had been underemphasized in previous years. But now the new BUSA General Secretary, Rev. Scheepers, has brought a timely vision for strengthening these churches. This has been signalled by his new thrust, called "Equip 2005", which is already generating helpful training manuals for the churches, along with workshops for the church-planters (BUSA Handbook, 2002:210). Rev. Scheepers has stated to the entire 2003 national Assembly that the BUSA is eager to enlist researchers who can report on the health of the new church plants and suggest strategies for developing these churches (Scheepers, 2003). The head of the BUSA missions department, Dr. Eric Robbins, also wrote recently, "Following the phenomenal growth of BUSA in recent years there is obviously a great need for discipleship, teaching, and consolidation of the work" (2003:157).

Recently, Rev. Scheepers has gone on further to say that he thinks the BUSA needs an entirely “new model” for quality church planting (2004). Rev. Scheepers and Dr. Robbins invited the researcher to come and address the annual Missions Board meetings of the BUSA on 2 March, 2004, to share his initial findings and suggestions on improving church planting in the BUSA. The response was positive and they are requesting more of this kind of research. Furthermore, at the researcher’s home church, Christ Baptist Church, Polokwane, the church’s mission arm and pastoral training arm have just entered a new phase of closer partnership. With this has come a growing concern about how to strengthen our weak church plants and improve church planting. This research could hardly come at a more crucial time!

1.3 Further need for this research

Alongside of these practical needs in one African denomination, there is also a gap in church planting literature. The researcher has not yet seen a work that combines a solid exegetical foundation with a focus on the whole process of building churches to maturity, including the challenge of how to strengthen existing churches that are weak (often because of being poorly planted). Most books only focus on how to pioneer a new church-plant⁸. Steffen (1997:232) rightly states, “Because our church planting strategies tend to focus on phase-in activities rather than those that facilitate phase-out, church planters all too often spawn national churches *full of crippled infants*. A comprehensive church planting model that promotes the immediate empowerment of nationals in all aspects of ministry is desperately needed (emphasis mine).”⁹ That is the burden of this thesis.

Though plenty of material is available on church growth in general, rarely do such studies offer a clear exegetical basis for their strategies¹⁰. Most or all of the emphasis is placed on research and programs drawn from human experience and success stories rather than a thorough study of Scripture (Patterson & Currah, 2003:211, 215; MacArthur, 1993:27)¹¹. There also seems to be a lack of material offering a biblical

⁸Missiologist van Rheeën notes (2000:37), “Traditionally the study of church planting has focused more on church initiation than on church maturation.”

⁹Steffen (1997) then proceeds to produce an excellent book that gives a model of phase-out oriented church planting, an approach that calls for keeping the goal of an empowered, indigenous church in view *from the start*. But Steffen gives very little biblical basis for his model. Perhaps he assumes this has been given already in some of the other missions literature that he surveys. But in this age of pragmatic approaches to church growth and missions, that seems like a dangerous assumption. Too many are prone to just mimic a model without ever grasping the biblical basis.

¹⁰One exception is the excellent work by David Eby (1996), *Power Preaching for Church Growth*. Based on an extensive survey of over 300 recent books on church growth (mostly in America), Eby proves that the role of preaching has been severely neglected in the modern church growth movement. He then proceeds to develop a church growth model based on the Spirit-empowered preaching and principles in the book of Acts. Another helpful work is the *Church Multiplication Guide*, by Patterson & Scoggins (2003b), which builds on radically New Testament principles.

¹¹Cf. Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (1998), rightly challenges church planters to go beyond the mere ‘how-to’ by first considering what *kind* of church should be planted. But Murray implies that the kind of church needed is determined more by cultural needs than by biblical mandates. This is seen in his sparse attention to biblical exegesis, and in such disturbing statements as, “Church planting can be valued as a sensible, even God-inspired, contemporary expression of mission, whether or not it has biblical precedent”. Murray’s statements are worth mentioning here, as they reflect the critical need for biblical discernment amidst trends in church planting and missiology. He states that a mission method’s “appropriateness to the contemporary context is of greater significance” than direct biblical support. He writes that the New Testament provides many “perspectives” on church planting, but not “guidelines,” nor an “adequate rationale for church planting in Britain today”. Murray thinks that the advance of the kingdom is not dependent upon church planting, calling that an “unduly ecclesiocentric approach that is neither biblically warranted

evaluation of current church planting movements and trends that are shaping the direction of missions. Ott (2004) recently wrote, "Someone really needs to do a follow-up on the rapidly growing movements.... How healthy are they?"

It would also be helpful to have material that applies and illustrates biblical church planting and church strengthening in an African context; but such material seems sparse. Saayman (2003:73) writes, "...the rapid growth of the...church and apparently successful evangelization in sub-Saharan Africa is an issue which needs proper analysis." Bediako (2000:7) also refers to how "the African Christian field, not least because of its surprise element and its vibrancy, offers quite distinctive opportunities for fresh Christian theological reflection...." Yet a newly released, unique book that specifically addresses how to evaluate African congregations fails to give any clear biblical grid by which to understand church growth and maturity (Hendriks, 2004).

Obviously, all these research needs will not be met in one thesis. In facing the challenging tasks of missions and church planting, there is always a need for more biblical thinking and local applications. Further interaction with relevant literature will be found intertwined throughout the rest of this thesis as it relates to each section. Chapter 2 will include key sources in biblical missiology, church growth and church planting. Chapter 4 will interact with other recent trends in church growth and missiology, while Chapter 5 will include church planting literature and case studies that confirm and illustrate certain strategies. Chapter 5 will also return to the emphasis above in 1.1 and interact with literature from the wider scene of the African church.

1.4 Research question

The two burning questions this thesis seeks to answer are these:

- *In light of what Scripture says about building mature churches, what is the condition of church plants and church planting in the BUSA, as representative of churches in Africa?*
- *How can we better plant and strengthen churches in the BUSA and throughout Africa to become mature, reproducing churches?*

The specific problems to be researched are as follows:

1. What do Acts and the Pauline epistles teach about the process of building mature churches?
2. What is the condition of recent church plants and of church planting in the BUSA as representative of the wider scene in the African church?

nor helpful in assessing contemporary church planting policies." Murray falls into the same snare as many other modern church growth advocates (cf. 4.3.1 in this thesis) who interact a lot more with the *cultural expectations* than the *biblical specifications* about the church.

3. Based on the BUSA field research, what is a good model of analysing the health of churches and church planting in Africa in light of Scripture?
4. What are some effective strategies for building mature, reproducing churches in the BUSA and throughout Africa?

1.5 Aims and objectives

The aims of this research are:

- To better understand the condition of recent BUSA church plants and church planting as a sample of the situation across Africa.
- To find biblical, effective strategies for producing mature, reproducing churches in the BUSA and throughout Africa.

To reach this aim, the following objectives must be fulfilled:

1. Gaining a better understanding of what Acts and the Pauline epistles teach about the process of establishing mature churches.
2. Gaining a better understanding of the needs of recent BUSA church plants and church planting, as representative of the situation of churches across Africa.
3. Developing a model of how to analyse the health of churches and church planting in Africa by interacting with the BUSA field research (strengths and weaknesses) in light of Scripture.
4. Based on the exegetical study and field research, effective strategies must be formulated for strengthening churches and church planting in the BUSA and throughout Africa.

1.6 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that, despite the rapid numerical growth in church planting in the BUSA and across Africa, many churches are not maturing because they have not been properly evangelised and established. Leadership has not been effectively entrusted to qualified local elders, with sad results. It is expected that the research will reveal that many recent BUSA church plants (especially those in the Baptist Northern Association, near where the researcher lives and ministers) are in grave danger of nominalism if they are not strengthened in such areas as qualified eldership, interpreting and applying Scripture, discipling and equipping members, and effective church planting. These weaknesses will be corrected only by a commitment to biblical strategies for planting and building churches toward maturity.

1.7 Method of research

This study was conducted by using the following formal research methods:

1. The New Testament exegesis was done according to the grammatical-historical method (Zuck, 1991). This involved the Greek New Testament (UBS, 4th revised edition), lexicons such as Louw & Nida (1993) and Newman (1993), along with relevant commentaries, articles, biblical theology works, and other theology and ecclesiology texts.
2. The field research was conducted in *two phases*, both aimed at accurately identifying where and how BUSA churches and church planting can be strengthened. The *first* phase involved more of a quantitative approach where a detailed questionnaire was used, following Neuman's description (1997:31) (i.e., a "descriptive survey study", Isaac & Michael, 1995:50). This was distributed to about 230 pastors or leaders of recent (since 1990) BUSA church plants. Within this group of churches, the researcher also highlighted those churches that have received a building from Samaria Mission, the missions' arm of the researcher's own BUSA church in Polokwane. (This included a few churches older than 1990, but who also received a church building in the past decade and who need to be evaluated.)

The pastors given the survey were literate and fluent in English (as most are in the Baptist Union). Since it did not seem possible, within the time constraints, to diagnose at grassroots level the spiritual maturity of the members of hundreds of new churches across the country, the researcher surveyed the pastor/leader of each church in the hope of getting a good indication of the health of these churches. The data gleaned from each leader reflects the leader's own maturity (which is a major determiner in a church's maturity) and reflects something of the condition of his flock (e.g., its numerical growth, financial viability, demographics, doctrinal knowledge, potential leaders being developed, overall participation, etc.). It was hoped that this approach would also yield a good sampling of the overall condition and progress of the 400+ recent BUSA church-plants (De Visser, 2001:32-34; Neuman, 1997:31).

3. The *second* phase was a more qualitative attempt at accurately defining the main concerns over church-planting and church maturity in BUSA churches through key interviews, again following guidelines from de Visser (2001:32-35) and Neumann (1997:253). The researcher first targeted (by fax and e-mail) the seven BUSA area coordinators who together cover the whole country, along with about fifteen other key planters and church developers in the BUSA (the ones most involved with the 400+ recent church-plants). The researcher also conducted face-to-face interviews with his church's missions' pastor who is the director of their missions arm, Samaria Mission, the biggest contributor to BUSA church planting since 1990. Another face-to-face interview was conducted with the researcher's Sr. Pastor, Rev. Coertze (who was the 2002-2003 president of the BUSA). The researcher supplemented these findings with his own field observations in visiting thirty of these churches over the

past five years, along with using the findings from the rest of Christ Seminary faculty in their field visits to many of these pastors (cf. Hendriks endorsement of the “direct observation” method, 2004:231).

4. After a complete content analysis was done, the results of the above-mentioned research were utilised to develop a practical strategy for strengthening churches and church planting in the BUSA and across Africa. Various insights from other research on the church in Africa were also incorporated. Plus, lessons from missions’ history are sprinkled throughout.
5. The researcher uses occasional footnotes to give information and additional sources that are important and helpful, but that would distract from the main flow of the text.

1.8. Limitations of this study

The researcher acknowledges certain limitations and presuppositions that accompany this study. The researcher takes a conservative, evangelical stance that holds the 66 books of the Bible as the inspired, all-sufficient Word of God that is the only infallible rule for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This study offers biblical, universal principles on the practice of church-building in its broadest sense, referring to the pioneering and initiating of new churches and to the strengthening of existing churches. The researcher has not delved into important nuances of urban and rural church planting, or between cross-cultural and monocultural church planting, or between missionary and national church planting. Nor does this study cover such important missions’ topics as language study or culture study. But to the extent that the overall model and principles in this study are rooted in the Word of God, it will be timeless, transcultural, and universally relevant.

For similar reasons, this study also does not delve into analysis of the African context or worldview. It is stated (in chapters 2, 4) that the church planter must know and love his recipients by learning their culture and understanding the questions they are asking before offering answers. But it is not the place of this thesis to give a detailed analysis of worldview issues. This has already been very capably done in such works as these: Nyirongo (1997) and Gehman (2000), whose books are both entitled, *African traditional religion in biblical perspective*; Van der Walt (2003), *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa*.¹²

An admitted weakness in this study may be its omission of many historical lessons on church planting. Thankfully, the main emphases of this study—Scripture and field research, do not need church history to

¹² Van Rooy (1978) has also given a helpful summary in his booklet, “The traditional worldview of black people in Southern Africa.” Van Rooy has since written two superb articles: “The Christian gospel as a basis for escape from poverty in Africa”(1999); “Christ in the context of the African worldview”(2002).

prove their validity. Yet history provides valuable lessons, cautions, and illustrations of biblical principles being played out. This will be pointed out again in 6.3, "Recommendations for further research." It is also acknowledged that the field research in this thesis focuses mainly on one African denomination, the BUSA, in the belief that this offers a representative sample of the bigger picture in Africa.

1.9 Chapter divisions

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 - 2.1 Keys in Acts
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Annexure A – Surveys used

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Bibliography

CHAPTER 2 – EXEGETICAL BASIS:

KEYS FOR BUILDING MATURE CHURCHES FROM ACTS

& THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Mature local churches are one of the most central, yet elusive, objectives in missions. To the visitor a region may seem teeming with Christian activity – evangelistic campaigns boasting large numbers, well-attended conferences, and grateful responses from the locals. Yet, years after the gospel has entered that area, after all the activity, one may still ask, ‘Where are the healthy, well-established local churches?’ Reed (1992:138,143) has rightly said, “One of the great indictments of colonial missions is its consistent failure to establish associations of independent, thriving, and reproducing churches, filled with real leaders, able to think theologically in their own culture”. Another missiologist asks, “Why do some church movements flourish, grow, and mature, while others stagnate, wither, and die? Why do some churches brilliantly reflect the love and holiness of God while others mirror the jealousies and divisions of the world?” (Van Rheen, 1996a:179).

Pastors and church planters scratch their heads, unsure of the causes behind stunted local churches that never seem to mature. Often they wonder whether their concerns are rooted in biblical principles or mere cultural preferences. And once the universal scriptural principles are identified, how are they to be applied, and in what order of priority? The persistent question is, “What should a healthy, biblically functioning church *really* look like in this city, township, or village?”

These are precisely the questions that this chapter seeks to answer, with this *objective* in view:

Through the scriptural lens of Acts and the Pauline epistles the researcher will explore key principles for building mature churches.

The use of the verb “building” is not arbitrary, but is drawn from a biblical term rich with redemptive-historical significance (e.g., Jer. 1:10; 24:6; 31:4; 33:7; Matt. 16:18, etc.) (Goetzmann, 1986:252). This term is also well suited to refer broadly to the whole process of establishing churches, from the initial planting to the ongoing strengthening of churches (based primarily on Paul’s usage of οἰκοδομέω [vb.], οἰκοδομή [n.], which ranges from evangelising [Rom. 15:20] to edifying [1 Cor. 3:9-14, 14:3,5,12,26]; cf. 2.2.2 for an elaboration) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Ridderbos, 1975:429-438). From this data the researcher will formulate criteria to be used in subsequent chapters for evaluating church planting movements and specific churches, and then strategizing for how to help them mature.

God has not left us groping in the darkness of cultural relativism, unable to measure a church’s maturity objectively. By shining the spotlight of Scripture onto any church, in any culture, one can make valid evaluations. Once Scripture is properly interpreted, its message “rises above time and culture” (Mayhue,

2002:195). Getz and Wall (2000:24) describe how researchers can first identify the functions of the New Testament churches and then, “from those functions we can develop principles that transcend cultural settings. And if it is indeed a correctly worded biblical principle, it can be applied anywhere in the world, no matter what the societal conditions”. All who accept what the Bible claims about itself, that it is an inspired (God-breathed) and infallible book (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21), should also accept the implications—that it is absolutely authoritative and ever relevant (Grudem, 1994:127-135).

It is presumptuous to claim that one must ‘make the Bible relevant’ to our hearers (Adams, 1982:136). One could just as well try making the sun rise tomorrow! The Word of God is “living and active” (Heb. 4:12), and only requires that one “search ‘deeply enough into the text and its original situation and intentions to find its relevance.’” (Greidanus, 1988:157-58; Adams, 1982:131-137).

As this study unfolds, hope should well up in the hearts of all who love and labour for the African church. The task is great, but the divine pattern and plans are clear. Mayhue (2002:21) writes, “By God-breathed, infallible revelation, Christ has communicated to us what He thinks about the church. The Scriptures particularize what He commends and specify what He condemns. No one need ever be in doubt over how to go about the unfinished work of building Christ’s church or what the outcome will be”.

The Divine promises are also clear. That ancient assurance from Christ still stands: “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). The Father still shares the Son’s passion for a pure, mature church (1 Tim. 3:14-15, etc.), a radiant bride (Eph. 5:25-31). The Spirit still yearns for flourishing churches (Jam. 4:5, etc.). The entire Trinity, and in fact all of Heaven (i.e., the angels too! – 1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10; 1 Pet. 1:12, etc.), is on the side of those who strive to see more healthy, biblical churches in Africa (or anywhere).

In this thesis, the word “church” will be used according to its normal usage in the New Testament, where it usually refers to a *local assembly* of believers that are biblically congregated (at least 85 of the 115 church-related usages of ἐκκλησία) (Peters, 1972:201; Reed, 2001:43). Hence, reference will be made to “any duly constituted local body of believers who corporately attempt to worship, witness, and serve in accordance with the Word of God (Hesselgrave, 2000a:20)” (cf. Getz & Wall, 2000:15-17). Occasionally, “church” will be used in contexts that will indicate a reference to the universal church (all true believers in Christ), since ἐκκλησία is also used in this way in the New Testament (cf. the other 30 church-related uses of ἐκκλησία, especially in Ephesians and Colossians) (Saucy, 1972:15-18; Peters, 1972:200-203; Hesselgrave, 2000a:20).

2.1 Keys in Acts for building mature churches

2.1.1 Introduction

A logical place to start defining the biblical process for developing mature churches is to start where the New Testament church started—in the Book of Acts. In working to see Spirit-empowered, strong churches today, what better examples can be found than the first churches Christ built (Mayhue, 2002:183)? Though the churches in Acts are in their early stages (with plenty of growing pains and imperfections), they still offer many examples of effective, God-honouring church planting and church strengthening (Couch, 1999:7,11; Bock, 1994:153-62).

Legitimate differences exist among interpreters over the exact origin of the church, whether it should be traced back to the Old Testament (Grudem, 1994:853-54; Berkhof, 1941:570) or to the New Testament, especially Pentecost (Couch, 1999:35; Saucy, 1993:167). Though it is tempting to engage in such a discussion here, it does not seem necessary. Regardless of the level of continuity one sees between the New Testament church and the Old Testament people of God, most evangelicals will agree that Pentecost (Acts 2) signals a remarkable, new era: the dawning of a New Covenant, Spirit-inaugurated church which Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18; cf. Acts 11:15, where Peter refers back to Pentecost as a “beginning”) (Grudem, 1994:855; Pate, 1996:96). Though much could be learned from portraits of the believing community in the Old Testament and in the Gospels¹, this study begins in the book of Acts since the aim is to concretely show the process and the product of planting a mature New Testament church.

Luke penned the book of Acts (a sequel to his Gospel; Carson *et al.*, 1992:198) in approximately AD 62-64 to convince Theophilus “that no one is able to hinder the victorious march of Christ’s gospel” as it advances in the Spirit’s power through the Apostles and the early church (Kistemaker, 1990:34; cf. Raymond, 2000:35; Carson *et al.*, 1992:210). This theme is clearly laid out in 1:8, “...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” The last three prepositional phrases of that verse give an outline of Acts, showing how the gospel would fan out from Jerusalem ultimately reaching the furthest Gentile nations (Longenecker, 1981:256-57; Couch, 1999:16).

Whenever dealing with biblical narratives, one must be careful to remember the hermeneutical rule that the *descriptive* should not be treated as *normative* unless expressed in the original author’s purpose or in other didactic portions of Scripture (Fee & Stuart, 1993:106; Johnson, 1997:83). We must also guard against

¹ As Hesselgrave (2000b:24-32) does with the Gospels in his excellent address, “Essential elements of church planting and growing in the 21st century.” Patterson (2003a:210-216) also begins his study of church planting with a good look at Jesus basic commands in the Gospels. Cf. also S. Murray (1998:83-86) on Gospel insights for church planting.

bypassing interpretation and leaping straight to application. Such 'monkey see, monkey do' attempts at imitating every aspect of the church of Acts have inflicted enough harm already in the church in Africa and abroad (O'Donovan, 2000:226-239).

Despite these cautions, Fee & Stuart (1993:87-102) rightly state:

We believe that much of Acts is intended by Luke to serve as a model. ...By the very way God has moved him to structure and narrate this history it seems probable that we are to view this triumphant, joyful, forward-moving expansion of the Gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit and resulting in changed lives and local communities as God's intent for the continuing church.

In a similar vein, Johnson (Johnson, 1997:xi) writes, "The shape of the church in those early days continues to set the contours for the church's growth and service to her Lord until that day when Jesus returns in the clouds of divine glory". In his classic missions text, Allen (1962:3-4) also notes that Acts offers a model: "So far as the foundation of the churches [in Acts] is concerned, it is perfectly clear that the writer of the Acts intends to represent St Paul's work as complete. The churches were really established".

In fact, Luke frames his whole narrative in six panels that each conclude with a summary 'progress report' where he shifts to the imperfect tense to convey the ongoing advance of the gospel and growth of these exemplary churches (Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5;19:20;28:31) (Fee & Stuart, 1993:90-91; Longenecker, 1981:234). "Acts was in essence a catechism for carrying out the Great Commission, that is, for multiplying churches worldwide (Reed, in preface of Hesselgrave, 2000a:9)." Acts then is well suited to serve as a pattern for all who long to see churches in Africa becoming well established (Hesselgrave, 2000a:44-46).

One could explore a multitude of principles in Acts for establishing healthy churches, covering both the divine and the human roles (e.g., Peters, 1981:17-18). But in line with the title and aim of this thesis, the researcher has mainly emphasized human responsibility, summarized under three keys behind the growing church in Acts: *quality leadership; committed membership; effective church planting*. While admitting that a researcher's selection is always influenced by his own situation, the reader should notice that most of the functions of the church in Acts easily fall under one of these headings. Thus, these three keys offer a good framework for an overall portrait of how these first Christians faithfully participated in the dynamic, church-building work that Christ and His Spirit were accomplishing. (Please note that for the rest of this section, 2.1, all Scripture references are from Acts, unless otherwise noted.)

2.1.2 Quality leadership

The leadership of the mother church in Jerusalem had been handpicked and prepared by Christ Himself, after three years of mentoring and teaching (Acts 1:1-26) (Reed, 2001:31; MacArthur, 2002:xi-xviii). Though far from perfect, these fishermen-made-apostles received the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost and soon proved to

be unstoppable soldiers for the gospel (MacArthur, 2002:xi-xviii). They knew the Scriptures well (2:14-36; 3:11-26; 4:5-13; 7:1-53; 8:35), and refused to be diverted from their priority of studying and teaching the Word (6:1-7) (Strauch, 1993:22-24,30; Kistemaker, 1990:223). The heart of their message was not mere personal experience; it was the person and work of the risen Christ (2:22-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:17-32, 42; 8:5,12,35,40) (Kistemaker, 1990:28; Johnson, 1997:141-165). They preached with a Spirit-empowered boldness and conviction of the truth (2:36-40; 3:4; 4:5-13, 19-20,29-31,33; 5:27-32; 6:8; 7:2-53) (MacArthur, 2002:27). They also took responsibility for the flock, both in dealing firmly with sin (5:1-11) and in overseeing and delegating administrative matters, such as caring for the needy (6:1-7) (Strauch, 1993:30-54; Reed, 2001:31).

When, according to Acts 6, the need arose for additional leadership to be selected, the apostles did not merely take the first available and willing people. They asked the congregation to identify servant-leaders with the highest calibre of spiritual maturity, "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (vv.1-7) (Mayhue, 2002:192-93; Kistemaker, 1990:222). Stephen exemplified such leadership, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (6:5). Nothing less than exemplary godliness would qualify, even for the diaconal, behind-the-scenes, practical tasks in the church (Strauch, 1993:93-95; Johnson, 1997:22).

Quality leadership was also foundational to the church in Antioch, Jerusalem's most notable church plant. The mother church sent one of her best, Barnabas, and he worked diligently in following up and encouraging the new believers (11:22-24) (Reed, 2001:32; Kistemaker, 1990:421). He then recruited another gifted teacher, Paul, to join him as they continued intensive discipleship (11:25-26) (Kistemaker, 1990:422-23). According to the chronology given in Galatians (1:16-2:1), Paul was an experienced believer, having been saved and prepared over a period of about ten years (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:227-31; Glasser, 1999:129). Once Antioch had a solid leadership team formed to shepherd the flock (13:1), they too (by the Holy Spirit) sent out their best as church planting missionaries (13:2-3) (Hesselgrave, 2000a:98). Theologically acute leaders also rose to the occasion when the Judaizers' false teaching threatened the church in Acts 15. At the Jerusalem council, the apostles and elders protected the gospel and the churches by defining right doctrine and conveying it to the churches (Mayhue, 2002:179; Strauch, 1995:125-133).

Paul's own life and ministry became the prime example in Acts for new leaders and their churches (content of this paragraph drawn mainly from Reed, 2001:34-35) (cf. also Bock, 1994:150-152). Despite many fears and threats, the determined apostle moved ahead in trust and obedience (18:5-9; cf. section 2:2 later). He and his team were careful to correct doctrinal errors that could harm the church (18:24-19:10) (Reymond, 2000:182-185). Paul's sermon in Acts 20 best unveils his godly example, as he reminded the Ephesians elders of: his presence; his humility; his perseverance; his unshrinking, constant, heartfelt preaching; his bold, selfless aim for the future; and, his example of being a hard-working tentmaker to avoid accusations of greed (20:17-24,27,31,33-36) (Strauch, 1995:140-159; Kistemaker, 1990:723-740). He then urged these

shepherds that wolves would raid the flock, so they must be alert, on guard, and devoted to God and His Word (20:25-32) (Strauch, 1995:140-159; Couch, 1999:48). In his final journey as a prisoner to Rome, Paul also left a “godly model of responding to adversity and making a defense for the faith (21:33-28:31)” (Reed, 2001:34-35; Kistemaker, 1990:36)². Time and again, Paul stood as the pattern of leadership to be traced by emerging leaders in every church. Many mission efforts since then have been eroded whenever the importance of quality leadership has been neglected or when shortcuts have been attempted.

2.1.3 Committed membership

The Jerusalem church was born through the mighty outpouring of the promised Spirit and the preaching of Peter. In a description of the pristine quality of this newborn community, Acts 2:41-47 (especially v. 42) tells the reader that these believers were “constantly devoting themselves” (προσκαρταροῦντες). The present active participle depicts their long-term, continual attitude of earnestness and diligence, a “persistence” and tenacity in living out Christianity (Newman, 1993 [CD]; Louw-Nida, 1993; Johnson, 1997:84). Luke uses this verbal form five other times to portray the energetic devotion of the early church (1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7).

In Acts 2:41-47 there are *five priorities* to which these believers were devoted: the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the ordinances, prayer, and evangelism. Because of their recurrence throughout the rest of Acts and the epistles, one is assured that Luke viewed these as universal traits of a healthy church (Wilkins, 1992:274-278; McGee, 1956 [CD]). As the commentator Johnson (1997:71-86) writes:

Luke does not intend his description to be a nostalgic retrospect of ‘good old days’ long gone, but rather a pattern for the present. Although the apostles’ days were extraordinary in some respects, when we compare the church soon after Pentecost with the New Testament epistles’ instructions for Christians’ attitudes and relationships, we find a striking correspondence. In effect, the Spirit is saying to us through Luke’s early summaries, ‘Look here and recognize that my blueprint for the church, commanded in apostolic letters, works!’

Let’s consider these five commitments in greater detail.

2.1.3.1 Committed to the apostles’ teaching

The first commitment of the Jerusalem Christians was to *the apostles’ teaching* (τῇ διδασκίᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων, 2:42a). The various forms that come from this Greek root (διδάσκω, “teach, teaching(s), teacher”) permeate the Bible, appearing over 100 times in the LXX and almost 200 times in the New Testament (Rengstorf, 1985:161-66), usually in contexts showing that instruction and doctrine are indispensable for the growth of

² Cf. also Johnson (1997:213-229), Guthrie (1990:355).

God's people. In 2:42, Luke adds the definite article (τη), probably to specify that these new believers were committed to a particular kind of teaching, that of the apostles and no one else (Mounce, 1996:158).

Stott (1990:50) states, "One might say the Spirit of God opened a school in Jerusalem that day; its teachers were the apostles whom Jesus had appointed; and there were 3,000 pupils in the kindergarten!" They instinctively inclined their hearts toward sound doctrine because it was the authoritative words of Christ Himself speaking through His commissioned messengers (Kistemaker, 1990:110). They were sheep that knew their Shepherd's voice (John 10). Their passion for doctrinal instruction unfolds throughout the rest of Acts. While most of the sermons found in Acts are evangelistic in nature (though also very instructive to believers), we still find plenty of living examples of the early believers' submission to the Word. And based on the Great Commission itself, one can be sure that what the apostles taught was "all" that Christ "had commanded" them (Matt. 28:20)³

For example, when they heard of the threats against Peter and John, it was the Word that filled their prayers (4:24-26, using Isaiah and Psalms). When the Jerusalem church planted one of its first daughter churches (Antioch), from the start they were immersed in the teaching of Barnabas and Paul, plus other prophets and teachers (11:22-26; 13:1; 15:30-35). As the gospel advanced to the Gentiles, none can forget the example of the noble Bereans, "for they received the word with great eagerness examining the Scriptures daily" (17:11). This appetite for truth abounded in the new churches of Philippi, Corinth, Troas, and Ephesus (chps. 16-20). This led to obedient, transformed lives, such as at Ephesus where the new believers purged themselves of all sorcery and burned their witchcraft materials (19:17-19). Indeed, as Paul has written, the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets..." (Eph. 2:20a). Bruce (1988:73) rightly concludes, "The apostolic succession is recognized most clearly in those churches which adhere most steadfastly to the apostolic teaching".

2.1.3.2 Committed to fellowship

Their second commitment was *fellowship* (τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, 2:42-46). Κοινωνία was used in secular Greek to refer to "people sharing business enterprises, legal relations, citizenship, marriage, and especially friendship" (Whitney, 1996:149). Essentially, it refers to "partnership, having in common" (Louw-Nida, 1993; Hauck, 1985:447-450). In its various forms this word appears in the New Testament (either as verb or noun) twenty-six times, nine of which have financial connotations (all from Paul's epistles) (Johnson, 1997:85). This sharing of material resources is seen in Acts 2 (vv. 44-45), and when Luke says they had everything "in common", he uses the same root word (κοινῇ) (Johnson, 1997:73).

³ Patterson & Scoggins (2003b) give a helpful summary of Christ's commands for church planters, basics that are so often crowded out by human traditions and unbiblical church planting.

Far from mere “socializing” (as it is often misunderstood to be today), *κοινωνία* refers to an active, practical sharing of a common life in Christ (MacArthur, 1991:54). The Jewish believers in Jerusalem were a colourful collection of ethnicities (2:9-11), yet “They were persons who were irresistibly drawn together because of a consciousness of sharing a common blessing...the blessings of the new Age...the Holy Spirit...new life.... They were drawn to one another because together they had been drawn to Christ” (Ladd, 1964:50). Keener (1993:330) also adds this socio-historical insight, “Many Greek associations met for communal meals only once a month, however. This earliest Christian practice of daily meals (later reduced to weekly) is thus noteworthy”.

This continues to be exhibited throughout Acts. The Jerusalem believers “were of one heart and soul” and made huge sacrifices to meet the needs of others in this newfound family (4:32-37). Similarly, when famine struck the Jerusalem church, the Antioch church responded in love by contributing for “the relief of the brethren” (11:29). On his way to Rome as a prisoner, complete strangers received Paul as a “brother” in Christ (28:14-15). The results of such loving, sacrificial fellowship are best evidenced in Luke’s description: “There was not a needy person among them” (4:34).

2.1.3.3 Committed to the ordinances

A third priority for the church in Acts was the keeping of the ordinances (from Latin, *ordo*, “row, order”) that Christ had appointed for the edification of His church and to promote its witness in the world (Whitney, 1996:135-45; Saucy, 1972:191-192). The first ordinance is seen in Acts 2:41, where the church baptized 3,000 new believers, just as Christ had commanded to be done in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19). As to how this could be done on one day in Jerusalem, one NT scholar and historian writes, “The temple mount had many immersion pools that worshipers used to purify themselves ritually; mass baptism could thus be conducted quickly” (Keener, 1993:330).

As the gospel spread out from Jerusalem, baptism continued to be the first act of a new believer, administered by the apostles and the local churches (8:36-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15,33; 18:8; 19:5). Because baptism occurs right after salvation, some have confused it with the event of salvation itself, rather than an important but non-salvific part of the overall conversion event (Mack, 1996:107). Bruce (qtd. in Mack & Swavely, 1996:107) affirms, “The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament”.

Added to baptism is the second ordinance, *communion*, which is not initiatory but an ongoing rite for believers (Whitney, 1996:139). It is the third item listed in Luke’s church summary in Acts 2:42, where he says that the church was committed to “the breaking of bread” (τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου). As with the previous nouns in this verse, Luke attaches the definite article (τῇ), probably to specify the unique bread set aside for

communion (in contrast to 2:46, κλῶντές... ἄρτον), referring to a common meal) (Johnson, 1997:75-76,84; Kistemaker, 1990:111). Though this phrase can be used to refer to a common meal, it is placed between two “religiously loaded” phrases (“fellowship” and “prayer”), suggesting that Luke is probably referring to the communion ceremony that customarily followed a meal (1 Cor. 11:23-26) (Johnson, 1997:75; Longenecker, 1981:290). This was conformed to the pattern established by Christ himself at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19), which was itself a part of the Jewish Passover meal (Couch, 1999:214).

In Troas years later we see the believers gathering to remember Christ through this ceremonial meal (20:7). Communion was a central part of the rich fellowship enjoyed by the early church (1 Cor. 10:16). Johnson summarises the theological significance of this ordinance: “... the breaking of bread focuses on the center and source of Christian fellowship/partnership/community, the redemptive death of Christ and his presence as the risen Lord among His people through the Holy Spirit” (Johnson, 1997:75-76). Any church planting that prevents young churches from partaking in these ordinances is robbing them of a vital blessing.

2.1.3.4 Committed to prayer

The fourth commitment central to the life of the churches in Acts was *prayer* (ταῖς προσευχαῖς, lit. “the prayers”, 2:42) (Bruce, 1988:72-73). Luke’s reference, including use of the definite article again, suggests the formal use of previously written prayers, whether from the Jewish temple prayers, Old Testament prayers (especially Psalms), or Jesus’ own teaching (Kistemaker, 1990:111; Longenecker, 1981:290). Interestingly in Acts (2:46; 3:1), “Jewish believers continued to gather with the rest of Israel to offer prayer and praise in the temple” (Johnson, 1997:76).

Prayer saturates the life of the early church in Acts. Just as Luke has set up in Luke-Acts the parallelism between the Spirit’s work in relation to Jesus and the Spirit’s work in the church, so he also sets up the parallelism between prayer in the life of Jesus and prayer in the life of the church (Longenecker, 1981:290). Prior to Pentecost, they saw God answer their prayers for Judas’ replacement (1:24-26). The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit probably came while they were praying (1:14; 2:1). Their first response to persecution was earnest prayer (4:23-27), and they also prayed fervently and effectively (even if a bit sceptically!) for Peter’s release from prison (12:5-17). In their first selection of leaders, their choice was made prayerfully, with a major purpose being to free their leaders to be more devoted “to prayer” (6:1-6). Thus Johnson (1997:76) writes, “The church naturally and instinctively reacted to crises and decision through prayer, showing that the unifying center of their fellowship was communion with God in the Spirit”. As it has been said, “The church marches forward on her knees”.

2.1.3.5 Committed to evangelism

A fifth and final passion of the early church was *evangelism* and church planting. Though not stated in 2:42, 2:47 does show that they were seeing conversions daily. The massive impact of these churches on their communities is unmistakable in Acts (Marshall, 1980:86). Part of their initial credibility came through the favourable reputation they had with outsiders (2:47; 5:13) (Kistemaker, 1990:114). Some of the impact was unique due to the apostolic miracles (2:43; 5:11, etc.), but much of it came through ordinary believers proclaiming the gospel, including the many Pentecost pilgrims who took their newfound faith back to their homes, bringing a “quick seeding of Christianity across the whole Mediterranean basin” (Maier, 1991:219; cf. Acts 2:10 with Rom. 1:8).

In 4:4, 5:14, and 6:7, Luke reports the constant flood of new converts into the Jerusalem church, presumably through their personal evangelism as exemplified in 4:31 (Bock, 1994:153-162). When persecution expelled these believers from their homes, they did not lick their wounds but rather seized the opportunity for further preaching of the gospel (8:1-4; 11:19-21) (Bruce, 1988:176; Marshall, 2000:153-54). Throughout Acts Luke gives exciting footage of the word spreading like wildfire, resulting in churches increasing in numbers and churches being planted, due to the faithful witness of believers (9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20, etc.). Hesselgrave (2000a:239) affirms, “...it was largely through the efforts of ordinary Christians that Christianity found its way to ‘Cyprus, Syria, Cilicia, Egypt and as far west as Rome’”.

As Bock (1994:162) writes, “For Luke, the people in the highly effective early church looked outward. They were not cloistered constantly; they were penetrating the world and sharing the gospel, even though it involved great risk”. Luke frames his whole account with many of these statements about “the word spreading” and “churches increasing”. Surely he would have been shocked to hear of any church *not* caught up in this great forward march of the gospel to the ends of the earth (Bock, 1994:153-162). As Green (1970:339) concludes in his masterful study, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, “Evangelism was the very *life blood* of the early Christians: and so we find that “day by day the Lord added to their number those whom He was saving” (Acts 2:47). It could happen again, if the Church were prepared to pay the price”.

One final note on the type of evangelism which was done by the early church: they viewed evangelism as “making disciples” (Matt. 28:19), winning devoted followers of Christ, not just piling up large numbers of shallow, false converts (Detwiler, 1995:34-35). If a pastor or church-planter wonders why a church is not evidencing growth in any (or all) of these five marks of a healthy church, perhaps he should first ask: “Are these people truly regenerated?” These first Christians were committed because they were *converted*. They were not some ‘inner circle’ of elite Christians; these were ordinary believers living normal, Spirit-filled lives of obedience to Christ their Lord. No wonder Luke uses “disciple” as a synonym for all those who are saved in Acts (Wilkins, 1992:248-260).

2.1.4 Effective church planting

The church in Acts realized that their Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) was not fulfilled through merely multiplying individual converts. The goal was to multiply believing communities, i.e., to establish churches (Hesselgrave, 2000a:24-25; Wilkins, 1992:279)⁴ (Logically, this characteristic precedes the previous one, 2.1.3; yet in the flow of the book of Acts, its emphasis comes later.). "Even baptism was not so much an individual experience, but it visualized identifying with Christ and a community of believers, and you were brought into that community (Reed, 1991:10)." As Getz & Wall (2000:12) write:

That is what the Great commission is all about. Jesus is Lord of the universe, and we have been commissioned to bring people under His authority. This requires a strategy that includes not only evangelism, but also the establishment of churches, in which believers can be taught how to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord.

In Acts 11-14, a discernible mission strategy emerges (11:19-30; 13:1-14:28) (Reed, 2001:32-35; Hesselgrave, 2000a:42-51)⁵. It was not followed slavishly or without exception, but it does serve as a normal pattern:

- (a) Church-planting missionaries were sent out by an established local church.
- (b) They evangelised strategic city-centres in each province (cf. Rom. 15:14-19) (Schreiner, 2001:60-61; Bruce, 1988:16; Allen, 1962:12-17).
- (c) Where possible (when not chased out of town), they instructed the new believers and gathered them into local churches.
- (d) Where possible (when not prevented), the missionaries would not leave before "passing the baton" by appointing elders so that each local church could be self-governing (Strauch, 1995:133-40).

Then Paul and Barnabas returned home to their sending church to report what God had done and to have further fellowship and ministry with them (14:26-28; 15:35). After this, they returned to their church plants to further strengthen them (15:36-41) (Reymond, 2000:154-55).

This focused, three-step strategy of *evangelising-establishing-and-entrusting* (to qualified elders) was repeated throughout Paul's labours in Acts (cf. the study of his epistles in 2.2 below). The apostle's pioneer spirit urged him to aggressively seek new, strategic frontiers for the gospel (16:6-7; 19:21) (Kistemaker, 1990:582-83). In doing so, he was "skilful in adapting his presentation of the gospel to the worldview of the hearer"—both to those with a biblical (Jewish) background (13:16-52; 17:1-15) and those with a pagan (Gentile) background (14:8-18; 17:16-34) (Reed, 2001:33; Gilliland, 1998:32-33).

⁴ Cf. also: Allen (1962:81); excellent article by Detwiler, "Paul's approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23" (1995:33-41).

⁵ Cf. also: Gilliland (1998:283-291); Marshall (2000:103-105).

Once saved, converts were baptized (18:8; 19:5) and gathered into local churches. Where possible, Paul stayed to nurture new believers through extended teaching, as at Corinth (18:11) and Ephesus (19:8-20; 20:1). Marshall (2000:103) adds this insight:

It is frequently misinterpreted to indicate that Paul did a kind of whistle-stop tour, stopping in each place only long enough to establish a small group of believers and then dashing on to the next place.

The chronological information provided by Luke should have been sufficient to nip this misapprehension in the bud, in that lengthy periods are spent in Corinth (over eighteen months) and Ephesus (over two years), and in other cases hasty departures were due to circumstances outside the missionaries' control. After the first journey, which may have had something of an exploratory character, Paul and his companions normally made extended stays.

Paul seized every opportunity to return to strengthen existing churches (18:22-23; 20:1-38; cf. 2.2, his epistles all served as tools for further strengthening) (Bock, 1994:151-52). He appointed local elders and exhorted them, as illustrated when Paul pours out his heart to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38) (Strauch, 1995:140-59). As Reed (1991:7) writes, "[Paul] appointed elders to oversee each community, and then he continued the process of establishing the churches by letter, by visits, and by prayer, training key men to assist him in the process".

Allen (1962:3) captures Paul's accomplishment in these words:

... The churches were really established. Whatever disasters fell upon them in later years, whatever failure there was, whatever ruin, that failure was not due to any insufficiency or lack of care and completeness in the Apostle's teaching or organization. When he left them, he left them because his work was fully accomplished.

In the same vein, Kostenberger and O'Brien (2001:152) write, "The planting of the gospel in the province of Asia during those years was carried out so effectively that for centuries these churches were the most influential in the world".

Hesselgrave (2000a:25,28-29) points to a major reason for Paul's success:

... One important reason was that Paul considered the preaching of the gospel and the establishing of churches as his primary task. ... That the missionaries were concerned about social relationships, and the minds and bodies of men as well as their souls, is patently true. But Paul's primary mission was accomplished when the gospel was preached, men were converted, and churches were established.... Good works [e.g., meeting of physical needs] were the fruit [the result of healthy churches] – not the root – of Paul's mission. ... No wonder Paul was so effective in multiplying believers and churches. Not only was he a gifted, Spirit-controlled man, he had a singleness of purpose and clarity of objective that have escaped many of his successors. He gave all of his boundless energy and unusual abilities to the building of the church of Jesus Christ.

Griffiths (1983:38) further enforces this emphasis when he draws out this principle from a study of the book of Acts:

... The main purpose of missionary work is to plant new churches where none exist and perfect existing churches where they do. All so-called 'specialized' groups are only ancillary to this main purpose, depend upon local churches themselves and will be judged eventually by the extent to which they have contributed to the growth of churches.

Another important facet to the church-planting strategy in Acts was teamwork: Barnabas sought Paul to help at Antioch (1:25-26); together they were later sent out from Antioch (13:1); others were taken along on their next mission journey (15:36-41). From there, Paul is hardly ever seen alone, but always has 'Timothys' along, especially for the purpose of training them as future leaders for the churches (e.g., 16:1-3; 18:18; 20:4,34; cf. section 2.2 below) (Marshall, 2000:105-107; Reed, 2001:34; Reymond, 2000:575)⁶. Little is said in Acts about any financial support for these missionaries, except that most of them seemed to be self-employed (e.g., Paul, Priscilla & Aquila were all tentmakers) so that no premature demands were made upon the young churches. It must also be noted that the appointed elder-pastors in each church were obviously living in that same area, not commuting from afar or trying to oversee multiple churches (with no motorized transportation available).

2.1.5 Conclusion

No portrait of the thriving churches in Acts is complete without remembering their Source, Head, and Chief Builder (Bock, 1994:101-02; Getz & Wall, 2000:1-5,20-21). Apart from the sovereign work of God, perfect leadership, membership, and strategies would have all been in vain (Johnson, 1997:16-31). In fact, it was only because of their submission to Christ their King that the early church was so effective. It was God who poured out His Spirit to launch and fuel this new era (Acts 2). It was He who "added" to His church "daily those who were being saved" (2:41,47; 5:14; 14:21), and He who powerfully "opened" Lydia's heart to the gospel (16:14) and a "door of faith" to the Gentiles (14:27). It was He who "granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life," and He who had "appointed" many to eternal life (14:48-39). The sovereign Lord is free to overrule both human failings and human plans, and the early church learned to be flexible and available to His supreme plan (10:9-22; 11:1-3,18-22; 16:6-10; 21:27-28:30) (Hesselgrave, 2000a:43-44).

The churches in Acts exemplify exactly what Africa needs: "The churches...were being built up, ...being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily" (9:31, "οἰκοδομέω", imperf. tense = past continuous action; 16:5). As long as they held to "God and to the word of His grace" they were continually "built up" (20:32, "oikodomeo"; cf. 14:23). God produces the maturity, but He does so through human builders who faithfully work according to His plan through qualified leadership, committed membership, and effective church planting.

⁶ Cf. strong exegetical cases also made by G. Murray (1998:189-200) and Pillette (1996, 1997a,b).

2.2 Keys in the Pauline epistles for building mature churches

Any reader of the New Testament soon sees that the tireless labours of Paul in Acts are not the whole story of this great man, nor of the churches he planted. Behind the busy scenes in Acts sits a concerned pastor with pen in hand (or amanuensis nearby) pouring out letters to his beloved churches. It was crucial to begin our research in Acts to understand the early stages of church planting and growth. But the actual process of strengthening and nurturing young churches to maturity was only alluded to briefly (14:21-22; 15:36-16:5).

However, when one comes to the Pauline epistles, one gleans a harvest of truths about the church maturing process. Far from being abstract theological treatises, every one of Paul's letters is written with a shepherd's heart, yearning to see his churches strengthened. "Paul's primary aim was not to leave an epistolary legacy in which subsequent generations would marvel at his theological system. He was a missionary who wrote letters to churches in order to sustain his converts in their newfound faith (Schreiner, 2001:37-39)." As Yarbrough (1996:591) notes, "Paul's writings all arise from the crucible of missionary activity and the theological effort required to educate and sustain those who found Christ through his preaching" (It is for this reason that, since the 1960s, Pauline studies have shifted from seeing only Paul's dogmatics to seeing Paul more as a "missionary theologian" [O'Brien, 1995:xi; Gilliland, 1998:9-16].).

Ensuring that existing churches were well established was central to Paul's ministry and to the advance of the gospel and fulfilment of the Great Commission. One evidence of this is the frequent use of $\sigmaτηρίζω$ ("strengthen, establish, make more firm, stabilize") in both the descriptions of his ministry (Acts 14:22; 15:41; 16:5; 18:23) as well as in his epistles (Rom. 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2,13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Reed, 2001:41). In this sense, one could categorize all his writings as "establishing epistles," tools for church strengthening. As Reed (2001:17) writes, "One of Paul's highest priorities was establishing the young churches he had founded. He would even leave wide-open doors for the gospel if one of his churches was in serious trouble (e.g., 2 Cor. 2:12-14). He knew that unless the churches he had founded were firmly established, there would be no way the gospel could progress to new horizons". Or as Reed (1991:7) states elsewhere, "For the gospel to progress with any stability, with any kind of depth, with any kind of foundation, these churches had to be flourishing and a base for the progress of the gospel".

It was this "concern ($\muέρμινα$, anxiety, distress) for all the churches" which Paul described as a "daily pressure ($\epsilonπίστασις$, burden)" on him (2 Cor. 11:28-29) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Robertson, 1995). Like any flock today, the churches to which Paul wrote faced numerous dangers that could weaken or devastate them and stall the gospel's progress in that region. Without these "establishing epistles," Galatia, Colosse, or Corinth could have been the next casualties of incomplete church planting. The need in Africa today seems no less severe. Since these epistles are inspired examples of how to build up churches effectively, the researcher must now *draw out Paul's core principles and patterns for establishing mature churches*. This

will be done through a study of Paul's example and the content of his letters, including also the insights of relevant literature on the Pauline epistles.

In order to fulfil this purpose (in a reasonably concise way), the researcher will reluctantly have to bypass much of the socio-historical and exegetical material written on the large Pauline corpus. A summary will better aid the reader in seeing the big picture of how these epistles served, and can still serve, as a guide in strengthening local churches. Note also that throughout this section, the researcher will be assuming the position that all thirteen epistles traditionally accredited to him are authentically Pauline. Arguments for this stance have already been clearly articulated by sound evangelical scholars (e.g., Carson *et al.*, 1992:231; Guthrie, 1990:403-667; Schreiner, 2001:10,38).

2.2.1 An overview of the Pauline epistles as establishing tools

One way to begin collecting keys on how Paul built up healthy churches is to begin with a short tour of how each epistle contributed to the strengthening of its recipients (i.e., to watch Paul using his tools and doing the work of church-building). In doing so, the reader will gain a fresh appreciation of Paul's example as a church strengthener and a better understanding of the core content he taught as he established them. Such a study should confirm what F.F. Bruce (1985:12) wrote in introducing his book, *How Paul Nurtured the Churches He Planted*: "In spite of the vast cultural differences between Paul's day and ours, the Christian mission today faces situations not essentially different from those which confronted Paul, and the younger churches of the twentieth century pass through experiences with which the young churches of the first century were well acquainted".

2.2.1.1 Paul's early letters

Paul's first six epistles were written 'on the road' during his first three missionary journeys, spanning an approximate period of AD 49-56, prior to his first Roman imprisonment (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:231; MacArthur, 1997:1376). Thus, some have called these Paul's "missionary epistles" (Lowery, 1994:243). Similarly, it is suggested that the dominant concern throughout all these epistles is "to establish his newly founded churches in the gospel and its implications" (Reed, 2001:42). Lowery (1994:244) writes that in these epistles, Paul often "tackled false teaching or improper conduct that threatened the stability of the Christian community".

In Galatia, the gospel-perverting influence of the Judaizers loomed large (Guthrie, 1990:482). In Thessalonica, the new converts faced a number of hurdles: false allegations against Paul (1 Thess. 2:1-12); persecution (1 Thess. 2:13-16); sexual temptation (1 Thess. 4:1-8); undisciplined busybodies (1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15); confusion over end-times events (1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12); questions about

leaders' authority, and about the place of spiritual gifts (1 Thess. 5:12-21) (MacArthur, 1994:1841-42; Carson, *et al.*, 1992:351-52 ; Guthrie, 1990:602).

In Corinth, the potentially destabilizing factors were legion: disunity and factions (1 Cor. 1-4), immorality (1 Cor. 5-6); marriage, divorce and remarriage (1 Cor. 7); misuse of liberties (1 Cor. 8-11:1); disorder in their worship services, especially over gender roles and misuse of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 11-14); confusion over the hope of resurrection (1 Cor. 15). Soon after this came the arrival of false apostles who sought to undermine Paul's apostleship and lead the whole church astray into error (2 Cor. 1-7, 10-13) (MacArthur, 1997:1726-28, 1760-61; Carson, *et al.* 1992:264-282; Guthrie, 1990:432-453). In Rome, there was a church seriously in need of being unified and strengthened around a solid understanding of Paul's gospel, with the hope that they might partner with him in future mission endeavours (Moo, 1996:16-22; Schreiner, 1998:10-23).

Like Nehemiah building the walls of Jerusalem, Paul was no stranger to the hard work required to build mature churches amidst many hindrances. Knowing Paul faced such problems should increase our eagerness to understand how he solved them. These real-life epistles contain the Spirit-inspired counsel that Paul gave to fortify his churches against the fiercest storms. In summary fashion, here is a *list of the core concerns Paul had in nurturing these fledgling churches* (Reed, 2001:63-65):

- Galatians – *Preserving the purity of the gospel*

Paul was zealous to maintain the purity of the gospel and to ensure that these believers were not “drifting in any way toward a distorted or different gospel” (Reed, 2001:63). He passionately urged them to stay firmly rooted in an understanding of the true gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from any human merit or works-righteousness (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:296). “Shocked by the Galatians’ openness to that damning heresy (cf. 1:6), Paul wrote this letter to defend justification by faith, and warn these churches of the dire consequences of abandoning that essential doctrine (MacArthur, 1997:1786).”

- 1 & 2 Thessalonians – *Standing firm in the gospel*

Paul's concern for this church is best captured in 1 Thess. 3, “When I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, ... for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord” (vv. 5,8). He sought for them to be “unshaken by those who draw attention away from the basic focus on the furtherance of the gospel, by alarming teaching on future events, accompanied by irresponsible living” (Reed, 2001:63) (cf. Raymond, 2002:168-69). Both epistles are essentially an encouragement for them to “go forward in their service of the Lord” (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:352; cf. Borchert, 1996:773).

These epistles may also offer the fullest Pauline case study on how to establish a local congregation (cf. Farnell, 2001). Reed overviews how Paul modelled the three essential steps: first, the *founding* of the church (1 Thess. 1:1-2:12); then the *shaping* (1 Thess. 2:1-3:10; 2 Thess. 2:15); and then, the *stabilizing* of the congregation (1 Thess. 2:18; 3:1-5:28; 2 Thess. 1-3) (Reed, 1997c:35-36) (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:356).

- 1 Corinthians – *Applying the gospel to divisions and ethical questions*

The apostle's aim in this epistle was to stabilize a church that was tottering amidst many worldly and divisive winds that were sweeping through (Carson, *et al.*, 1992:259-287; Pate, 1996:118-123; MacArthur, 1997:1726-28). Here Paul is "doing what he does best, bringing the gospel to bear in the marketplace. For him the truth of his gospel is finally tested in its ability to work its way out in the exigencies of everyday life in some very ticklish situations" (Fee, 1987:16). To unify and establish this church, his instruction revolved primarily around: showing the ethical implications of the gospel and the cross in such areas as proud divisiveness, immorality and litigation, or misuse of liberties (1:10-6:20, 8:1-11:1) (Reymond, 2002:196,200); correcting their 'over-realized' eschatology with an "already, not yet" perspective on Christ's present-yet-future kingdom (1:4-8, 26-28; 3:22; 4:20; 5:7-8,12-13; 6:1-6,10-11,14; 7:29-31; 10:11; 11:26; chp.15) (Fee, 1987:18); answering their various questions on vital issues (chps. 7-15). Many of the issues being raised kept bringing Paul's instruction back to the nature of the church as God's temple and Christ's body. "If the gospel itself is at stake in the Corinthians' theology and behavior, so also is its visible expression in the local community of redeemed people (Fee, 1987:18)."

- 2 Corinthians – *Defending the ministry of the gospel*

Paul's core concern in this epistle was opponents that were undermining the trustworthiness of those whom God has used to establish that church in the gospel (Reed, 2001:63). "Paul is here fighting for the apostolate; that means, he is fighting for the Christ, for the apostolate is nothing less than the power and the presence of Christ among men... There is nothing like this letter to bind the church to the apostolic word of the New Testament (cf. Reymond, 2002:204-205)." To counter such opposition and to strengthen this flock, Paul again educates them in key areas such as these: his true apostleship (chps. 1-7, 10-13); repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (2:5-11; 5:18-21; 7:2-16); an already-not-yet eschatology with its tension of suffering and weakness before glory (3:1-7:16; 10:1-13:14) (Pate, 1996:119); and, in the area of generous, freewill giving (8:1-9:18) (MacArthur, 1997:1761).

- Romans – *Unifying around a solid understanding of the gospel*

Interpreters often debate the purposes of this epistle, but Moo (1996:21) gives a helpful summary: "...all these [various purposes] forced Paul to write a letter in which he carefully rehearsed his understanding of the gospel, especially as it related to the salvation-historical questions of Jew and Gentile and the continuity of the plan of salvation". This young church could never be established, united, or share Paul's passion, apart from sinking their roots deep into an understanding of some vital truths: humanity's need for the gospel because of sin and condemnation (1:18-3:20); God's remedy—justification by faith alone (3:21-4:25); the assurance which results from the gospel (5:1-8:39); an explanation of God's plan for Israel (and the church) (9:1-11:36); and, the transforming power of the gospel in believers' lives and relationships (12:1-15:13) (Moo, 1996:1-941; Schreiner, 1998:1-818).

2.2.1.2 Paul's prison epistles

This second group of four epistles are placed together because they were all probably written at the time of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (ca. A.D. 60-62), when he was under house arrest (Acts 28:16-31; Col. 4:3, 10, 18; Phil. 1, 9, 13, 23; Eph. 3:1, 4:1; Php. 1:7, 13, 16) (MacArthur, 1997:1817; Hiebert, 1981:205). Writing as a prisoner, Paul's pastoral heart for these churches was on display as he suffered for the gospel and sought to move these adolescent churches toward greater maturity (Bock, 1994:300). As further tools for establishing, these letters reflect some of their own unique emphases: Now that these saints are established in the gospel, "He starts to give them a vision for where they are going...He wanted them to understand their place in the magnificent, unfolding plan of God, so that as churches they might grasp the significance of their calling and experience an unleashing of Christ's power within their midst, with one mind participating in the progress of the gospel, with Paul" (Reed, 2001:12-13). Here then is *a summary of Paul's main encouragements in these four epistles as he strives to further strengthen these churches and as he paves the way for all future church-builders*:

- Ephesians – *Living in light of God's purpose and their calling in Christ*

Though later Scriptures mention challenges the Ephesian church was facing (1 Tim. 1, 4; Rev. 2:1-7), at the time of Paul's writing no particular threats were mentioned. Rather, Paul wrote to encourage them with "special insights into God's purposes for the cosmos and the place of the one Church out of Jews and Gentiles in those purposes...[and] to reinforce the common values which establish his readers' identity as Gentile Christians who belong to the Church and to persuade them to change their behaviour

to that which is more appropriate to such an identity” (Lincoln, 1990:lxix). Paul first sought to convince them in chapters 1-3 of their glorious new position in Christ, showing them “the significance of their role in the unfolding plan of God and its accompanying riches” and power (Reed, 2001:64). He follows this in chapters 4-6 with a charge to practice this new position, to “walk in a manner worthy of their calling” (4:1), particularly in their “increased concern for the Church’s unity, and more consistent living in such areas as speech, sexuality, and household relationships” (Lincoln, 1990:lxix) (cf. Reymond, 2002:238-240; MacArthur, 1997:1801-02).

- Colossians – *Refuting false teaching through grasping the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ*

The flock at Colosse was facing no small threat to their stability. The heresy attacking them was a deadly form of syncretism, combining the true gospel with a mixture of Jewish legalism, which taught ‘Christ plus OT law’ (circumcision, ceremonies and ritualism, etc.), plus an early stage of Gnosticism, which taught ‘Christ plus mystical experience, secret knowledge, and asceticism,’ and even questioned the true humanity of Christ (2:1-23) (MacArthur, 1997:1831; Barker, *ed.*, 1995:1813-14; Reymond, 2002:232-234). To counter such error, Paul did not seek a point-by-point refutation of this heresy. There was a better antidote: overwhelming them “with the vaster riches and the surpassing greatness of the lordship of the cosmic Christ” (cf. Reymond, 2002:234). He exposed the inadequacy of error compared to the all-sufficiency of Christ (e.g., 1:15-2:10) (Barker, *ed.*, 1995:1814; Bock, 1994:300-307). And, as in Ephesians, he shows that the believer’s profound new position in Christ must manifest itself in new, godly living, both individually, corporately as a church, and in every other social sphere (3:1-4:6) (Hiebert, 1981:226).

- Philemon – *Relating to one another in light of the gospel*

This brief epistle exhibits a beautiful simplicity, as Paul appeals to this former-slave owner to forgive and receive back his runaway slave. “The task confronting [Paul] was one of peculiar difficulty.... The successful execution of such a task reveals Paul as a master in the art of dealing with men... a master of Christian courtesy” (Hiebert, 1981:246) (cf. Reymond, 2002:236-237). Paul shows that “the relationship between a slave and a master takes on new significance and different dynamics when both are Christians... The church is a new humanity whose relationships transcend social barriers, when the knowledge of Christ is applied to those relationships” (Bock, 1994:307). The underlying principle in Paul’s counsel was that individuals in the church must “understand the relational implications required” within this new Christian community “if they are to be one-minded in their participation in the furtherance of the gospel” (Reed, 2001:64).

- Philippians – *Participating together in the progress and joy of the gospel*

(This epistle is pushed to the last because most scholars agree that it was written after the other prison epistles, based on some of Paul's comments about the involvement of the Philippians and Epaphroditus, which indicate a longer period of time elapsing [2:25-29; 4:14,18; cf. Reymond, 2002:241]). In response to news from Epaphroditus, Paul wrote to inform the Philippian church of his circumstances, to thank and to encourage them, and to warn them of false teachers (Bock, 1994:319-320). But most of all, he pursued their "progress and joy in the faith" (1:26) by exhorting them to resolve internal conflicts by "conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together" for the gospel (1:27) (O'Brien, 1991:36-38; Louw-Nida, 1993). This is the most gospel-saturated of any of Paul's epistles (εὐαγγέλιον appearing 9 times, a greater frequency than any other epistle), revealing that the honour of Christ and advance of the gospel were the ultimate reasons behind his concern over their interpersonal attitudes (O'Brien, 1986:213-231).

In summary of these four letters, Bock (1994:308-309) writes:

A major focus...of the Prison Epistles in general is the corporate nature of those who are in the body of Christ. Believers do not have a private faith; they have corporate relationship and responsibility to each other. God has taken the initiative to form a new people through Jesus, as His plan moves toward summing up all the creation in Him. People in that new community should reflect the unity they have in Christ and walk in a manner that pleases the one who forgave them.

2.2.1.3 Paul's pastoral epistles

Paul is now nearing his departure. How can he ensure that well-established churches stay strong? Reed (1991:13) answers: "He established them in the gospel, then he moved on to getting them into a one-minded vision.... [Now] He wants to fully establish them so that they will remain strong against all the onslaughts". This final set of canonical letters is often called "pastoral" because they all "address the major issues facing those who are called to pastoral leadership positions in the church" (Bailey, 1994:333). They are written to Paul's key men, Timothy and Titus, but also to the wider congregations whom they represented and shepherded (e.g., Titus 3:15). Bailey (1994:334) observes, "All three books stress the need for Paul's associates to silence the threatening heresies, appoint qualified leaders in their respective churches, maintain the integrity of the gospel of grace, and train people to lead godly lives within their communities. At the theological center of the Pastorals is the need to defend the faith against encroaching errorists". As Stott (1997:10) says, "The apostle's overriding preoccupation throughout his Pastoral Letters is with the truth—that it may be faithfully guarded and handed on". Here again Paul sets the example for all future church-builders.

- 1 Timothy – *Properly ordering God's household*

Paul's chief burden in this epistle is found in 1 Tim. 3:15, "I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (Knight, 1992:10-11). One writer succinctly summarizes Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy: "When he realized that he might not be returning to Ephesus in the near future (3:14-15), he wrote this first letter to Timothy to develop the charge he had given his young assistant (1:3, 18; 4:1-16), to refute false teachings (1:3-7; 4:1-8; 6:3-5, 20-21) and to supervise the affairs of the growing Ephesian church (church worship, 2:1-15; the appointment of qualified church leaders, 3:1-3; 5:17-25; care for widows, 5:1-16; support for its leaders, 5:17-25)" (Barker, 1995:1834). The "household" image plays a major role in Paul's instruction. As Reed (1991:14) points out, "The community of faith is made up of households. From the households that are managed well and Christ-like, [Paul, and Timothy] selected leaders to shepherd the whole household. The family is a household within a larger household, or the church is a larger household made up of a number of households" (also a key reason for male leadership in the church, since it is God's pattern for the home; Reed, 2001:65). A church will not be built up until it learns to order itself properly as God's household (Reymond, 2002:250-55; MacArthur, 1997:1857-58).

- Titus – *Setting church plants in order*

As with 1 Timothy, so in Titus Paul clearly stated his agenda: "...that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every place" (1:5) (Reed, 2001:65). Again the household theme is prominent, as Paul points out that the church will only be fully established when it is well-ordered and well-led by qualified elders (1:5-9). In Titus' ministry at Crete, he was frequently battling the laziness and unfruitfulness of the people, some claiming to be recipients of God's grace but living lives devoid of any good works (e.g., 2:16) (Knight, 1992:281-360). So Paul wrote an epistle calling for a 'fruitful faith,' outlining for Titus the instruction that must be given, and the motivations that must under gird it (e.g., 2:9-14). Stott (1997:167) describes how all three chapters link Christian doctrine with its practical duties, first in the church (1:5-16, Christian elders, in contrast to false teachers), then in the home (2:1-15, duties toward each other, in light of Christ's first and second comings), then in the world (3:1-11, Christian relationships in public life, as direct fruits of salvation). Paul also wrote to fortify Titus "in combating the false teaching which threatened the health of the church" (Reymond, 2002:256) (1:10-16; 2:9-11). In summary, in light of the many references to God as "Saviour" (7 times) and the strong emphasis on His saving plan in 2:11-14, MacArthur (1997:1883-84) suggests that, "the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism."

- 2 Timothy – *Passing on the torch of faithful ministry*

The aged, faithful apostle penned this last letter while probably being chained in a cold jail cell awaiting execution (2:9; 4:6,13). MacArthur (1997:1873) writes, "In this letter, Paul, aware the end was near,

passed the non-apostolic mantle of ministry to Timothy (cf. 2:2) and exhorted him to continue faithful in his duties (1:6), hold on to sound doctrine (1:13,14), avoid error (2:15-18), accept persecution for the gospel (2:3,4; 3:10-12), put his confidence in the Scripture and preach it relentlessly (3:15-4:5)” (cf. Reymond, 2002:288-291). Yet Paul knew that the church would erode if another generation of faithful leaders were not raised up, so he urged Timothy to train others just as he had trained Timothy (which Paul did over a fifteen year period, entrusting increasing responsibility and passing the torch) (2:2). “For this thing to last, Paul knew it was necessary to well order the communities, to carefully train the leaders, and to pass on the torch” (Reed, 1991:14) (cf. Bailey, 1994:334).

Reed (2001:46) again lends a hand in summarizing the Pastorals and the whole of Paul’s writings. Of the Pastorals he writes, “These three letters climax the letters of Paul and complete his teaching on the life of the church, leaving us with all the essential norms and guides necessary to see churches in the twenty-first century become fully established. No church can call itself an established church – a New Testament church – if it fails to order its community life according to these truths”.

Here is a helpful summary of the overall flow of Paul’s thirteen letters (in their function as establishing epistles):

These epistles are the heart of the training of each believer. The early epistles bring the gospel to bear on most all the problems these new believers brought with them into the churches, and focus on how to grow in the Word, and walk with the Spirit in their new lives. The middle set focuses on continuing that walk, bringing into much clearer focus their new life in Christ and the importance of devoting their lives to Him and His purposes. The final set of letters focus on sound living over the duration of their lives in community with other believers (Reed, 1997:29).

Schreiner (2001:67) states, “It is not an exaggeration to conclude that all of Paul’s letters were written to ensure that his churches continue in the faith, since ‘we are your boasting just you also are ours on the day of our Lord Jesus’(2 Cor. 1:14)”. What church planter or leader today has not encountered most of these same issues that Paul is tackling in his epistles? Whether one faces the challenge of helping a church to understand the gospel better, or to apply the gospel better, Paul’s epistles are a cutting-edge, detailed model for building mature churches.

2.2.2 Paul’s concept of the building and maturing process

2.2.2.1 Importance & background

For a thesis on “Building mature churches” based on Acts and the Pauline epistles, more must still be said about Paul’s own Spirit-inspired, dynamic concept of the “building” and growth of the church (Reymond, 2000:499; Ridderbos, 1975:429). How does one recognize successful building, growth, and maturity? Ridderbos (1975:429) writes, “Its presupposition is on the one hand that the New Testament church did not

immediately reach its final goal and perfection; on the other hand that therein it is the abiding object of God's care over it and has itself been called to progress, extension, consolidation, in a word, to its own self-upbuilding".

This concept of "building" is naturally linked to the New Testament images of the church as a "house", "temple", and "building" of God (1 Cor. 3:5-17; Eph. 2:19-22; also Christians as "living stones", 1 Pet. 2:5), just as the concept of the church "growing" is rooted in the illustrations of a "field" and "body" (1 Cor. 3:5-17; 12:12-31; Eph. 4:12-16) (Ridderbos, 1975:429). Tracing these metaphors then leads us ultimately to God who "causes the growth" (1 Cor. 3:5-9), and to Christ the "Builder" who is also the "cornerstone" and "foundation" of the building (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 4:6; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20), the "Head" from which the body grows (Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:19) (Saucy, 1972:24-38). Since Christ has spoken authoritatively through His apostles and prophets, they too are included in this "foundation" (Eph. 2:20), and Paul is called an "architect" (1 Cor. 3:10) (MacArthur, 1997:1806; Ridderbos, 1975:430-432). As for the Old Testament background of these concepts, Paul may have been conscious of continuing the legacy of faithful Jeremiah who was also called "to build and to plant" on behalf of God, the supreme Builder and Planter of His people (Jer. 1:10; 24:6) (Ridderbos, 1975:429-30; Goetzmann, 1986:247-252; Michel, 1985:674-77).

There are two major ways in which Christ intends to build and grow His church: through "both extensive-missionary and intensive-confirmatory upbuilding", i.e., to grow 'outward' through multiplication and 'upward' through maturation (Reymond, 2000:499; Ridderbos, 1975:432-33; Gilliland, 1998:197, 260-261; Saucy, 1972:91-97). As Peterson (2000:199) notes in Eph. 4:11-12, "When they [the apostles and prophets] are listed together with evangelists and pastor-teachers, the impression is given that 'building' (*oikodome*, v.12) the body of Christ involves both growth in size through evangelism and growth to maturity through teaching and the exercise of love". Confusion, compromise, and complacency abound when churches are not gripped by these two main purposes that their Master has for His church (Mayhue, 2002:13-21).

2.2.2.2 The extensive building of the church through *multiplication*

The extension of the church is but the extension of God's passion to see His glory spread among the nations (Gen. 12:3; Ps. 67; 96; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, etc.) (Piper, 2001:97-119; 1993:1-218). This expansion of Christ's church is God's current chapter in His great redemptive, worldwide story of magnifying Himself. It was Christ's greatest concern before He left the earth (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). He delays His return to earth for this sole reason—to bring in the rest of His elect (2 Pet. 3:8-9; Matt. 24:14). Why else has Christ left His people on this earth, when every other purpose of the church can be better accomplished in Heaven (e.g., worship, edification, unity)? As MacArthur (1991:59) says, "The church exists for the sake of the world. ... The ultimate goal of all ministry is to reach others for Christ".

It was this passion that fuelled Paul's entire existence. The purpose of his apostleship was "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake", that the nations might "glorify God for His mercy," that new churches would be planted where "Christ was not already named" (Rom. 1:5; 15:9-11, 20-21). As Ridderbos (1975:433) writes:

The extension and progress of the church, in a qualitative as well as in a geographical sense, is in [Paul's] train of thought among the essential characteristics and conditions of the Christian church in the time between Christ's ascension and future appearing. All his own missionary work, which drove him from one place to another, from Jerusalem to Illyria and from Illyria to Rome and Spain (Rom. 15:19ff) is the proof of it.

Paul's concept of the "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) is not of merely a static message, but of a dynamic, living, advancing force, just as Luke also spoke of the "growing Word" in Acts (6:7; 12:24; 19:20; cf. Rom. 1:16). Paul speaks in Colossians 1:5-6 of the forward march of the gospel "which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also...." He asks the Thessalonians to pray that this gospel word would "run forth and be glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1). Often in Paul, "gospel" refers to the actual "act of proclaiming" (i.e., the work of evangelism) (Rom. 1:16-17; Php. 1:5; 2:22; 4:3,15) (O'Brien, 1995:62, 80-81). Ridderbos (1975:433) rightly observes, "The key motif of [Paul's] missionary thought is the breakthrough of the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations (Rom. 1:16; 3:22ff; 15:9ff)....". Thus, "everything works toward the *pleroma*, the full number intended by God both of Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 11:12, 25), a perspective with which for Paul the end of history coincides (Rom. 11:25,26)" (Ridderbos, 1975:433).

This view of the gospel meant Paul was insistent that the churches he planted catch his contagious gospel-passion for the expansion of Christ's church among the nations (a passion seen already in the evangelistic heartbeat of the church in Acts, cf. 2.1.3.5). For this reason, Paul sought the partnership of the Roman church in his strategy for reaching Spain (Rom. 15:22-29). In Philippians he refers to ordinary Roman Christians in Rome involved in personal evangelism (1:14-18), while also commending the Philippians for their partnership in this gospel cause through their own proclaiming and through their support of him (1:3-7; 2:16; 4:3,15-18) (cf. similar commendations in 1 Thess. 1:7-8; Rom. 1:8). Surely this missionary zeal was a part of what Paul expected the churches to "imitate" in him (1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:33-11:1). Ephesians 6 offers further proof that Paul expected participation in this outreach, where in vv.15, 17 ('feet fitted with readiness...taking up the sword of the Spirit, the word of God') Paul "declares that all Christians are involved in spiritual warfare in which they are to stand firm...by both resistance and proclamation" (Reymond, 2000:500) (cf. O'Brien, 1995, whose whole book has contributed to the insights of this paragraph).

Tied to this is the indirect missionary effort of a local church through the godly lives of its members. Often Paul spoke of the outward impact of Christians' behaviour before a watching world, urging believers to live upright, gentle lives "in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17; Php. 4:5). Colossians speaks of believers

“walking with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of every opportunity,” and having “gracious, speech, seasoned with salt” in their response to unbelievers (4:5-6). Titus 2 speaks powerfully of the evangelistic impact of a godly life in every sector of society, a life that silences every accusation (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14; 6:1). Tying it all together, Philippians 1:27 shows how a Christian’s reasons for holy conduct all revolve around the gospel – adorning it, defending it, and sharing with Paul in its advance (O’Brien, 1995:117-118) (cf. MacArthur, 1997, Reymond, 2000:499-500, and Ridderbos, 1975:434 for this whole paragraph). It is at this point that the two aspects of the building of the church (extensive and intensive) overlap most, for God has ordained that the cause of the gospel be carried on the shoulders of mature local churches filled with transformed people.

2.2.2.3 The intensive building of the church through *maturation*

“There are few areas in the Christian church where we fail more catastrophically than in the care we give to new believers (Green, 1992:292).” An African proverb states, “We cannot give birth to children and then leave them” (Van Rheen, 1996a:153). In His parting commission to His disciples, Christ left no doubt about the mandate for ‘follow-up’, calling them to “make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:19). The foundation has been laid, the cornerstone is secure, and now the elect stones are being added *so that* they might be built up in holiness (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). Until Christ returns, this building project continues (1 Cor. 3:10-12), this planted field keeps yielding a harvest (1 Cor. 3:6-7), this body must keep growing (Eph. 4:11-16).

This should be no surprise for all who know the living Builder, Planter, and Head who energizes the whole endeavour (Hesselgrave, 2000:18-19; Ridderbos, 1975:436). God’s vision for a flourishing, edified church is unmistakable in all that Paul writes (e.g., 1 Cor. 3; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 2-4; Col. 2-3, etc.) (Winkler, 1996:76). Just as he envisioned the dynamic of the gospel in its expansion, so also he was confident of the organic power of the gospel to transform new converts (O’Brien, 1995:62-63).

Like any loving parent, “Paul does not want his converts to remain spiritual infants (Gal. 4:3; 1 Cor. 3:1; Eph. 4:14)” (Reymond, 2000:500-501). His goal was clear: “I am in labor until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19); “I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith” (Php. 1:25). This zeal for their growth also permeates his prayers, as he yearns for them to “bear fruit,” “grow,” “increase,” and “abound,” so that they would be “established” and ready for Christ’s return (Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thess. 3:12-13). Paul knew no ‘easy-believism’, no salvation without discipleship. Conversion equalled a faith-generated “obedience” to Christ as Lord (Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26) (Peterson, 2000:186-187; Moo, 1996:51-53). Colossians 2:6-7 sums up Paul’s agenda for every convert, new or old: “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in

Him and established in your faith....” Such continual growth is both God’s guarantee (Php. 2:13) and the Christian’s duty (Rom. 12:2).

Paul is convinced that growth cannot occur unless the work of edification is being done both at the leadership and the membership level. Pastors and elders are called to be the “construction supervisors” who guide the building process through faithful instruction and equipping of the workers (Eph. 4:11-13) (Mayhue, 1995:336-337). Biblical leaders are God’s ordained instruments for accomplishing the building, planting, and watering (1 Cor. 3:5-15). Only when the leaders faithfully exercise their gifts in teaching and shepherding does the body grow (1 Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:4-8) (MacArthur, 1997:1732).

Likewise, the participation of every member of the church is indispensable in this great building project. Each member contributes to the construction work through his/her commitment to practicing dozens of “one-another” commands (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:25; Rom. 12:16) and through using their specific spiritual gift(s) (1 Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:4-8) (Volumes could be said about these exciting dynamics of body-life in the church!) (Mack & Swavely, 1996:72-174; MacArthur, 1991:109-110, 165-166; Whitney, 1996:15-208) (Cf. also Annexure D). Speaking of this member participation, Getz & Wall proclaim (2000:69), “*This is the key to growth—both spiritually and numerically!*” (emphasis theirs). The unifying principle behind all of this wonderful variety and diversity in the body is Paul’s persistent motto: “Pursue love... Let all things be done for edification...love edifies” (1 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 13-14; Rom. 13:8-10; 15:2; Eph. 4:15; Col. 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:11) (Goetzmann, 1986:253). Every thought, word, deed, and use of spiritual gifts in the church must pass through this filter: ‘Is this loving and will this edify?’

A crucial term in this discussion must still be defined: “maturity”. Any builder or farmer knows that not all growth is good. Paul laboured to see a *certain kind* of growth toward a *certain* goal, “that we may present every man complete in Christ...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ...to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ ” (Col. 1:28-29; Eph. 4:11-16). “Just as Paul ‘struggles’ to ‘present everyone mature in Christ’ (Col. 1:28-29), so Epaphras ‘struggles’ in his prayers for his converts, ‘so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills’ (Col. 4:12)” (Peterson, 2000:194). What exactly did Paul have in mind when he spoke of this “maturity” (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 3:10; 14:20; Php. 3:15)?

In all three of the passages just cited, the root of the underlined word is the same in Greek: τέλειος, “mature, full-grown, complete, whole” (a root found in Paul’s letters 8x as adj., 2x as verb) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Peterson, 2000:192). After reviewing Hebrew and Greek backgrounds to this key word, along with Paul’s context in Colossians, Peterson (2000:193) concludes:

The 'perfect' or 'complete' Christian will be the one whom God enables to persevere in this Christ-centred, gospel-based lifestyle, firm to the end. The apostle prays for his converts to be mature in this sense (1:10-12) and makes it the goal of his proclamation, warning and teaching (1:28-2:7). The image is not one of sinlessness but of blamelessness, steadfastness, fruitfulness and thankfulness.

Writing on the overall topic of maturity, Getz & Wall (2000:42) comment: "As seen in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Corinthians, God measures the spiritual maturity of a local church by the degree of faith, hope, and love expressed and reflected by its members".

How is such a challenging 'ministry of maturity' accomplished? O'Brien (1995:88), answers:

...it is through the ongoing teaching and warning of each person that the proclamation of Christ is carried out. Clearly for Paul and his colleagues evangelistic and missionary outreach was not achieved by some superficial presentation of the saving message about Christ to the world; rather, it was effected through warning and intensive teaching in pastoral situations.

At the end of his essay on the key Pauline passages on maturity, Peterson (2000:200-201) gives a summary deserving to be quoted in full, showing how "maturity was a goal of Paul's mission at two different levels":

On the one hand, he was concerned that his converts should realize and express the maturity that was potentially already theirs in Christ. On the other hand, he was concerned to move them forwards toward the ultimate encounter with Christ, when the perfection of Christ himself would be fully experienced by his people together. To achieve his goal, the apostle gave himself wholeheartedly to a ministry of proclamation, warning and teaching, that included the writing of his epistles. As he unfolded God's total plan of salvation, he showed Christians how to live appropriately in the light of what is already fact and what is yet to be attained in Christ. Part of his strategy was to establish a pattern of ministry in the churches that would in many respects duplicate his own, enabling God's people to promote 'the body's building itself up in love' (Eph. 4:16) and to move together towards God's ultimate goal for them in Christ.

Looking at Paul's example further reinforces this necessity of building churches toward maturity. In Romans 15:19 he affirms, "from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." How could he claim to have successfully evangelised a region spanning almost 2,000 kilometers in such a relatively short time period (Moo, 1996:894-895)? The only reasonable explanation is that Paul is claiming, "that he has brought to completion in the regions designated his own special apostolic task of planting strategic churches... 'the message had been...proclaimed widely enough and planted firmly enough to assure that the name of Christ would soon be heard throughout its borders'" (Moo, 1996:896, incl. qt. from Knox).

Notice that for Paul, the activity of "preaching the gospel" equally included *both* the evangelistic campaigns *and* the nurturing of new converts in healthy churches. Bowers urged evangelical missions back to this biblical pattern through his groundbreaking 1987 article, "Fulfilling the gospel: the scope of the Pauline mission". He wrote (1986:198; also 1993:909-610):

A distinguishing dimension of the Pauline mission is that it found its fullest sense of completion neither in an evangelistic preaching tour nor in individual conversions but only *in the presence of*

firmly established churches. ...What lies, in effect, within the compass of Paul's familiar formula 'proclaiming the gospel' is, I suggest, not simply an initial preaching mission but the full sequence of activities *resulting in settled churches.* ...He was not only proclaiming and converting; he was also founding communities (emphasis mine) (cf. Kostenberger & O'Brien, 2001:184).

O'Brien (1995:42) summarizes Bower's case and reiterates it from Paul's epistles:

From his *practice* of residential missions (at Corinth and Ephesus) and nurture of churches (1 Thess. 2:10-12), from his *priorities* (1 Thess. 2:17-3:13; 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 10:13-16), and from his *description of his assignment* (Col. 1:24-2:7; Rom. 1:1-15; 15:14-16) in relation to admonition and teaching believers to bring them to full maturity in Christ, it is clear that the *nurture of emerging churches* is understood by Paul to be an integral feature of his missionary task (emphasis his)(cf. Bowers, 1986:197).

Reed (1991:9) punctuates this point, emphasizing Paul's plan to always establish a "beachhead of Christians" who could "go...and have an impact on their own community."

He knew that he had to stick with that plan, that the churches needed to be central. He also knew that if he kept going further and further out with the gospel and he did not have strong established churches, his whole base would be eroded. If his base was eroded, the gospel would not progress and ultimately he would have to take the gospel to them again. And, he would not have the additional help and reinforcement or the models that were needed" (emphasis his).

2.2.2.4 Summary

Ridderbos (1975:432, 435) weaves together these two aspects (2.2.2.2 & 2.2.2.3 above) of church growth:

In accordance with the redemptive-historical character of the church this upbuilding must be seen first of all as the continuing work of God with his people (Rom. 14:19,20), whose temple and dwelling place it is. This continuing and consummating work consists both in the bringing in of those who till now have been without (cf. Rom. 15:20ff) and in the inner strengthening and perfecting of all who in Christ now belong to it (1 Cor. 14:3; 1 Thess. 5:11, et al.). ...And the deepest motives for this [work of upbuilding], just as for the work of the apostle himself, lie in the consciousness that the church is included in the great world-encompassing work of God in Jesus Christ. It is not the church itself that is the ultimate object, not its numbers and prestige, but the revelation of the full eschatological salvation in Christ, of whom the church is the *pleroma*, that is to say, the bearer of the glory of Christ".

There must be no dichotomy between these two objectives of church building: evangelising and edifying. These two strands are woven together in the over-arching vision of God's plan to fill the world with His glory (Rom. 11:36) by filling up the church to maturity in the fullness of Christ (cf. use of "*pleroma*" in Eph. 1:10,23; 3:19; 4:13) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Lincoln, 1990:73-80). "As the people of God and as the body of Christ the goal and destiny of the church lie in its *pleroma*, in the extensive as well as in the intensive sense of the word" (Ridderbos, 1975:435). This "fullness" is accomplished through God's ingathering of His elect (Rom. 11:25-32) and through the building of Christ's body through the various gifts, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13) (Reymond, 2000:500-501).

Another key from Paul's ministry deserves mentioning: his "dependence on and confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit at every level of the church-building endeavor" as an "essential factor that gave the work its dynamic staying power" (Howell, 1996:206; cf. Hesselgrave on this same theme in the Gospels, 2000a:28-29, 30-31). In his excellent article, missiologist Don Howell (1996) draws from Allen's classic text (1912; latest edition, 1962). Speaking of Paul, Howell (1996:204) writes, "The simplicity and brevity with which he taught his converts the foundational elements of the faith stimulated the believers to dependence on the Spirit in living out their faith and applying biblical principles to their local contexts". Though Paul was forced to defend his apostleship in the volatile Galatian and Corinthian situations, he did not solve problems by decree or by lording it over them, since his "bedrock conviction" was that "the Spirit dwells in the church to convict, correct, guide, and fortify her" (1996:204). After a detailed exegesis of all the Spirit references in 1-2 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:5-6; 2:1-2; 4:8; 5:16-122; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:1-2), Howell (1996:214) concludes, "Paul believes that the Spirit has been intimately involved on every level of the church planting endeavor in the Macedonian capital. He is certain that even in his forced and extended absence the same Spirit will preserve, strengthen, and perfect this young church".

Through Paul's example and the content in his epistles, Christ has drawn a definite pattern for how He wants His church to be built and to mature. Only those who are gripped by the same convictions as Paul to build mature churches will be ready to properly evaluate and strengthen churches in Africa (or anywhere) (Schreiner, 2001:39). The guidelines and the goal are clear, and the cause is urgent. As Reed (2001:46) writes,

The stakes are high. Many men around Paul deserted him and their faith. Many of the churches faltered. These truths [in Paul's epistles] contain a crucial message for the church of the twenty-first century that is serious about participating effectively on the front lines of the progress of the gospel. These universal truths must be adhered to and carefully worked out in all cultures and in all times.

2.3 Confirmation and conclusions

2.3.1 Kerygma and didache drawn from Acts & Pauline letters

Teaching is central in the church-building process (both in evangelism and edification), as seen throughout Acts and Paul's letters. Thus, every church worker should diligently ensure that what he teaches is in line with Scripture. In Acts the reader saw that the early church was devoted to the "apostles' teaching" (2:42). What was the core curriculum that the apostles were teaching? In Colossians 2:8, Paul mentions how Christ and the world each have their own "elementary principles" (στοιχεῖα, "basics, 'ABCs', first principles") (cf. Col. 2:20; Heb. 5:11-14) (Louw-Nida, 1993; Robertson, 1995). When Paul planted a new church, what were the basic doctrines that he regularly used in laying the foundation? What were the essential ingredients of what Paul often called "the traditions" (τὰς παραδόσεις, that which is passed on) received from Christ and

taught to the churches (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15, 3:6; similarly called: “commandments”, 1 Thess. 4:2; Louw-Nida, 1993)? And when Paul urged Timothy to “guard what has been entrusted to you” (1 Tim. 6:20), what were the core doctrines that churches and their leaders must preserve at all costs if they want to be established (also called in the Pastorals: “the faith, the trust, the good deposit, the standard of sound words, the sound doctrine” being passed down) (Reed, 1997c:8-9,19-20; Louw-Nida, 1993)?

To map out the biblical process for establishing churches, we must find answers to these questions about apostolic teaching. Some will suggest that the answer of what to teach is found in one word: “Scripture” (the closed canon), the final body of doctrine to be passed down for any church to be well established. This is true, but too general to be very helpful. One does not introduce a newborn infant to the whole food pantry in the first year, or even in the first few years. The church planter and pastor must know where to start, what basic diet to feed people when evangelising and discipling the church toward maturity. Failure to identify and teach these fundamentals in a well-ordered, structured way has led to failure in the maturing of churches (Hesselgrave, 2000a:219-253; Getz & Wall, 2000:141-143; Reed, 1992:142-43; 1997a:8-12; 1997b:15-16; 1997c:33).

Finding a good summary of these basics from Acts and Paul’s epistles should prove quite helpful. Furthermore, such a synopsis of their instruction can also serve as a substitute for a lengthy treatment of Lukan or Pauline theology which is not possible within the constraints of this thesis (and is a task which has been ably accomplished already by such scholars as Reymond [2000], Zuck & Bock [1994], Ridderbos [1975], Schreiner [2001], Gilliland [1998]).

Two words are used by scholars for this core curriculum of New Testament church planting: *kerygma*, and *didache*. *Kerygma* comes from a New Testament term, “κήρυγμα”, used by Paul especially regarding the content of the gospel message that he proclaimed (e.g., Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:4; 15:14) (Louw-Nida, 1993). One commentator states, “The meaning of *kerygma* all six times that Paul uses this term is consistently the message about Jesus, the content of the gospel Paul so courageously proclaimed throughout his ministry” (Farrel, 1996:445) (cf. Gilliland, 1998:32,274-275; Reymond, 2000:35-36).

Didache is derived from “διδάσκειν, διδάσκω,” terms used in the New Testament (as seen already in Acts 2:42) to refer to the instruction given to edify believers (Reymond, 2000:36; Louw-Nida, 1993; Gilliland, 1998:211). This distinction between *kerygma* and *didache* has at times been overdrawn, ignoring overlap in the two terms (e.g., Acts includes evangelistic “teaching”; Johnson, 1997:162). But it can still serve as a helpful tool for summarizing apostolic preaching and teaching (Reed, 1997c:33-38). In the boxes below, the reader will find helpful summaries of these two categories:

Kerygma – Essential elements of evangelistic preaching in Acts :

(Key passages: Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 10:34-43; 17:22-31; 26:6-7, 22; Gal. 1:1-5; 3:1-18; 1 Cor. 15; Rom. 1:1-7; 4:24-25; 10:9-13; Eph. 1:1-3:21; Col. 1:9-10; 1 Tim. 3:16)

1. (Consider the *past*) This gospel was prophesied beforehand in the Scriptures, as part of the Creator's unfolding plan to bless the families of the earth through the seed of David, in the form of a New Covenant in which there would be forgiveness of sin, and a placing of God's Spirit within man.
2. (Consider the *present*) This gospel was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Anointed Messiah), the Son of God, the seed of David, the King of Kings, conceived of the Holy Spirit, who came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, was attested by miracles and signs, died, was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
3. (Consider the *future*) This Jesus will come again to judge the earth, and set up the kingdom of God for all time, and after He abolishes all rule and authority, He will reign forever and ever.
4. (*Decide!*) All who hear this message must repent and believe for the forgiveness of sins, and then be baptized. All who are saved enter into a new community and are given the Spirit of God as a pledge of their inheritance as they eagerly await the Saviour who will return for them.

*Drawn mostly from Reed (1997c:37), but also from Reymond (2000:36-44), House (1981:120), Johnson (1997:143-161), Gilliland (1998:274-75), and Allen (1962:62-77).

Reymond (2000:43-44) adds this crucial insight on the *kerygma*: "In sum, it was the proclamation by and with the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2:4), not of the cross *per se*, but of God's mighty raising of Jesus from death three days after his crucifixion—together with its implications for men—that turned the first-century world upside down for Christ... This aspect of the primitive gospel proclamation demanded the pagan's attention and response". Reymond (2000:37) drives home the application to our own mission efforts today: "In [identifying these core components of the apostolic gospel], we may better discern: (1) whether our own evangelistic preaching today includes the content that it should, and (2) why, perhaps, our evangelistic efforts are not as effective as they might be".

Didache – Essential elements of teaching for edification, mostly from Paul:

1. Each believer is instructed to lay aside his old life, renew His mind in the teaching (authoritative, inspired tradition passed down), and conform his new life to the will of God (Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:1-2).
2. A set of virtues, only possible through God's resources, is to characterize each believer (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12; cf. 2 Pet. 1:1-11).
3. Individual households must be ordered properly, consistent with God's created design for man and for the Church (Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Particularly, roles and responsibilities must be defined for: husbands and fathers; wives and mothers; children.
4. God's household, the church, the pillar and support of the truth, must be properly ordered according to sound doctrine received from the apostles (1 Tim. 2:1-5:22; Titus 1:5-2:15; 3:9-11; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Eph. 3:1-13; Col. 1:24-29). Roles and responsibilities must be defined for: corporate worship services (cf. 1 Cor. 11-14); pastors/elders/overseers (cf. 2 Tim.); deacons; deaconesses; older men and women; younger men and women; widows; giving and financial matters (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Tim. 3-6; 2 Thess. 3).
5. Each believer must be committed to do his part, both generally in one-another ministry, and specifically in the use of his gifts in the building up of the church (Rom. 12:3-16; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:1-16).
6. A pattern of relationships within the church must be observed – characterized by love, brotherhood, mutual acceptance and respect, in which each is diligent to pursue unity in the bond of peace (Rom. 12-15:13; Php. 1:27-2:5; 4:2-5; Gal. 5:12-6:5; Eph. 4:1-6). This includes teaching believers how to handle conflict in a godly way (cf. Matt. 18:15-18).
7. A pattern of relationships in the world must be observed – characterised by respect for government, employees and other authorities, and love and good deeds toward neighbours and those in need (Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 2:14; 3:1,14; cf. 1 Pet. 2:11-25). This includes living out a godly example before a watching world (Titus 2), and being ready to proclaim Christ at every opportunity (Col. 4:2-6; cf. 1 Pet. 3:8-17).
8. Each believer must lead a responsible, Spirit-filled, sober life: working hard, providing for his own, making the most of the time (because the days are evil) and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies (Eph. 5:1-22; 6:10-18; 1 Thess. 3:6-15; 4:9-12; cf. 1 Pet. 5:6-11).

*Taken almost entirely from Reed (1997c:37-38; 2001:45-60) (but cf. also Allen [1962:62-77] and Wegenast [1986: 770-771], Zuck & Bock [1994:243-368], and Ridderbos [1975:436]).

Again, the reader must keep in mind the overlap between these two categories, as reiterated by Brown (1986:66): "[after giving lengthy support, he concludes] that the kerygma of missionary preaching, the teaching of the epistles and the Gospel accounts of Jesus were not separate compartmentalized activities belonging to different phases of the church, but were in fact simultaneous and complementary".

Perhaps the reader has noticed the parallels between these two categories (*Kerygma & Didache*) and the previous sections (2.2.2.2 & 2.2.2.3) on the extensive and intensive growth of the church. Christ's church is being built when His servants are *evangelising* with the biblical *kerygma* and when converts are being *established* and elders are being *entrusted* with the biblical *didache*. Such faithful church-building will prove effective in any culture, whenever the messenger takes these timeless truths and incarnates them in the recipient's culture. The New Testament does not give a complete listing of curriculum for church-building, but rather a skeletal outline upon which we must add localized applications (Schreiner, 2001:388-389; Gilliland, 1998:43, 210-212, 221-22). Only when local believers own and particularize God's truth in their own context will mature churches begin to flourish for the glory of Christ (Van Rhee, 1996a:151-52, 179-189; Howell, 1996:204).

2.3.2 Reiteration

Up to now, a barrelful of biblical principles have been collected from Acts and the Pauline epistles showing Christ's passion and plan for building mature churches. Though these principles have already been well researched and documented elsewhere (as seen in the many sources cited), such a study was needful, acting as a machete to clear the way for the groundbreaking work of this thesis in its application to needs in Africa.

The exegetical foundation had to be laid first. In speaking about "core principles that set... Paul's agenda for the missionary enterprise," Reed writes, "That agenda will work itself out in every generation and in every culture in a different way. ...we are not saying this is the blueprint, but we are saying that Paul gave us some patterns, some prototypes, and some principles that are to under gird our strategies as we move from century to century" (1991:15; cf. O'Brien, 1995:ix; Mayhue, 1995:336). Other writers confirm these exegetical findings. Scobie (qtd. in O'Brien, 1995:x-xi) writes:

The importance of Paul for the subsequent missionary expansion of the Church can scarcely be overemphasized. By his own extraordinary missionary activity concentrated into a relatively few years and by the theology worked out in his letters Paul laid the foundations for the later expansion in both practice and theory.

Kuen (qtd. in Strauch, 1995:116-117) adds to this:

Has not the history of twenty centuries of Christianity proved that the plan of the primitive church is the only one which is suitable for all times and places, is most flexible in its adaptation to the most diverse conditions, is the best able to resist and stand against persecutions, and offers the maximum of possibilities for the full development of the spiritual life? ...All heresies and deviations in the church spring from the abandonment of the Scripture and the model for the church which they present. ...The churches established by the apostles remain the valid models for churches of all times and places.

By now this exegetical study has shown that the central focus of missions in this age is to glorify God through building mature churches among all nations. Van Rheeën (1996:187) writes, "The goal of missions is not social work or evangelism but the establishment of indigenous churches. Only indigenous churches, rooted in their cultures, will be able to accomplish effective social and evangelistic ministries". In line with this, Reed (1991:3, 15) asserts two fundamental statements:

The first is that leadership training is always a matter of establishing churches. The second is that missionary activity is always a matter of establishing churches. When you understand these basic concepts, they will shape your entire agenda of leadership training and missionary activity...World evangelization – in either the shallowest or the deepest sense of the definition – is always a matter of establishing churches. If we lose sight of that we change our definitions and our goal, we undermine our effectiveness, and we move away from some very important biblical patterns.... If churches are established, the gospel will continue to be a strong light, indefinitely, within the community and continue to be a base for penetrating other nations and communities beyond.

2.3.3 Concluding criteria for a mature church

In laying the exegetical foundation, the researcher has followed the New Testament pattern by overlapping discussions on the goal of maturity and the process of reaching that goal. But as this thesis now looks toward field research in South African churches, it would seem helpful to take the exegetical data from Acts and Paul and clarify both the end *product* of a mature church and the *process* for reaching that goal. Though one might hesitate at first to speak of a church being "mature" (knowing that ultimate maturity is not achieved until Christ returns), one must remember what was seen in 2.2.2.3 above. Paul did speak of a level of maturity that was attainable and recognizable this side of Heaven (as clearly implied in Php. 3:15; 1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:11-16). Granted, the New Testament churches were all at various stages of maturity or immaturity, so a complete portrait of a mature church is not given; however, enough of the basic contours are given to be clear on how to develop church maturity today.

Based on Acts & the Pauline epistles, these are the criteria for a mature church, a congregation that is responsible and strong, ready to plant other churches:

(Note: rather than listing every supporting Scripture, only key passages are cited, along with the relevant exegetical sections from 2.1 and 2.2. An even more condensed and concrete version of this list appears in 3.2.1, #3, in a sort of 'initial criteria' list to be used when church-planters/developers examine their church plants.)

1. It must have elders (overseers/pastors) who are qualified in their exemplary, godly character, their doctrinal content, and their ministry skills (Acts 6:1-7; 20:17-35; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; cf. 2.1.2; 2.2.1.3; 2.2.2.3).
2. Its leaders must be regularly feeding the church with the exposition of Scripture (cf. 2.1.2; 2.1.3.1; 2.2.1.3; 2.2.2.3). They must also recognize threats to the church's stability, warn

and strengthen the flock, and guard against all attacks on the Bible (cf. 2.2.1, esp. 2.2.1.3; 2.2.2.3).

3. Its leaders must be faithfully ordering God's household in a biblical way (e.g., worship services, regularly nurturing and educating members, training deacons, handling finances, widows, etc.) (cf. 2.2.1.3; 2.2.2.3; 1 Cor. 14:40). This order includes worship services and songs that are God-centred, Scripture-shaped, and genuinely edifying for God's people (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17).
4. Its members must have been truly converted through understanding the gospel and responding in repentance and faith (Acts 20:21; Romans 1-4; cf. 2.1.3.5). (NB: Whenever "members" is used it includes a church's leaders.)
5. Its members must be preserving the purity of the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (2.2.1.1 – Galatians; Romans 1-4).
6. Its members must submit to the authority of Scripture and to the authority of their leaders (Acts 2:42; 17:11; cf. 2.1.3.1; 2.2.1.1 – 2 Cor.; 1 Thess. 5:12-13).
7. Its members must keep standing firm in their faith, unshaken by false teaching, understanding the total sufficiency of Christ and His Word (cf. 2.2.1.1 – 1-2 Thess.; 2.2.1.2 – Colossians; cf. 2.2.1.3).
8. Its members must understand God's purpose (in Christ) to magnify Himself through the church, plus their new position in Christ (personally, and corporately) and the new responsibilities that brings (cf. 2.2.1.2 – Ephesians, Colossians).
9. Its members must be growing in personal holiness, living responsible, fruitful, Spirit-filled lives, not being conformed to this world but being transformed into Christlikeness by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12-13; Eph. 4-6; cf. 2.2.1.1 – 1-2 Thess., 1 Cor.; Titus 2-3).
10. It must be committed to the biblical church discipline process for confronting and restoring wayward members and preserving the purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 1:20; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

11. It must have a good foundation of godly families, starting with leaders who set the example in blameless marriages and parenting (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6; Eph. 5:22-6:4; Col. 3:18-21; cf. 2.2.1.3).
12. Its members must be committed to genuine fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42-46; 4:32-37; cf. 2.1.3.2), not being divisive but committed to unity, loving and encouraging one another, and using their spiritual gifts to edify one another (Romans 12-15; Eph. 4:1-16; cf. 2.2.1.1 – 1 Cor.; Philemon; cf. 2.2.2.3).
13. Its members must be taking financial responsibility for the leaders and ministries of their church, starting with supporting their pastor(s) as much as they are able (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:9-12; 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 6:6).
14. Its members must be committed to Christ's two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; cf. 2.1.3.3).
15. Its members must be committed to fervent, biblical praying (Acts 2:42; 4:23-27; 12:5-17; cf. 2.1.3.4).
16. Its members must be unified around a commitment to the advance of the gospel through their godly lives, their evangelism, and through church planting (Acts 2:47; 4:31; 8:1-4; cf. 2.1.3.5; 2.1.4; 2.2.1.1 – Romans; 2.2.1.2 – Philippians; cf. 2.2.2.2).
17. Its elders/pastors must be training up future elders to whom leadership can be entrusted (cf. 2.2.1.3 – 2 Timothy).
18. It should show a growing initiative, responsibility, and ownership in governing itself, supporting itself, and growing itself (inwardly and outwardly) (Eph. 4:11-16; cf. all of the above criteria imply responsibility, as does the term "mature", i.e., 'grown up', weaned from over-dependence).

This is not merely a list of ideals for a church to be striving for but never attaining. However high this standard may seem compared to the dismal condition of many churches today, God does not require what cannot be fulfilled in His strength. Just as real local churches fulfilled these criteria in New Testament times,

so today it can be done and is being done⁷. These criteria will probably not be fulfilled by every attendee of the church (Matt. 13:24-30, expect tares among the wheat). But it should be true of a large enough majority that an honest observer would agree that the church's overall reputation is one of maturity. Of course, meeting this standard of maturity never negates a church's need to keep striving to "excel still more" in every area (1 Thess. 4:10; Php. 3:12-16). But if a church is unsure that it meets these biblical criteria, how can it be ready to plant other churches? *Multiplication of immature, mediocre churches will prove to be harmful to the long-term advance of the gospel in an area.*

2.3.4 The process of reaching church maturity

When churches have been planted that do not measure up to the biblical criteria, one must ask if the builders adhered to the biblical process. The Pauline strategy for establishing churches has already been studied in detail, both in 2.1.4 on "Effective church-planting" in Acts and in 2.2.2.3 on the maturation process of churches. Church planting was not normally the work of independent individuals; rather, established churches planted other churches (Hesselgrave, 2000a:96-98). From the base of the Antioch church, Paul repeatedly used a three-phase plan of *evangelising* strategic areas, *establishing* congregations through nurture (by letters and visits), and then *entrusting* leadership to local elders (Reed, 1997c:xi). As Van Rhee (1996b) writes:

Developing a strong movement of God in a new city or ethnic area requires the accomplishment of three essential missiological tasks. First, initial evangelism must lead to planting new churches. Second, Christians must be nurtured to maturity within these churches. Third, leaders must be trained to evangelize and plant other churches, pastor and shepherd the community of believers, and train still other leaders. ... While other mission tasks may amplify these three central tasks, a strong movement of God cannot come into being without their accomplishment (emphasis his).

2.3.5 Two helpful models for building mature churches

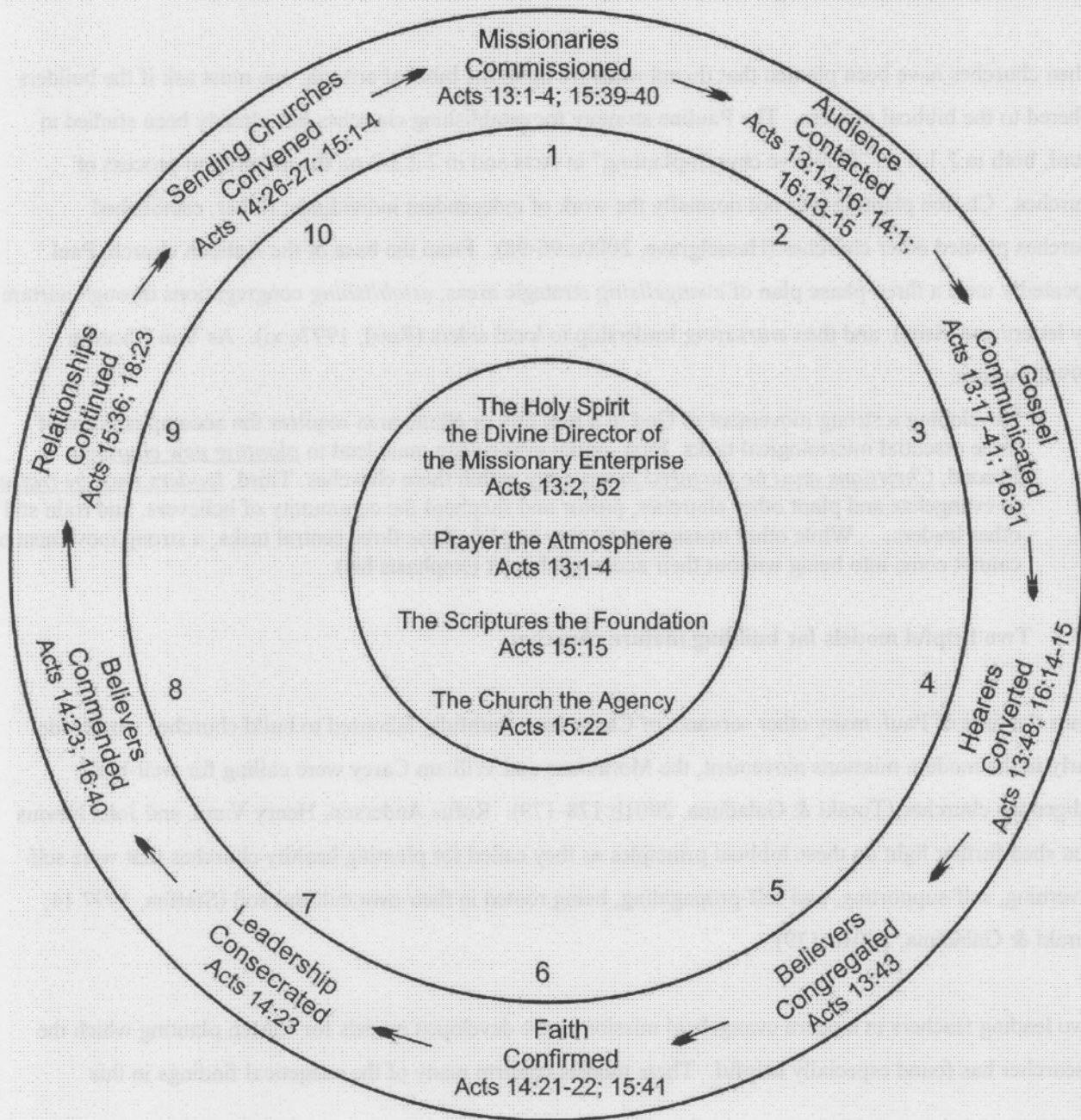
Since the time of Paul, many other servants of Christ have faithfully laboured to build churches worldwide. Early in the modern missions movement, the Moravians and William Carey were calling for well-built, indigenous churches (Turaki & Galadima, 2001b:178-179). Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, and John Nevius then shed further light on these biblical principles as they called for planting healthy churches that were self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, being rooted in their own cultural soil (Steffen, 1997:14; Turaki & Galadima, 2001b:179).

Two leading teachers in modern evangelical missions have developed models for church planting which the researcher has found especially helpful. These models confirm many of the exegetical findings in this

⁷ Mark Dever's booklet (2004), "The Nine Marks of a Healthy Church" reaffirm much of what the researcher has stated. Dever explains these on his helpful web page: www.9marks.org

chapter and they incorporate most of the principles gleaned from Acts and Paul. The first is from Hesselgrave, whose book, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, is on course to become a classic in its field (latest edition, 2000a). The whole book is framed by what he calls "The Pauline cycle" for church planting (2000a:31):

The Pauline Cycle



Steffen (1997:231), however, cautions that leadership training should parallel the entire process, rather than only surfacing at the 7th step.

A second model from which this thesis has also benefited is from Gailyn van Rheenen in his text, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies* (1996a). He states that this model was developed through scriptural study and through experience in church planting among the Kipsigi people of Kenya.

Van Rheenen's Model
(1996a:156-159; 179-189)

Four stages through which a local church must be matured (the "Kipsigis Nurturing Model"):

1. Initial Church Stage – introductory evangelism phase
*Role of church-planter: evangelist
2. Developing Church Stage – initial Christians are mentored to become a germinally reproducing, cohesive body through teaching
*Role of church-planter: church maturer, mentor
3. Independent Church Stage – local leaders assume all major leadership roles
*Role of church-planter: trainer of leaders (whom the local church selects for themselves); periodic catalyst
4. Mature Church Stage – ordained church leaders are selected
*Role of church-planter: occasional guest; consultant; periodic encourager

Based on an in-depth study of the body of Christ in Ephesians, Van Rheenen offers this definition that was reached by his team of Kipsigis church planters: "A mature church was understood as a congregation organised with its own elders, deacons, and evangelists who had matured to the point that it could 'build itself up in love, as each part does its work' (Eph. 4:16)."

He goes on to further define a mature church, building on some of the classic missiological definitions. Essentially, what he offers is this: *A biblically mature church is a responsible church that is self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-theologising within their own culture.* (The emphasis on the 'four selves' is in contrast to paternalistic missions, not to biblical God-dependent ministry.)

CHAPTER 3 - FIELD RESEARCH:
SHOWING THE CONDITION OF RECENT CHURCHES AND
CHURCH PLANTING IN THE BUSA

It is never easy for an outside observer to accurately diagnose the maturity of one church, let alone a large group of churches like the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA). A church is no mere machine that comes with convenient gauges and meters that give a quick indication of its condition. But the local church is a body that has telltale signs of its health. So the researcher entered this field research phase conscious of the limitations, yet confident that the problem is serious enough to demand further analysis and is widespread enough that significant data would emerge. And it has. This will be shown in the two sections below, starting with the church survey findings, followed by the results from surveying key BUSA leaders in church planting and development.

The objective of this chapter is to show the condition of some of the young BUSA churches and church planting through the findings yielded from the church surveys and surveys of key BUSA leaders.

The reason that this chapter will not also cover broader research on the church in Africa is that this has been addressed already in 1.1 and will be addressed in 5.7. The researcher decided that it might be too distracting (if not impossible) in chapters 3 and 4 to try including much broader, Africa-wide field research. So chapters 3-4 will focus in on one African case study, the BUSA, which will be treated as a small piece of the whole African pie.

3.1 Survey findings in recent church plants in the BUSA

A sample of this survey can be found in "Annexure A". Overall, the researcher would say that the church planting surveys yielded moderate success but were not as revealing as he had hoped. This was probably due to both the weaknesses of a more quantitative approach and the way that the researcher formatted the survey and phrased the questions. The survey was six pages long with 66 questions, 10 of them being short answer questions requiring more than a quick multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank answer. Most respondents took at least one hour to complete the survey. But because of the variety of questions on the survey, even though some questions did not work there were plenty of other questions that did. Despite the chaff, there still seemed to be a good supply of helpful data about these young churches.

Following some of Neuman's (1997:31) quantitative survey description, a church planting survey was created and 270 copies were made for BUSA pastors. Based on feedback from each distribution point, it is estimated that about 230 surveys reached their intended recipient. This was because of obstacles such as pastors not attending regional meetings, not receiving mail, or never receiving a survey that was supposed to be hand-delivered via another nearby pastor who promised but failed to do so. Yet, 230 recipients means

that nearly 70% of the targeted research field (the estimated 335 BUSA churches planted since 1990) received a survey.

Out of these 230 surveys distributed, 83 were returned, which is a 36% return rate. According to some research estimates (saying to expect only 10%), this appears to be a good return rate (Miller, 2003). This was especially encouraging after the initial response of less than 10 surveys returned after the researcher handed out 70 to be completed during the BUSA Assembly in Kimberley. This slow start was eventually overcome, thanks to the efforts of some of the BUSA area coordinators, some Christ Seminary students who helped with distribution, other church leaders who helped to chase down missing surveys, plus plenty of e-mails, phone calls, and personal contacts from the researcher himself.

The survey results will be listed here under the same eight headings as were used in the survey, some in paragraph form and others in tables. The seven BUSA territorial associations were unevenly represented, though all were represented. The Baptist Northern Association (BNA) by far had the strongest showing, bringing in 76% of the surveys (63 out of the 83). Yet this actually may not be so lopsided as it appears, since in his mini-survey (cf. 3.2 below) the BNA coordinator estimates that the BNA may be responsible for as many as 50% of the 400+ new BUSA churches. One reason that the BNA appears to be the most active region in BUSA church planting is that the BNA is by far the largest of the seven BUSA regions, covering the Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northwest, and Limpopo provinces. Plus, the heavy representation by the BNA churches in this research is an obvious consequence of the researcher living and ministering in that area. Furthermore, the researcher's own church and ministry are identified as being at the forefront of BUSA church planting (Robbins, 2003:157; Rae, 1999:161).

As for the other regions, seven returns came in from the Eastern Province (EPBA), four from Natal (NBA), two from the Free State (FSBA), and one each from the Northern Cape, Western Cape, and the Border Baptist Association (former Transkei). Some of this gap in representation from these other regions should be filled in 3.2 below where the area coordinators give their own input as to the condition of their churches. Four returns also came in from non-BUSA, Baptist Convention churches, since they were recipients of a church building from Samaria Mission, the mission arm of the researcher's own church (which is a BUSA church) (cf. 6.2 of the Introduction, a stated aim of the field research).

3.1.1 Personal information

The average age of pastor/leader who completed a survey was 43 years. 73 out of the 83 respondents were married, with the others being single. All were male except for one female who answered on behalf of her church whose pastor just died. 30 out of the 83 (36%) were bi-vocational to some extent, having other

employment outside of their pastoral ministry. 13% said they only saw their wife on weekends, or only once a month.

It seems appropriate to also insert data from a few later questions in the survey that are relevant here (#s 24-25, 27). 20 out of the 83 respondents said they were not viewed as the pastor of the church, though most usually function in that way in the absence of any full-time pastor. The average tenure of these pastors/leaders at their respective church was 8 years, so their years of experience seem to amply qualify them to represent their churches. But after a second look at this, the researcher realized a few old pastors were throwing off the average, since 35% of the respondents had only been in their church for 3 years or less. Yet interestingly, most of the old pastors are from the rural churches, putting the average tenure for the rural church pastors up to 10 years, significantly higher than the overall average of 7 years.

The credibility that some of the respondents gained by their longevity may have been lost by their geographic distance from their churches. Over a third (38%) of these pastors/leaders does not stay locally with their church, but either travels there on Sundays/weekends (28%) or only goes two Sundays or less per month (10%).

Interim observations:

- It would appear that concerns over immaturity in these young churches are probably not linked, in most cases, to pastors that are too young or are single and who therefore lack the respect of the community. But the health of the church may be linked to the lack of longevity in some cases, and especially to the lack of locality (living among the people) found in over 1/3 of the pastors/leaders.
- Yet in the researcher's own experience, about half of the churches (25 of the 50) he has visited in the past five years were being led by a young, single pastor who was not the type of man normally respected in African communities. In these communities, "young" is mainly linked to "unmarried", even if he is in his mid-thirties.
- One explanation for this apparent discrepancy in the survey is that, in some cases, a Sr. Pastor of the mother church completed the survey for the branch church, instead of the pastor/leader of that branch church who is the one actually leading them on a weekly basis. Another factor could be that the younger, single pastors/leaders are generally less responsible and thus more likely to be the ones who never completed and returned the surveys, and thus their churches were not represented.

3.1.2 Education levels

As far as their highest educational level achieved, 14% said a Standard 8 certificate, 23% said they reached a Matric certificate, while nearly half (45%) achieved some further diploma, usually in biblical studies. 12% achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher.

As far as pastoral or theological training, only 5 stated they had no training. 7 said their training was only independent, self-guided training. About 20% described their training as informal, while over 70% said they have had, or are receiving, formal training at a Bible college or seminary. Nearly half of these are students or graduates of Christ Seminary in Polokwane, where the researcher lectures. Most of the others graduated from one of the three main schools of BUSA, in Randburg, Cape Town, or the former Baptist Bible Institute (BBI) in Transkei.

Pastors easily won the contest for having the greatest role in shaping the lives of younger pastors, since 58% pointed to their pastor as their biggest mentor. After this, it was lecturers and teachers who had the greatest influence. Sadly, the impact of godly parents was hardly mentioned, with only 3 of the 83 giving credit to a parent or parents as top mentors.

Interim observations:

- Lack of education and pastoral training does not seem to be a serious concern among the respondents. But a big question that remains is, 'How many of those pastors/leaders of the 400+ young BUSA churches who did not reply were hindered *because of* educational barriers – e.g., English proficiency, reading comprehension, etc.?' Obviously, the percentages among the respondents are going to be higher than the average pastor in these young BUSA churches, since the survey is easier for a more educated person to complete and many of these churches are in black, underprivileged communities (BUSA Handbook, 2003a:110-121).
- As expected, the survey respondents with formal pastoral training were much more likely to complete the survey, due to both their educational level and their being more convinced for the need for such an evaluation of churches. Compare the 70% of respondents who had formal training with the percentages suggested in the mini-surveys below in 3.2.
- The large number of Christ Seminary respondents was to be expected, due to the researcher's own location and position as lecturer at that seminary, and because of the seminary being heavily involved in training pastors for these young BUSA churches. As of November, 2003, Christ Seminary had 66 total graduates and students. Out of this number, over 40% (27-28 of them) are pastoring in the targeted field group of this thesis (the young BUSA churches planted since 1990). It is unlikely that any of the other BUSA training schools have near this high of a percentage of their total, full-time students who are from this target group, especially in light of the cost of training at Christ Seminary (R1,000 per year) versus the other schools. So perhaps this uneven distribution of respondents is still quite appropriate if Christ Seminary offers the highest concentration of respondents who fit the target group of the BUSA church plants.
- It seems that most of the pastors/leaders of these young BUSA churches are first generation Christians, based on the fact that most claim to have been shaped more by their pastor than their parents. This fits

well with the researcher's own observations that the vast majority of his seminary students (about 90%) state that they did not have Christian parents.

3.1.3 Beliefs

Question #9 asked, "Please describe in one sentence how a person can be saved (born-again, converted to Christ)." 81% gave a clear answer about salvation through faith in Christ. 13% gave an unclear answer, with no mention of faith or Christ. Another 6% did not answer. Question #10 asked, "If someone tries to keep the Ten Commandments and shows love to his neighbours, will that ensure that he goes to Heaven?" Sadly, there were 3% who said, "Yes." 96% said "No," and one did not answer. Question #11 asked, "If someone follows another religion different from Christianity, can they still go to Heaven as long as they are a good person and sincere in their beliefs?" Thankfully, there was not a single "Yes" answer.

The next few questions revealed important aspects of these pastors' view of the Christian life and the Bible:

(#12) "Please describe in one sentence the process of how a Christian should grow spiritually. Complete this statement: "The way to grow as a Christian and to overcome sin and become more holy is by...."

Did not answer	3	=	4%
Answers that included the Scriptures (reading, studying, hearing, meditating, etc.)	63	=	76%
Answers including enablement by the Spirit and/or God's grace	13	=	16%
Answers including human effort in obedience/holiness	32	=	39%
[Yet only 2 or 3 even hinted at the "putting off, putting on" concept which is so central to Scripture]			
Answers including the need for faith/trust to fuel our obedience	5	=	6%
Answers including the need for fellowship/encouragement in a local church	29	=	35%
Answers including need for prayer	37	=	45%
Answers that included need to witness/evangelise in order to grow	13	=	16%

(#13) What is the most important way for a Christian to find God's will for his or her life?

No answer	6	=	7%
Referred to the Bible, Word of God	56	=	67%
Referred to prayer	26	=	31%

Other answers included a variety of means for knowing God's will, such as: seeking, waiting, depending, obeying, listening, and the Spirit's leading. But none of these occurred with any significant frequency.

(#14) How many times have you read through the entire Bible from cover to cover?

I have <i>not yet</i> read through the whole Bible one time.	17	=	20%
I have read through the whole Bible <i>once</i> .	38	=	42%
I have read through the whole Bible <i>more than three times</i> .	18	=	22%
I have read through the whole Bible <i>more than ten times</i> .	10	=	12%

This means that 1 in 5 of these pastors/leaders have not yet read through the whole Bible, and that almost two-thirds of have not yet read through the Bible more than once.

The following two questions revealed that most are thinking biblically about how to select leaders and how to conduct church discipline:

(#15) What is the most important criteria when you select someone for any leadership position in your church? (select only one answer)

No answer	2	=	2%
The biblical answer as primary criteria:			
They must have a blameless reputation and a godly life.	71	=	86%
The unbiblical answer as primary criteria:	10	=	12%
They must be faithful in church attendance. (7)			
They must have good speaking and preaching abilities. (2)			
They must be an older person. (0)			
They must be well educated, employed and successful in society. (0)			
They must not smoke or drink alcohol. (2)			

(#16) If one of your church leaders discovers that a member in the church is guilty of sexual immorality, what should happen first? (only one correct answer)

No answer	3	=	4%
The biblical, first step:			
The member should be confronted privately, urging him/her to repent and be restored.	65	=	78%
The unbiblical, first step:	15	=	18%
The member should be publicly warned or rebuked. (2)			
The member should be excommunicated, or at least put on probation for a few months. (8)			
In order to avoid offending or hurting, we should not confront him/her. (0)			
The leader should tell many others in the church to pray for and to warn him/her. (5)			

3.1.4 Views on preaching & teaching

(#17) How would you define, in one sentence, what is the right way to preach the Bible? (In other words, what does it mean to preach or teach the Bible in a biblical way that is pleasing to God?)

No answer	9	=	11%
Included something about expositing/explaining the Bible	48	=	58%
Did not include anything about teaching/expositing/explaining the Bible	26	=	31%

What proved to be a major flaw in this question is that many (about 50%) respondents simply begged the question by answering that "expository preaching" was the right way to preach the Bible, without explaining what they mean by that popular, but often misunderstood, term "expository". The researcher had intentionally left out that term to avoid technical jargon, but it ended up backfiring on him this time!

(#18) How do you know when you have been a faithful preacher who gave God's message to others? (only one correct answer)

No answer	1	=	1%
The biblical answer:			
You know you have properly taught the Bible when people clearly understand the correct meaning of that passage of Scripture and know how to apply it to their lives.	64	=	77%
The unbiblical, or insufficiently biblical, answers:	18	=	22%
You know you have properly taught the Bible when the people tell you they enjoyed the message. (2)			
You know you have properly taught the Bible when you feel that the Holy Spirit was really speaking through you. (10)			
You know you have properly taught the Bible when many people make decisions and come forward during the altar call. (6)			

(#19) *What kind of regular preaching do you think is best for your church?*

The healthiest, more objective regular diet for a church:			
Preaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible	34	=	41%
The less healthy, more subjective regular diet for a church:			
Preaching on various topics and issues that are relevant in society (15)	49	=	59%
Preaching on whatever relates to the needs of my people each week (7)			
Preaching on whatever the Holy Spirit tells me to preach that week (17)			
Preaching gospel messages most of the time so more people will get saved (10)			

Notes:

- Some gave more than one answer.
- 76% of Christ Seminary students chose the “verse-by-verse” answer (what happened to the other 24%, since they are all being taught a verse-by-verse method in the seminary?). In contrast, only 30% of other, non-Christ Seminary pastors believe verse-by-verse is the best regular diet for a congregation.
- Even though 77% believe in “expository” preaching that teaches the Bible (see previous question), 59% of them think this can be done *without* giving their flock a regular diet of verse-by-verse preaching but rather by following more subjective guidelines or just preaching evangelistically.

As for sermon preparation, half of these pastors spend 5 hours or less preparing their Sunday sermon, while another 24% said they spend 5-10 hours and 25% said more than 10 hours. More than half of these pastors are using 3 sources or less on their sermon preparation. 24% said they use 3-5 sources, while 20% said they use more than five sources. All that this would seem to reveal is that the survey respondents reflect the whole spectrum of pastors, from those who prepare little to those who prepare well for expounding God’s Word. A definite concern is that at least 1 out of every 10 of these pastors admits to almost no preparation for his sermon.

3.1.5 Church statistics

One question asked, “*How is your church viewed (recognised) by the Baptist Union?*” 7% gave no answer or were no longer affiliated with the BUSA. 39% said they were “fully constituted churches”. The remaining 54% were still in “fellowship” status with the BUSA. In the BUSA, a church must have “40 fully fledged members” before it can be a fully constituted church (BUSA, 2003a). This is a criterion which many of these young churches are having difficulty meeting.

Here was one red flag: Of the 46 churches claiming to be BUSA “fellowships”, *only 11* are actually listed as fellowships in the 2003 BUSA Handbook (2003a:110-121). So the other 35 churches are apparently under the *false impression* that they are recognized as fellowships. Many of these young churches would probably not meet the BUSA criteria for fellowships either, since it is required that they have “20 committed and faithful members” and have a solid “parental link” to a mother church or BUSA church planting committee (2003a).

What then should these 'churches' be called, if they are not yet recognized as constituted churches or fellowships (synonymous with "a new church plant", BUSA, 2003)? Ironically, the BUSA claims these 'churches' in the total church planting figures of 400+ churches since 1990, yet the BUSA is not recognising them as churches in any other way. Are these just "Bible study groups", "mission churches", or "extensions"?

As far as location, 40% of these churches were in more urban areas (township, settlement, town, city), while 60% were in more rural (village) areas. Regarding leadership, 23% of the churches (mostly the rural ones) said they do not have a full-time pastor. As far as church age, the average age of these churches is 9 years old. Yet 21 of these churches have been planted since 2000, and 11 more since 1998, meaning that 39% of them are still 5 years of age or younger.

When it came to church size, the average starting size was 21 adults. Unfortunately, in some cases the researcher and his church's mission have often noticed that these adults only attend because of an initial crusade or tent campaign but are nowhere to be seen three months later. The total number of adults presently in attendance at these churches was an average of 30. Out of these, at least two-thirds are women. Added to the adult attendance is an average of 18 youth (ages 13-20) and 22 children (ages 1-12), meaning that over half of their Sunday attendance is youth and children.

The figure for number of men (9) in regular attendance was suspiciously high. In the experience of the researcher and his church's mission and seminary, rarely do these rural churches have more than 3 to 4 men, and sometimes the pastor is the only adult, married man. See 3.2 below where Rev. Venter states that it is customary for these pastors/leaders to list the figure of all men who have any affiliation with the church, especially the men whose wives are in the church but they themselves work down in the big cities and are hardly ever seen. One also wonders if the term "regular/regularly" on this question was unfamiliar and might not translate well in the minds of those speaking English as a 2nd or 3rd language.

Regarding church buildings, 36% of these churches do not yet have their own building. 53% do have a building, with most of their buildings (48%) coming through Samaria Mission, usually funded by overseas sources. This reflects the generous involvement of outside partners in mission, but also a concerning trend of dependency in BUSA churches.

The remaining questions in this section explored more of the history of these churches and how they were planted:

(#36) Who planted or started your church? (give their name; or, if you prefer not to give their name, at least describe their relationship to you – e.g., mother church, evangelist, missionary, yourself, etc.)

No answer, or unclear answer	7	=	8%
Referred to involvement of a mother church	26	=	31%

Referred only to an individual ("myself", or individual [usually an evangelist or pastor])	38	=	46%
Referred to a group of people, or "myself" plus others (but mother church not mentioned)	12	=	14%

Note: Some of these churches probably were planted by a mother church but only the key individual (pastor/evangelist/planter) was mentioned. Nonetheless, the language they chose is significant in showing whom they view as their main parental link or spiritual founder who was responsible for their birth. Less than one-third of these churches seem to recognize any link with a mother church that planted them.

(#37) *From the time that your church began, what are the main ways that your church has been nurtured (followed-up and strengthened) by the church planter or mother-church (or other 'parental link') that started your church (for example: further contact, visits, letters, teachings, etc.)?*

No answer or stated that they were receiving no further nurture	16	=	19%
Stated they were receiving various kinds of nurture (visitations, teaching, seminars, etc.)	67	=	81%

Notes:

- This question was not very effective, since most answers were too vague. Saying that a church receives "visitations" does not indicate much about the frequency, quality or effectiveness of those visits.
- Interestingly, 14 churches spoke of "tent crusades" (evangelistic campaigns) as a way that the mother church nurtures them. There seems to be some confusion between nurture and evangelism.

(#38) *How effective is this ongoing nurture (strengthening, follow-up, etc.) that your church is receiving from the church planter or mother church (or other 'parental link') that started your church or is overseeing your church? In other words, how much are they helping your church to grow toward maturity and become a viable, healthy church?*

No answer	10	=	12%
Their nurture is <i>very effective</i> in helping us to grow and mature.	40	=	48%
Their nurture is <i>somewhat effective</i> in helping us to grow and mature.	9	=	11%
Their nurture is <i>not very effective</i> in helping us to grow and mature.	3	=	4%
There is <i>no nurture</i> being given at present.	18	=	22%

Note: This means 59% of these churches feel they are being nurtured, but 38% could not speak of any effective nurture being received at present. Perhaps some did not understand the question, but still this is a concerning statistic.

(#39) *Since your church was founded, have there been any church splits (major break-ups where a large group of people are upset and decide to leave the church)?*

No	68	=	82%
Yes	15	=	18%

The average number of those members lost in the split was 12, though a more true average would probably be 8, since one church lost 40 members in a split and this raised the average.

3.1.6 Church financial situation

(#40) *How many of your church members have full-time employment and earn a salary?*

The average number of employed members was 6. But when correlated with question #23, it was discovered that the rural churches averaged only 4 employed members, 33% less than the overall average. Also of interest is the fact that 40 of these churches (48%, nearly half) still have 3 or less employed members in their church, and 12 churches reported having 0 employed members. It is assumed (but not guaranteed) that the respondents would have included anyone who is self-employed in the category of "employed" if they were earning any kind of regular salary.

(#41) *When the church first began meeting, what was the approximate amount of monthly giving/tithing (on average)?*

R 383 was the average monthly church income when they began. But for the rural churches, this figure dropped to R 253.

(#42) *What is the current amount of average monthly giving/tithing?*

R 1,860 was the current amount of income for these churches. But for the rural churches, the amount was R 760 for monthly giving. 8 churches did not answer this question.

Notes:

- At least there is a notable increase in the giving since the start of these churches. The figure of R 1,860 is very influenced by the few urban, middle-class (mostly white) churches that responded. Over half of these churches actually take in R 500 or less per month, with over 30% of them taking in *less than R 200* per month. No more than 12 of these churches (13%) are even getting R 2,000, and if this all went to the pastor, is that even a liveable salary for a man and his family in a rural context?
- Correlating this with questions #29 & 30 above, this means that the urban churches have an average of 9 families giving R 207 per month (or 30 adults, giving R 64 each per mo.). Rural churches, then, have an average of 4 families giving R 190 each (or 28 adults, mostly unemployed, who are each giving an average of R 27 per month).
- One key factor that this survey question does not account for is any non-monetary support for a pastor, such as giving him foods or free rent or accommodation.

(#43) *How much of this monthly giving/tithing is sent back to your mother church or church planter?*

Only 15 of these churches are sending any of their income back to a mother church, in varying amounts that average up to about R 385 per month. The findings that this question yielded did not prove to be as significant as the researcher had expected.

(#44) *In the past two years, has there been any steady increase in the giving/tithing?*

No answer	6	=	7%
Yes	33	=	40%
No	44	=	53%

Note: The researcher has realized that the findings for this question may not bear much significance, since in a given two-year period any church could experience a drop in giving, even if the overall trend has been an increase. Nevertheless, such a high number of churches with no sign of increase is still cause for concern.

3.1.7 Church leadership and shepherding

(#45) *Does your church have appointed elders? (Please note: this is not according to a cultural definition of elder as just an older man, but according to the biblical definition of "elder" as a man appointed by the church or by the leadership to be an overseer and spiritual leader in the church.)*

No answer or unclear	6	=	7%
Yes	44	=	53%
No	33	=	40%

Notes:

- The fact that half of these churches claims to have a biblical eldership structure in their churches is unlikely in the current BUSA situation. In the fifty or so churches that the researcher has visited, few have ever had a biblically functioning eldership, and most of their pastors will admit this. This is also the testimony of Samaria Mission in their exposure to over 70 of these churches in the targeted research field (cf. 3.2. below, interview with Rev. Venter).

- The researcher could have made this question clearer by stating, “appointed elders *in addition* to the pastor,” since some churches may have just referred to their pastor as their one “elder”. But in many BUSA churches, the terminology of “eldership” is still uncommon, since the emphasis has been more upon congregational rule and a deaconate or steering committee type of leadership structure (BUSA, 2003b)

(#46) *How many of your current church leadership (pastors, elders, deacons, steering committee members, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, etc.) do you think are living holy lives and are godly examples in their home, in the church, and in the community?*

Did not answer	13	=	16%
Most or all of our leaders (81-100%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.	34	=	41%
More than half of our leaders (51-80%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.	17	=	20%
Less than half of our leaders (0-50%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.	11	=	13%
I am not sure.	10	=	12%

Note: The researcher is unsure of why so many did not answer this question. Survey fatigue, after so many questions already?

(#47) *Out of the men who are regularly attending your church, how many are godly, capable men whom you are presently training up to become future elders in your church?*

The average number of elders-in-training was 3. But 18 churches (22%, almost 1 in 4) either did not answer or said that there were 0 elders-in-training at present. Unfortunately, this is also another question that leaves a dangerous amount of room for miscommunication as to what “training up future elders” actually entails. Based on the researcher’s own repeated observations and those of his church’s seminary and mission (e.g., Rev. Venter, cf. 3:2. below), it is suspected that too often new leaders are not being properly developed. Approximately 8 out of every 10 Christ Seminary students (many of whom are from these young BUSA churches) testify that they have no senior/older pastor who is mentoring them and setting the biblical example.

(#48) *Are you allowed to regularly perform baptisms and to conduct the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion)?*

No answer	9	=	11%
Yes.	53	=	64%
No.	18	=	22%

(Only the senior pastor or a leader from the mother church can perform baptisms or Holy Communion when he comes to visit.)

Note: This means 36% of the churches gave no assurance that they are celebrating the ordinances regularly.

(#49) *In an average week, how many hours do you spend in doing private pastoral counselling with people in your church (not teaching publicly to groups, but using the Bible to help individuals with their specific problems)?*

These pastors/leaders reportedly do an average of 5 hours of counselling per week. Yet 22 respondents did not complete this question. Either it was not clearly phrased, or they were fatigued by this point in the survey, or there was some other reason.

(#50) *In an average week, how many hours are you currently spending in personal, one-on-one (or house to house) evangelism in the area surrounding your church?*

The average answer was 6 hours per week in personal evangelism. This appears very healthy. But again, the average was tilted by a few strong pastors/leaders. Half of the respondents (49%) said they evangelised 2 hours or less per week, and over one-third (38%) said only 1 hour or less or they did not

answer. In 3.1.1 above it was noted (#27) that 38% of these pastors/leaders do not stay locally in the area of their church but only travel there on Sundays or weekends. It would be quite difficult for him to extensively evangelise that community during such short visits. It also the frequent observation of the researcher, and of his church's seminary and mission (cf. 3.2., interview with Rev. Venter below) that many of these pastors/leaders depend mostly upon tent campaigns and mass evangelism unless someone directly trains them in how to do house-to-house evangelism.

(#51) How many of those hours of evangelism in this community are spent specifically targeting the working (employed) men in the community, seeking to build relationships with them and to evangelise them?

The average reported was 2 hours per week spent in reaching the men. Again, this appears commendable, but it does not tell the whole story. 45% of these pastors/leaders either did not answer this question or said that they spent 0 hours evangelising men. Granted, some could say that they don't specifically target the men but that their 6 hours of overall personal evangelism (cf. #50 above) also includes reaching men. But in light of the lack of men, and leaders, and finances in the churches, it seems reasonable to expect that effective church planting will intentionally seek to win men (heads of households) to Christ (cf. 3.2 below).

(#52) Please describe in one sentence the purpose of your church (the main reason that your church exists):

No answer	8	=	10%
Included the Godward (vertical, exaltation) purpose of the church	28	=	34%
Included the nurturing, edifying purpose of the church toward the flock	53	=	64%
Included the evangelising, outward purpose of the church toward the lost	64	=	77%

Notes: A few others gave more vague answers about "fulfilling God's purpose on earth" which seemed to beg the question. One will see that most of these churches were very clear on their call toward the world, but less clear on their call toward the flock and toward their God. There did not seem to be many statements that were clearly phrased, well-worn statements that a church has come to own (though some of this could be due to the language barrier).

(#53) List what you believe are the two or three most crucial (most effective) ways that you can lead your church toward maturity in the next year. "In the next year, the most important things I can do to lead my church to become stronger are..."

No answer or unclear	13	=	16%
Referred to prayer	22	=	27%

Notes: Most referred to need for teaching Bible and for some type of visiting/shepherding/discipling and home/cell groups. Very few actually referred to preparing and preaching sermons, but one cannot be sure how many might have intended for this to fall under the category of other related words like "teaching" or "discipling". Only 2 mentioned anything about the impact of their own example (self-watch). Many also referred to witnessing/evangelising, which refers more to the outward growth than the internal growth of the church. They seem to equate "strengthen" with increased numbers.

(#54) If you had to choose, what would you say is the biggest obstacle right now that prevents your church from reaching its true potential?

No answer	15	=	18%
Referred to land or resources	13	=	16%
Referred to uncommitted members (in their attendance, giving, etc.)	20	=	24%
Referred to leadership needs (need pastor, better leaders, etc.)	13	=	16%
Referred to external factors (poverty, culture, AIDS, etc.)	13	=	16%

(#55) Personally, what would you like to be doing five years from now?

No answer	7	=	8%
Still pastoring this church and helping it to grow stronger	44	=	53%
Moving on to new areas to do evangelism and church planting	22	=	27%

Pastoring another church where I can be better supported	4	=	5%
Other (pension; misunderstood question, etc.)	4	=	5%

Note: The researcher erred in suggesting a dichotomy between the first two options of staying as a pastor versus moving on for further evangelism. Some pastors may intend to do both. The researcher was trying to ask if one was planning to leave the pastorate to go full-time into church planting and evangelism.

3.1.8 Overall church health

(#56) How many of your members (including leaders) do you think clearly understand the gospel message and trust in Christ alone (not any of their own efforts) for their salvation?

No answer	3	=	4%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	27	=	33%
More than half (51-80%)	41	=	49%
Less than half (0-50%)	11	=	13%

Note: Why are only 33% of the churches sure that most of their members understand the gospel? Why and how were they admitted into membership if their leaders are so unsure of their salvation?

(#57) At present, what do you think are two of the greatest doctrinal threats to the stability of your church (In other words, what are some of the most common false teachings or dangerous doctrines today that might harm your members)?:

No answer or "no dangers"(!) (which 3 said)	20	=	24%
Referred to charismatic doctrines (prosperity gospel; Spirit baptism; tongues)	25	=	30%
Referred to traditional religion or syncretism (ancestors, Zion Christian Church, "especially in times of illness")	15	=	18%
Referred to cults (Jehovah's Witnesses; Satanism, etc.)	12	=	14%

Notes: Why did so many not answer this question, and some think they'd be immune to false teachings? Other dangers mentioned were: immorality; confusion over doctrines of Trinity, virgin birth, and deity of Christ; lack of submission to church leaders; lethargy and formalism; unsaved members.

(#58) If you teach your members next week that the Bible requires them to make new changes in a certain aspect of their lives (in their lifestyle, habits, home life, church life, etc.), how many of them do you think will be truly willing to change and obey Scripture?

No answer	5	=	6%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	26	=	31%
More than half (51-80%)	41	=	49%
Less than half (0-50%)	11	=	13%

(#59) Outside of the Sunday morning sermon, do you have any other regular times of in-depth biblical teaching or training (equipping) for your members?

No answer	7	=	8%
No	18	=	22%
Yes	58	=	70%

(#60) In all of the preaching and teaching your members have received over the past two years (on Sundays, or membership classes, or at any other times), which of the following topics have been addressed through clear, in-depth biblical teaching? (circle each topic that has been covered)

No answer at all	5	=	6%
Some (or all) of these basic doctrines:	52	=	63%

God's character and His attributes; the person and work of Christ; the person and the work of the Holy Spirit

How to study and apply the Bible.	46	=	55%
How to grow daily as a Christian and to overcome sin and temptation.	58	=	70%
How to have a godly home - explaining the biblical roles for husbands & wives, fathers & mothers, and children.	28	=	34%
How the local church should function in its worship services, and in the roles and responsibilities of the leaders and of each member in the church?	38	=	46%
How to be good stewards of our resources (time, possessions, finances, etc.) and how to be regularly giving/tithing to the church.	41	=	49%
How to live as a Christian in the world – for example: how to be a good citizen, how to treat the government; and how to honour God at work.	38	=	46%
How to understand the gospel and communicate it clearly to others in personal evangelism.	47	=	57%

Notes: Why are the churches teaching less on the Christian home than on the other topics? Why is it that each of these core subjects has not been taught by more than about *half* of these churches in the past two years (avg. of 53% of the churches is teaching each of these subjects)?

(#61) How many of your members do you think show a regular commitment to prayer, both in their personal life and in the corporate prayer life of the church?

No answer	3	=	4%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	14	=	17%
More than half (51-80%)	47	=	57%
Less than half (0-50%)	19	=	23%

(#62) How many of your members do you think are clearly growing in Christ, showing the fruit of their salvation through living transformed, Spirit-filled lives?

No answer	6	=	7%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	15	=	18%
More than half (51-80%)	50	=	60%
Less than half (0-50%)	12	=	14%

(#63) How many of your members do you think are showing regular participation in the life of the church body through practicing the 'one anothers' (for example, loving and encouraging one another) and through using their spiritual gifts to edify one another?

No answer	4	=	5%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	12	=	14%
More than half (51-80%)	47	=	57%
Less than half (0-50%)	20	=	24%

(#64) How many of your members do you think are committed to being biblical peace-makers in the church and not peace-breakers (in other words, they are working towards true unity, not divisions)?

No answer	3	=	4%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	22	=	27%
More than half (51-80%)	45	=	54%

Less than half (0-50%)	13	=	16%
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(#65) *How many of your members do you think show that they are involved in the spread of the gospel through their godly lives and through personally evangelising others?*

No answer	4	=	5%
Most or all of them (80-100%)	9	=	11%
More than half (51-80%)	39	=	47%
Less than half (0-50%)	31	=	37%

Notes:

- The respondents definitely viewed this area of evangelism as the weakest trait in their churches.
- For these overall maturity questions, the researcher now realizes that they are too ambiguous to be as revealing as he had hoped. The difference between “most” and “more than half” could be the difference between 79% and 80%! *It is hard to quantify on paper the overall maturity or health of a church flock.* It is hoped that the other questions in this survey, and especially the other interviews (cf. 3.2), will help to supplement this gap.
- Overall ‘maturity’ score: For these 8 “maturity questions” (#’s 46, 56, 58, 61-65), the researcher tried to give a cumulative grade to each church. For each question where they had a “most or all” or a “more than half” answer (i.e., wherever they had over 50% of their members meeting the criteria), they received 1 point. There were 48 churches that received a grade of 7/8 (7 out of 8) or 8/8. The average grade for the rural churches was 4 out of 8, meaning that in half of the maturity criteria they reported that less than half their members met that biblical criterion for a healthy church.

(#66) *If you would like, please add any other comments about the overall health or maturity of your church at present, or about any other areas where your church needs the most strengthening:*

This question did not yield much further data. Only 29% of the respondents answered, with the most common comments being: need for resources (building, giving, etc.), need for a pastor, better evangelism, and more member participation.

3.2 Interview findings from BUSA leaders in church planting and development

The mini-survey used in interviewing both the area coordinators and the other key leaders is found in “Annexure A” of this thesis (the format for these two mini-surveys was almost identical). For some who did not respond by fax, mail, or e-mail, a phone interview was conducted in which the researcher walked with them through these questions and transcribed their answers.

3.2.1 Findings from the seven BUSA area coordinators

A BUSA area coordinator is a full-time position funded by each territorial association. Each coordinator is responsible to oversee and encourage all of the BUSA churches and fellowships in his area.

Here are the five questions used in the survey given to them, followed by their answers:

1. Out of the 400 + new BUSA churches/fellowships planted since 1990, how many of these would you estimate are in your area (under your territorial association)? (please give at least an approximate number):

Baptist Association of the Northern Cape (BANC)	5
Baptist Northern Association (BNA)	200
Border Baptist Association (BBA)	40
Eastern Province Baptist Association (EPBA)	16
Free State Baptist Association (FSBA)	4
Natal Baptist Association (NBA)	12
Western Province Baptist Association (WPBA)	60
TOTAL	337

2. Out of these younger, more newly planted churches/fellowships in your association (i.e., those planted since about 1990), how many of those churches would you say have a capable pastor/leader who has received (or is receiving) some kind of adequate pastoral training? (please give an approximate number):

Baptist Association of the Northern Cape (BANC)	1 out of 5 (20%)
Baptist Northern Association (BNA)	55 out of 200 (28%)
Border Baptist Association (BBA)	30 out of 40 (75%)
Eastern Province Baptist Association (EPBA)	6 out of 16 (38%)
Free State Baptist Association (FSBA)	3 out of 4 (75%)
Natal Baptist Association (NBA)	6 out of 12 (50%)
Western Province Baptist Association (WPBA)	35 out of 60 (58%)
TOTAL	136 out of 337 (40%)
Average	49%

3. Out of these same younger, more newly planted churches/fellowships in your association, how many of those churches would you say have now become mature (viable, healthy, well-established) churches, churches that would fit these four criteria listed below:

- They have their own pastor who sets a godly example and who shepherds and preaches in a biblical way.
- They have a committed membership who submit to the Scriptures, who are growing in Christ, who participate actively in the life of the body, who pray, and who evangelise their community. (This does not mean they are perfect, or that every member fits these criteria; but is this their overall reputation as a body?)
- They are taking financial responsibility for the ministries of their church, starting with supporting their own pastor.
- They are a stable, 'Antioch' (Acts 13) kind of church that is a model to others and is ready to reproduce itself by planting other churches.

Please give an approximate number of these churches/fellowships in your association (those planted since about 1990) that you would say have matured to the point that they fit these four criterion:

Baptist Association of the Northern Cape (BANC)	0 out of 5 (0%)
Baptist Northern Association (BNA)	20 out of 200 (10 %)
Border Baptist Association (BBA)	7 out of 40 (18%)
Eastern Province Baptist Association (EPBA)	4 out of 16 (25%)
Free State Baptist Association (FSBA)	3 out of 4 (75%)
Natal Baptist Association (NBA)	0 out of 12 (0%)
Western Province Baptist Association (WPBA)	10 out of 60 (17%)

TOTAL
Average

44 out of 337 (13%)
20%

4. *What would you point to as the main reasons why some of these younger churches are not maturing and becoming well established, while others are?*

These were the main concerns: (For a fuller listing of the specific responses, cf. Annexure "B")

- a. Leadership problems
- b. Uncommitted membership
- c. Finances & resources
- d. Cultural issues
- e. Their origin (how the church got started)
- f. Doctrinal problems

5. *What are the main ways you would say the church planting process can be improved in your association so that it will result in more churches that are mature, responsible churches?*

Here are the kinds of suggestions that were given: (For a fuller listing of the specific responses, cf. Annexure "B")

- a. Plant/start new churches for the right reasons and in the right way.
- b. Mother church must show greater involvement.
- c. Encourage self-employment and equip more bi-vocational pastors.
- d. More training and equipping of both leaders and members.
- e. Have a BUSA-wide indaba to discuss and strategize for better church planting in light of rural and urban realities.
- f. Get more women to be pastors in the rural churches where there are few men.

3.2.2 Findings from other key BUSA leaders

Twenty other surveys were sent out to key BUSA leaders who are heavily involved in church planting, most of who were recommended to me by the BUSA president in 2003. Twelve of these were returned (60%), yielding the following results:

1. *Out of the 400+ new BUSA churches/fellowships planted since about 1990, approximately how many of these have you had exposure to or involvement with? (if unsure, please estimate at least):*

Total # of churches represented through these leaders (i.e., total # of churches they are involved with, though some overlapping): 200

Average # of churches they were involved with: 10 churches each

Minimum: Some leaders have only had been involved with as few as 2 churches.

Maximum: Some of these leaders have visited from 50-100 of these churches.

2. *Out of these same churches/fellowships, how many of these would you estimate have a capable pastor/leader who has received (or is receiving) some kind of adequate pastoral training?: _____*

Total # of churches that have a capable and trained pastor/leader: 90 out of 200 (45%)

3. Out of these same churches/fellowships (i.e., the overall number you gave in #1 above - those planted since about 1990 that you are acquainted with), how many of those churches would you estimate have now become mature (viable, healthy, well-established) churches, churches that would fit these four criteria (cf. 3.2.1, #3 above). Please give an approximate number of these churches/fellowships that you think have matured to the point that they fit these four criteria:

Total # of churches recognised as mature: 51 out of 200 (26 %)

4. What would you point to as the main reasons why some of these younger churches are not maturing and becoming well established, while others are?

Here were the types of reasons given: (For a fuller listing of the specific responses, cf. Annexure "B")

- a. Cultural issues
- b. Preaching
- c. Leadership
- d. Building
- e. Finances
- f. Origin (how the church was started)
- g. Time
- h. Other factors

5. What are the main ways you would say the church planting process can be improved in the BUSA so that it will result in more churches that are mature, responsible churches?

Here are the kinds of suggestions that were given: (For a fuller listing of the specific responses, cf. Annexure "B")

- a. Doing effective church planting (better defined, better follow-up, better mother church involvement, etc.)
- b. Leadership
- c. Teaching & equipping the members
- d. Finances

3.2.3 Findings from interview with Rev. Nicki Coertze

One of the twelve surveys referred to above in 3.2.2 deserves special attention. It actually turned out to be a full interview (lasting one hour), using the same mini-survey form as a guideline. As mentioned previously, Rev. Coertze was the 2002-2003 president of the BUSA. For the past fifteen years he has also been the Sr. Pastor at Christ Baptist Church, the forerunner of recent BUSA church planting (Robbins, 2003:157; Rae, 1999:161). This is also the researcher's home church where he serves alongside Rev. Coertze on the pastoral staff and as lecturer and academic dean at their church-based seminary. The findings from this interview will be listed along the same lines as 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above.

1. *Rev. Coertze's exposure to, and involvement with, the target group of BUSA churches planted since 1990:*

He estimates that he has visited over one hundred of these churches, which amounts to more than one quarter of the total number of these churches. His main exposure has been in the three areas where BUSA church planting has been most active (see statistics above in 3.2.1)–the WPBA (Western Cape), the EPBA combined with the BBA (Transkei), and the BNA (former Transvaal). In fact, these three regions combine to represent 316 of the 337 churches (94%) that the area coordinators reported to be in the target group. So Rev. Coertze's insights will prove to be very relevant to this research.

2. *Rev. Coertze's impressions of the quality of pastoral leadership in these same churches:*

"Most of these churches have dedicated, committed, love-for-the-Lord kind of pastors. But they are ill-equipped due to the unavailability of training."

- In the BNA, the guys are hungry but just need solid theological education.
- In the WPBA churches that he's observed, many of the guys are equipped but there is a tremendous amount of bad preaching – i.e., spiritualising and allegorising of the text, sharing of mere good ideas, using the Scripture only as a springboard. This has created much hype and fervency, but not stable flocks and solid maturity. "Their churches are packed. It is exciting, vibrant worship that is infectious. But the testimonies are as shallow, shallow as can be (based only on human experience)."
- In the Eastern Cape (BBA & EPBA), a great amount of godliness, with great leaders and examples and real spiritual passion.

3. *Rev. Coertze's impressions of the health and maturity of these younger BUSA churches, and the way ahead for further strengthening them:*

- In BNA, their worship is very culturally influenced, because Christianity has been present for so long that children grow up in a kind of Christianised way. But this can easily numb them to genuine Christianity, and can lead to much nominalism.
- In the WPBA churches that he's observed, they are embracing anything. And in that area, there is a vast amount of charismatic and other influences. And because these churches are packed in so closely together, they heavily influence one another, often for the worse not the better.
- In the Eastern Cape, they are embracing tradition. For example, they are more rooted in mission traditions of liturgy and hymns. There is a danger of inherited godliness rather true godliness. Not much exposition of Scripture or depth, more of just topical sermons on godliness and spiritual devotion. Externally, one is initially quite impressed with their worship. But when one sees how they handle disputes and pressures, one soon realizes that the depth is not there and

that there has not been a very solid foundation. Their passion can be short-lived when troubles arise.

- “What is lacking in all three areas is well-equipped, skilled guys handling the Word of God properly and teaching right. Only then the Word of God can become the final authority in the lives of their people.”
- A lot of the churches are putting too much emphasis on church meetings and democratic decisions. “In many cases, it’s a matter of ‘Doesn’t matter what the Bible says, this is what we believe and what we stand for.’”

- Rev. Coertze’s overall diagnosis on the health of these newer BUSA churches:

Says it is hard to evaluate their maturity since it is very relative depending on the standard used.

“60-70 % of these churches seem to be healthy, vibrant, they’re going, they’re part of the ‘norm’ and part of where Baptist ‘churches’ are generally at, and are therefore reproducible and healthy.

...But compared to what we desire to produce here at Christ Baptist and the standards that we have, I would put the figure way down to 20%.” Why? “Because they don’t have the adequate tools and resources that we have here. So they’re doing the best they can with what they have.”

- “Most people who read the Scriptures would look at these churches and say, ‘This is fine’.”

Rev. Coertze then tells the story of a church planter he recently met who supposedly planted 500 churches in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia in the last three years. Rev. Coertze then asked him about the standard of quality in these new churches, and this church planter replied, “Well, it’s much better than what was there before.” To which Rev. Coertze replied, “But *biblically*, where’s the standard?” “So, I think biblically, most Baptists will be very happy to say to you, ‘60-70% of these [new BUSA churches] are OK’. Most small churches will even look and say, ‘100% of these are OK’. But I think if you come down to a serious study of the Scriptures and you look at the standard of a man of God who is able to teach, I will draw the line at 20-30% true productivity.”

- I asked Rev. Coertze if this kind of ‘1 out of 5’ maturity/success rate is normal or if we need to make serious changes in our church planting. He answered, “I don’t want to be too negative. While these churches are not where they should be, the gospel must spread, people need to come to Christ, and churches must pick up the responsibility to mature and grow these young churches. ...These things are hard to pinpoint into a statistic, saying ‘4 out of 5’ are immature. They might not be as vibrant as they should be yet, but they are ‘rescuable’. What we need now as a BUSA is to do the ‘EQUIP 2005’, and better, where we are emphasizing the need for tools, resources, etc.”

- “So are there true believers in these churches? Yes, seemingly (the fruit is there). So that makes the church planting 100% justifiable. The scary fact is this – that while the church planting is taking place, we must not cause what has happened, I believe, in Africa over the 2,000 years, where the quality of Christian life has been watered down and it became integrated with syncretism, animism, etc. So we must guard against this. The BUSA is on the right road. Church planting is going well. But we must also equip.” What is lacking most in Africa are resources. These black pastors badly need resources, especially good theological books – this is a major, major difficulty.
- “The lack is not that church planting should not take place, is unsuccessful, or true churches are not being planted. The lack is we are sitting with a backlog in Africa of a lack of resources, a lack of equipping, a lack of training, a lack of the funds to train and disciple and to raise them up to maturity. ...A lot of Africa’s resources are in Europe and America, when they should have been here to upgrade the knowledge and understanding on all social levels, including Christianity. Unfortunately today, Christian discipleship costs money. It is not just a matter of an interpersonal relationship and a Bible in my lap. There is deeper equipping, understanding of original languages, context, etc., that calls for tools so that the churches are not shallow. ...In many areas, the support (finance and personnel) is not there, so the solid equipping just cannot take place.”
- “BUSA church planting is doing a good job at producing a love for the Lord, a love for His Word, a love for prayer, a love for gathering, and a love for being excited in Christ. But generally it is not maturing the believers, it is not raising up a standard of excellence among leadership, it is not bringing about churches that are reproducing enormously godly standards. Rather, it is reproducing shallowness. And that’s a major concern. So what South Africa and Africa needs are more and more of the resources and tools that are so greatly lacking to flow back among the existing believers who know the language, culture, etc., so they can start producing better quality believers who are growing in their knowledge of the Lord through intense studies of what the Word of God *is* teaching.”

3.2.4 Findings from extensive interview with Rev. Venter of Samaria Mission

The full transcript of this hour and a half interview can be found in the Annexure B. This interview was very enlightening and educational. It may prove to be some of the best field data that was gleaned. Rev. Hennie Venter has been involved in evangelism and church planting for over twenty-five years now, since 1977. He has been the missions pastor alongside of Rev. Coertze at Christ Baptist Church since 1990, and is the founder and director of that church’s mission arm, called Samaria Mission. As mentioned already, Rev. Venter and Christ Baptist Church have been at the forefront of the whole BUSA push for church planting

since 1990 (Robbins, 2003:157; Rae, 1999:163). Rev. Venter states how his mission has been involved with over 200 churches (most of these being the new BUSA churches that form the target group for this thesis), and have helped to supply buildings for over 70 of these churches. It seems clear that Rev. Venter is *by far the most qualified spokesman* to represent the church planting work that the BUSA has been involved in. Here is an individual who has had personal contact and genuine involvement with probably *a fourth* of the total group of 400+ churches planted by the BUSA since 1990, so his input is vital in this field research. Further information about Rev. Venter and Samaria Mission can be found at the Christ Baptist Church web site at www.cmint.co.za.

The researcher will attempt to summarize here the key points of the interview that help in defining areas where newer BUSA churches and church planting needs strengthening:

- The basic pattern that Rev. Venter has followed in his church planting:
 - a. Evangelise using tent campaigns (as depicted in their logo above and the first photo below) that show the “Jesus” film and preach the gospel. Supplement this with preaching house-to-house and in schools (often involving short-term teams from USA).
 - b. Gather the new converts and start to do follow-up through weekly Bible study meetings.
 - c. Identify potential church leaders.
 - d. Depart (usually after 3-4 weeks), but start to develop other partners (usually short-term teams from USA) who can go back there for a short-term visit and teach and train the people, and provide a church building (see example to the right).
 - e. Get that church leader to enrol at Christ Seminary for theological training. Or, in their efforts in Mozambique, Samaria mission has two pastors who go in a few times each year to gather and train current pastors for a few days of intensive pastoral training.

Then, *ideally* (though it is not yet happening in most cases):

 - f. While that church leader is in training, he is developing other leaders in the church and is properly administrating the church and its finances. He must also begin developing other specialized ministries at this time, especially with the youth and with growth-group training.
 - g. During this time, the church should also get recognition as a fellowship in their BUSA association (typically BNA in this case, since Samaria Mission is based in the north). The church should become involved in regional fraternals, conferences, and other intra-denominational fellowship.
 - h. Within three years, the church should have 40 solid adult members, with secure leadership and financial viability, so that they can be constituted as a church in the BUSA. The church must also foster more of a mission vision for cross-cultural outreach, including beyond their borders.
- Rev. Venter says that Samaria Mission would take credit for planting (i.e., starting) about 10% of their churches (7-10 churches). The rest of the churches were either started in partnership with a mother

church and/or church planter in the area, or were already existing churches that just needed further assistance in evangelism or discipleship. Samaria Mission mostly functions as a catalyst to existing churches.

- Here are the *thirteen main problems* Rev. Venter observed in their work of seeking to build mature churches with the BUSA (via the Baptist Northern Association) in the Limpopo Province:

a. Churches have often been planted with very little nurture (follow-up). They were not well grounded in the Bible, so they soon developed factions and disunity among them. Rev. Venter shared this as he looked back on his own church planting efforts:

I feel we (Samaria Mission) did not visit and develop the churches the way we should have. There were various reasons for that. Manpower was our chief problem. The requests for help are great; I sometimes have up to four calls per week. Some of these involve petty problems. They often expect some kind of miraculous solution from me. These usually involve splits, finances and leadership.

Rev. Venter estimated that *about 20 of their 70 churches (29%) that they've been most involved with are mature or healthy* at present. He said that many of these are actually still quite immature and are not financially supporting their pastor, but at least they have a promising leader who is trained or getting training. Rev. Venter also indicated that *only about 20 of the 70 churches have shown any noticeable improvement (in their evangelism, attendance, or overall maturity) after receiving a church building*. He attributes this to lack of qualified leadership in these churches.

b. Leaders are not being effectively trained and developed. Many are still not even appointing deacons to share in the leadership of the church. Rev. Venter remarked:

Almost all the old Baptist pastors, which we had (in the BNA), they are almost all gone. Many have gone off the rails, and done more damage than good. ...they've just faded out and are not active. The good guys are all gone down to the Reef (Gauteng). But they did not leave many trained leaders behind them, if any. So the church becomes stagnant. If they do not have a godly trained leader, the congregation goes nowhere.

Furthermore, some of these old but incompetent pastors chase away the promising young men who should have been rising up to replace them. Another cause that Rev. Venter pointed to was the lack of confidence in many of these black African brothers:

But, again, we sit with the cultural situation where he thinks, 'I'm young, I'm not married, I'm nothing.' Not all are like that, but I tell you, in the rural areas, the *majority* are like that. They are so afraid to stand up as a strong leader and lead. They feel they are not acknowledged by the community.

c. The mother churches are often not nurturing their new branches. And sometimes they prevent the local leader from having full authority to train and appoint his own leaders, since only the "big Bishop" can do such appointing.

d. "At the moment 90% of the churches are not run by a biblical structure." Rev. Venter goes on to say:

Most of these churches still have a totally unbiblical church government structure, where they are run by a church committee (treasurer, chairperson, secretary, and pastor) rather than by a biblical eldership. And many of these committee members are incompetent to do their job, such as handling the finances. ... Until this changes, the church will not come right – it must change. How to change this will be a real process, but we can do it through proper training.

In our church here (CBC), we have godly leaders and elders with wisdom and knowledge, guys from the business world and the church. So we can reach good, sensible conclusions before we do something. But these guys (in the black rural churches) have nobody! They just talk to their wives, or to one of the youth, and then off they go. They have no real eldership counsel.

e. Church administration is a great concern. Rev. Venter said, "Only about 10% of [the approximately 70 churches planted] have responded satisfactorily to my request for a financial statement."

f. The leaders are not developing certain specialized ministries (beyond those reaching the women), especially for the youth and for cell group leaders. This can then lead to greater friction between the old people and the youth.

g. Some areas have to be totally re-evangelised because of leaders being sucked in by false teaching and taking other leaders with them.

h. The lack of men in the churches – "It... is mostly women and children who attend Sunday services." One cause of this is the apartheid migrant worker system where the men are away for months and have to abandon their households. Also, the men are best reached through relationships, not just big mass meetings. But many evangelists, church planters, and pastors don't take the time to build relationships and trust with the male leaders in the community. They often just condemn the men but build no relationships with them. Rev. Venter shared this insight:

My visits to some of the chiefs revealed a similar attitude. I've told them, 'If that's your lifestyle, that's your lifestyle. But I can tell you what the Word of God says, the way we should live. But I'm here to help in more ways than just to tell you you're not right. You know you're not right.' Then we develop very good relationships with these chiefs, and later on they open their hearts. When they have real problems, they call on you. Some of our younger preachers need to give more grace like this in trying to reach men. Otherwise, you don't make much progress in your churches. But most of the guys that are good disciplers – they will go and visit these men, build relationships with them, and win them for Christ.

i. The pastors are unable to give good, biblical counselling, "... is a tremendous weakness. Real good counselling is generally not available. People have *all sorts* of problems, and there is no one to counsel them. The educated ones, like teachers, look at the pastors and say, 'Ah, that one, he doesn't really know his Bible. He cannot counsel.'"

- j. Some mother churches are rushing their church planting and overextending themselves and not doing a proper job.
- k. "Some pastors are just lazy, and take chances. Some would only take a taxi on a Sunday to see their congregation for a few hours and to preach, and that would be the end of the contact with the congregation for the week. No discipling is done."
- l. Often churches will not develop and grow in certain areas (e.g., their involvement in missions) without outside help (i.e., usually foreign money). This includes their need for a building. Churches that still meet in a shack will turn off people who will only come to worship in a nice building. Rev. Venter states, "There are some congregations that just cannot help themselves at this point. If we're not coming alongside them to build a little church [building], they would not be in existence today."

Combining "d" above with this point on the dependency of these younger churches, Rev. Venter says:

But through proper training, we must teach them the role of the elders, and deacons, and the women in the church. This is a real process (i.e., it takes time)... Perhaps starting in their 3rd year at seminary they start implementing this in their congregations. And they cannot do this alone. If they have a mother church over them...if we have a good relationship, and church development, we can come alongside of them.

- m. Most of the newer churches have *no model* to show them how to develop and grow. And their leaders often don't stay long enough to develop any sort of model. As Rev. Venter asks, "How then do you mature churches (if someone does not stay)? They need to see that model."

Near the end of the interview, Rev. Venter ended with an example of one of the pastors of one of these newer BUSA churches. He is a product of Samaria Mission and Christ Seminary:

Take for example one of the men working out in Venda, living in a little box, in a little church building that is falling apart. The mother church thinks things are going fine at that church. But we have to go and say, 'No, things are not going well there.' They don't have their own bank account, etc. When he enters his final year of seminary, that church should be at a point where they will all be there with him when he graduates. They should be able to say, 'Here is our church leadership, and here's our own bank account. We're now in fellowships status with the BNA. Within 3 more years we will constitute as a church having at least 40 solid adult members in our church.'

Yet, if you speak to that pastor there in that little church in Venda, he sees it as a hopeless situation with no direction. He doesn't feel he can improve himself, because he lives under the system that the individual like me doesn't have a say, but rather the community, "our people", decides for me (i.e., the mother church). The mother church has a *bunch* of churches, and no time to take care of the branch churches, or even all of their own affairs. So I said, 'You guys must mature first (i.e. slow down)'. But again, I think without external development help, they cannot help themselves.

3.2.4 Other relevant BUSA statistics and excerpts

To cap off the above findings from the surveys and interviews, the researcher has found some other BUSA statistics and excerpts that help to further identify the areas of need in these newer BUSA churches:

- In the BU handbook for 2002-2003, *60 out of 141 fellowships are without a trained pastor* (“minister”). One must then add to this another 10-20 churches that are “pastored” by a pastor who actually oversees multiple churches, and who does not normally reside in the area of some of “his” churches. Adding this figure to the other 60, this means *at least half* of these newly planted BUSA fellowships appear to be *without* a trained, capable shepherd (BUSA Handbook, 2003a). This is surely cause for concern.
- The researcher had a phone conversation (July, 2003) with Rev. Terry Rae, the previous General Secretary of the BUSA (from 1993-2001), who has been promoting much of the church planting thrust. Rev. Rae stated that he had conducted informal surveys that revealed a fallout rate of 8% in these 400+ churches planted since 1990 (later confirmed in a journal article also – Rae, 1999:163). This means that 30-40 of the 400 new churches have already disbanded in some way. This was attributed to three main factors: “research and surveys were not properly done in the area;” “other evangelical churches were well-established”; “leaders who began the work moved away for various reasons, such as job opportunities in other areas.”
- Rev. Rae’s article (1999:161) also gives a helpful explanation of some of the socio-economical context in which many of these new churches have been planted. He points out, “...urbanisation was stunted during the 40 years of the *Apartheid* policies, when influx control, i.e. the movement of people to the cities, as well as the Group Areas Act, did not allow our cities to develop and grow naturally. In 1988 influx control was abolished...[and] 40 years of stunted urbanisation was redressed and in a comparatively short period of time (approximately 5 years) a mass movement of people to the cities took place.” This unnatural stampede of growth obviously led to massive increases in crime and in unemployment, which still severely affects many of the black churches today.
- This burden for reaching the new urban dwellers of our country led the BUSA in 1990 to accept a challenge to accelerate church planting, “especially in the new urban areas.” But ironically, as one of the above statistics now reveals (p. 8, #23), over half of these younger BUSA church plants seem to be in rural areas, not urban.
- Some of the key BUSA leaders put heavy emphasis on the rate and speed of church planting efforts. Rev. Rae (1999:163-64) often refers to this, speaking of the 1995 rate of one church being planted every

15 ½ days, and the 1995-99 rate of a church planted every 14 days, and the 1999 rate of a new work every 6.3 days.

- The BUSA in conjunction with the BNA (Baptist Northern Association) has drawn up a guideline for the constituting of fellowships and churches (which has been referred to already in above comments). Here are their suggested criteria for a church to first be recognised as a *fellowship* in the BUSA (2003b):
 - a. 20+ committed and faithful members.
 - b. Gifted folk able to serve as a small interim “Steering Committee”.
 - c. A parental link either to a mother church (or) the BNA Church Planting Committee.
 - d. A simple constitution, which provides a “modus operandi” for the fellowship.

Next are the suggested criteria for a fully *constituted church*:

- a. The former BUSA requirement of 40+ fully-fledged members is recommended.
- b. Stable, mature, and biblically gifted leadership. A stable Executive that is able to lead the church in the absence of a pastor.
- c. Financial viability – in other words, the new constituted church must be able to take care of its own financial responsibilities even if assistance is received from outside sources. it must be able to provide the bulk of its financial requirements and be able to “effectively manage” its own finances whether it has a full-time or part-time or student pastor or simply a biblically-gifted lay-leader.
- d. A constitution for a church which has been officially accepted by a constituted church members meeting and if possible approved/endorsed by the BNA Executive before acceptance.

3.3 Preliminary conclusions

After gleaning all of the above findings, the researcher believes that a clear picture of these BUSA churches is emerging. He will seek to summarize each of the main strands of research and then weave them together into an overall diagnosis of how BUSA church planting and newer churches seem to be doing.

3.3.1 From the church surveys

The surveys of the young BUSA churches revealed that most of the respondents are experienced, fairly well educated, have received (or are receiving) pastoral training, and are most shaped by the influence of their own pastor. Yet too many are not staying in the same vicinity of the flock they claim to shepherd.

Thankfully, these leaders seemed clear in their understanding of the gospel and in their statements about how the Christian life is lived and how God’s will is known. But their immersion in Scripture was not as impressive, since 2 out of every 3 still have not read through the Bible more than once, and 1 out of 5 have not even read the whole Bible once. They did seem clear, however, on the biblical principles for selecting church leaders, for practicing church discipline, and for defining good preaching. Yet these pastors turned around and surprisingly said that less than half of them believe that verse-by-verse, consecutive exposition of God’s Word is the best food for their flock.

As for the actual churches being surveyed, about 60% were rural and 40% urban or township. It was revealed that almost half of them are under the false impression that they are a recognised fellowship of the BUSA. Another concern was the apparent inaccuracy in reporting the number of men and families in their church, probably stemming from the habit of referring to their ideal attendance when (rarely) the men are back home from the city on a weekend visit. But the commitment of the women and children in these churches is commendable.

Less than one-third of these younger churches acknowledged any link with a mother church. Yet this does not seem to stem from a healthy autonomy, since almost all of those that have buildings received it from an outside donor, very few are even close to supporting their own pastor, and over half say their giving/tithing has shown no increase in the past two years. The rural churches have an average of only four members who earn a salary and their average monthly income is R 760 as a church.

As for the pastoral ministry in these churches, a few other significant findings surfaced. There seemed to be confusion over exactly what is an elder in the church. Involvement in pastoral counselling and evangelism seemed to be strong. In terms of the purpose that drives these churches, they were much clearer about their evangelistic mandate than about their call to edify the saints. Only 1 in 3 made any reference to the ultimate, Godward (exaltation) purpose of the church.

In the final section on the maturity/health of these churches, there seemed to be a dangerous amount of churches (70%) that are unsure that the majority of their members have a good grasp of the gospel itself. Otherwise, their leaders gave a rather average report on their church's spiritual health. Only half of the churches have covered in the past two years the key, foundational teachings regularly needed in any church. Teaching on God's plan for a godly home and the biblical roles in the home was much lower than any of the other topics being covered (been covered in only 1 of 3 churches in past two years). In the other areas of maturity, personal evangelism was identified as the weakest area.

Another serious concern is the seemingly stunted growth in these churches: these churches have been in existence for an average of 9 years, yet over that time period the average increase of adult members is 11 (started at avg. size of 20, now at avg. size of 31), meaning they are averaging about 1 new member each year (about a 5% growth rate). At first, this seems quite divergent from the hopeful recent 2003 BUSA statistic of a 19% growth rate in the fellowships and extensions (i.e., the newer churches, which the BUSA just began tracking in 2003) (Grant, 2004). Yet, that same page also reveals only a 4% growth in the number of actual baptisms in these same churches. So most of the growth would seem to be transfer growth, biological growth, or unbaptised converts. This fits with the recent comment of the BUSA missions developer, Dr. Robbins (2003:158): "There is a very real concern...that over the past decade this evangelistic zeal has begun to fade in BUSA".

Overall, these surveys alone have not produced a clear picture of the condition of these newer BUSA churches. (Face to face interviews in their local language would have probably been more effective.) But thankfully, the other methods of field research seemed to fill in the gaps in many ways.

3.3.2 From the various BUSA interviews

The findings from the interviews with key BUSA church planters and developers were quite helpful. The estimate of the area coordinators regarding the total number of these newer (since 1990) BUSA churches was almost an exact match to one of the BUSA estimates of 335 churches planted since 1990 (cf. 1.3). The estimate (of both the coordinators and other key leaders) that nearly half of the leaders of these churches are capable and well trained seemed in agreement with the survey findings. But the estimates that only about 20-26% of these churches are mature, well established churches was much lower than on the surveys (though not surprising, since a survey from a church leader himself would tend to be less objective than an outside observer).

These mini-surveys from the BUSA coordinators and church developers clearly identified some of the main factors in why some churches are maturing and many others are not. The consensus was that this could be traced back to these factors:

- church leadership that are either untrained, spiritually immature, or unavailable
- membership that are uncommitted in some way
- lack of finance and resources, especially due to migrant workers (men) and unemployment
- interference of culture issues (worldly attitudes adopted from surrounding society)
- churches were not planted for the right reasons or in the right way in the first place
- poor preaching and teaching of the Word
- some churches just need more time to mature but are on the right track

Here then are the main solutions suggested by these BUSA leaders as keys to building more mature churches:

- More effective, careful church planting under a solid mother church
- Developing and training better local leadership
- Train and equip the members better.
- Teach more on finances; encourage self-employment (bivocational) for pastors; avoid over-dependency on outside funds.

Perhaps the most revealing of all were the two personal interviews of two of the foremost figures in BUSA church planting, Revs. Venter and Coertze. The researcher will attempt to highlight here some of their main concerns regarding the condition of BUSA church planting (since 1990) and the resulting churches:

- There is a great amount of hunger and hype in these churches, but a lack of solid biblical teaching and doctrinal foundation, leading to a very shallow spirituality.
- Some areas have become so Christianised, with an 'inherited godliness' from earlier generations that is not genuine, making the danger of nominalism great.
- Rev. Coertze: "What is absent [in all of the regions of the BUSA's major church planting activity] is well-equipped, skilled guys handling the Word of God properly and teaching right. Only then the Word of God can become the final authority in the lives of their people." Equipping is the great need of the hour. But this cannot be done without resources and finances, which are often needed from the outside.
- Like the previous findings above, both Rev. Coertze and Rev. Venter also estimate that the maturity 'success rate' is about 20-30% in these churches being planted. Rev. Coertze views this maturity as more of a relative term, depending on the expectations of a certain church or denomination. As for the researcher's stated criteria for biblical maturity, Rev. Coertze again stated that probably only 20% of these churches could then be called mature.
- Rev. Coertze repeatedly emphasized that he believes the cause of so many churches being biblically unhealthy and "shallow" should not be traced back to *how* they were planted, but rather to the way they have been deprived of resources, especially the financial resources for pastors to get good theological books and training so that they can teach the Word of God to their people. Similarly, Rev. Venter was convinced that some churches would not survive if the resources of a physical building were not provided for them.
- Even though Samaria Mission has at various times been credited with planting 100 or so churches (since about 1990), Rev. Venter acknowledges that 90 or more of these churches were actually already existing and were then assisted by Samaria Mission in their evangelism and provision of their church building. But in some cases these churches were not large enough to be constituted as a BUSA church until after the growth that came through Samaria Mission's involvement. There is still a need in the BUSA for clearer definitions of biblical church planting versus church assisting and developing.
- On pp. 30-33 above, Rev. Venter's comments about the challenges of their church planting work were summarized into thirteen salient points. In many ways, this list matches the concerns stated by the other BUSA coordinators and key leaders: initial church planting was inadequate; local church leadership (and administration) are not being effectively developed; detachment of mother churches; desperate need for a model of what a healthy church should look like (a 'how to' example); infiltration of unbiblical cultural ideas; ineffectiveness in evangelising the men in the community.

Following these concerns were the main solutions suggested by Revs. Coertze and Venter:

- Both of these men were hesitant to reflect back on significant faults in the BUSA push for rapid church planting, but rather preferred to focus on the current needs for strengthening and equipping these churches, primarily through pastoral training (as already mentioned above).
- Rev. Venter laid out his mission strategy that normally involves doing short-term evangelism (usually 2-3 weeks), preferably through and with a local leader and mother church. Samaria Mission then maintains contact with the leader of the church and encourages him to go to Christ seminary (if possible) to be equipped. Samaria Mission may also send other short-term teams to visit and assist his church in further evangelism and provision of a church building. Plans are also underway to more actively pursue church development and follow-up with these churches, in conjunction with Christ Seminary.

3.3.3 From Christ Seminary's field visits and observations

Like the above observers who were interviewed, the researcher and his colleagues also bring to the table extensive firsthand exposure to these same BUSA churches and their leaders. Christ Seminary (where the researcher lectures and serves as academic dean) is the primary BUSA training school devoted to training the black African pastors of these newer churches. This seminary was founded in 1997 for that very purpose – to further equip the pastors of the 70 or so churches that Christ Baptist Church had planted or significantly assisted since about 1990. Christ Seminary has worked now for nearly eight years with at least 33 of the pastors and their churches from this target group of BUSA churches. The seminary has had eight lecturers who have taught (for a minimum of 2 years, and some for nearly 6 years), each averaging 8-12 field visits per year to students and their churches (each visit consisting of a *minimum* of a half day—usually the Sunday service and eating lunch together). Combined, the lecturers have visited these 33 pastors and their churches between 1 and 5 times each, for a total of over 150 field visits (over 1,000 hours of observation) to these BUSA churches in the years 1997-2003.

Regarding language proficiency: one of the seminary's lecturers is a Venda who is also fluent in most of the other regional languages of our students; the other lecturers normally use a local interpreter to explain what is being said in a church service (though most of the lecturers are also currently learning one of the local languages). Based on this extensive exposure to these churches, here is *the consensus of the Christ Seminary faculty regarding the condition of these younger BUSA churches* (This document was drafted and agreed upon by the entire faculty on 24 Feb., 2004, as the fruit of countless discussions in monthly faculty meetings and informal conversations):

1. These young BUSA churches have *numerous strengths* and virtues that far outshine many established, urban churches: their selfless hospitality; their wholehearted singing and prayers; their zeal for evangelism; their love and hunger for the Word and their teachability; their love for gathering and fellowshiping; their simple joy and contentment amidst suffering and poverty; their humility to learn from younger, less-experienced outsiders; their love for children; their children's respect for authority. One is amazed at the patience and tolerance of many of these believers who have sat for years under such shallow teaching, since they had nowhere else to go.

2. Yet there are *serious concerns* about the health and stability of these churches:

- The *evangelistic methods* being used to start and to grow these churches seem very Arminian (man-centred and manipulative), producing a large number of 'decisions' but few solid converts. And the tent methods rarely seem to impact men, especially working men, in the community.
- The *preaching and teaching* is typically very shallow, repetitive, or totally unbiblical, and as a result many of the people have no solid foundation in the Word. Most students at Christ Seminary admit that, before coming to seminary, they used to think that preaching did not involve preparation but only picking out a favourite verse and then sharing some opinions or spring boarding into generic, motivational or evangelistic messages.
- The *singing* is often very repetitive, emphasizing only the emotional experience of the song and neglecting the role of the mind and understanding in worship. Music often seems to be misused in their evangelism, where certain choruses are blared out through the loudspeakers to attract the community to the tent meetings. Not only does this seem to disrespect the neighbours at times, but it also numbs the believers to the truth of these songs when they are merely used as a way to draw a crowd or to pass the time until the meetings begin (some lecturers have counted a chorus being sung 20-30 times on occasion).
- The *praying* is often repetitive and disorderly, and it is typical for everyone to pray simultaneously. This seems to prevent the church from uniting together in corporate, thoughtful prayer.
- Two other concerns about public worship: images of Jesus are often posted at the front of the building, which could tempt worshippers to break the 2nd commandment; members are encouraged to give/tithe in a very publicised way, contrary to Christ's warning in Matthew 6:1-4.
- There is an obvious *absence of men and of whole families* that leaves these young churches without a solid core and base (spiritually, financially, and socially) of members. This makes the membership in these churches more transient and unstable. It also causes the community to see these churches as tailored only for women and children, not for men (especially working men with credibility in the community).

- This leads to a serious *lack of other mature leaders* (biblical elders) being developed to share in the shepherding and teaching of the church. Instead, young and immature men are often prematurely placed in positions of leadership, sometimes only a few weeks after first visiting the church or after just being saved.
- Many of these churches are still in the grip of *over-dependency* on outside funding. Pastors do not see any way toward financial viability except through subsidies from urban churches or mission groups. Churches too often think they cannot do effective ministry without a tent and sound system for evangelising, or without a fully paid pastor to run the church.

3. Many of problems seem to stem from the *charismatic influence* on these churches. For example, in prayer the name of Jesus is repeated and shouted out as a sort of magical device. The emcee leads the services as a kind of cheerleader who must stir up the congregation into a frenzy with such frequent shouts as, "Hallejuah? Hallelujah!". The preaching is also often driven more by the preacher's loudness, animation, or personal authority, rather than his biblical content. Often the preaching style is unmistakably taken from their exposure to televangelists such as Jimmy Swaggart or Creflo Dollar (whose video tapes and TV ministries are widely accessible even in remote villages). Charismatic influence is also seen in many other ways, such as the irreverent way in which demands are made upon God in prayer, or the way physical healing is overemphasised, or as Satan is supposedly pushed 'lower' through repetitive singing that addresses him directly.

Christ Seminary faculty have also witnessed many of the other concerns stated above in the other field research. But this section was mainly aimed at specifying characteristics of these newer BUSA churches that might not have clearly emerged already in the other field research.

3.3.4 Overall picture emerging

Certain characteristics of these younger BUSA churches (planted since 1990), and some of the church planting process itself, have now become clear. These are churches that are mostly in black African, low-income communities, where the need was the greatest for church planting. They have been planted by sincere and zealous servants of the Lord. These churches are filled with faithful, devout pastors and members. The rapid multiplication of these churches is a tribute to the expansive power of Christ, His Spirit, and His gospel.

However, most of these churches (probably 70-80%) are shackled by serious limitations preventing them from maturing into responsible, reproducing churches. Most of them were planted quickly, without intimate ongoing involvement from a mother church and without competent local leadership being identified and

entrusted with the nurture of the infant church. Most of them see no way toward financial viability, in light such factors as weak teaching (on stewardship), distrust of their leaders, a dependency mentality, and the absence of men due to ineffective evangelism and the migrant worker situation. Most of them desperately need to see a model of what biblical preaching and teaching, and biblical church leadership, membership, and ministry really looks like. Unless these churches are thoroughly equipped in these areas, there is no sign that they will grow past adolescence so that the gospel can steadily advance in and through these churches.

Such a profile paves the way for the crucial next step in chapter 4: analysing these churches, and the church planting, in light of Scripture. This should help to complete the diagnosis by going beyond mere symptoms to root causes and ideas, some of which are biblical and others that are not. Only then can effective strategies be suggested with a view to lasting change.

The objective of this chapter is to define the strengths and weaknesses of recent BUSA churches and church planting in light of Scripture. In doing so, a case study model will be offered of how to analyse the health of churches and church planting anywhere in Africa.

4.1 Strategies in light of the biblical criteria

Listed below are some of the key strengths of these younger BUSA churches and their leaders. The data drawn from the first research method (the church surveys) may not accurately reflect the whole target group (the 332 or so churches). This is because the majority of those who responded were probably the more mature and better educated pastors rather than those who battle with English, or who did not care to complete the survey, or who were in a location that made it difficult for a survey to reach them. But the return rate was good (36%) so a biblical analysis is still in order. Plus, the other research methods (mini-surveys, interviews, and the researcher's own experience) helped to fill many gaps.

4.1.1 Strengths of the pastors

- The faithfulness and longevity of many of the rural black pastors – As Acts (20:17ff) and Paul (1 Tim 3:1ff; Titus 1:3ff) demonstrated, church maturity depends upon proven leaders who can trust over time and have a bluntness reputation. The fact that the pastors of these younger BUSA churches, mostly in the rural black areas, have an average tenure of ten years is a big contrast to the transient pastorates in most of today's churches.
- Their clarity on the gospel of grace – As seen in the leaders of the early church in Acts and in Paul's epistles (e.g., Romans), no church will grow for its leader does not have a clear grasp of

CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD RESEARCH: *DEFINING THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF RECENT BUSA CHURCHES AND CHURCH PLANTING IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE*

This chapter should be the hinge of the thesis because it turns from the gathering the raw material in chapters 2 and 3 to using that material in chapters 4 and 5 to construct biblical solutions for churches in Africa. After observing the necessary data one must begin interpreting it and implementing it. When one examines field research through the lens of Scripture it should result in a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of churches and church planting, whether in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) or anywhere. Strategies (chp. 5) for building more mature churches should then flow naturally out of this analysis.

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4.1.1 Strengths of the pastors

- *The faithfulness and longevity of many of the rural, black pastors* – As Acts (20:17ff) and Paul (1 Tim. 3:1ff; Titus 1:5ff) demonstrated, church maturity depends upon proven leaders who earn trust over time and have a blameless reputation. The fact that the pastors of these younger BUSA churches, mostly in the rural black areas, have an average tenure of *ten years* is a big contrast to the transient pastorates in most of today's churches.
- *Their clarity on the gospel of grace* – As seen in the leaders of the early church in Acts and in Paul's epistles (e.g., Romans), no church will grow far if its leader does not have a clear grasp of

the gospel. In questions #9-11 of the survey, almost all of the leaders confessed a clear gospel (at least at that basic level).

- *Their high view of Scripture* – The first Christians were “constantly devoting themselves to the apostle’s teaching” (Acts 2:42, etc.) and Paul was a lover of God’s Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17, etc.). Similarly, these young BUSA churches reflect a deep commitment to the Bible. In the brief space allowed, seven out of ten pastors made it clear that they know Scripture is essential for spiritual growth and for knowing God’s will. The researcher finds that in many Western churches today, the Bible is one of the last sources considered for knowing God’s will or experiencing real growth. A hunger for biblical teaching in these churches was also seen in the fact that the majority of them hold additional Bible training outside of the Sunday services, covering a wide range of vital topics.
- *Their clarity on some key issues of pastoral ministry* – The early church and Paul were clear on such essentials as qualified leadership (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13, etc.), the practice of church discipline (1 Cor. 5, etc.), and the need for preaching the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5, etc.). In a similar vein, most of these pastors gave correct answers regarding the primary criteria that a leader be blameless, that church discipline begin with private confrontation, and that successful preaching involves explaining and applying the Bible.

4.1.2 Strengths of the churches

- *Their passion for multiplication* – As seen in Acts (2:47; 4:31; 8:4, etc.) and Paul’s letters (Php. 1:6, 27; Romans 1:16; 15:9ff, etc.), every healthy church should have an unstoppable enthusiasm for reaching the lost. The BUSA is to be commended for its eagerness to set goals for rapid expansion. This came out clearly in the surveys and in most of their church purpose statements.
- *The generosity of overseas partners stands out* – The early church was renowned for its vibrant fellowship and sacrificial giving (Acts 2:42; 4:32-37; 2 Cor. 8-9, etc.). So also BUSA church planting has been enriched in many ways by local generosity from the wealthier BUSA churches and especially by the help from international supporters. Such Christian generosity has supplied over 70 church buildings in rural, needy areas, along with bringing over a host of long-term and short-term missionaries to assist in the planting and strengthening of these churches and in developing leaders.
- *Church unity and fellowship* – Just as the early church (Acts 2:42, etc.) and Paul (Eph. 4:1-3, etc.) prized the body life of the church, so do these BUSA churches. The surveys suggest that

few (18%) of these younger churches have gone through a church split, and many have observed how these congregations love to gather and to fellowship, sometimes many nights a week. Such eagerness to gather is reminiscent of the early church's fervent fellowship.

- *Their passion for prayer* – Just as Acts (2:42, etc.) and Paul (Php. 1:9-11, etc.) display the centrality of prayer, so these BUSA churches showed a zeal for prayer in their survey answers. This has been confirmed by the repeated observations of the researcher and of the church and seminary where he serves. When the researcher once inquired with his students (many of whom are BUSA pastors) if they had ever tried an all-night prayer meeting, many of them answered that this was *a regular event and a highlight* in the life of their churches. How many of the older, Western churches could say that?

These are just a few of the notable strengths in these younger BUSA churches that were revealed through the field research. The BUSA must also be commended for its strong emphasis on church planting and not on mere evangelism or social ministry or other endeavours that often sidetrack churches from their primary mandate. One common sidetrack that the BUSA churches seems to have resisted so far is the trend toward 'holistic missions' that says the meeting of physical needs and community development is just as central to missions as evangelism and church planting (cf. excellent article on this by Hesselgrave, "Redefining Holism", 1999:278-284). Furthermore, the BUSA seems to have wisely resisted some of the dangerous ecumenical trends in church planting where interdenominational groups attempt to plant churches jointly.

Based on his own observations (and those of his church, seminary, and mission; cf. others at 3.3.3), the researcher realizes there are *dozens of other highlights* in the life of these young BUSA churches, strengths that cannot be identified through mere empirical research. Often the faith of our black African brothers and sisters shamefully exposes the spiritual poverty of the older, more established 'white' churches. Truly, "Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith..." (Jam. 2:5a). The researcher testifies that African Christians, who have received one-hundredth of the Bible teaching enjoyed by many Western evangelicals, often display a faith, joy, hospitality, and evangelistic fervour that is a hundred times stronger!

4.2 Weaknesses in light of the biblical criteria (and possible causes)

"Weakness" in this context does not refer to a disease or syndrome that is beyond one's control. This analysis seeks to offer an honest evaluation of ways that these BUSA churches and the church planting itself need to become more biblical. Though not ignoring external (uncontrollable) factors, the aim is to give hope and to show the way for improvement by focusing on areas that the BUSA and its churches can control, under any circumstances.

This analysis will bear weight only for those who are convinced that churches and church planting *must always first be measured* by the absolute standard of Scripture, not merely by a standard of comparison with the past or with other churches in their area (a mindset Paul forbids in 2 Cor. 10 and elsewhere). One must beware of paternalistically saying, 'Well, their church may not be very stable, but at least it's more than they had before, or better than the other churches there.' One day when the church planter stands before the Lord to answer for the quality of His work, God will not evaluate his work *in comparison* to 'what they had before'. Neither will Christ judge based upon the average statistical fallout rate for new converts or new churches, nor will He judge based upon the low expectations of others in the denomination or the community.

This list of weaknesses is longer than the above list of strengths, not because the researcher desires to be negative or critical, but out of a desire to be helpful. Though the BUSA church planting movement is a genuinely exciting movement, the aim of this thesis is to strengthen and improve this movement for even greater fruitfulness in generations to come.

This biblical analysis of the BUSA church planting trends can be arranged according to the three stages that Paul followed, as seen in Acts (cf. 2.1.4, 2.3.3): *evangelising* the community, *establishing* the new converts and churches, and *entrusting* leadership to capable local leaders.

4.2.1 Weaknesses in *evangelising* and starting churches

Scripture shows that church planting missionaries were normally sent out by an established local church that acted as a kind of mother church (Acts 11-14). Yet *only 31%* of these younger BUSA churches acknowledged any link with a mother church. Out of those that did mention a mother church, some say they are no longer receiving any significant nurture from that church. In their guideline (BUSA, 2003c), the BUSA/BNA require a "parental link either to a mother church (or) the BNA Church Planting Committee", but often this link is loose or non-existent. When the link is an associational committee, some of the BUSA leaders interviewed (cf. Annexure B) say that this is far less effective than a good mother church that is committed to nurture that new church.

The *kind of evangelism being used* to start these new churches must also be analysed biblically. When only *one-third* of these pastors surveyed said he was sure that the majority of his members have a good grasp of the gospel, there is cause for concern. BUSA leaders admit (cf. chp. 3) that mass evangelism methods like tent crusades and altar calls produce dozens (even hundreds) who come forward, but only a few who remain in a few months. It is time to reconsider this method. Nowhere in Scripture is there any other required public response aside from baptism, confessing Christ, and commitment to a local assembly (Acts 2:41, 47, etc.; Rom. 10:9-10). In many places it is commonly accepted that altar calls are essential for evangelism. Yet this method was basically unheard of before the 19th century emergence of American evangelist Charles

Finney (an outspoken Arminian and pragmatist, known for his invitations to “come forward” to the “anxious bench”) (Roy, 2003:27-31; Murray, 1996:242)?¹

Since it is admitted that the altar call method has a large dropout rate, one must consider that for every one true convert there may be ten others who have been sent away with a damning false assurance based merely upon their public ‘decision’. Note how Jesus (e.g., Matt. 7:21-23), the Apostle John (1 John), and the books of James and Hebrews (6:4-8; 10:26-31, among many other Scriptures) all give severe warnings against the deadly dangers of false assurance. The next time such people come to hear the gospel, they may be numbed and unresponsive, thinking they are already saved because they walked the aisle previously. Even the most careful evangelist cannot guarantee against false assurance. But surely no Christian evangelist would *wilfully* cause others to be self-deceived and run the risk of populating Hell more than Heaven through their careless evangelism.

Furthermore, who can tell the number of disillusioned people who walked away and soon realized their supposed conversion was fake, leaving them more hardened to the gospel than before? Consider how severely this kind of shallow evangelism can discredit the gospel in the eyes of the community, when the majority who attend meetings and profess faith show no lasting change. The church is called to “walk with wisdom toward outsiders” and ensure that “the word of God is not dishonoured, ... that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us, ... that in every way the teaching of God our Saviour is made attractive?” (Col. 4:5; Titus 2:5, 8, 10, partially NIV)².

For years, veteran missionaries and missiologists have been warning that such mass evangelism methods are more American (pragmatic) than biblical, and can have severe long-term side effects that cripple a church (Hesselgrave, 2001a:109-141, 167-191; Patterson, 1999:601). For example, it is concerning when a method mainly attracts the most available or vulnerable members of society (e.g., often the women and children). This can result in a shaky foundation upon which to build a church. Recall that in Acts, Paul usually targeted the synagogues where there were plenty of adult men present (Hesselgrave, 2001a:111-125; Patterson, 1999:598). It is also a concern when American evangelists import a Western individualistic, privatised gospel by asking people to accept Jesus as their “personal” Saviour aside from any appeal to their household. Chua Wee Hian (1999:616) states:

The apostolic pattern for teaching was in and through family units (Acts 20:20). The first accession of a Gentile grouping to the Christian church was the family of the Roman centurion Cornelius in

¹ In a historical overview of Finney’s long-term impact, MacArthur (1993:235) concludes: “Finney’s most enduring and far-reaching influence, unfortunately, is not from multitudes of souls saved or sinners reached with the gospel. Those effects, it seems, were almost wholly superficial, often vanishing as soon as Finney left town. Finney’s real legacy is the disastrous impact he had on American evangelical theology and evangelistic methodology”. MacArthur (1993:235) quotes from one of Finney’s co-workers who grieved over the spiritual deadness in churches where just three months earlier Finney’s crusades had stirred up such fervour.

² Murray’s insightful little booklet on *The Invitation System* (1998) deserves a careful reading by any modern evangelist. The BUSA’s own Roy (2003:27-32) powerfully addresses these same concerns in his article, “Have We Domesticated the New Birth?”. Cf. three other excellent books on biblical evangelism that include critiques of the pitfalls of modern ‘crisis evangelism’ methods: W. Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* (2002); J.I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (1991); from a long-time Southern Baptist, E. Reisinger, *Today’s Evangelism: It’s Message and Methods* (1982).

Caesarea (Acts 10:7, 24). At Philippi, Paul led the families of Lydia and the jailer to faith in Christ and incorporation into his Church (Acts 16:15, 31-34). The 'firstfruits' of the great missionary apostle in Achaia were the families of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15), Crispus and Gaius (Acts 18:8; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14). So it was clear that the early church disciplined both Jewish and Gentile communities in families.

Another evangelistic tool that is easily misused is the "Jesus" film, especially in light of the premature responses that are often elicited by it. When an audience has little or no biblical background, how clearly will they understand the message of Jesus and salvation (or are they just responding out of respect for the visiting evangelists or because of crowd pressure or other reasons)? People must first learn to ask the right questions before the evangelist starts dishing out answers (e.g., until they understand God as Creator and a definition of sin, they will not see their true need for a Saviour) (Steffen, 1993:272-274)³. Paul carefully considered the worldview of his audiences, and he began both of his evangelistic messages to Gentiles by teaching on God as Creator (Acts 14:8-18; 17:16-34). With proof from a case study of 40 years of church planting in the Philippines, and another case study from Albania, Steffen (1998:432) warns:

When little time is given to laying a firm foundation for the gospel, much more time is required to tear down the faulty foundation to construct a sturdy one. ... While the Holy Spirit ushers people into the kingdom of God in spite of our flawed evangelism-church planting, those on the receiving end may live with the consequences for years to come.

What a sobering warning! This is the core issue: there is *no shortcut* for thoroughly teaching and explaining the biblical gospel. For those that frequently enlist short-term teams from America and elsewhere, there is an even greater danger of naïve or careless evangelism that does not first understand its audience (not to mention the need to earn trust in areas that have been burned by false apostles and prosperity gospel preachers).

Short-term teams (and other visitors) can also wreak havoc when they are not properly screened in advance. If they arrive bringing a doctrinally unsound message or method of ministry, or if they are spiritually immature and not a good example, they cause much more harm than good and only *create more* work for the leaders and church planters who are left behind to pick up the pieces (cf. Rev. Venter's observations in Annexure B).

It is the tendency of some, after doing this kind of shallow evangelism described above, to claim that they have "many converts (i.e., decisions)" and have now "evangelised" that area and can move on. Recall in chapter 2 that Christ Himself defined evangelism as "making disciples" (Matt. 28:19). This was modelled in Acts as Christians were called "disciples" and evangelism was synonymous with disciple-making (Acts 14:21-22). As Rev. Scheepers (General Secretary of the BUSA) loves to say, "Africa doesn't need more converts. What we need are more *disciples*!"

³ Steffen's (1993) insightful article, entitled "Don't Show the Jesus Film", outlines six prerequisites to consider *before* using the film effectively.

Paul's goal was not quick decisions but "the obedience of the faith" (an obedience that can never be seen through a mere altar call) (Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26). Paul would not claim that he'd "fully preached the gospel" in an area until a viable, strategic church had been established there (a potential "mother church" to now reach the area on their own) (Rom. 15:19). So for Jesus and Paul there was no such thing as an evangelism phase and then a *separate* follow-up phase. The definition of biblical evangelism *includes* discipling (follow-up). In fact, remember that for Paul the concept of "preaching the gospel (*euangelidzo*, evangelising)" included everything from initial evangelism to ongoing nurture (cf. Rom. 1:15, preaching the gospel to the saved; cf. 2.2.2.3).

4.2.2 Weaknesses in *establishing* these churches

These BUSA churches that were surveyed have been in existence for an average of nine years. Yet, the combined opinion of the BUSA area coordinators and many other key leaders is that *only 20-25% of these churches have become strong or mature, responsible churches*. That should trouble any church planter. This section aims to unpack further symptoms and possible causes of this problem.

4.2.2.1 Detachment of mother churches

Even through flawed methods, God by His Spirit and Word can gather an assembly of new converts, evidenced many times in the BUSA in recent years⁴. But how well are these offspring being nurtured by their mother churches and church planters?

In a section below (4.2.3), a related concern will be addressed more directly: the poor development of local shepherds for these flocks and the inadequate preaching and teaching these flocks receive. For Paul (in Acts and in his epistles, cf. chp.2), the God-appointed and most effective tool for maturing new churches was constant *biblical teaching*, both by word and by example (e.g., Acts 20:17-35; Php. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:10). When there is no faithful leader to stay among the people and do this kind of teaching, all other attempts at nurture will probably fail.

That said, there is still concern (cf. 4.2.1) over the lack of solid links to mother churches that initiate and nurture these emerging young churches, in contrast to the biblical pattern (cf. 2.1.4 and 2.2.2.3). As the surveys showed, *69% of these younger BUSA churches did not speak of having a mother church*. Rev. Venter has also warned that some mother churches are rushing ahead (or even competing in) their church planting and overextending themselves, and are thus not doing a proper job. Many of the interview responses in 3.2 (cf. Annexure B) echoed these same concerns, often stating that the strength of new

⁴ Steffen (1998:433) rightly states, "All evangelism-church planting is flawed," because we are the sinful, frail human agents God has chosen to use (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-28). He goes on (1998:434), "To paraphrase Jonathan Edwards, all evangelism is a disfigured work of God. It amazes me that anyone ever becomes a believer."

churches lies with the involvement of the mother church. Otherwise, the church usually remains weak. This absence of a mother church as catalyst may explain why the numerical growth in these churches has also been so slow—averaging about *one new member per year* (cf. 3.3.1).

BUSA leaders also spoke of how mother churches are not clearly communicating with their daughter churches, and of how church planters are not receiving the preparation, nor the field support and input that they so badly need (cf. 3.2; Annexure B). These leaders also warned that churches planted only by a regional association don't really grow. All the planter does is send back monthly reports and get a visit on rare occasions. He has no real support base or accountability. He does his own thing, and the association only steps in when there's a problem. Is it any surprise that these churches never mature, when the biblical plan (that strong local churches should plant other churches) is ignored? On the positive side, the WPBA (Western Cape) reported of new churches that were thriving when mother churches put in the time needed to nurture young daughter churches.

4.2.2.2 Fostering dependency instead of self-reliance

Another disturbing trend in these BUSA church plants that seems to prevent them from maturing is the ongoing *dependency* upon outside resources. Granted, chapter 3 clearly showed the severe financial challenges that most of these churches are facing, especially in light of migrant workers and unemployment. But rather than helping these churches toward biblical, local solutions to such hardship (as will be suggested and illustrated in chp. 5), some church planters and developers seem to have crippled churches through foreign subsidies (3.3.2, 3.3.3). This was suggested by statistics such as only 40% of the churches reporting any recent increase in giving, and by the fact that over 90% of the churches that have buildings did not build it themselves. It was observed by BUSA leaders that most of the rural pastors are being supported far below the actual ability of their churches to give and support him. 4.2.3 below will deal with this from the side of the leaders who must learn to be bi-vocational. But this dependency trend is also (primarily?) the fault of the planters and founders of these churches.

Because Scripture encourages Christian generosity to those less privileged, and never forbids foreign support for local church planters, the real dangers of dependency have been easily overlooked. But Schwartz (1999:592) notes, "The well-intended generosity of Christians often backfires by creating dependency." He calls this "the failings of misguided kindnesses."

When Scripture speaks (cf. 2.3.2) of a church that is "strong, mature, stable", it is implying that such a church has begun to stand on its own two feet (cf. numerous NT metaphors for the church which all imply this: a body, a building, a family, an army, etc.). For this reason, Paul expected churches to support their pastors and to be ready to contribute to other needs and mission endeavours (e.g., 1 Cor. 9; 16:2; Php. 1:6; 4:15-18; Rom. 15:24; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Eph. 4:28). To the Corinthians he especially commended the

Macedonian churches that demonstrated the grace of God by joyfully “begging” for the privilege of giving “abundantly” out of their “deep poverty” and “beyond their ability” (2 Cor. 8:1-5)⁵.

Ott (2004) states:

...it is a sign of maturity that a church is able to cover its own ongoing expenses (be it a pastor's salary, rent, materials, etc.). This does not rule out one-time gifts, or emergency assistance [from outsiders] (as in the NT). This is a matter of stewardship even in poor churches. Only as its own expenses are covered is it in a position to really contribute to world evangelization and not be a drain on other's resources.

Recently the researcher read another missionary newsletter describing the urgent need of monthly financial support for ten indigenous church planters in an African region, since their foreign funding had dried up. Christ Seminary (where the researcher works) gives monthly sponsorship to a few area students or graduates (gradually decreasing over a five year period) who can develop stronger churches that can mentor other seminary students. But after three years, there are still serious questions about whether this is working, and one wonders if this is best for the long-term health of these churches.

Schwartz gives this sobering caution (1999:592, 594, combined with comments from his helpful webpage, www.wmausa.org):

When outsiders construct church buildings for local people, they can inadvertently become thieves of self-respect. Foreign funding for buildings can take away the privilege that local people should have of building their own churches, clinics or schools. Instead of preserving dignity, we can create a dependency that often comes back to haunt us. ... This dependency syndrome means that many Christians in mission-established churches and other institutions are living below their privileges in the Lord. Churches become paralyzed without the subsidy and find they cannot reproduce themselves through evangelism or missionary outreach of their own. ... So long as there is a veiled source of income from some unknown place, local people will not feel the need to support their own ministries. The question is this: Does anyone have the courage to let the system collapse so that what rises up truly belongs to the people?

Self-reliance... does not imply that Christians do not rely on God. It has to do with breaking the reliance on the resources of those at a distance - usually in places like the USA, Europe or Korea - rather than on what God has placed close at hand.

Schwartz and others also warn against using anything in church planting that is not *reproducible* by the locals (Schwartz, 1999:593). Figuratively speaking, the church planter must pass them a light baton, not a heavy one that cannot be carried on after the missionary leaves (Steffen, 1997; Hesselgrave, 2001a:283-284). Sometimes the researcher hears of churches and pastors that think they cannot effectively evangelise until they can afford to rent or buy a massive tent (and sound system) for holding campaigns and can get a projector for showing the Jesus film.

⁵ MacArthur (1997:1775) notes how this Macedonian province was “basically an impoverished province that had been ravaged by many wars and even then was being plundered by Roman authority and commerce”. And speaking of their “deep poverty”, he writes that this was “the most severe type of economic deprivation, the kind that caused a person to become a beggar”.

Some will argue that the urgent need for planting churches and spreading the gospel outweighs these concerns for nurturing mature self-reliance and local ownership. But would God have us do His work in a way that deprives His people of blessing and growth and hinders them in the long run? If God had wanted to expedite the process, He could have left out the time-consuming elements of His plan – elements like developing leaders and stability in a new church. But He did not.

Consider some of these *eventual consequences of fostering dependency when planting churches*:

- a. It can hinder evangelism and reproduction. Patterson (1999:604) share his wisdom from decades of rural church planting⁶:

Another almost universal impediment to reproduction is a missionary subsidy that stifles nationals' own giving and builds a dependent spirit. Don't rob poor believers of the blessing of sacrificial giving! God multiplies their mite by special celestial mathematics that will prosper them now and for eternity. Paying national pastors with outside funds nearly always stifles spontaneous reproduction and eventually leads to deep resentment when the source no longer equals the demand.

- b. Because it stifles local giving, it can actually make the church even poorer⁷.
- c. Undiscerning giving can actually "result in a new form of the old paternalism that so characterized the colonial era. ... Giving that creates dependency is dehumanizing and oppressive" (Ott, 1993). Two African church leaders sound this warning:

"If we Africans do not think about our situation and seek a way for our self-support, we will continue to be called beggars. So will our children" (Ntamushobora, 2003:490).

"The African church will not grow into maturity if it continues to be fed by Western partners. It will ever remain an infant who has not learned to walk on her own feet" (Z. Nthamburi, quoted in Ntamushobora, 2003:493)

- d. Money continues flowing to already existing churches when those same funds could be used to advance the gospel in unreached areas where there are not yet local believers to carry on the work (Schwartz, 1999:594). Christians will have to answer to the Lord one day for such poor stewardship.
- e. As Rev. Venter noted in his interview, dependency also brings a much greater tendency to neglect ownership of the ministry (and the buildings) in the years to come. Schwartz again advises (2003a):

⁶ Allen's (1998:176-188) article gives case studies of churches in Indonesia that shrunk as a result of the foreign mission paying the pastor. Ott (1993) mentions the rapid church growth in China under communist oppressors as proof "that churches can grow and mature even under the most severe conditions without Western support. Indeed, when the Chinese churches received Western assistance, they experienced minimal growth." He mentions another case study in India (1993): "When the mission stopped paying national workers in India, the number of lay workers multiplied, which resulted in mass movements to Christ in the Methodist Episcopal Church." Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board (Southern Baptist Convention), also states the dangerous irony of trying to accelerate growth through financial aid that ends up stalling growth (qtd. in McQuilken, 1999).

⁷ Schwartz (1993) reports:

During the 1980's, the South Commission was set up to do a ten-year study of the southern hemisphere. The people who did the study discovered that with all the money, government loans, grants, World Bank and International Monetary Fund projects, food aid through World Vision and other groups - the sum total of all those things which the Northern Hemisphere gave to the Southern Hemisphere, the Southern Hemisphere was left poorer than if they had not been given such assistance. Imagine that! After all that the Northern Hemisphere did, the Southern Hemisphere was still in poverty. One might rightly conclude that in some ways foreign funding helps to keep people poor.

"Early ownership" might not be the quickest way to plant a new congregation; but for its long-term health, it is likely to be one of the most important. For example, local owners who want to preserve their own dignity will not be looking to outsiders every time they want to develop another part of the project.

- f. Foreign aid can also breed coveting and jealousy on the part of other nearby churches that are overlooked (Ranken, qtd. in McQuilken, 1999).

For these consequences of dependency to be avoided or reversed, there must first be a change in the underlying convictions of key mission leaders and church planters. Some of the interviews in chp. 3 revealed all too clearly the entrenched belief in the *inadequacy* and *insufficiency* of local resources:

- In the context of mother churches racing ahead too carelessly in their church planting, one church planter reported, "So I said, 'You guys must mature first (i.e. slow down)'. But again, I think without external development help, they cannot help themselves." He is convinced that churches will not develop and grow in certain areas (e.g., their involvement in missions) without outside help (i.e., usually foreign money). This includes their need for a building. Churches that still meet in a shack will turn off people who will only come to worship in a nice building. This church planter states, "There are some congregations that just cannot help themselves at this point. If we're not coming alongside them to build a little church [building], they would not be in existence today."^{7b}
- Likewise, another key leader emphasized that he believes the cause of so many churches being biblically unhealthy and "shallow" should not be traced back to how they were planted, but rather to the way they have been deprived of resources. He believed that one of the greatest needs of these pastors is for outsiders to give money so these pastors can get good theological books and training so that they can teach the Word of God to their people. One of his concluding statements was:

So what South Africa and Africa needs are more and more of the resources and tools that are so greatly lacking to flow back among the existing believers who know the language, culture, etc., so they can start producing better quality believers who are growing in their knowledge of the Lord....

The researcher could not agree more about the desperate need for good resources in these churches. But is ongoing foreign funding the best means to accomplish this? Sometimes it is called "partnership," and is supported by relevant Scriptures. But one must beware that such a partnership does not become unbiblical in the way that it produces long-term dependency and a kind of permanent adolescence in churches.

Here is a basic biblical conviction that must be planted deep in the hearts of church planters and leaders if this dependency mindset is to change and if these emerging churches are to become truly established: 'God has placed ordinary believers and local churches all over the world to fulfil His purpose through their own

^{7b} In contrast, the researcher knows a veteran church planter in Kenya who believes it can be good for a church to not rush to get their own building, because a humble venue will help filter out the fickle and draw those who are truly committed to planting a biblical church. Far better to move into a nice building and see increased numbers *after* you have a core group of committed folk, rather than *before*.

gifts and abilities. No Christian, even in the poorest parts of the world, should say that they are *unable* to serve Christ and join in His mission *without* outside support' (adapted from Schwartz, www.wmausa.org)⁸.

Second Corinthians 9:8 gives this absolute assurance in the context of the Macedonian church with their deep poverty: "God is able to make all grace about to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (cf. vv. 8-15!). Paul himself models this same godly freedom from dependency and confidence in existing resources, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am (in poverty and in plenty). ...I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Php. 4:10-20). Who would want to deprive people of the chance to see their faith grow and to discover the depths of God's sufficiency?

One of the primary tasks of church planters must be to model what it means to "equip the saints", meaning to "furnish them completely" in their service to the Lord. Thus, writes Bustin (1999) (with over 40 years missionary experience in indigenous church planting in Papua New Guinea), "the work of the missionary—apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher is not just to scatter the seed but to fully equip the new saints to serve as disciples in their own right". These young churches are not being well equipped if the church planters or mother churches continue to foster dependency.

4.2.2.3 Weaknesses in their membership

Serious flaws in church planting and leadership development will inevitably produce unhealthy church members. Most of the problems these BUSA churches have with their membership are only symptomatic of the deeper, root problems in leadership and church planting. On the positive side, there is great hope that when one follows the biblical pattern for developing better leaders and planting stronger churches, most of the other problems among the members will begin to be sorted out. But mention must be made of a few of the current concerns.

Throughout the field research, respondents kept mentioning how churches could have all the other marks of a mature, thriving church, yet their financial struggles cast a shadow over everything (cf. 4.3.2, #2 above). As stated above, there are serious concerns about the low giving in these young churches. Many are not being effectively taught about stewardship and giving. A related concern (from the field research) is the ongoing evidence of worldly cultural ideas and values infecting some churches. Again, this can only be expected in the absence of sound biblical instruction.

⁸ Missiologist Ott affirms this (1993): "Making the fulfillment of the Great Commission dependent on the church's ability to raise money is a fallacy Western Christians have uncritically, unconsciously accepted. It reflects our Western materialism and commitment to a professionalized ministry. Again, this theoretically limits God's work to the measure of the church's economic prosperity."

Another serious symptom noted was the seemingly stunted growth in these churches due to a lack of personal evangelism. Many of these churches are also not showing involvement in wider, cross-cultural missions. Rev. Coertze also noted that some areas have become so Christianised with an 'inherited godliness' from earlier generations that their Christianity is no longer genuine and they are headed toward nominalism.

4.2.3 Weaknesses in *entrusting* and developing leadership

It is here that we find the greatest cause for concern, as seen in the comments of most BUSA leaders interviewed (cf. 3.2; Annexure B). As goes the leadership, so goes the church. As goes the shepherd, so goes the flock. Reed's rebuke (1992:138, 143) of another era is worth hearing again in ours: "One of the great indictments of colonial missions is its consistent failure to establish associations of independent, thriving, and reproducing churches, filled with real leaders, able to think theologically in their own culture". Here are some of the core concerns:

- *Geographical distance from their congregations* – As seen in chapter 3, over *one-third of these pastors do not stay locally with their church*, but either travel there on Sundays/weekends or only go two Sundays or less per month. They are trying to pastor by remote control, a kind of drive-by shepherding. Yet the Book of Acts revealed that church leadership were normally chosen locally, from amidst each congregation (Acts 6:3a; 14:23). Likewise, whenever he was able, Paul sought to live full-time in the area of the flock he was serving. He said to the Ephesian church elders, "You know...how I was with you the whole time" (Acts 20:18; Christ himself modelled this "with them" principle, cf. Mark 3:14). For this same reason church leaders were to be chosen by those who knew them well and were able to watch their lives (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

This lack of local leadership may be inevitable when a congregation is initially being planted as the gospel rapidly advances into a new area. But too many churches in the BUSA have existed for years and are still limited to a long-distance shepherd, without any local leadership being developed (cf. 3.1.5, the average age of these churches is 9 yrs.). Mother churches and senior pastors are content to continue planting more and more churches with only a circuit system of one or two pastors to shepherd all of these new flocks (cf. 3.2.1). Rev. Venter also noted (cf. Annexure B), "Some pastors are just lazy, and take chances. Some would only take a taxi on a Sunday to see their congregation for a few hours and to preach, and that would be the end of the contact with the congregation for the week. No discipling is done."

Whether on purpose or by oversight, the BUSA/BNA guideline about recognition of “fellowships” and constituting of churches actually omits any mention of the pastoral leadership needing to be local (BUSA, 2003). Ott states (2001:341): “Indeed, apart from evangelism and initial follow-up, if a national is not available and willing to be trained, the ministry should probably not be initiated. This makes for a slower start, but, I believe, a more solid finish for the church plant.” It seems that more of this purposeful patience would pay off abundantly in the long run for the BUSA. As the researcher recently heard in conversation with Phineas Chauke (an experienced African church planter) (2004), “Churches will not become viable, healthy churches until leaders are developed *locally* to stay there and carry on the work.”

- *Failure to develop enough competent pastors/elders* – As show in 3.2.4, it is estimated that at least half of the newly planted BUSA fellowships do not have a trained, capable shepherd (BUSA Handbook, 2003a). This harmonizes with the estimates from the BUSA area coordinators and key leaders (3.2.1, 3.2.2), who both said that less than half of these churches have a capable pastor or leader who has received (or is receiving) some kind of adequate pastoral training. Notice, the questions were carefully phrased to allow for a wide range in types of church leadership and training (as is the biblical pattern), including competent lay leadership who receive informal training (as also stated in the BUSA guideline under 3.2.4). The core issue is not the form or method of training (nor the diploma/degree received), but the outcome. Far too many of these churches are languishing without a biblically qualified, competent leader to shepherd them. One wonders who first put these men into leadership in over half of these new churches if there was no sign of them having competency or even gaining competency through adequate training?

As one Venda church leader observed (a paraphrase):

‘The major reason for weak churches is their lack of a capable, godly, trained pastor. Too often the mother churches or planters are not taking the time and staying long enough to develop strong local leadership in the new church plant. The mother church or mission group naively trusts that the local leaders know how to plant and nurture churches, so the full leadership is prematurely given into their hands.’

One pastor in a Gauteng township noted, “Pastors lack adequate theological training. Some are teaching charismatic doctrines. They may be growing in numbers, but not in spiritual maturity and doctrine.” Another BUSA church planter stated, “Some of the leaders have created grave problems. Some are just not capable as leaders. I’m not sure in our training schools we’re doing an adequate job of teaching leadership.”

On a similar note, Rev. Venter voiced his concern over the leaders’ frequent neglect of church administration. He stated, “Only about 10% of [the approximately 70 churches they’ve planted

or assisted] have responded satisfactorily to my request for a financial statement.” Church planters must not wait for students to learn this a few years later in seminary while their church suffers from mismanagement until then. Biblically speaking, these leaders should show (or learn) basic competency in such areas as handling finances *before* they are put in leadership in a new church (1 Tim. 3:1-7, etc.).

Some will remark that this leadership vacuum is a natural consequence of the rapid spread of the gospel. Thus, they say, the church planters are not primarily responsible to stay and develop leaders, but rather the seminaries, mother churches, or other ‘equippers’ must come along after the missionaries (cf. 3.2.3, 3.2.4, Annexure B). But such comments seem to come more from observing modern church planting movements than from observing biblical patterns. In Acts (cf. 2.1.2), qualified leadership was not negotiable – it was indispensable! Leadership development was not a separate task, but was an inseparable part of the church planting process.

As shown in 2.1.4, the Pauline pattern involved passing the baton to capable local leadership *before* moving on (except when they were chased out of town). When Paul did leave, as in Crete, he left behind co-workers who would ensure that the task of appointing capable overseers was completed (Titus 1:5; 3:12). When Paul departed for Athens, he left Timothy and Silas in Macedonia (Acts 17:14).

Yet today, new BUSA church plants (even if called “fellowships” on paper, the community and the denomination often call them churches) are recognised if they have “gifted folk able to serve as a small interim ‘Steering Committee’”(BUSA, 2003c; cf. 3.2.4)–and many times “interim” becomes permanent. When terms are being used that are foreign to Scripture the infant church may already be on course for mediocrity or worse. Brown (2004:13) sounds an appropriate warning (quoting from one of his mission agency’s field leaders):

I fear that the classical, biblical, historic, self-emptying means of planting churches is falling into disgraceful disrepute among us. Teaching the whole counsel of God patiently for years to a few quality elder candidates seems like an incredible waste of time to some...even though after we leave, the blood of any straying sheep is on their neck before God!

- *Lack of true expository, biblical preaching* – The pulpit is one of the best indicators of the maturity of a church and the quality of its leadership. The high priority of expounding the Word was displayed both in Acts (2:42, etc; cf. 2.1.2, and 2.1.3.1) and in Paul (2 Tim. 4:1-5, etc.; 2.2.2.3). Despite good responses from these BUSA pastors on the definition of true biblical preaching, immediately a contradiction arose when *over half of them stated that verse-by-verse exposition of books of the Bible is not what their churches need most*. Rather, they said their preaching should be guided by more subjective guidelines or by an evangelistic agenda. This is

probably why about half of them spend five hours or less preparing their main Sunday message, which is rarely enough time to mine God's Word and dig up real riches to teach God's people.

An equal or greater concern is that most of these pastors have had some kind of pastoral training, yet it does not appear to be producing the Bible expositors that these churches so desperately need. Rev. Coertze stated that one of the BUSA areas with the best-equipped pastors is also the area where so much preaching mishandles the text and the churches are often shallow and unstable. As Rev. Coertze's stated in his overall diagnosis, "What is absent... is well-equipped, skilled guys handling the Word of God properly and teaching right. Only then the Word of God can become the final authority in the lives of their people."

Rev. Coertze and one of his staff were the only two out of the nineteen BUSA leaders interviewed to specify that more biblical preaching and teaching is a major need and a crucial remedy for these young churches. Until we as the BUSA admit this is a severe need, there may not be much improvement.

- *Lack of pastors who are bi-vocational* – The field research revealed that most of these newer BUSA churches are poor and located in underprivileged areas. These rural churches have an average of only 4 employed people, resulting in an average monthly church income of only R 689—hardly enough for a pastor to live on. Over half of these churches actually take in R 500 or less per month, with over 30% of them taking in *less than R 200* per month. Added to this are other complicating factors—such as the dependency mentality, members who are untaught or unwilling to give, and members who distrust the motives of pastors. In this context it is concerning that only one-third of these pastors has any kind of self-employment to supplement his income and support his family.

The biblical pattern is clear: Until a church is mature and stable enough (i.e., able and willing) to support their pastor, he must lay aside his right to be supported and find some kind of tentmaking employment to meet his own needs and to prove the purity of his motives to his flock. Paul modelled this kind of bi-vocational ministry in Acts (18:3; 20:33-35; cf. 2.1.4) and reiterated it in his epistles (1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:9, etc.). Teasdale (2000) writes:

The apostle Paul at times was supported financially in the ministry by churches who contributed to his needs. At other times he labored diligently with his hands to provide for himself and his companions (I Thessalonians 2:5-9). The bondservant of Jesus Christ must be willing to put his hand to whatever menial task necessary for his support and the furtherance of the Gospel.

But the researcher (along with others in the BUSA, cf. 3.2.1, 3.2.2) finds that many of the pastors of these newer BUSA churches are under the unbiblical impression that the man of God

is 'above' manual labour or secular jobs. Or they fear that taking on such additional work (even if just for a season) will make them 'wordly' or will forfeit their ministry, contrary to the clear example of the apostle Paul. Evangelicals today often fall into a sort of gnostic dualism between the spiritual and the physical, seeing work as less 'sacred' than ministry (in contrast to the pattern in Gen. 2, Col. 3:22-24, etc.). Too often seminaries and Bible colleges also neglect this vital aspect of training (Buys, 2002b:1-10).

Another common cause of this unwillingness to be bivocational is the age-old, universal problem of laziness. Too often the researcher has seen a student or graduate who is 'full-time' pastoring a church of ten women and a few children (cf. Annexure B, p. 7, from Rev. Venter) while his wife breaks her back working 12 hour days as a school teacher to provide for their home. For too long these men have been allowed to think that such a practice is biblically acceptable. On the contrary, 1 Timothy 5:8 states that any one who does not "provide for his own...has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever".

The researcher has observed that the result of these pastors not being bi-vocational (at least temporarily) is that they are less likely to stay long in one church (because of the temptation to move to greener pastures). If they do stay, their ministry is often hampered by their irresponsible example, their discontented attitude, or their growing bitterness (and/or their family's bitterness) toward this 'unsupportive flock'.

- *Unbiblical leadership structures* – Rev. Venter put it most strongly (after observing almost half of these 400+ newer BUSA churches):

At the moment 90% of the churches are not run by a biblical structure. ... Most of these churches still have a totally unbiblical church government structure, where they are run by a church committee (treasurer, chairperson, secretary, and pastor) rather than by a biblical eldership. In our church here (Christ Baptist), we have godly leaders and elders with wisdom and knowledge, guys from the business world and the church. So we can reach good, sensible conclusions before we do something. But these guys (in the black rural churches) have nobody! They just talk to their wives, or to one of the youth, and then off they go. They have no real eldership counsel... Until this changes, the church will not come right—it must change (cf. Annexure B).

This is exactly the experience of the researcher and Christ Seminary in their interaction with dozens of these BUSA pastors and churches. Rev. Coertze sounded a similar warning, "A lot of the churches are putting too much emphasis on church meetings and democratic decisions. In many cases, it's a matter of 'Doesn't matter what the Bible says, this is what we believe and what we stand for.'" Interestingly, the recent BUSA/BNA guideline for constituting a church omits any mention of the need for elders (2003c).

Acts (14:23, 20:17) and Paul (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) leave no doubt as to the high priority of establishing a plurality of qualified elders to shepherd a church (cf. 2.1.4, etc.). Yet few of these newer BUSA churches seem to have grasped the importance of this. Sometimes this is due to the example of their mother churches where the senior pastor is the 'chief CEO' and the only functioning elder. Without clear biblical teaching on this subject, these churches easily adopt a worldly, democratic view that the church should be governed by popular vote. This can lead to disputes, divisions, and obstacles that keep a church from growing and maturing.

This issue of church polity has been a hot topic of discussion in the entire BUSA in the past four years, so it is not surprising that there has been confusion in the newer churches. Thankfully, the statement of 'Baptist Principles' was revised at the 2000 BUSA Assembly to put stronger emphasis on the role of the eldership, but this has not yet trickled down to these younger churches (Pohlmann, 2003:122; Thomas, 2003:112-113).

- *Lack of adequate teaching and discipleship* – Because of the lack of true exposition, it is not surprising that the teaching in these churches is off-balance in certain areas. Rarely can a preacher, based solely on his own impressions, have the wisdom to preach and teach comprehensively to the *real* needs of his people. The most proven way for a preacher to ensure that his people learn the mind of God for all of life is by subjecting himself and his church to the book-by-book exposition of God's Word. (This expository method is drawn from core principles found in Ezra 7:10; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5, etc.)

70% of these pastors were unsure that the majority of their members have a good grasp of the gospel. Most of the basic, foundational teachings (outlined in chp. 2, cf. esp. 2.3.3.2 on Paul's Didache) needed in any church have only been taught in half of these churches in the past two years. Especially low was the number of churches (1 in 3) that have taught on God's plan for a Christian home and the biblical roles in the home.

Rev. Coertze pointed out that in one of the major regions of recent church planting (EPBA), there is little exposition of Scripture or depth of teaching, but mainly just topical sermons on godliness and spiritual devotion. Externally, one is impressed with their worship. But when one sees how they handle disputes and pressures, it is evident that they lack real depth or a solid foundation. Many other leaders also mentioned (as was also evidenced in the church surveys; cf. 4.2.2) how few churches have been taught well in the area of stewardship and giving. Too few of these churches are taking ownership of their church's ministries and needs. Likewise, it was noted that many of these churches seem infected by unbiblical notions of evangelism, singing, and prayer because they've not been solidly instructed in these areas.

In contrast, the biblical pattern in Acts and Paul showed the careful instruction required to nurture emerging churches (Acts 2:42, etc.; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5, etc.). Paul's epistles abound with detailed, practical, 'how-to' instruction on how believers must live in each sphere of life – from home, to church, to work, to community (Eph. 5:18-6:9; Titus 2, etc.). In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul gives many specific instructions on "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15). Teaching biblical doctrine is not just one of many ministries in a church; it is the central ministry, the engine that drives all other ministries⁹. Only when one knows what God expects and promises in any aspect of life can that truth be lived out.

- *Character & calling of the leaders* – Concerns over these church leaders extends not just to their skills but also to their spiritual maturity and sense of divine calling. BUSA leaders surveyed noted that too often in these churches there is a domineering leadership style which stifles instead of edifying and empowering others. On the other hand, a leader in the WPBA (Western Cape) told of a church planter whose church grew strong because he was clearly gifted and *consistently humble*, willing to seek counsel from others and willing to be a servant-leader who relates to common people and loves them. He never had the chief mentality or expected special "Moruti" [Pastor] treatment or status.

Another pointed out that most of the weak churches where seminary students and graduates are pastoring could be changed if their leader would just practice the biblical principles he learned with patience, humility, and love. With regard to these leaders racing ahead to plant more churches, Rev. Venter noted, "We need to teach them not to be greedy, but to seek God's will in the matter. They must stop carnal competitions of who can plant the most churches." Another danger that surfaced was the tendency to see church planting grants as a job more than a calling. The cry of one of the veteran black leaders (and past president) in the BUSA must be heard: "Where are the men today who still have the passion and burden for the ministry and who are not just doing it because they needed a job?!"

The biblical necessity of a leader's godly character and true calling has been plainly seen (Acts 6:1-8; 20:17-35; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, etc.). In God's plans for the church, no leader

⁹ In this age of purpose-driven churches, perhaps churches should consider a more narrowly defined purpose statement so that they don't lose sight of their primary calling from which all other ministries flow. Here is one such example from Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, CA., USA (www.gracechurch.org):

"The central ministry of Grace Church is the continuous imparting of biblical truth to the people of God that they may know God and serve Him in worship and ministry. Grace Church is a teaching church, first and foremost committed to the Bible, and a firm belief in its authority over our lives. All of our ministries are intended to increase the knowledge and application of God's Word in the lives of His people and lead others to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ so that they can live to the glory of God."

should be appointed who has not first proven his passion for the work, his spiritual maturity, his servant leadership, and his obvious giftedness and capability to teach and shepherd.¹⁰

In light of these above weaknesses in leadership, one again asks *why* there is such a lack of stable, godly, skilled leadership to shepherd these fledgling churches? In analysing these various problems of leadership in younger BUSA churches, some probable causes have already been suggested. Here are some other possible roots beneath these troubling fruits:

- Not just at the mother church level, but at the denominational level a mindset has been promoted that churches must be planted quickly to meet certain man-made deadlines such as 1995 or 2001. This will be critiqued further in 4.3.1 below.
- When new churches and leaders see the BUSA waver in biblical convictions (e.g., avoiding a clear stand on what the Bible says about women not being elders/pastors, 1 Tim. 2:11-15), this breeds leaders who doubt the clarity and authority of Scripture in many other areas.
- As stated in chapter three, the South African social context of rapid urbanisation and migrant workers drains the black villages of male leadership and fractures homes and families. This has also led to the fact that most of the younger pastors and leaders had no father figure in their homes while growing up. This creates severe needs for self-discipline, responsibility, and leadership skills, before even considering pastoral training issues.
- As one leader stated, "Too many are placed in leadership prematurely." This goes against the caution in 1 Tim. 5:22-25 not to appoint a man too quickly (not to mention the caution in 1 Tim. 3:6 not to appoint a new convert).
- The researcher also suspects that the BUSA process for supervising and mentoring candidates for ministerial recognition is not very effective. Sometimes one mentor has twenty candidates under him, spread out over several hundred kilometres. This makes it almost impossible for any effective mentoring to occur in the short period before the man is fully recognised with ministerial status in the BUSA.
- Obviously in some cases the main factor is a need for more time for a leader to grow, develop skills, use the training he has received, earn trust with his people, and train up other leaders.

¹⁰ MacArthur (1993:182) states, "I would venture to say that the chief deficiency in most churches today is in this area of leadership. Too many churches (and too much church planting) have ignored the spiritual requirements for leaders. ... Churches (and church planting) that ignore [the biblical qualifications for leaders] set themselves against God's design and forfeit His blessing. To compromise on the issue of leadership is, as Charles Spurgeon would say, 'the most suicidal act that a church can commit' (parentheses mine)."

4.3 Overall concerns

4.3.1 Overemphasis on speed and numbers

The BUSA tendency toward inadequate church planting seems to have grown out of the heavy focus upon planting a certain number of churches by certain deadlines (e.g., 95 by '95, etc.). As noted in chapter three, some BUSA leaders are also eager to emphasise the rate and speed of church planting (e.g., one church planted every 15 ½ days in 1995, one every 14 days in 1995-99, a new work every 6.3 days in 1999, etc.). But by themselves, what do such numbers and speed reports actually prove?

4.3.1.1 Dangerous trends

This pragmatic mindset has been in vogue in missions for a while now, as typified by such movements as AD 2000 or the DAWN emphasis on saturation church planting (begun in Philippines, with target of 50,000 churches by AD 2000) (Montgomery, 1999:606-612; 1990). The IMB (Southern Baptist Convention) has recently produced an exciting booklet by David Garrison, entitled *Church Planting Movements* (1999). A movement is defined as "rapid and multiplicative increases of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment" (1999:chp.1)¹¹. Notice the emphasis on speed, as also seen when Garrison (1999) lists "Rapid reproduction" as one of the Universal Elements of church planting movements (chp. 3) (cf. Annexure C, Gilbert's insightful review of Garrison's booklet).

In Brazil in 1999, a group of evangelical mission leaders from fifty-three countries met for strategic discussions about the cause of world missions. Leaders from the two-thirds world expressed concern over the adverse effects of the pragmatic American church growth movement. "Frustration was expressed concerning the obsession with quantifiable success, where crusades, marketing, and other campaign blitzes were expected to usher in the consummation by the year 2000." The fruit of the assembly's dialogue was the Iguassu Affirmation, which contained such statements as this: "We call for a healthy critique of mission theories that depend heavily on marketing concepts and missiology by objectives" (Horton, 2000).

Much of this recent focus on acceleration and numbers comes from one key location and a few key figures. The location is Fuller Seminary, with its accompanying missions ministries (Institute for Church Growth, U.S. Center for World Mission, the Perspectives course, *Mission Frontiers* bulletin, etc.). One of the first influences was Billy Graham. Iain Murray (2001a), in his devastating critique of modern American evangelicalism, documents how Graham (in conjunction with Fuller Seminary) began compromising biblical

¹¹ The recent church planting in the BUSA fits some of the aspects of these exciting church planting movements (Garrison, 1999: chp. 1), such as: prayer; intentional church planting; Scriptural authority; local and lay leadership; churches planting churches; rapid reproduction. Other elements do not seem as evident: abundant gospel sowing; cell/house churches; healthy churches. Chapter two gives further descriptions of such movements, and again the BUSA's church planting seems to fit some but not others. See more Garrison's booklet in Annexure C.

truth for the sake of numbers and wider impact (cf. also Murray, 2001b: 231-247). Murray exposes the naïveté this exhibited toward those who professed Christianity but didn't believe it, and the way that this led to a diluting of the gospel. Murray shows how this has yielded serious consequences in evangelicalism today, such as Graham's recent public statements about possibility of salvation for those in other religions who never believe in Christ. This story is a sobering caution to any who are tempted to put outcomes above truth and put numbers above faithfulness in church planting.

Three other key figures behind the modern church growth movement have been Donald McGavran, widely acknowledged as the father of this movement; his top student, C. Peter Wagner; and their top statistician and marketing specialist, George Barna (Litfin, 1996: 57-77; MacArthur, 1993:74-75). All three of these men are boldly pragmatic in their approach to church growth and multiplication, basing their arguments far more upon field experience and 'what works' than upon biblical exegesis. Wagner and McGavran (1990:265-281) declare that numerical goals are *essential* to a biblical view of church growth, though no clear biblical support is given. It is hard to under-estimate the extent of the impact these men and their ideas have had on church planting worldwide.

4.3.1.2 Biblical critique

Here is the root error beneath these church growth and church planting trends: *they are results-driven and audience-driven instead of being obedience-driven*. Instead of focusing on faithfulness to their biblical mandate, they try to do God's job of producing results. In his incisive analysis of these trends, Duane Litfin concludes that many church growth advocates have fallen into the very mindset that Paul rejected at Corinth (1996:57-77). In contrast to the eloquent preachers who had come to Corinth trying to "persuade" to produce certain human outcomes, Paul was "determined" to do God's business ("preaching Christ, and Him crucified") in God's way ("in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"), leaving the results entirely up to Him (1 Cor. 1:17-2:5). In contrast to proponents like Wagner who argue that any methods are justifiable as long as they are not "immoral", Litfin (1996:72) states: "Paul did not disavow the persuader's stance because it was *immoral*; he rejected it because it was based upon a purely human dynamic which produced human results" (emphasis his).

While Scripture does not oppose sensible goal setting, the BUSA field research (chp. 3) would suggest that this kind of goal setting has tempted (even if unintentionally) planters to hurry up at the expense of evangelising and church building in a God-honouring, biblical way (Reed, 1991:15-17)¹². The emphasis in

¹² Greg Gilbert (2004: www.9marks.org) puts his finger on these very issues in his excellent review of Garrison's *Church Planting Movements* booklet. He states:

If there is one part of the Church Planting Movement strategy that raises questions in my mind, it is the insistence on rapidity. I have said that I think there is a right sense of urgency in Garrison's book, but I wonder also if there is some measure of a wrong impatience. ... I am left with many unanswered questions from Garrison's description of the IMB vision. Most of those questions have to do with the development of strong leadership in an environment where rapidity is so prized. I worry that the push for speed may be cutting the feet out from under these many churches before they are even

Scripture is always on being faithful more than being fast (1 Cor. 4:1-4; 10:31, etc.). Paul's recurring charge to church leaders was not to 'expedite,' or 'be efficient' in 'your' ministry, but to "fulfil, complete" the ministry that God Himself required of them (Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5; cf. Paul's own example of this in Acts 20:24). It is for this reason that this thesis began in chp. 2 with the biblical basis—in order to *first* be clear on the divine mandate and plan for church planting.

It these biblical convictions which lead MacArthur to conclude (1993:73), "Nothing in Scripture indicates that church leaders should set numerical goals for church growth." In 1 Cor. 3:6-7, Paul clearly states, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." The motto of every church planter and pastor should be, "If we concern ourselves with *the depth* of the ministry, God will see to the *breadth* of it" (MacArthur, 1993:74)¹³. And if we are diligent and faithful, surely God will also see to the rate and speed of the ministry¹⁴.

Steffen (1998:434) rightly points out: "Unlike most of us, the Holy Spirit thinks of evangelism-church planting from a generational perspective. He is not intimidated by our goal setting or deadlines. It should not surprise us if the Holy Spirit plans to extend his work (and ours) long beyond 2000. It is not up to us and our goals". Here then is the question: What will future generations in the BUSA and in South Africa have to say about the long-term quality and effects of the new churches being planted (cf. Ott, 2001:341)?

What is God's alternative to results-driven strategies? Litfin (1996:76-77) captures it well: "Make plans and focus on goals, but resist stating goals in terms of the *results* desired. Instead, state goals in terms of *what God has called us to be and to do*, and then state plans in terms of *how we intend to be that and do that*, leaving the results up to the Lord." The Church Planting Alliance in South Africa seems to have more of this emphasis when they aim to "plant a healthy church within walking distance of every small community in South Africa" (<http://www.cpa-sa.org/>).

started. It is one thing to start a huge number of churches in a short time; it is quite another for those churches to remain healthy and sound witnesses for decades to come. For that, you need solid, well-grounded leadership. Because these are rare insights to find on this topic today and because they echo the core concerns of this thesis, Gilbert's entire review has been included in Annexure C.

¹³ Some will cite Paul as the model for legitimate pragmatism in 1 Cor. 9:19-23, where he said he became "all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (v.22). But a careful look at the context shows that this had nothing to do with making the message more acceptable or compromising any biblical methods of mission. It had everything to do with removing *needless obstacles* in order for the message to be clearly communicated so that many would be saved (Litfin, 1996:67-68; MacArthur, 1993:89-104).

¹⁴ It should also be noted that numbers can be very deceptive. Speaking of big figures reported in mission endeavours, Peters cautions (1981:23-24):

"It may be Christendom in the making, but not Christianity breaking through. ...[There may be] a mass of people professing Christendom but not a dynamic, vibrant, growing, responsible church of Jesus Christ. ...In many ways the expansion of Christendom has come at the expense of the purity of the gospel and true Christian order and life."

4.3.1.3 Related concerns

Many other trends in church growth and planting could be examined in this chapter. However, such a survey is beyond the scope of this thesis, and sound material is available on this subject already¹⁵. But there are a few other undercurrents worth mentioning because they are affecting the BUSA in general and could thus harm (now or later) the newer BUSA ‘daughter’ churches.

One great danger in many (most?) of the church growth models is the way that the *authority and sufficiency of Christ and His Word are undermined*. God’s Word is undermined when mission strategies are based more upon what one (subjectively) thinks ‘God is doing’ in this place or that place, rather than by objective biblical principles (Wells, 1994:181-185). One leading group in evangelical missions states that it expects to discover the way ahead for world evangelisation by “listening” to what they think God is saying to His people, based on survey returns (Bush, 2003:8)¹⁶!

God’s Word is undermined when one thinks he must ‘make’ the gospel relevant to today’s audience (e.g., youth), rather than to discover and unleash its relevance through teaching and preaching the Word. God’s Word is undermined when the audience or consumer becomes sovereign in determining ministry methods, priorities, and messages¹⁷. God’s Word is undermined when cultural analysis drives church development more than biblical exegesis¹⁸. As Gilbert (2001) rightly states in a review of the popular book *ChurchNEXT*, by Gibbs:

...the church must be bullheaded about shaping its foundational identity by nothing but the Scriptures – and that not only in its doctrine, but also in its structure and even its methods. ...If sociological and cultural studies are allowed to shape the foundations of the church’s structure and method, the result can be disastrous error. The danger comes when we look to the culture to

¹⁵ E.g., Pritchard (1996), *Willow Creek Seeker Services*; MacArthur (1993), *Ashamed of the Gospel*; Litfin’s superb article (1996), “An analysis of the church growth movement”; Peters (1981), *Theology of Church Growth*.

¹⁶ They go on to state (2003:8), “The World Inquiry is a quest to know the mind of God through the burdens, visions and dreams of his people as we move into the future. The World Inquiry seeks to discern the divinely orchestrated frontier of the Church’s mission of world evangelization at the beginning of the 21st century.” Their leader, Luis Bush, was formerly the International Director of the AD2000 Movement. Cf. also another of their leaders, Rick Wood (2003:6).

¹⁷ E.g., at the 2003 BUSA Assembly, two speakers explicitly promoted this market-driven approach to ministry:

(1) Rev. Shelley Smuts showed the delegates that the way to do “effective youth ministry” is primarily through loving and understanding the youth and their “world”. In a summary article of her message (2003:9), there was no mention of what the Bible says about how to reach youth, how to understand their real needs (whether felt or not), or what God expects of a youth ministry, etc.

(2) Dr. Malan Nel (2003) repeatedly stated that the church’s credibility hinges upon “contextual relevancy”. Ironically, this threat of becoming “irrelevant” is never once mentioned to any church in the New Testament. Nel suggested, in order to maintain “relevancy” with postmoderns, ministers must be cautious of such things as giving “absolute answers”, “just claiming the Bible,” and speaking about certain disturbing issues such as death.

Perhaps the saddest part of these two seminars was the overwhelmingly positive response of the delegates. These were some of the hottest selling tapes of the four-day assembly.

¹⁸ Typical of this mindset is the monthly column in *Today* magazine by Graham Codrington called “Future Church”. Note the October 2003 subtitle to his column: “A new world demands a new church” (p. 38). In contrast, Os Guinness (2003), in his book *Prophetic untimeliness: a challenge to the idol of relevance*, powerfully exposes the danger of these trends. Never have Christians tried to be so relevant, he says. But never have Christians ended up so irrelevant – because they are sacrificing God’s universal, timeless truths. As one comment on the back cover reads, “The temptation to dress the faith in today’s fashion guarantees that it will look out-of-style tomorrow. Only the eternal can reach every time and culture.”

determine what we should do before we determine from the Bible what we should be. ... Our lack does not lie in our understanding of the culture, but in our understanding of the Bible.

The authority and sufficiency of Scripture are also undermined when statistical research and empirical data govern our methods more than the God's inspired principles for church growth. The influential writings of Christian Schwarz on Natural Church Development are shocking in the way they neglect the infallible and universal biblical guidelines in favour of man-made, fallible statistics. This is sheer pragmatism, a belief that 'whatever-works-for-the-majority-of-churches-must-be-the-norm'.

Interestingly, Schwarz is seeking to address the very same burden as this thesis—church health and maturity. But the reader soon discovers that Schwarz has a totally different starting point for where to find solutions for church strengthening (Schwarz, 1996; 2003)¹⁹. Perhaps his focus is less results-driven and numbers focused, but this is only because a new pragmatic authority called statistics and empirical data has been enthroned. If he had first pointed the reader to biblical foundations, then his vast research could serve as valuable confirmation of certain biblical truths.

Schwarz admits that his methods are not theologically driven, and are therefore usable by churches of various doctrinal convictions. This points to another danger of many modern church growth and church planting emphases. They offer strategies and methods to help any kind of church reproduce itself. Even if that church is a heretical church, they can be assisted in multiplying more bad churches. God's Word is undermined when an ecumenical agenda overrules discernment about the kind of churches that God wants to reproduce.

4.3.2 Short-term mentality

Another closely related area where some BUSA church planting needs to become more biblical is in the overemphasis on short-term, itinerant kinds of ministry at the expense of the prolonged ministry that many rural and emerging churches need. Surely it is commendable and biblical (cf. chp. 2) at times when church planters try to do short-term equipping and mobilising of local believers rather than staying to do the work for them. But such an approach only works *once* certain critical conditions have been met. If the missionaries or church planters depart prematurely, naively thinking that the locals can now manage on their own, the long-term damage can far outweigh whatever good was done (Hesselgrave, 2001:287-288; cf. chp. 5).

The apostle Paul definitely intended for the church in Greece to be built up by the Greeks and the church in Ephesus built up through the Ephesians (etc.), but only *once* he had ensured that they had biblically qualified

¹⁹ Some in the BUSA have been attracted to Schwarz's system. E.g., de Jongh's article in the *Baptist Today* (2002:5), "What is the quality of your church: introducing Natural Church Development".

leaders capable of doing the work (Acts 20:17-35; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, etc.; cf. 2.3.3.1). Even though Paul himself had pastored at Ephesus for some three years, and had even appointed capable elders there, there was still enough instability to convince Paul that Timothy (an outsider) should “remain on” to teach and stabilise the church (1 Tim. 1:3). A few years later, Paul was still urging Timothy that before leaving Ephesus he must “entrust” God’s truth to “faithful men who would be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

When one reads of all of the tasks Paul gives Timothy in these epistles, it is clear that such a church-strengthening ministry could never have been accomplished by sporadic visits and hit-and-run kind of ministry. Neither could Titus’ (a cross-cultural missionary) have fulfilled the church-strengthening work assigned to him at Crete through short-term visits. And do these young BUSA churches today need any less?

For an outsider to stick around for as long as necessary does not always mean that local initiative will be stifled or that one is reverting to an outdated model of ‘traditional’ missions. But one must be clear on the purpose for staying. What could be *better* for the long-term health of a church and the empowering of local leadership (and the advance of the gospel in that region) than to stay *until* a stable foundation is laid and discerning leaders are equipped? If no others from that same culture and language group are available for such a task, then the outsider might need to learn the language or do *whatever it takes* to fulfil the biblical mandate to establish churches in a God-honouring way. This approach best serves the long-term advance of the gospel.

Some would say that this kind of equipping can be done from a distance through seminary training, conferences, and pastors’ fraternals (cf. 3.2.4, and 4.3.1 above). But if this is equally effective and efficient, one wonders why Paul himself didn’t do the same so that he and his co-workers would not have to stay at one post for so long. Surely gifted men like Timothy and Titus could have accomplished great things if they had moved on sooner to do other planting or equipping.

But Paul was first determined to see Ephesus and Crete well established (among other examples – e.g., repeat visits to Corinth). And the BUSA field research (in chp. 3) has shown that it is *expecting far too much* of a few seminaries, colleges, and urban churches to think that they can truly identify and develop (from a long distance) leaders for 400 new churches. (And this is not to mention the dozens of other churches and denominations also sending their men to these BUSA schools for training.)

Even the best seminary or church-based training centre will have its hands tied if there are not well-established churches, pastors, and elders in each region that can supply for leaders-in-training what theological students will never adequately receive in the classroom (cf. 1.1). Scripture identifies at least *five functions* of developing church elders and pastors that must happen at the local level:

- a. Only the local church can adequately identify men, in a real life context, who have the right character and calling to qualify for pastoral ministry or eldership (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- b. Only the local church can comprehensively model for them biblical principles of life and ministry (Php. 4:9, etc.).
- c. Only the local church can give them adequate hands-on, personalised ministry training and mentoring (Jesus-and-his-disciples style, Paul-and-Timothy style, etc.).
- d. Only local church elders, in conjunction with the congregation, can appoint (recognise/ordain) new pastors and elders for a local church (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22-25; Acts 6:1-7).
- e. Most foundational of all: It is to the local church that God has entrusted the task of guarding the church's doctrine (1 Tim. 3:15; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14; 2:2). Theological accuracy must begin in the churches, not the seminaries. When false teachers crept in, Paul held the church accountable (Gal. 1; 2 Tim. 4:3-4) (Gilbert, 2001).

It is a common myth that aspiring young men go to seminary (some sent by their church, some not) while the churches wait for the seminary to do all the training and produce the results. Then, after (or near) graduation, churches look to the seminary to provide a pool of suitable candidates for pastoring their church. But this kind of thinking contradicts all five of the biblical functions just listed. It wrongly assumes that God has now transferred to the seminary/college the *local church's authority* to recognise and appoint pastors and elders (Adams, 1998).

Rev. Venter diagnosed one major cause of the weakness of many of these new BUSA churches:

One cause is that there are still not good models so they still don't really know how it works (good church-planting). ... But if I could sit with that guy and do his training, get him in one place, let him work, do his preaching and teaching, and train leaders there, with the approval of the mother church, it will work! That guy will blossom, and he will do his job. We've seen this on our house visitations, where the time comes that he (the man we're training) preaches. He did an excellent job.

If that is what it takes to really get the job done, it should be done that way more often. Church planters and mother churches must *never* expect that an institution or a short-term ministry can replace the *primary, long-term role of the local church* in developing quality leadership for new churches. As will be seen in chapter 5, training must not lag behind church planting; it must parallel church planting as an integral part of the process of building mature churches to the glory of Christ.

Biblically and empirically, the researcher hopes that it is now clear that these newer BUSA churches and their planters and mother churches must take more seriously the task of entrusting leadership into capable hands so that these churches can become mature and reproducing. Ott advises (2001:342):

Few missionaries... are really willing to restrain their ministry or slow the advancement of the church for the sake of developing lay ministers and ownership. ... [in some difficult areas] the process of developing leaders and churches may be long and tedious. The early departure of the missionary can result in major problems in the new church, as the Apostle Paul experienced with the church in Corinth.

A caution from Rev. Paul Teasdale (2000), veteran missionary to Kenya, founder & executive director of The Master's Mission training program and sending agency:

It is unlikely for a missionary, working in an area where the Gospel is not known, to have a fruitful ministry with those of another culture during a short term. It takes time to win the confidence of the community and develop a platform for the message of the Gospel. It takes time to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," especially when the one teaching cannot speak the language of the ones being taught. It takes time, often a lifetime, for a missionary to establish a New Testament local church governed by biblically qualified men.

It is true that the apostle Paul, our primary missionary model, was often able to establish churches in relatively short periods of time; however, we must recognize a number of advantages available to Paul which we do not have. Paul was an apostle, and was able to perform the "signs of an apostle" to validate his message. Missionaries are not apostles. Paul had the advantage of the Pax Romana, the Roman Peace, which allowed him to travel freely from one ethnic region to another. Missionaries must obtain various government visas and permits to travel into unreached areas. Paul had the advantage of a universal trade language, Greek, with which to communicate in all parts of the empire. Missionaries must learn a foreign language before they can begin to communicate. Perhaps of greatest significance, Paul usually preached Christ to those who were already familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, which told of Israel's, and the world's, coming Redeemer/Messiah and King. Unlike Paul, today's missionaries must preach Christ to those who do not already have the "schoolmaster" of the law to show them God's righteous standard and their desperate condition apart from Christ.

Finally, while it is true that Paul left the believers in each location after a relatively brief period of ministry, he entrusted the work in each place to faithful, qualified elders who continued to minister in that place indefinitely (Acts 14:23). It is certainly appropriate for pastors and evangelists to minister for short periods of time in various locations; however, for the establishment of a New Testament local church in an unreached area, it is imperative that a missionary be devoted to that local body for the extended period of time necessary to disciple and appoint qualified elders. This often requires a lifetime of ministry.

It is unfair to castigate short-termers without noting that much critical work would be undone without their services. However, it is lamentable that in the forefront of the battle we have replaced seasoned career veterans with short-term recruits.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter has sought to model a way to analyse the health of churches and church planting in Africa by engaging with both the field research and the biblical principles. An analysis was given of the strengths and weaknesses of one African denomination, as the young BUSA churches and the whole BUSA church planting process were examined in light of the biblical criteria. First, the strengths of these churches were highlighted, such as the longevity of many pastors, their high view of Scripture, and their devotion to prayer.

Next, the weaknesses in these BUSA churches were examined along the lines of the three stages that Paul followed, as seen in Acts (cf. 2.1.4, 2.3.3). The weaknesses in *evangelising* the community and starting new churches were seen in the kind of evangelism that too often omits a clear gospel and produces shallow and short-lived results. The major concerns over the *establishing* of the new congregations were the detachment of mother churches, the fostering of dependency instead of responsibility, and the spiritual immaturity seen

in many members in areas of giving and personal evangelism. The next section was closely linked to this as it analysed the *entrusting* and developing of local, capable leadership in these churches.

Specifically, there were these concerns over the development of leaders: their geographical distance from their congregations; failure to develop competent elders; the lack of true expository preaching; the lack of pastors who are bi-vocational; unbiblical leadership structures and labels; a lack of adequate teaching and discipleship; the character and the calling of the leaders. After this, some overall cautions were given against the overemphasis on speed and numbers, and against the unbiblical church growth trends that undermine the authority and sufficiency of Christ and His Word. Concerns were also expressed about the common short-term mentality toward church planting, and about the overestimates of a seminary or college's ability to be a substitute for strong churches and careful church planting.

A personal anecdote from the researcher

While writing this thesis, I was approached by a team of BUSA church leaders who were eagerly seeking to reach their area and plant churches. With all sincerity, they asked, 'How do you think we should go about planting new churches? Should we take our tent and go into these villages and preach for one week, two weeks, or what?' I paused and then said, 'How about a few years, or whatever it takes to really do the job that God requires?'

One of the men replied, 'But Jesus is coming back, and there is a great urgency.' I replied, 'But are we wiser than God and more urgent about this than He is? Surely His heart breaks far more for the lost than ours. And yet this same God has not only given us a goal of reaching the lost; He has also clearly told us *the way* in which He wants His church to be built among all nations. We must first be clear and convinced of our biblical mandate to plant healthy, indigenous churches with qualified and capable leaders. Then, we must have the resolve to take *as long as necessary* to fulfil that mandate. And by the way, in the end, this approach is proven to have a *far greater* breadth of evangelistic impact!'

They went on to explain how their mother church was still not self-supporting or very stable yet. And they already have four branch churches that are still young and weak, without stable leadership. Yet they wanted to march ahead and do further church planting, with more outside funding, to reproduce more of the mediocrity found in their existing churches. The researcher advised that *not for one moment should they cool their evangelistic zeal, but rather channel it* into strengthening their existing churches and reaching the lost in their communities. Meanwhile, be praying and dreaming and planning and working for the day when they can send out well-equipped, self-supporting church planters both locally and internationally!

That conversation perfectly encapsulates this chapter. Positively, the emerging BUSA churches have many faithful pastors who love their flock and love God's Word and the gospel. These churches are marked by a simple devotion to Christ, to His church, to prayer, and to reaching a lost world. But these churches, and the whole BUSA church planting process, stand in great need of strengthening. Only when we are *biblical* in the way we evangelise, establish churches, and entrust them to capable leadership—only then will strong churches emerge that bear lasting fruit and impact the nations for God's glory. To this end, chapter 5 will offer strategic solutions and a 'way ahead'.

CHAPTER 5 – THE WAY AHEAD:
SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING MATURE CHURCHES
IN THE BUSA AND IN CHURCHES ACROSS AFRICA

Critics are often told, ‘Don’t just curse the darkness. Light a candle.’ It is said that a motto of the great Michelangelo in his quest to impact culture was, “Criticism by creating.” This is precisely what the researcher aims to do in this chapter—to cap off this thesis with biblical alternatives and applications for better church building in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) and beyond. Throughout this chapter, the researcher will be suggesting strategies in response to the BUSA case study of chapters 3-4. Yet the suggestions will be given in a more generic way for the sake of broadening this case study to apply to churches across Africa.

The *first objective* of this chapter will be to propose an initial plan and structure for strengthening young churches in the BUSA or anywhere in Africa (5.1-5.2). The *second objective* will be to offer suggestions and strategies for how to operate within that structure by improving each stage of the church-building process in Africa, whether in existing churches or in starting new works (5.3-5.7).

When church planting has malfunctioned, who better to consult than the Architect? For this reason, chapter 2 laid the biblical foundation from Acts and Paul. Since this is the basis for all the strategies in this chapter, a quick review is needed. Too often church planters fear that their frustrations might be due to overlooking the missing link or latest model or method that has worked for another ‘expert’ in the field. The lead article for a recent edition of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* illustrates this. A veteran missionary to Pakistan writes about his long and frustrating “Search for the Golden Key” to success in missions (Wakely, 2004:12-22). He admits how disillusioning his search was and how unbiblical some of the popular keys can be. Strangely though, he does not liberate the reader from searching for such keys. Nor does he give much hope in God’s Word as the all-sufficient source of every essential missionary method. Instead, he advises that faithful, effective church planting requires constant experimentation, ‘using all the keys that you can’ (2004:22)!

The church builder who builds upon the timeless principles of God’s Word need not fear becoming irrelevant or ineffective. A church planter is no less faithful and successful before God even when he labours many years among a resistant and unresponsive people, like the Jeremiahs and Ezeekiels of old. God’s age-old design for missions doesn’t have an expiry date when there is no response in the first decade. Biographies of great missionary heroes like William Carey or Adoniram Judson testify to long years of faithful service before any fruit was borne. And when fruit finally came, it was not due to the discovery of an extrabiblical ‘golden key’. The challenge for church planters in every age is not to discover new methods and models, but to better understand God’s original design for church planting and to faithfully and patiently implement it in

a given location. One yearns to see fruit, but this fruit must only be produced by doing God's business God's way (Cf. Zemek's excellent little book, *Doing God's Business God's Way: A Biblical Theology of Ministry* [2000]).

After the review of New Testament data in chapter 2, chapter 3 sought to understand the needs among recently planted BUSA churches. Following this, Chapter 4 offered a biblical diagnosis showing some of the root causes of these symptoms. This chapter now offers remedies. In biblical language, the "put on" must follow the "put off," and "correction" must follow "instruction" and "reproof" (Eph. 4:22-32; 2 Tim. 3:16).

These solutions will be offered along the lines of this over-arching strategy and core conviction: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.* Two clarifications: (a) "mature" does not imply old or perfect churches (cf. 2.2.2.3), but healthy, responsible churches that faithfully fulfil their God-given ministries; (b) "qualified" refers to the criteria of 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1, not to academic or other qualifications.

Africa and the world have seen many apparent advances of the gospel, but many have not been steady, lasting advances. The gospel advances in the book of Acts and in the high points of church history were not single-generation spurts of activity; they were movements that had a ripple effect for generations because they were driven by Spirit-empowered, effective church planting and church strengthening. Any who embrace these biblical principles today can expect that Christ will again use their feeble efforts to advance His kingdom and build His church.

5.1 Denomination and mother churches must take responsibility

5.1.1 Beware of the consequences of unfinished business

Denominational leaders must first recognise when there is *unfinished business in their existing church plants*. For example, only as BUSA leaders acknowledge the poor health of many of their younger churches will there begin to be improvement. Leaders must beware of a paternalism that says, 'Well, those daughter churches may not be very healthy, but it's better than what they had before'. Some of these leaders admit that these churches are in such a sad state that they would never want to join such a malnourished flock. The Golden Rule also applies to church planting: Plant the kind of churches that you would want to be planted for you (Matt. 7:12; 22:39)!

Akin to this is a dangerous relativism that says, 'At least their church isn't as bad as others in that village', or 'As far as churches go among those people, that church is above average' (cf. 4.2). One must also not fall

into a pragmatism that says, ‘As long as a few are saved, the efforts were all worth it.’ This reflects the kind of naiveté that assumes if there is no visible damage done, there must have been no harm. But a crack in the foundation of a building is rarely visible at first; only later does one discover the devastating flaw.

Another viewpoint that hinders healthy church planting is the shotgun, hit-or-miss approach that says one must plant a big batch of churches to get a few good ones. Recall in 3.2.2 the church planter who said, “Raising the number of total church starts virtually guarantees raising the number of mature churches.” Perhaps such folks have mistakenly applied Christ’s parable about *sowing* seeds (Matt. 13) to the process of *starting* churches, thinking they should scatter the church plants and expect many to die but a few to take root. This is pragmatism that aims to get results at any cost, even if it means sacrificing the biblical pattern for church planting. Instead of trusting God to bless His work done His way, they rush ahead and dishonour Christ and His bride, the church.

As mentioned in Chapter Four (4.2.1), the long-term consequences of sloppy church planting can bring disgrace to the name of Christ and the reputation of the gospel; and it can bring false assurance or disillusionment to many. Other consequences include the following:

- By not developing qualified shepherds to feed and protect the flock, the door is left open for false teachers to devour the flock (cf. Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 4:16, etc.). For example, some Zionist churches were originally evangelical church plants that were never well grounded (Akers, 2000).
- Not planting these churches firmly only creates more work for the mother churches down the line when they have to go back and sort out the mess, resolve conflicts, and un-teach error. This is precious time that could be spent advancing the gospel and planting new churches, if the job had been done right the first time.
- When a mother church does not plant healthy churches, the daughters may follow that poor example and reproduce further mediocrity and instability in the granddaughter churches. The witness and quality of such churches worsens with each generation.

The most serious consequence of all when church planting is done poorly is the risk of standing ashamed before the Chief Builder when He returns. 1 Cor. 3 clearly states, “Let each man be careful how he builds [Christ’s church]” (v.10b). This is because “...the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work” (v.13b). Note that Christ will not test the *quantity* of each man’s work, or the relative value of his work *in comparison* to others’ work or others’ expectations. Only the *quality* of the work will be fireproof and will last in His blazing presence.

True, Christ expects His servants to multiply their talents, but only in a way that is faithful to the Master and takes no shortcuts (Matt. 25:14-30). It was the shrewd servant’s good investment that yielded good returns.

If he had invested his talents carelessly, eventually he would have lost his talent and faced the same rebuke as the lazy servant.

Who would want to hire an architect or builder who admits that out of his last fifty buildings, five of them have collapsed within the first two years? Yet some today rejoice that only a few of the many churches they've planted have folded. One grieves that this kind of hit-and-miss church planting has become so acceptable among many today. Think of how affectionately and earnestly Paul laboured for the maturity of *each* church he was involved with. Surely he would see such neglect of infant churches as synonymous with *child abandonment*, an awful practice in the ancient world that has long since been outlawed.

A suggestion: Maybe a denomination should say, 'Since 1990 we've *started* about 340 churches and we are *still planting* most of them so that they can truly grow and flourish on their own!' Unless this is first acknowledged, mother churches may keep hurrying off to new horizons at the expense of weak infant churches that urgently need nourishment.

5.1.2 Show the mother churches their mandate

Since it is clear from Scripture that there is no dichotomy between church planting and church building (cf. chp. 2), it seems that the same denominational leaders who set the pace for starting churches should set the pace for strengthening those churches. Just as these leaders were admired for their pioneering vision for new churches, so now they are needed to set the example in faithfully finishing the job they started. Not for a moment does this mean that such evangelistic types of leaders should cool their vision for expansion and for the unreached. It only means that this vision must become more biblical by including an emphasis on the maturity of the churches being planted, in order to solidify the advances of the gospel in a certain area. Rev. Venter at Christ Baptist Church (Polokwane) is an example of a pioneer church planter who also has a growing burden for the nurture of existing churches (cf. 3.2.4).

A first step in leading the mother churches to accept their responsibility could be that the leaders lead the denomination in corporate repentance over any aspects of the church planting that have not honoured God or His Word. Like Ezra and Nehemiah, leaders must show God and the churches their genuine grief over abandoning infant churches to languish by the wayside. This might be the best way to show how seriously they take the responsibility to plant healthy churches.

Denominational leaders and mother churches must then re-examine and become convinced of the biblical pattern for building churches (cf. Chp. 2). The authority of Scripture must be placed above all expediency, efficiency, pragmatism, and any other models and motives that are unbiblical. All human goals and plans must be subjected to the sovereign will of the Chief Builder, Christ Himself.

The denomination must then teach mother churches and church planters their biblical mandate for church planting, warning of the consequences if the job is not finished (cf. 5.1.1 above). Discussions and exhortations at the Executive level, messages at the annual Assembly, regional meetings and fraternal, written statements and articles, books and booklets—any available means must be used to re-educate the churches regarding God’s design for church planting. It must be clearly and convincingly shown from Scripture (cf. Chp. 2, Acts & Paul’s epistles) how the three main phases of effective church building are laid out: Paul *evangelised* and gathered new converts; he *established* them in the faith; and he *entrusted* leadership into the hands of qualified elders. Paul *did not leave* until the job was done or someone qualified was left to ensure the job was done.

Finally, the denomination and the mother churches must be shown *how* to do this by teaching and example. The sections (5.3-5.7) below will elaborate this. First the researcher would like to sketch *an overall plan* for alerting and equipping mother churches for their God-given, parental role in the progress of the gospel.

5.2 Identify and develop ‘Antioch’ hub churches

Western civilisation owes much of its existence to one early church. It was from the Antioch church that the Spirit launched Paul and his associates into their missionary journeys that turned the world upside down (cf. 2.1.4; Acts 13ff) (Schmidt, 2000). Antioch was a multiracial, mature local church that became a hub and a beachhead for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. God has ordained that this same vehicle, strong and vibrant local churches, should continue to advance His kingdom. A denomination and its church planting efforts are only as good as their mother churches, so this section suggests some practical ways for the BUSA and any churches in Africa to mobilise existing hubs and to develop others.

5.2.1 Mobilize existing hubs

Denominations (probably through their regional associations) should identify churches that have planted other churches. Once these churches have seen the overall vision for advancing the gospel through strong churches (cf. 5.1.2 above), the leadership of these churches should be introduced to the list of *18 biblical criteria for a mature church* given in Chapter 2 (from Acts & the Pauline epistles, 2.3.2; cf. also 6.1) (or a similar biblical list if preferred – e.g., Mark Dever’s “9 Marks”, www.9marks.org). The leadership of each mother church should then be strongly encouraged to study the relevant passages, to discuss and become convinced of each criterion, and where necessary put it into their own words or even translate it into their local language.

This mobilisation process should begin with some of the key church planting churches in each area, some of which are actually ‘grandmother’ churches by now. If a delegate (or anyone) sent by the denomination can

first motivate some of these flagship churches to step up to their biblical duty, an exciting chain reaction may follow. Such a meeting with these grandmother churches could also be the time for piloting (testing) the process of teaching them a biblical criteria list for a mature church and about healthier church planting.

In the spirit of Matt. 7:1-5 (and Gal. 6:1b), the local church leaders should first confess any 'logs' in their own eye, any areas where their church is not thriving and mature. Perhaps they could give themselves a grade on a 1-4 scale for each criterion: 1 = absent/failing in this area; 2 = weak in this area; 3 = average/mediocre in this area; 4 = strong and thriving in this area.

For each criterion where they scored low (a 1 or 2), they should develop a detailed "maturity strategy" explaining *why* they scored low and specifically *how* they plan to mature in each area. In areas where they scored a 3 they should discuss how they plan to improve, and in the healthy areas where they scored a 4 they must give thanks to God for His work in them. All of this process should be bathed in prayer.

After the mother church undergoes a healthy self-evaluation (not to be prolonged though, unless critical flaws are found), it is recommended that the leadership of the mother churches make a list of all their daughter churches that they perceive are not yet mature and autonomous (i.e., not yet led by qualified elders, and probably not yet constituted as a church). They should call separate meetings with the leadership of each of these daughter churches to introduce them to this list of what makes a good church. They must explain and discuss (and translate where necessary) the biblical passages supporting each criterion. To set an atmosphere of humility and mutual correction and in order to lead by example, it is recommended that the mother church first share how they have been challenged and convicted by these biblical criteria. They should also share some of the specific plans they have made to improve their health as a church.

Then, with the biblical checklist (cf. 2.3.2) in front of everyone, the mother church should ask the leadership of the daughter church to join them in evaluating the younger church, using a similar sort of 1-4 grading scale. For each area of immaturity (scores of 1 and 2), the leadership of both the mother and daughter churches must diagnose possible causes and then agree on a specific strategy for maturing in that area. As stated above, they should also plan for how to improve any areas graded 3 and should praise God for any 4 areas, bathing everything in prayer.

The leadership of the two churches should also agree on periodic meetings for re-evaluation, possibly every six months or so, until the daughter church has qualified elders and shows an overall maturity and autonomy (e.g., grades of "3" or "4" in most or all of the criteria). The time when the daughter church shows that she is ready to graduate into adulthood would also be the appropriate time for her to be fully constituted as a church

within the denomination (cf. the BUSA criteria in 3.2.4; by this time the mother church should have also aided them in drafting their own constitution¹).

5.2.2 Overcome obstacles to strengthening daughter churches

For churches that have planted many branches, this evaluation and nurturing process will be especially time consuming. They will not commit to this process unless they are first convinced of their God-given duty to strengthen their daughter churches (cf. 5.1.1, 5.1.2). As a last resort, some mother churches that have overextended themselves might need to pull together a few of their daughter churches at the same time for this biblical evaluation process. But they must still take the time to sit with the leadership of *each* church to analyse specific concerns and to develop personalised maturity strategies for that church. In all of this, churches must hold firmly to this core conviction: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.* Perhaps as they start to accept this God-given duty, with all that it involves, they will be more careful before planting the next church.

These convictions about church strengthening will be sorely tested in cases where the daughter church evaluation process never gets past #1 in the biblical criteria list (2.3.2): qualified elders. This is usually the most obvious lack in a church that was not planted properly. If the mother church is now convinced it must take seriously the biblical pattern for effective church planting, then they must supply a Timothy or Titus type who will *continue* ministering at that daughter church *until* there are qualified elders (i.e., godly and capable elders according to 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)². This kind of patient, long-term commitment will be a *huge*, but necessary shift in focus for many churches that have previously cared more about breadth than depth. Time and again they must return to core biblical convictions about church planting and about doing God's business God's way for God's glory (cf. chp. 2).

Some of these mother churches that have proliferated too rapidly will probably have branch churches that are not even viable. They have no real leadership and a tiny or unstable membership, with no direction as a church. Or it may be a church that has no men who can be trained as elders. And the mother church may not

¹ Hesselgrave (2000a:268-269, 277) offers wise counsel and cautions on this process, concluding that it is probably best for the mother church to propose a provisional, model constitution at first rather than expecting the fledgling church to get bogged down in all the details of inventing their own constitution.

² The mother church or church planter must also decide whether, biblically and practically, one elder or a plurality is necessary before the church is constituted and the church planter phases out. The biblical pattern is a plurality of elders [Cf. 2.1.2], which is probably why Paul and Barnabas were sent out together, to provide an instant plurality in new church plants. But it would be hard to say that this is biblically required *before* a church is constituted and the church planter departs, especially when one faithful elder is in place and is developing other potential elders.

be able, or willing, to supply leadership for this daughter church. In such cases it is recommended that these churches either:

- (a) Merge with another nearby branch church in order to form a stronger base and to seek a pastor if needed.
- (b) If this is not possible, the mother church (or another stronger, likeminded church nearby) should (re)absorb them. This branch can still hold a regular cell/home group in their area under a leader sent by the mother church, even on Sundays. But as often as possible they should be encouraged to travel and attend the mother church, even using their giving or tithe as transport money if needed in the interim. It would be better if the mother church showed its concern by helping to arrange transport for these branch members to join the mother body on as many Sundays as possible. In the researcher's own church in Polokwane this was required with a faltering church plant in a nearby town. That work has now dissolved, with some members joining another evangelical church there and some moving to Polokwane.
- (c) If they are able, the mother church could send a regular delegation of members to help plant the new branch church until it becomes viable. This can be a dynamic way to encourage evangelistic passion in the mother congregation.

Another potential obstacle to strengthening younger churches is a wayward mother church. They may desire further responsibility for their church plants, but only out of an impure desire to further secure their own kingdom (and often to retain the financial kickback they require from their branches). The mother church herself is actually in disarray, perhaps the members are nominal believers, her leaders are ungodly or incapable, or her doctrine has veered away from Scripture. This church may claim to have conducted the biblical self-evaluation process (cf. 5.2.1 above) and yet they minimize, ignore, or deny the problems. What can be done? This is the risky side of local church autonomy, especially when they became autonomous prematurely.

The denomination or area association may have no authority over this church. But they can exhort and warn and counsel them, and as a last resort can dismiss them from the denomination or remove their minister from the recognition list. The main lesson here is: Plant churches carefully the first time, since one day that daughter will become a mother! But in the meantime, daughter churches under a wayward mother can be encouraged to associate with better mother churches (cf. 5.2.3 below).

5.2.3 Develop other hubs that will adopt 'orphan' church plants

Probably the biggest obstacle in this proposed strategy is the large number of churches and fellowships that have no link to a mother church but were merely planted by an independent individual (cf. Chp. 3). What is to be done to salvage and strengthen the many disconnected, weak young churches in a denomination?

Some suggest that these faltering churches can be stabilised primarily through parachurch efforts—such as a seminary that trains their pastor, or an area association or committee that offers equipping (conferences, materials, visits, etc.), or through short-term teams that give short-lived injections of evangelism and encouragement. But as vital as some of these efforts are, there is still *no substitute* for having a mature, model church that can mentor a young church toward maturity. Any other vehicle can offer biblical principles and ministry from a distance, but cannot offer the full model of what a church is (cf. 4.3.2).

There is no easy solution to orphaned church plants. The way churches are planted has lasting (sometimes irreversible) consequences, for good or for ill. But knowing that nothing is nearer to God's heart than the cause of His gospel and His church, the researcher is confident that diligent praying and strategising will yield fruit in the strengthening of these churches.

The process should begin with the denominational regions identifying all their churches and fellowships that have been recently planted in their area but have no link with a mother church. Wherever possible, the association should make contact with a leader in that church plant and inquire about how the church is doing and whether or not they are willing to be placed on a mentoring list to link them up with stronger churches. Where they are unwilling, and their weak condition is obvious, the denomination should consider how long such churches should remain as recognised churches.

Each association could then meet with all of their well-established, healthy churches and inform them and plead with them to adopt orphan churches that badly need further planting and nurturing. The motive? *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.* Surely some mother churches do have (or can dig down and find) some available resources and personnel to help adopt and mentor a struggling infant church in their region.

When such an adoption takes place, the mother church must clearly define (for themselves and for the adopted church) the purpose and plans for the new relationship. The denomination or area association should outline in detail what this kind of adoption involves, so that it does not become a token relationship that never truly strengthens the younger church. As soon as a relationship is established, the goal is to engage this daughter church in the same evaluation process and strategic planning as described above (cf. 5.2.1, biblical criteria for maturity).

A denomination should also identify churches that are not yet ready to adopt daughter churches but show potential for a mothering role in the future. These prospective parent churches could be developed through

sending them approved graduates from a seminary or college, and through other efforts to equip and motivate them through stronger churches in the region (seminars, conferences, books, refresher courses, etc.). The *best strategy* for developing new mother churches is for *current daughter churches to be strengthened* to maturity so they can spawn granddaughters (and perhaps to adopt other needy daughters). Where a mother church cannot be found that is willing to adopt an infant church, area associations will have to decide how to treat such a church. If there are signs of this church maturing, then there may be hope. If the church is languishing and dishonouring the name of Christ in their community, it seems that the denomination or association has three options:

- (a) Mobilise a church planter or a Timothy (pastoral type) who will move there to do the job necessary to rescue and strengthen that church and reach that community (and in the process link up with the best available mother church in the area). This worker (or team) will probably need to be bi-vocational.
- (b) Mobilise a church planter or a Timothy type to come alongside a nearby, healthy church to be their church developer who will actively mentor a weaker branch church (or a even a few churches, if it can be done well).
- (c) Encourage that church to disband and merge into the best evangelical, Bible-teaching church in their area.

Even if only a few of the stronger churches own this mandate and get serious about better church planting and church strengthening, many will take notice. One cannot overestimate the impact of a handful of key churches who renounce pragmatic, quantity-driven ministry and pursue a distinctly biblical, *quality-driven* ministry (cf. chp. 2). A church that is passionate about excellence in church planting will stand out amidst the mediocre efforts of others. Such model churches should also become *resource centres* for other evangelical churches that will want to come and learn about how to build more mature churches in Africa. These model churches will then be the best bases from which to offer conferences, seminars, leadership training, and other resources. Nothing speaks louder than a living advertisement of faithful church planting and church growth.

The current situation is similar to the BUSA's decision in 2000 to adopt a more biblical form of church government, i.e., elders. This decision was taken unanimously, yet it has not trickled down to most churches because they *have not seen a model* to convince them of the biblical alternative to the way they've always done things. The same is true of church strengthening: a few models will sway the masses. The catalyst will not be the top-level decisions and policies, but the grassroots examples of a commitment to do God's business God's way.

The researcher is often burdened by the fact that *less than ten* of the over eighty seminary students that he has worked with or is working with can point to an Antioch type of church that has modelled biblical

ministry for them. Some things cannot be taught in a classroom (cf. 4.3.2). A church-based seminary such as Christ Seminary is a big step in the right direction. But above all, these pastors-in-training and their fledgling churches need living proof of the kind of church that Christ, the Chief Builder, wants to build through them.

5.3 Ways to better evangelise

In response to the biblical critique in Chapter 4, the researcher must offer further solutions. The sections above (5.1-5.2) have overviewed a *structure* for the BUSA or any denomination or association of churches in Africa to use in organizing itself and its mother churches for a much-needed *church strengthening movement*. The whole strategy has been shaped by this core conviction: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.*

It seems fitting to follow the outline used in chapter 4 (based on Acts & Paul, cf. sections 2.1.4, 2.3.3), the biblical pattern for church planting: *evangelising* the community, *establishing* the believers, and *entrusting* leadership to local elders. Under each of these headings, strategies and suggestions will be given.

5.3.1 Evangelism in starting new churches

As stated in section 4.2.1, evangelists and church planters must be taught the priority and centrality of the local church in God's mission. They must be clearly shown this from Scripture (e.g., Matt. 16:18; Acts; 1 Tim. 3:14-15) (cf. Chp. 2), and must be shown the present and long-term benefits when *churches plant churches* versus independent individuals planting churches. The church planter must be willing to place himself under the authority of the local church elders (or leadership team). The elders and the church planter should draw up clear expectations and guidelines for their relationship. The elders of a church must welcome the church planter and assure him of their passion for missions and their commitment to encourage and hold him accountable. This is the current situation at the researcher's church in Polokwane, and it is very enriching both for the elders and for the missions' pastor (also the church planter) and his team (Rev. Venter and Samaria Mission; cf. 3.2.4).

As far as evangelistic methods, preachers of the gospel must work diligently to strip away any methods that distract from communicating the gospel message and the required response of repentance and faith. It is the clear, undiluted preaching of the gospel that the Holy Spirit has promised is the "power of God unto salvation", not the tent or the music or any human manipulation (Rom. 1:16-17, etc.). Scripture and missions history reveal that there is no reason to add any other public response than that of baptism, confessing Christ and joining a local church. Too often the biblical role (cf. 2.1.3.3) of baptism as a public response and a

welcome into the body of Christ has been needlessly postponed, being replaced by altar calls. But the fear of baptising converts too soon will be lessened once churches evangelise in a way that produces genuine conversions and once they start disciplining sinning members (Matt. 18:15-18, etc.). Trusting more in God's powerful preserving work in new converts also lessens the fear of immediate baptisms.

Some say that altar calls are not necessary in urban settings where one can follow up on converts through response cards with addresses; but in rural areas church planters often do not have addresses so an altar call is the only way to identify and follow-up on seekers. But there are flaws in this reasoning. Surely one can trust God's mighty gospel to do its work and make a person willing to attend a follow-up meeting right afterwards or a church service on Sunday. The Holy Spirit doesn't need extra-biblical human methods to baby-sit a genuine convert so they won't fall away in the first moments of their salvation. There are many ways to follow-up those who respond, without resorting to an evangelistic method that is proven to be dangerous and dishonouring to the Lord (cf. 4.2.1).

Often the tent atmosphere has become inseparable from the Arminian, manipulative kinds of altar-call evangelism. But the researcher still hopes that the tent venue can be rescued from being a symbol of mere decisions to being a symbol of effective *disciple-making*. This will require that the emphasis is more on explaining the gospel and the call to discipleship than on hasty, emotional decisions. To the credit of tent campaigns, the researcher has found that many students at Christ Seminary came to Christ at a tent meeting. The altar call never saved them; the preaching did.

When it comes to evangelistic methods, more emphasis should be put on a time-tested and proven method for evangelism: personal evangelism. The gospel came to Peter through his brother Andrew, and to Nathaniel through Philip, and to many homes through Paul's door-to-door visitation (John 1:40-51; Acts 20:20). In Africa, where tent meetings attract mostly women and children, extra emphasis must be placed on targeting the working men in the community through personal evangelism. This is far more likely to secure a solid base for a stable church in the years to come.

Andrew Isiaho – Effective church planting in Kenyan slums

Andrew (2004), a friend of the researcher, is a Kenyan who has been pastoring and church planting for the last fifteen years. After failed attempts at trying to plant a church too quickly and for the wrong reasons, Andrew was sent out by a mother church to evangelise the Gataka village in a squatter area outside of Nairobi. He went as a bi-vocational church planter who held another full time job. Andrew began by befriending adult men (working men, where possible) in the community and starting an evangelistic Bible study with them. During the first year, as he met with these men to lay a foundation for clearly understanding the gospel, many of them came to Christ. They were then encouraged to invite their families to attend Sunday services, and a church was born.

Five years later, because of Andrew's careful diligence and wisdom in church planting, God has given the Gataka church eight biblically qualified elders and has made them a thriving church. Andrew had no big results in the first few months or years, but five years later he had the greater joy of seeing the gospel steadily advancing through a well-established church in a poor village.

Some of Andrew's advice to other church planters:

- "Have a humble beginning. Don't make a big show: crusade, musical equipments, big posters, etc. Instead, person to person evangelism."
- "Make contacts with key people. Aim for men. Begin with friendship evangelism. Don't push people into quick decision. Visit them again and again. ... Don't start a church until you have disciples."
- "Take church planting seriously. Church planting calls for a lot of patience and prayer. Tough times will come, but endure as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3). Church planting calls for committed, courageous and visionary godly men. Church planting calls for men who will not compromise the truth of God's word."

In response to concerns given in 4.2.1, it is also recommended that evangelists and church planters lay a better biblical foundation before rushing in to show the *Jesus* film. For decades veteran cross-cultural church planters have been showing the dangers of premature, rushed, or inadequate presentations of the gospel. They have also shown the lasting benefits once people (or whole villages!) understand the Old Testament foundations for the gospel and are led to a true understanding and commitment to Christ (cf. famous New Tribes Mission' stories such as the conversion of the Mouk tribe in the video, *Ee-Tauw*, or the conversion of the Taliabo tribe in the *Taliabo* video) (McElwain, 1993:1-60). There are no shortcuts to effective, biblical evangelism: evangelists and church planters *must* be willing to stay *as long as it takes* to do God's business God's way. Otherwise, as missions history reveals, others will have to go back to re-evangelise.

There are excellent tools now available to evangelists and church planters who are serious about laying a foundation that will last. *Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ* (McIlwain, 1993) is a proven teaching tool with 50 lessons taking the student chronologically through the Old and New Testament story of the gospel. Accompanying charts and maps, large pictures, and a teacher's manual are also available. New Tribes

Missionary, Steve Lonetti, has taken that curriculum and condensed it into 15 lessons which can be used cross-culturally or in Western, urban settings with evangelistic, 'discovery' Bible studies (Lonetti, 1999). The researcher has repeatedly used Lonetti's curriculum in evangelising and discipling new believers, and is convinced that this type of curriculum is an essential for church planting. Nothing can compare to the thrill of seeing the drama of God's redemptive plan unfolding as He revealed it!

A final note: It is also recommended that short-term teams be more carefully screened to ensure that their evangelistic methods and message will reinforce and not hinder the work of the local evangelists and church planters. This kind of screening works best when a church only works with teams that come through approved churches overseas or locally, churches that have proven they are reliable in sending people with right doctrine and character. Obviously no filter is foolproof, but it must at least be functioning.

5.3.2 Evangelism in existing churches

Recall from chapter 3 that only 33% of the pastors said they were sure that the majority of their members have a good grasp of the gospel. Pastors and church leaders must also not forget to continue evangelising their own congregation. Church leaders must take the purity of the church seriously, admitting only members who display a clear grasp of the gospel.

Christ warned about the tares among the wheat. A wise pastor will remember to keep evangelising unsaved church-goers, especially warning them against false assurance and dead faith (e.g., exposit the books of James and 1 John). But the pastor must evangelise in an appropriate way that does not sacrifice the main purpose of the sermon and the service, which is to edify the believers (cf. 1 Cor. 14, Eph. 4:11-12, etc.). Preaching the gospel to the church should not mean only evangelistic messages, weekly altar calls, or attempts to get believers 'saved' again. When Paul said he was "eager to preach the gospel" to the church at Rome, the rest of his epistle shows us what he had in mind. It is packed with heavy, doctrinal preaching—far from shallow or repetitive gospel preaching (Rom. 1:15ff). Christians must continually grow to understand and savour more of the glories of the gospel and learn how to apply it to all of life (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Col. 1:23, etc.).

One of the best ways for Christians to know and love the gospel more is by learning how to proclaim it to others. Pastors and church leaders must model, encourage, and facilitate this kind of personal evangelism in the community. This can begin by developing a program for following up visitors, with the elders taking key leaders and members along to watch and assist in evangelism.³ Soon they will be ready to go out on their

³ An gospel tract that is much more effective and biblically sound than most these days is, *2 Ways to Live* (Matthias Media; www.matthiasmedia.com.au). It comes in various forms, even in CDs. They also have training manuals in evangelism for both teacher and student.

own and to train others. The researcher has also seen in both urban and rural settings that a Saturday event for men or women can be very effective (a breakfast, a tea, etc.). Churches invite a quality speaker to address a relevant topic from a biblical perspective and to bring in a clear gospel presentation. It can both edify the flock and reach the community.

A church's outreach to its youth is one of the front lines of evangelism. The church must seize this opportunity to love and teach their youth the truth of the gospel. This begins by training the parents to evangelise and shepherd their own children. Saved youth must then be equipped in how to reach their friends for Christ. Concerned parents and faithful church leaders teach and model the gospel to youth and raise up an army of young disciples for Jesus.

The mother church is the key to all of this: passion for the biblical gospel is contagious. Once the mother church becomes more excited about the doctrines of the gospel than about programs and politics, the flame will often spread to their branch churches and beyond. Conversely, if the mother church continues to have a shallow or cold grasp of the gospel, their daughter and granddaughter churches will get an even weaker and weaker version of the gospel until it is lost altogether. The words of the great African church leader, Bjang Kato (1985:23), were never truer than now: "If there was a time in Africa when there was a need for a clear-cut Gospel, it is today. If there was a time when Christ's sons and daughters in Africa must be prepared to lay down their lives for an undiluted Gospel, it is today."

5.4 Ways to better *establish* these young churches

The best way to see that a new flock is nurtured is to raise up reliable, local shepherds. For this reason, the refrain throughout this chapter has been: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.* The way suitable shepherds usually emerge is through the on-site teaching and example of a faithful Paul (church planter) or Timothy (interim pastor). Such a church planter or developer must have a clear plan for how to teach and nurture the fledgling flock until leadership can be entrusted into capable hands.

Below are some suggestions for an effective *establishing plan* both for new church plants and for existing church plants. These specifics should build upon the initial plan suggested in 5.1-5.2 where it was proposed that mother churches pursue or adopt daughter churches so that they can walk through a biblical evaluation process with them and can develop strategies for that young church to mature.

5.4.1 Teach and model, teach and model

Colossians 1:28-29 is one of many passages where Paul states the main method for maturing believers: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power which so mightily works within me." Most young churches fail to mature for one primary reason: *the lack of faithful Bible teaching from godly teachers.*

It is unlikely that qualified elders will ever be developed in a church plant if the church planter is not *regularly instructing* the congregation in the Word and by life example. An absentee shepherd can hardly say with Paul, "Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God *but also our own lives*, because you had become very dear to us (1 Thess. 2:8, emphasis mine)." No one has ever improved on these two pillars of Paul's ministry: *teaching* and *modelling*⁴. He testified to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 that the heart of his ministry among them for over two years (v.18b, "with you the whole time") was his selfless and diligent example combined with his unshrinking faithfulness in teaching them the word of God (vv.17-35). This is why he exhorts these elders to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock" (v.28).

In the same vein, Paul later charges another pastor at Ephesus: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16; vv.6-16 are all about these two keys of teaching and example). So much is at stake! Not just the edification of the believers, but their ongoing evangelisation and eternal salvation *hinges* upon a leader who will faithfully teach and model. And *faithful* instruction refers not only to the teacher's content, but also to the teacher's *consistency* in faithfully being available and observable by staying locally *with the people*.

This is why the mentality of church planting in many places must be changed. Either mother churches must fully support the church planter so he can stay locally until the job is done, or church planters must become bi-vocational tentmakers for as long as necessary. Long-distance church planting is *doomed to fail* in most cases. Paul summarises his ministry, "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me (i.e., on-site teaching and example), practice these things" (Php. 4:9a).

⁴ Cf. Adams' (1986:52-53), "A supracultural method, discipling has its roots in the relationship of the Trinity...In John's Gospel where Jesus describes His ministry (chp. 3, 5, 8), He makes it clear that His teaching consists of what He has seen the Father do and heard the Father say. Learning by hearing and seeing – that is discipling."

5.4.2 Teach and model the biblical basics and foundational doctrines

If the previous section answered *how* the church planter must carry out his establishing ministry, the next logical question is, ‘*What* must be taught?’ As stated in 5.3, the teaching must begin and continue with a solid understanding of the gospel. One practical step in this direction would be for the church planter or leaders to teach new converts, or the whole congregation, through a study of the *Kerygma* list of essential elements of the gospel that was given in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3.2). The teacher could walk the people through each of the key passages in Acts and Paul’s epistles from which that list was drawn. Along with this, church planter should early on preach expositively through one of the four Gospels. A natural place to start would be either Mark for its brevity or John for its simplicity (though also more abstract).

Next in the church diet could be the *Didache* list that was also given in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3.2) as a summary of the essential elements of edificational teaching. The teacher could work expositively through each of these key passages, mostly from Paul’s epistles. This could be done in various ways: Sunday preaching, Bible hour, home groups, special seminars on holidays or weekends, or at other times. This *Didache* list was the source for question #60 in the survey, which revealed that half of the churches are not teaching on these foundational topics. One excellent tool for covering most of these doctrines is a Bible study workbook entitled *Fundamentals of the Faith* (GCC, 2002), from Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California (pastored by John MacArthur). Other similar tools are available today. One with specific application to the African context is the helpful book by Wilbur O’Donovan (1996) called *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*. If an infant church is not regularly receiving the pure milk of “the elementary principles of the oracles of God”, one should not be surprised if the church still behaves like a child and never matures to “solid food” (Heb. 5:11-14).

These basics are not only for new churches but should be regularly taught in *any healthy church*, since a healthy church will continue seeing new conversions and intake of new members. One fears that in many of today’s churches a new convert could go for two or more years and never receive basic instruction on how to study their Bible, how to truly overcome sin, how to do personal evangelism, how to have a godly marriage and household, or how to use their spiritual gifts and serve in the church. But if the church also needs the steady diet of expository preaching through books of the Bible (and it does!), the Sunday pulpit ministry is probably not the place to expect that these topics will all be covered in a systematic or cyclical way in the life of the church. Rather, the Sunday School or Bible Hour, along with home-cell groups, provide good opportunities for this essential equipping. Too few evangelical churches today have a well-developed, strategic plan for nurturing their members all the way from the cradle to the grave. And they wonder why the next generation becomes so secularised.

Another part of the early instruction given to the church must be the *biblical criteria list* for what a healthy and mature church looks like. They must know their corporate goal from the start. The 18-point list given in section 2.3.2 will overlap with the *Didache* list in many ways. So after the church planter has taught through the *Didache* subjects he can return and supplement it with any items from the criteria list that need more attention. As stated above (and below), this criteria list can especially be used among the emerging leaders of the church to evaluate progress and strategise toward maturity.

These lessons on the biblical basics can be a catalyst to launch believers beyond the mediocrity that so plagues many Christians. For example, how few Christians have ever discovered their spiritual gift(s) and felt the joy of using their gift in the body life of the church! Churches must get back to “every member ministry” (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Eph. 4:6-16; 1 Cor. 12) (Christofides, 2004). And how many believers go a lifetime without ever reproducing themselves by leading another person to Christ and discipling them? Not only does Jesus’ Great Commission call believers to disciple others, but Hebrews 5:12 expects that every Christian should grow to become a “teacher” of others. Yet so few members in our churches can point to even one younger believer whom they are investing in. In Annexure D the researcher has supplied a worksheet that was crafted for his own church on “Examining and Improving Your Involvement in Your Local Church.”

5.4.3 Prioritise membership and the discipling of families

Another proven vehicle for establishing and equipping a new church is the *membership process*. Not only is there good biblical support for having some kind of membership process (cf. Matt. 18:15-18; Acts), but it also provides a prime opportunity to shepherd the young flock. The church planter or leaders should first interview each prospective member and ensure that they have a clear understanding of the biblical gospel and that they have been baptised or are ready to be baptised. Next, they can be instructed on what it really means to commit themselves to a local church. There are also excellent tools on this, such as the book by Mack and Swavely, *Life in the Father's House: A Member's Guide to the Local Church* (1996). Each chapter spells out from Scripture the wonderful privilege and serious duties of church membership.

Once converts become members, they must realize they have embarked on a lifelong journey of growth and fruitfulness as they serve Christ in their home, church, and community. The equipping and growing must never stop for the elders and the members. The church planter or leaders should especially focus on discipling members who are married and who have families. A church needs a strong core of godly families. They are the backbone of a healthy church (cf. #3 on the *Didache* list in 2.3.3.2). It was spouses and families that Paul normally targeted first on his lists of practical exhortation (Eph. 5:22ff; Col. 3:18ff).

Healthy homes in a church are the catalyst for most of the other ministries of the church, and will significantly reduce the church planter's labours as qualified elders emerge from such homes. These godly families can become a force for evangelising and discipling many in the community. Conversely, when a church planter does not do in-depth discipling of whole families, young churches will languish for years without a strong membership. The researcher highly recommends the following tools for raising up godly families in the church:

Christian Living in the Home, by Jay Adams (1972); *Your Family God's Way: Developing and Sustaining Relationships in the Home*, by Wayne Mack (1991); *Biblical Parenting for Life*, by John MacArthur (2000, with both a Teacher's Guide and Student's Workbook); *The Excellent Wife*, by Martha Peace (1997); *The Exemplary Husband*, by Stuart Scott (2000); *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Ted Tripp (1995); *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, by Paul Tripp (1997).

The same authors have published many other books on the Christian home and all are highly recommended.

Gehman (1987:114) rightly says, "Biblical instruction rests on two pillars: the local church and the Christian home... Where there is vital, dynamic biblical instruction through the local church and the Christian home, there you may expect to find strong Christians."

5.4.4 Provide equipping resources

In a cross-cultural context, these recommended resources will be limited by language and culture barriers. To their credit, these kinds of resources are so thoroughly biblical that most of their content is universally applicable, and may only need to be translated into the local language. But there is surely a greater impact when these same biblical principles are fully translated into the language and the culture of the church that is being planted.

The African church has a tremendous need for resources that are anchored in biblical absolutes but clothed in African style, with Africanised illustrations and applications that drive home the message. Furthermore, the African church must develop more of its own evangelistic and discipleship material in the local languages. At Christ Seminary students are encouraged, rather than just producing research papers written only for their lecturers, to write 'position papers' on key theological issues that will edify their flocks. They must describe the issue and give a biblical analysis, writing in a plain English style that can be understood easily or translated where necessary. When a student does well at this, he is asked to consider making photocopies to distribute the paper to his leaders or church members, or even to other area pastors.

There are some English resources for the African church being written, though still sparse, inaccessible, and often so academic in style that they are not reaching the grassroots level. Some exciting materials developed

for popular readership are: *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*, by Wilbur O'Donovan (1996); O'Donovan's sequel, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (2000), offering biblical insight on hot issues in both urban and rural Africa today. A positive trend in East Africa is that evangelical pastors are gathering together in a forum called the Theological Advisory Group (TAG) to produce helpful materials such as: *Biblical Marriage & Family in Africa* (1996); *The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa* (1999); *Prayer & Worship in the Church in Africa* (1989, 1991).

Another encouraging development is a local pastor in South Africa, Rev. Joel James, who is producing biblically sound material for equipping believers that is written in a clear, concise, and dynamic style. Rev. James is burdened to see such resources placed at a very affordable price into the hands of African believers. These booklets sell for only R7-R10 each. Here is a list of the excellent booklets he has produced to encourage Christians and increase their discernment:

- Biblical Decision-making: Is it God's will to "find" His will? (2001)
- The Companionship Principle: Bringing biblical sanity to the insanity of dating. (1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- Forgiving Like God Forgives: God's plan for restoring peace to sin-shattered relationships. (1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- How to Handle Calamity: A study in fear-of-the-Lord faith from the book of Job. (2003)
- Identifying False Teachers: A biblical checklist for identifying false teachers in the church. (2001)
- Overcoming Anger: A biblical guide for becoming patient, tolerant, and slow to anger. (2000, 2001 Revised edition)
- Questions and Answers about Healing, Tongues, and Prophecy (2004)
- Testing Today's Prophets: Does today's "prophecy" measure up to biblical standards? (1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- What Will Heaven Be Like? (2003)
- Infant Baptism vs. Believer's Baptism (2003)
- How to Study the Bible: A course for serious Bible students and teachers (2004)

Similar materials have been written in the biblical counselling movement in the United States. *Resources for Changing Lives* (an arm of Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers) offers numerous hard-hitting booklets with biblical answers to today's hot issues—from homosexuality to domestic abuse to depression to suicide (They even offer a nice display box for churches to use. A must for any church!). Likewise, Jay Adams' excellent counselling pamphlets are still in print because they address perennial problems (marriage, anger, worry, depression, etc.) in any society and offer God's sufficient solutions (also from Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers).

The BUSA has also begun providing similar materials to equip churches in such areas as church membership, stewardship, missions, and spiritual gifts. One only prays that such resources multiply and that African church leaders will rise up and do sound biblical thinking within their own context of the African church! In Chapter 1 (1.1) (Van der Walt, 2002:16), this grave concern was raised about the past inadequacies in discipling and nurturing African converts:

Because the Gospel was not brought as a new, total, encompassing worldview, which has to take the place of an equally encompassing traditional worldview, the deepest core of African culture remained untouched. Christian faith only influenced and changed the outer layers of African culture such as, for example, customs and behaviour. For this reason it often led to superficial Christianity – totally at variance with the nature of the Christian faith, which is a total, all-embracing religion, influencing the whole of life from a reborn heart – in the same way that a heart pumps life-giving blood to every part of the body.

...The average African convert did not experience the Gospel as adequate for his whole life, and especially not when it came to the most complex issues of life. For that reason we discover all over Africa today that Christians, in times of existential need and crisis, as in danger, illness and death, revert to their traditional faith and view of life. The Gospel has no impact in those areas where it really matters!

There is a desperate need for African churches both new and old to be well grounded in God's solutions to their deepest problems. But until discerning and skilful leaders take the time to hear the questions and to search the Scriptures for the right answers, Christianity will continue to be a 'mile wide and an inch deep'.

5.4.5 Two other long-term equipping strategies

Out of a burden for a stronger, deeper Christianity in Africa, the researcher dreams of two other strategic vehicles for equipping believers. One is a *church-based biblical counselling centre* where genuinely Christian counselling could be offered to church members and the community. From this base church leaders could be better equipped in biblical counselling, in contrast to the so-called Christian psychology being used in many churches where God's truth is being watered down by the unbiblical theories of secular psychology (Cf. Bulkley, 1993; Almy, 2001; Cantrell, 2003, etc.). Such a counselling centre could become a biblical think-tank and resource centre for applied theology in Africa, a continent that has a host of tough issues still begging for biblical answers.

One proof of the church's appetite for biblical counselling is that pastors' conferences often have much larger attendance for their counselling electives than for any others. Likewise, it is common knowledge that Christian bookstores sell more books on counselling and Christian living topics than on any other topics. This is more than just a misguided felt need; it reflects genuine needs for discipleship that are not being met in the churches.

A quality, church-based counselling centre could offer a wide range of lectures and seminars and materials on counselling related issues. Alongside this, the centre would offer opportunities for observing and participating in biblical counselling through both live counselling and videotapes. Pastors, church leaders, and gifted members could attend a weekend or a week of intensive equipping and then return home overflowing with hope in the sufficiency of Christ and His Word! Such a biblical counselling centre could develop a network and movement of likeminded leaders and churches that resolve *to resist* the culture's

relentless pull toward worldly, humanistic therapies, and *to strive* together to rediscover God's abundant resources for changing lives! The options and opportunities of such a centre are almost endless. The researcher has already seen similar strategies tested and proven for decades in the States, and the need here in Southern Africa seems even greater.

The other strategic dream is for a quality *Christian university* for Southern Africa where top young African leaders can be equipped with a comprehensively Christian worldview for all of life. This university could offer a liberal arts training that would ground students in a biblical perspective of whatever vocation they pursue. This kind of in-depth equipping requires far more than most churches can offer, and could be a tool to serve many churches by taking their choicest young people to the next level of discipleship and preparedness for serving Christ with excellence in the world. There are a few schools in Southern Africa that claim to be offering this kind of education, but the researcher has yet to hear of one that has an entirely Christian faculty and the conservative evangelical stance required to make the impact that is needed.

One is burdened when seeing how African society is so *unaffected* by the massive number of churches, professing believers, and Bible schools. Could this not be due to the fact that African Christians are not being equipped to pursue their vocation with excellence and to stand for Christ in the marketplace? Indeed, this begins in the home and the church. But church and mission history reveal that church planters have strategically provided literacy training and built Christian schools and universities for further equipping believers (Winter, 2003:10). Schmidt (2001:185-193) confirms, "Most colleges and universities that are well known today began as Christian schools". As history repeatedly shows, this mission strategy brings with it a great temptation for a school to sacrifice biblical convictions for academic respectability. But that surely does not negate the strategy itself.

Writing on this very issue, Carpenter (2003:6-7) notes: "The environment for creating evangelical universities is ripe to the bursting point in parts of sub-Saharan Africa." He says the "move from the revival tent to the university" can be seen not as a diversion but as a "classic evangelical maneuver". The vice-chancellor of Uganda Christian University comments that, for a new generation of African Christians, "Discipleship ... includes a tremendous hunger for education." As they are equipped, he says they "become the seedbed for the development of a stable, godly nation" (2003:7). Carpenter concludes (2003:7), "The rise of evangelical universities thus marks the emergence of an important second chapter in the story of revivalist Christianity's growth in the non-western world."

In another article in the same issue of *Mission Frontiers*, Scotchmer shows that the time has never been more ripe for Christian higher education, in light of globalisation and the sky-rocketing literacy rates and massive demands for post-secondary education in the developing world (2003:9). Scotchmer (2003:9) concludes:

Having done so much to prepare the soil for higher education in the developing world [through evangelisation and the resulting upliftment and literacy], the question before us today is whether the church is prepared to turn over the entire field, or most of it, to others. On several continents, corporations and western universities are quickly capitalizing on the current demand for higher education. Via the Internet, they are developing massive educational enterprises to attract eager young minds—and dollars. Meanwhile, the church looks on.

Historically, it has often been through zealous university students that God has launched national revivals and church planting movements. See 5.6 on the Zambian church planting success story, an example of the vital role of university students. Well-educated young people also provide a prime pool from which the church can draw her leaders and future pastors. Of course this can happen with Christian students at any university, but the odds are greater at a place where the truth is upheld.

Meanwhile, when churches and families are not yet able to send their youth to a solid Christian university, they must work to arm them with biblical discernment as they enter secular universities and vocations. It is disappointing to hear of so few BUSA urban churches having a strategic impact on the universities of the land. These campuses should be a prime target for the church's evangelism and equipping. Excellent resources are available for equipping high school and university students, such as: *Thinking Biblically*, by John MacArthur and the faculty The Master's College (2003); *How Now Shall We Live*, by Colson and Pearcey (1999).

If a bright learner does not yet seem discerning enough to survive the intense scepticism of a secular university, he should be encouraged to pursue distance studies while working and staying at home or with other godly friends and being further equipped at a strong local church. If a young person does not have a solid church nearby, he could also consider trying to finding work and moving closer to a good Bible-teaching church. There he should receive the most important kind of education—getting grounded in the Word.

To be consistent, the researcher should probably first be dreaming of a *Christian education movement for primary and secondary schooling*. This has begun to a small degree in South Africa. Yet the researcher still finds, especially in the black rural areas, that Christian parents see no other option than to send their children to secular, government schools where they are often brainwashed with humanistic thinking. Sadly, many Christian parents (both in rural and urban churches) aren't even aware of the danger so they're not even *looking* for other options! Too many churches seem to naively think that a 30-minute Bible class on Sunday, or a few chats with Mom and Dad, can purge a child from 30 hours of saturation with worldly wisdom during the week. Henry Morris (1978:22) states, "The public school system in its present form has become perhaps the greatest of all influences *away* from God and His truth in America." And Jay Adams (1998:6-8) rightly warns (with equal relevance to America and South Africa):

The one area in which humanism has been most successful in gaining converts and in propagating its views has been education... Public schools form the fountainhead of humanistic propaganda in training our society.... Rapidly, across the land, Christian schools have begun to multiply in an attempt to free children from the tentacles of the humanistic educational octopus. Probably there has been no more outstanding innovation among Christians in this generation than the Christian school movement. Nowhere is there a greater opportunity for combating humanism than in education.... The contrast between Christian students who succeed in grappling with the problems of a sinful world and those from pagan schools who cannot, could – above all else – make Christianity very attractive to the many who are baffled by the contradictory and nihilistic theses of humanism....”

If the African evangelicals are serious about building strong churches with well-grounded believers that impact their world for Christ, the subject of Christian education is no small matter. As seen in the surveys (Chapter 3), over half of those in these young BUSA churches are children or youth. No faithful church planter or pastor can turn a blind eye toward the teaching and shaping that over half of his flock is getting Monday through Friday. Churches should be rallying together to provide Christian schooling and home-schooling networks and encouragement. No church will be well established for long if it is not giving a Christian worldview to the next generation.

5.4.6 Overcome dependency and foster self-reliance

Section 4.2.2.2 discussed at length the problem of young churches that are weakened by dependency on outside funding. Some possible solutions are now in order. Whether or not dependency is a *chief* cause of weakness in younger BUSA churches, it is one of the more obvious symptoms of a church planting that is not producing strong indigenous churches that are able to reproduce. How can churches begin to break the cycle of dependency and develop more local initiative and responsible ownership of their ministries?

Changes are made in this area the same way as any other area of concern: through *patiently teaching and applying the Bible*. God’s people must see His resources and their responsibilities. As the African Christian leader Aryeetey wrote (O’Donovan, 2000:135), churches must be planted with a “comprehensive, long-term, deliberate strategy to so empower the churches that they would become truly and largely self-supporting.”

What follows are some important steps in this process.

The *first* step is to give *biblical teaching* about stewardship and giving from the moment the church is born, not at a later date. From the start they must see that God’s primary plan for providing for the needs and ministries of the church is *through the local resources of His people*, not through outside funds. As Schwartz says (2003a), “The health of the congregation for years to come could well be determined by what the leaders recommend and implement from the beginning.” Schwartz further advises (2003a):

It can be shown over and over again that those who seem to have nothing to give actually can give back to God from the little they do have. In 2 Corinthians 8 we read about Macedonians who begged for the privilege of giving “out of severe trial and extreme poverty”. And when that happens, the God who receives from them becomes their provider. There are unbelievable stories out of

refugee camps and other situations of poverty where one would assume that people live in absolute poverty, yet they joyfully find a way of giving back to God from what he has entrusted to them. It is why the two small coins of the widow (Luke 21:2) represented so much by comparison. We must take great care not to do our giving in a way that destroys that initiative to give, however meager it might seem to us. It is an important reason to acknowledge the difference between absolute poverty and relative poverty (emphasis his).

A second step is to *give hope* by pointing out that God can provide in any situation and that healthy self-reliance is possible. Show people nearby cases where dependency is being overcome and underprivileged African churches are self-supporting. The researcher continues to find story after story of exciting initiatives from God's people in the poorest of places (cf. the website www.wmausa.org for numerous examples) For example:

- Gerald Bustin (1999) tells the amazing story of the vibrancy and initiative of the Papua New Guinea Bible Church movement that originated in 1948 with poor village churches that were taught from the start to give generously and sacrificially. These new believers were also taught trades and skills for supporting themselves. They have now planted 500 churches all over the island (in both rural and urban settings) that are all entirely self-supporting. They have given thousands of dollars to sponsor local outreaches, to help foreign missionaries with their costs when they come to minister, and to send their own missionaries as far as Nigeria! Obviously every thing about this story is not transferable to South Africa, but much of it is. One of the keys to this success story was the conviction of the original missionaries who came to plant these churches:

When any new generation of disciples becomes permanently dependent upon the previous generation for support and control, it short-circuits the self-perpetuating nature of the Gospel and breaks the cycle. This means the growth of the Gospel becomes limited by the ability of the previous generation. The perpetuation of the Gospel can only be maintained and accelerated when each successive generation accepts total responsibility for their part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

- O'Donovan (2000:125; he doesn't specify the country) tells the story of an African movement of churches in an impoverished country that became convinced of their need to give sacrificially. Their response was so generous that the denomination was eventually able to finance and build an entire college campus for theological training in the capital city!
- Schwartz (1993) tells of the Assemblies of God in South Africa:

Every year they gather for a week-long conference in ThabaNchu and there, among other things, they take a collection. This year they collected two million Rand! How does this happen? First of all, it is a year-long process. It doesn't happen on one day or during one week. The women of the church have projects throughout the year. Some make blankets for sale and the proceeds from every tenth blanket go to ThabaNchu for the church. Others make dresses and every tenth dress belongs to the Lord. That is how they can take a collection of two million Rand. Local imagination, local initiative, local involvement - that's fulfillment.

- Another encouraging story is told of the Evangelical Free Churches of Venezuela:

When they caught a vision to send their first missionary to do tribal work, they sought assistance from the North American mother mission. The mission leaders responded, "If you are to be a truly missionary church, you must send them and support them yourselves." At first the Venezuelans didn't understand, and they protested. "But you have so much and we so little!" Soon, however, they raised the necessary support and were able to send their first missionary. There was tremendous joy at the commissioning service, because the Venezuelans saw how God provided and knew that they had become a truly multiplying, missionary church. Had North American funds been provided, they would have been robbed of that joy (Ott, 1993).

A *third* step in overcoming dependency is to *expose people to local resources*. Both pastors and members should be referred to reliable sources for bi-vocational or entrepreneurial training. Such training opportunities are widely available in South Africa for those who are willing to work and to start at ground zero⁵. Christ Seminary has had various students with bi-vocational experience and successful small business ideas that they pass on to others. Some of the students have assisted ladies in the church with getting sowing machines and training for a home-based business. As long as the pastor does not lose sight of his first calling to shepherd the flock, this can be a vital labour of love for him to serve the church and the community by assisting with entrepreneurial opportunities and training. Pastors may also be surprised to see the response of people when they see that the pastor is willing to work, as illustrated with an African pastor:

After securing permission from the local authorities, a pastor bought a field and set about plowing it. A neighbouring villager saw what he was doing. He approached the church leader in the field and said, 'Reverend, why are you plowing this field?' He replied, 'Because church offerings are down and I need to support my family.' The neighbour responded, 'You are a man of God, you should be doing God's work. You go do God's work, and I'll plow your field for you.' ... That church leader later made this observation, 'When our people see that we as church leaders are willing to work for our own living, then our people will show that they, too, are willing to help. That is how the attitude of our people will change' (Schwartz, 1999:593-594).

Another possible need will be for churches and church planters to graciously and wisely *redirect* outside funds that might damage self-reliance in local churches⁶. If a foreign donor is not flexible enough to direct his money wherever the *local church* thinks is best, then that money is not needed in God's service. Perhaps one way would be to ask that such eager donors consider channelling their funds toward start-up capital for entrepreneurial pastors or members in the church so as to empower them to further stand on their own. Another suggestion is that donors channel their monies toward more multi-church kinds of ministries that are equipping nationals, such as regional seminaries or a biblical counselling centre. These are ministries less likely to receive much local funding, though local churches *should* be invited to contribute and to take an increasing ownership of these regional ministries. In some cases a ministry must have the faith and humility

⁵ Two such sources in the Gauteng area are: (a) Phineas Chauke, HPC Business Development Services that offer training seminars in self-employment and entrepreneurial skills; (b) Neil de Schmidt's Buhle Farming Academy, a very affordable training program for amateur, home-based chicken breeding and small crop farming. The researcher can be contacted for more details regarding these and similar sources.

⁶H. Paulson helpfully lays out three key stages (and some related principles) in a church's development toward non-dependence (1999:266-269). Similarly, McQuilken (1999) gives four biblical principles to use for evaluating any approach to foreign funding.

to suggest that a donation be entirely redirected to a more needy part of God's harvest—especially to some of the unreached corners of the world that desperately need labourers.

Ott (1993) tells of a similar kind of faith and conviction:

A missionary who was working in a tribal group in Mexico had to spend days travelling from village to village by donkey. Thinking of the travel time that could be saved, a well-meaning friend offered to buy him a four-wheel-drive vehicle. The missionary wisely rejected the offer, explaining, "If I use such a vehicle, the natives will say, 'We can't do evangelism unless we also have a vehicle.'" His ministry would cease to be reproducible. *Having a good long-range strategy often means rejecting methods promising greater short-term results* (italics mine).

Steve Saint (1998) on building mature churches among the Huaorani (Auca) tribe in Ecuador

It is critical that we keep sight of what the purpose of missions is. Missions is not to go in and create and control a church for other people nor be the church for them. It's not our job to insure that it functions. *It is simply and only to plant the church in every people group and nurture it until it is able to propagate, govern and support itself.* When missions go beyond that, then they are imposing themselves in the area of responsibility that belongs to the indigenous people and then everything gets out of whack.

I don't get this from books on missiology, but just from the Scriptures. In Matt. 28, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me. You go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." He was talking to eleven ... men, sending them out to make disciples, who would teach other people to follow Him on their own, observing all that He had commanded them.

This means that the Huaorani believers need to be discipled so that they can make disciples also. But if they're not given the chance to do that, if other people dominate them and keep doing the things that the Huaorani should do, then they never grow up.

A model for ministry: Rev. Hugo Gutsche, founding missionary of the BUSA

from Fritz H. Haus (1999, unpublished dissertation), *Carl Hugo Gutsch (1843-1926): the significance of his life and ministry for the Baptist churches and missions in Southern Africa*

Gutsche... set out to teach his new believers *of all colours* to write and read, acquire a basic education and sober industrious habits, according to Christian work ethics. ... This documented history... clearly shows that Gutsche and his churches served the indigenous African population in a most unselfish manner. Gutsche did indeed 'support the Xhosas', by emulating the MORAVIAN principles. ... Those Zinzendorf Germans from Herrnhut (first official missionaries to South Africa; arrived in the 1730s) trained the newly won Christians who automatically and without option had to learn secular skills which enabled them to make their own living. ... They started schools, printing works, mills, cobbler shops, agriculture, horticulture, bakeries and all the crafts imaginable. A Moravian Christian was well able to look after him/herself (316).

Imagine what Gutsche would have done today in the new South Africa, as a "missionary to the liberated Blacks. With his vision, calling and principles, in the context of our present time, surely he would make the Border region and South Africa a better place to live in by equipping his flock for an orderly, worthwhile and dignified life." (324)

First generation movements have vitality, idealism and impact. Their charismatic leaders and founders are specially gifted with an exceptional vision. This is amply illustrated by the life and work of Carl Hugo Gutsche. However, a church or denomination is only fulfilling its task if succeeding generations remain true to the ancient Biblical principles" (325). ... Gutsche's German Baptist Churches had a life span of about one hundred years. ... The valiant efforts of Oncken and Gutsche to plant the Gospel in the soil of Southern Africa have born fruit. ... Gutsche and his English colleagues laid a sound Scriptural foundation that stood the test of time. Their mission work has grown beyond expectation. At the end of 1999 the BUSA has 370 full time missionaries working in five continents... (327).

5.5 Ways to better *entrust* leadership to local, qualified elders

The above sections have outlined many suggestions for improved evangelism and establishing in the BUSA's church building endeavours. It is best for these stages to be done properly *before* leaders are entrusted with the care of the church. Experienced church planters warn against outsiders rushing in and supplying a trained leader for a new congregation that has not yet been nurtured. This can lead to a dangerous distinction between clergy and laity, and such an imported leader may also never gain the full respect of leaders in that community (Van Rheenen, 1996a:158).

But all evangelising and establishing efforts can be nullified without stable leadership to carry the church ahead. Following from the analysis and concerns stated in Chapter Four (section 4.2.3), below are some suggested strategies for the BUSA or any churches in Africa to meet the urgent need for biblical leadership. Here again is the over-arching vision: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through churches in Africa, mother churches must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.*

5.5.1 Disciple men from the outset

As was illustrated in the story (cf. 5.3.1) of Andrew Isaiaho in Kenya, the church planter must aim to evangelise and disciple men and their families if the church is to have a strong foundation. Early in his ministry the church planter or leader must begin one-on-one discipleship of key men in the church. Typically, working men who are married are the best candidates for church leadership.

If the church planter is following the advice (cf. 5.4.2) to teach the biblical *Didache* elements to the whole church, then this will naturally lead to instruction from the Pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) on how God wants his household ordered. The congregation must then be taught about the noble task of eldership in the church, along with the biblical requirements (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). This teaches the church what to look for in leaders. If the church planter is faithfully shepherding and nurturing this flock (cf. 5.4), he can expect that leaders will begin to emerge.

5.5.2 Train suitable and willing candidates for eldership

The faithful church planter will already have a plan in place the moment he begins to recognise potential leaders among the flock. Before starting formal meetings with such men, the church planter should begin taking them along with him in ministry (e.g., house visits, counselling, hospital visits, evangelism, sermon preparation, etc.) The vital role of training by modelling was already emphasised in 5.4.2. Like Joshua with Moses, the disciples with Jesus, and Timothy with Paul, the wise church planter will have key men shadow him in every aspect of ministry. As they prove faithful, he must give them opportunities to share in the ministry and to take responsibility (cf. 5.5.3). He must observe how they handle failure, and how they perform under pressure. He must spend time in their homes to see how they treat their wives and children. He must verify their desire and giftedness that reflect a genuine call to the ministry of eldership. This is why pastoral training through correspondence studies is often inadequate, unless the student attends a strong church that can provide mentoring.

When candidates for eldership have been identified, the church planter may want to invite those who are willing to join in an in-depth men's Bible study of the passages on eldership. Each participant must humbly examine himself in light of Scripture. It must be emphasised that a shepherding role in the church is a *privilege*, not a *right*. It is not necessarily a permanent calling. One must never claim that they deserve to be an elder based on age, status, theological training, or any other criteria. God may even providentially unqualify someone through unavoidable limitations such as physical, family, or financial concerns. Whether or not the man is at fault, he must have the humility to withdraw from the elder board at that time, at least for an appropriate period.

Excellent study tools are available for training elders. New materials don't necessarily need to be reinvented, but can be applied and adapted to each situation. *The Master's Plan for the Church*, by John MacArthur (1991) lays a helpful foundation for any church member and especially all potential elders and deacons and deaconesses. *Biblical Eldership* (1995) and the accompanying workbooks for mentoring eldership candidates (1996), both by Alexander Strauch, are excellent and proven curriculum for developing elders. Joel James (2003) also has a helpful workbook called *Elders Ordination Study Manual*, which succinctly summarizes all of the key doctrines and verses the men should know in order to be "able to teach" and refute error (1 Tim. 3:2b; Titus 1:9). Joining a team of elders who pastor the church does *not* require formal theological training, but neither is it a task for men who are untrained in the Word. A candidate for eldership must prove that he is "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:7, 9).

The church planter must show that God intends for his church to be led, not merely by one professional pastor, but by a plurality of godly, equipped elders (cf. Acts 20:17-35; Jam. 5:14). Leadership training must first address *all potential elders*, regardless of distinctions that may arise later between lay (non-staff, non-paid) elders and staff, vocational elders, who are typically called "pastors" in today's vernacular. The whole church and the potential elders must see that, biblically speaking, there is *no distinction* between the terms "pastor," "elder," and "overseer" (cf. Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Pet. 5:1-3 where all three terms are used interchangeably for the same person and office).

5.5.3 Patiently instruct and warn unqualified elders (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

Whenever the church planter or leader instructs men about biblical eldership, all existing elders or elder-like church leaders should be asked to join the Bible study. For those elders who are already qualified, this will help to equip them further. For those elders who are unqualified or disqualified but are entrenched, pray that God uses His Word to convict them to make changes or withdraw from the eldership. If they are unwilling, the church planter or leader must approach this misplaced elder and plead with him to step down. If he is unwilling, some or all of the church leadership must be informed and must also urge this unqualified elder to step down. If the church planter has no other leaders yet, he must appeal to the mother church for help in confronting this man. If the man remains unwilling, the full process of church discipline will probably have to be pursued. These tough situations must be dealt with using much case-by-case wisdom, with the ongoing counsel of a good mother church or other capable advisors.

5.5.4 Use on-the-job training

The biblical basis for church-based, in-service pastoral training was developed in 4.3.2. Five functions of developing elders and pastors were listed, each of which *must happen at the local church level*. With the

BUSA's two main training colleges existing as separate institutions that are not based at a model church, there is a greater risk of ineffective training. The BUSA would do well to channel many aspects of pastoral training back into strong local churches that can train students in the milieu of real ministry.

David Garrison (1999), a keen observer of dynamic church planting movements, gives timely advice that is worth quoting at length:

With the rapid increase in the number of churches, effective leadership training is critical to the success of the movement. If new church leaders have to leave their churches for extended periods for theological training, the momentum of the movement will be diminished. At the same time, this vital component of church growth must not be overlooked. The most beneficial training brings education as close to the action as possible.

The forms of this on-the-job training vary from field to field, but typically include a series of short-term training modules that do not impede the primary tasks of evangelism, church planting and pastoral leadership. Missionaries also attest to the importance of ongoing leadership training for the continued growth and strong development of a Church Planting Movement.

Craig Ott (2004) adds this wise counsel:

I personally don't think the answer [to improving church plants] is to slow church growth when God is moving. But rather considerable care must be given to equipping leaders in non-traditional ways that can maintain pace with the church growth. Much of the effort has gone into very traditional approaches to theological education that is just not accessible to many who need it most.

This kind of pastoral training has been a distinctive of Christ Seminary from its inception in 1997. Due to the foresight of Revs. Coertze and Venter, church-based theological training is offered in nine-day modules during ten months of the year. The rest of the time the students are serving in their local churches and in mission outreach. Each lecturer at Christ Seminary is also active in pastoral ministry and mission, mostly at Christ Baptist Church. The training is not merely a break from or a preparation for church planting and ministry. Instead, the training is *permeated* by the daily pressures and questions that arise from being *in real ministry and mission* while studying.

More leaders in missions are becoming convinced of the superiority of this kind of training over traditional, residential models (cf. Winter, 2003:10; Van Rheeën, 2000:46-47). In fact, the church-based, on-the-job approach to pastoral training is the most traditional, classic approach. Deuel (2002) notes, "Throughout history, pastors have learned the practical ministry skills essential to shepherding a flock by working alongside of a supervising pastor." The art of apprenticing must be restored to pastoral training.

Two recent studies in Africa serve to prove this point further:

(1) Stamoolis (2001:489, citing Parsons) cites a study by a missionary agency on pastoral training in Africa. They surveyed six hundred pastors who had studied at 11 institutions. Their bottom line results are frightening: "The training made little difference in the quality or depth of teaching of the pastors. They taught and preached nearly the same as they had before their training." But

Stamoolis then goes on to explain the one exception – the modular approach, with heavy mentoring on the field and in-service training.

(2) Coon (2003:17) conducted an extensive survey of 643 students in eleven good, evangelical Bible schools in East Africa in 1994. To his dismay, he discovered:

Only 4% of the adult church attenders were involved in some kind of Bible teaching group. But in one area where many churches were led by lay elders who had attended special training at a training center for church leading elders, 20% of the people (youth & adults) are in a Bible study. ... A conclusion of the survey was to recommend that standard four-year Bible Schools consider adopting the Bible training center model for first year Bible School curriculum. All pastoral training should be more actively monitored with a focus on the educational outcomes in the lives of the students and the health of their churches.

Another in-depth case study in rural church planting in Honduras revealed this same critical need for pastor trainers to view not only their students but their students' churches during the whole educational process (Patterson, 1999:600). For churches in Africa to see stronger churches, we must heed such case studies and offer more quality, in-service training to the leaders of the young churches.

A top Christian educator, Howard Hendricks (1996:54-55), affirms that it is not mere involvement, experience, and practice that transform students. It is well-supervised involvement, properly evaluated experience, and the right kind of practice that bring lasting results in a student. This highlights all the more need for mentoring theological students in good churches, not just keeping them busy in any available ministry.

5.5.5 Give intensive training to those especially gifted to pastor

First Timothy 5:17-18 implies that there will be some elders who focus more heavily on "preaching and teaching," for which they should receive financial support from the flock. It is this distinction that makes it permissible, and advisable, for a church to recognise an elder or elders who are especially gifted for a full-time role in pastoring a church. Such men have historically been prime candidates for more extensive theological training. This is the kind of man the church should consider supporting and encouraging, where possible, to pursue further studies at a reliable school or church-based training centre. There are exegetical and expository skills that a pastor could learn at home, especially if he has access to a strong mother church. But in many cases, these skills will only be learned through the shared efforts of many churches (or a denomination) pooling their resources and hiring skilled teachers and mentors to train their pastors.

Effective theological training always begins with *screening and selecting the right candidates*. This is surely a constant challenge for all three of the BUSA schools at present, just as it is across Africa. In an article entitled, "What's Wrong with 4,000 Pastoral Training Schools Worldwide?," Ralph Winter (2003:10) speaks with painful accuracy:

The most severe problem is the simple fact that 90% of the students in pastoral training are not the seasoned, mature believers defined by the New Testament as candidates for pastoral leadership. [In most seminaries and Bible colleges worldwide], the vast majority of the students will never be effective pastors, no matter what or how or where they are taught, simply because they may lack pastoral gifts, and at their age and level of maturity there is no way to predict that they will ever gain the essential gifts and maturity.

This is why seminaries must work in a much closer partnership with the local churches to recognise qualified men and send them with their full blessing.

Another concern about the pastoral training in some schools in Africa is the *under-emphasis on producing sound expositors of the Word*. Too often expository preaching is treated as merely one of many equally important skills for the pastor. There is the mistaken notion that other subjects like youth ministry or missions' techniques stand in a parallel relationship to theology and exposition. One African, Baptist theological school in 2003 only required their students to take *one semester* of expository preaching in their entire four-year program. But as has been noted often in this thesis (cf. 4.2.2.1, etc.), for the apostle Paul the preaching and teaching of the Word was not just one of many methods for shepherding the church. It is *the* method. From it all other ministries flow. Recall the purpose statement of one thriving church: "Our central ministry is the continuous imparting of biblical truth to the people of God that they may know God and serve Him in worship and ministry" (cf. 4.2.3, footnote #9).

This is why Christ Seminary in Polokwane requires students to take a preaching class *every* semester of the four-year program. This gives them eight semesters of studying and practicing expository preaching before they graduate. They must produce complete exegetical study notes and a preaching manuscript every session (which equals ten times each year), and must preach at least thirteen sermons in a preaching lab setting before they graduate. Like most ministry skills, sound exegesis and exposition are caught as much as taught. Students must be able to 'look over the shoulder' as their teacher demonstrates how to take apart a passage of Scripture and then put it together again. If a student cannot handle the Word of God with accuracy and clarity, no amount of other ministry skills will compensate.

If a top goal of pastoral training is to produce men who have strong convictions and who are clear biblical preachers, it is puzzling to see the trend toward a more *passive, suggestive style of teaching*. On quite a few occasions, the researcher has heard other educators in South Africa say that the goal of seminary training should be to expose the students to different viewpoints, and then let them decide for themselves which they will adopt. Yet it is striking to note the very *active* words the apostle Paul uses for his philosophy of education. He does not instruct Timothy to merely share or discuss certain ideas, but to "entrust [deposit, commit] these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Constant dialogue about competing views does not produce men with strong convictions who can confidently teach others. Paul's told Titus what his teaching style should be: "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority" (2:15).

Pastoral trainers must have the humility to admit when a Scripture passage is difficult or an issue is not clear-cut. Healthy debate and discussion should be welcomed in the classroom as long there is an attitude of submission to Scripture. Yet the teacher's main task is clear: he must model for the students what they must in turn do in their churches—teaching the authoritative Word of God. They cannot effectively shepherd their flock by merely offering a menu of foods to select from. God has called the pastor, and the trainers of pastors, to *entrust* the truth to others so that they are well fed, and can grow and feed others.

WANTED: Pastors who teach and equip, not just evangelise (Hesselgrave, 2000a:286)

In central Africa missionaries and national leaders in a denomination numbering thirty thousand came to a rather rude awakening some years ago. Hundreds of people were making confession of faith and being baptised. Numerous churches were being planted in villages large and small. Amidst the apparent success, however, one great problem persisted despite efforts to solve it. Members were leaving the churches almost as fast as new ones were joining. Changes in local church programs and leadership personnel had little or no effect. Finally, the primary factor became apparent. The training institution for Christian workers was preparing evangelists, those who could gather crowds, preach the gospel, win the lost, and (in some cases) start churches. But it was not training workers who could manage the church, build up believers in the faith, and minister to families in turmoil. The curriculum and practical assignments were then modified. Institutes were held for those in ministry. Gradually the local churches began to stabilize.

Preach the Word!

On the day of judgment preachers will not be asked where they went to seminary or whether they earned advanced degrees. They will not need to present membership statistics or submit their annual budgets. It is not a matter of how popular they were or whether they could make people laugh. Instead, when they stand before the heavenly tribunal they will be asked, 'Did you preach the Word?' Those who followed their own agenda—or even worse, the world's agenda—will hang their heads in shame. But many humble preachers, who were held in little esteem, will shine in the brightness of their Father's glory. For in their proclamation of God's Word they were faithful to the very end. Their preaching was evangelical, doctrinal and practical. Their Lord will say to them, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!' (Matt. 25:23) (Ryken, 2003:52-53).

The primary task of the pastor is to be a minister of the Word. I am also convinced that such a ministry is what the church is in desperate need of today. Rather than preparing men and women to be ministers of the church, ministers of youth, ministers of counseling, ministers of outreach, and even ministers of Christian education, as indispensable as these all are, the primary task of seminary education should be to prepare ministers of the Word... [He concludes that the anemia of the church today] is not a lack of ministers but a dearth of ministers of the Word (Guelich, 1983:2).

5.5.6 Restore a process of public recognition or ordination for elders/pastors

Black BUSA churches seem rarely to have any sort of process for publicly recognising new elders and pastors. Part of this has been an unintended consequence of the BUSA's decision to stop doing denominational ordinations and to only have a ministerial recognition list. Some churches now assume that if a pastor passes BUSA approval and makes it onto the list, then he is approved by God and is qualified to shepherd their flock.

This bypasses of God's design for a mature, autonomous local church to recognise publicly and affirm their own elders and pastors through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 5:22, etc.). Restoring an ordination process to the local church could greatly help awaken churches to their calling as the primary venue for training the

next generation leaders. It could help remind churches that they cannot abdicate their role in pastoral training to the seminaries and colleges.

5.5.7 Train more bi-vocational pastors and church planters

This topic has been touched on already in previous sections, and resources were recommended. But a few further comments seem necessary. Thankfully, the BUSA and its seminaries are starting to take note of the dire need to graduate pastors and church planters that are mobile and that don't expect a fully paid position in a church. Rev. Scheepers, the BUSA General Secretary, often mentions his burden to see a renewed emphasis on bi-vocational pastors and church planters. Christ Seminary also has a growing burden for this as we observe graduates that are shackled by financial dependency and churches that are crippled by a 'we-can't-grow-until-we-can-pay-a-pastor' mentality.

Due to the modular system used at Christ Seminary, most students cannot hold a regular job. Some have given up their jobs to come and study. The modular approach to training is all the more reason why students must learn an entrepreneurial, tentmaking skill so they can provide for their family during the 21 days each month when they are not in classes. Plus, this will equip them to stay longer to develop and strengthen their young churches toward financial viability. Or for some who will go into church planting, tentmaking skills will be essential for being mobile and self-supporting, as was the Apostle Paul. McQuilken (1999) writes:

While we may encourage nationals to give sacrificially to support their own, we must avoid communicating that professional pastors and missionaries are the only, or even the best, way to reach the world for Christ. One of the greatest missionary movements in the church's history was initiated by Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, who achieved a ratio of one missionary to every 12 communicant members. Eventually they had three members on the mission field for every one at home. They did this by developing creative ways of generating partial to full self-support; in modern jargon, they became tentmakers.

Codrington (2003b:42) points out that unemployment and joblessness is *the* most pressing issue in the church today, based on recent surveys. The church must rise to the occasion with creative solutions for both pastor and members to become more productive in society, as God created them to be.

5.5.8 Identify and train deacons and deaconesses as servant-leaders in the church

While developing qualified elders for a church, one must not forget God's other appointed and essential office in the church: deacons and deaconesses (1 Tim 3:8-13). As with elders, the church planter must give careful biblical instruction to the whole church on the role and function of deacons. The church can then know what to be aspiring to and looking for. Alexander Strauch (1993) offers a helpful tool on this, entitled *New Testament Deacons: Ministers of Mercy* (followed by an accompanying study guide, 1995). If ever there was a time that the African church needed servant leaders who will care for the sick and dying and

orphaned, it is now! Perhaps some of the accusations that Baptists are not engaged enough in society have come because churches are not truly unleashing a deacon force as they should.

5.5.9 Summary from Van Rheezen

Van Rheezen's summary (1996:174, 147, 187) follows perfectly on the heels of sections 5.3-5.5. He affirms this evangelising-establishing-entrusting strategy for building mature churches in Africa:

It is sad that frequently, whenever missionaries fail to prioritise the essential tasks of missions, little is left after they depart (emphasis his). Teaching English or literacy, digging water wells or treating physical bodies, instructing students in schools or camps, while expressing the compassion of God and opening doors for gospel proclamation, do not in themselves lead to the development of churches. ...the church must prioritise and intentionally do the major tasks of missions: planting churches through evangelism, nurturing new Christians to maturity, and training leaders to continue the process of planting churches, nurturing new Christians, and training still other leaders as the church matures and reproduces (emphasis mine). ... While other mission tasks may amplify these three central tasks, a strong movement of God cannot come into being without their accomplishment. ... The goal of missions is not social work or evangelism but the establishment of indigenous churches. Only indigenous churches, rooted in their cultures, will be able to accomplish effective social and evangelistic ministries (also citing M. Hodges).

With his wealth of church planting experience in rural Africa, Van Rheezen (1996:180) goes on to suggest a model scenario for carrying out this process in a pioneer situation:

[The aim is to establish] spiritually vibrant and germinally reproductive churches. ... The focus of missionaries and national leaders *during the first ten years* is on developing cohesive churches that, in turn, plant other churches. ... During the early years, much training is done informally as the missionary and mature local Christians model the doing of Christianity in their non-Christian context. The concepts of the Christian faith are intentionally taught, first through congregationally based Bible courses and later in small, yet appropriate Christian institutions overseen by national leaders. Over a period of years the missionaries make a transition from training evangelists and equipping young Christians to becoming trainers of leaders. Finally they begin to phase out their involvement to initiate another Christian movement. When beginnings are slow (because missionaries begin as learners), the Christian movement gains momentum because people were intentionally taught, Christians were nurtured, and leaders were trained in ways suitable to their culture.

5.6 Confirmation and illustration

It has been demonstrated throughout this thesis that the validity of the biblical, Pauline pattern for church-building is attested not only in Scripture but also in the testimonies of accomplished missionaries. In order to reinforce these vital principles and suggested strategies, the researcher will highlight a few other insights and success stories from the mission field:

- When Tom Steffen (1997:13) arrived in the **Philippines**, his mission agency had been there almost 40 years and worked with 19 different tribal groups, yet only *one church* had been successfully phased out as a mature local church. "Why? Because neither the mission agency nor the church planters started

with a clear definition of and plan for phase-out (1997:13).” Steffen (1997:16, 219) states, “Paul [the apostle] believed in responsible disengagement... Knowing when to leave a church plant is just as important as knowing when to begin it.” During his years of effective church planting in the Philippines, Steffen (1997:217-218) devised the following *ten principles for successfully passing the baton*.

1. Build deep relationships
2. Make sure believers share the vision
3. Model ministry before requiring others to take it over
4. Organize to disperse power
5. Call for ministry involvement immediately
6. Expect mistakes
7. Believe in God’s people
8. Announce departure plans discreetly
9. Plan programmed absences
10. Expect the ministry to increase after departure

- Returning to Van Rhee (2000:46) and his legacy among the Kipsigis in **Kenya**:

It has been a joy to see the church of Christ in Kipsigis grow during the past few years without missionary involvement. Recently, while visiting Kipsigis, I journeyed by public service vehicle and foot to an area where I had ministered many years before. During the time that I was a missionary in this area, the church was weak. I had worked with national evangelists to start one church that, in turn, established a second. Now, 12 years later, there are 10 much larger churches in this particular area. A crowd of 489 gathered for the Sunday morning service, and 120 vocational preachers ministering in these churches attended the Sunday afternoon evangelist’s meeting. I stood amazed at their mature faith in God, in-depth knowledge of the Bible, and incisive plans for ministry. I could only say, “Praise God. May he use the Kipsigis churches as missions-sending and missions-mobilizing churches!”

- George Patterson (1999:603-605) tells the story of failures and successes in church planting in

Honduras:

Beware of the bad strategy of a mother church sending workers to several daughter churches at once, as though she were the only church with God’s reproductive power. The “hub” strategy wears out the workers and discourages the mother church. God’s power, inherent in all churches in which His Spirit dwells, enables a mother church to start a daughter church and train its new elders to help it develop and reproduce in granddaughter churches. Just disciple the disciplers and watch it happen!

Patterson goes on to show how they began in 1970 with four mother churches. By encouraging these churches to not spread themselves too thin but to properly plant a few daughter churches, it appears that God did a mighty work in the daughter and granddaughter churches. By 1979, there were 64 churches with over 2,000 baptised members in total!

- Out of **Zambia** has come a remarkable story of God’s hand at work in an indigenous movement of Reformed Baptist churches. Their leading figure has been Rev. Conrad Mbewe, often referred to as the “Spurgeon of Africa,” even in a recent international news magazine (Abraham, 2003). He has earned this title because of his effective and earnest biblical preaching, along with his tireless labours and productivity. Since Mbewe was unavailable, the researcher spoke with another founding member of this movement, Rev. Ronald Kalifungwa (2004) who is now pastoring in South Africa. In the 1980s a

number of students were attending the University of Lusaka when God moved mightily among them. On their own they began to meet for Bible study and to devour the sermons of Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd Jones, and the Puritans. Many of these students attended Lusaka Baptist Church.

In 1987 Lusaka Baptist launched an urban outreach that led to the planting of four daughter churches in strategic urban areas. Within five years, 10 urban churches had been planted. Today there are now 23 churches that have been planted, 12 of them being granddaughter churches. *All of these churches are healthy, stable, growing congregations.* Almost all of them have at least one biblically qualified elder shepherding the church. On average they take about five years to develop other qualified elders in new churches.

Their common strategy has been for the mother church to send out a church planter who was already a proven, godly man with a professional background and university training. They send to him to a strategic urban centre that can be the basis for other church plants once it matures. The mother church supports the man and his family (sometimes with temporary, minor assistance from outside sources also). In other cases, instead of sending a man, God has providentially relocated members from a mother church to other urban areas because of their vocations. They have then begun to congregate, evangelise and invite others in the community, and start a church led initially by lay leadership.

Most of the 23 churches already have a building or are in the process of building. The only foreign funding involved has been a few capital loans that are soon paid back. These Reformed Baptist churches also use radio and TV outlets to proclaim the gospel, do Bible teaching, and advertise their churches. Rev. Mbewe has been writing a column in a national newspaper twice weekly for the last 10 years in which he expounds the Word and addresses popular social issues.

Now that these urban, English-speaking churches are becoming well established, most of them have begun to start vernacular churches in the cities. They believe this will be the best springboard for reaching the rural areas.

What is most impressive about these Zambian churches is not the church planting figures [or "statistics"], but the lives of the members. The researcher knows some who were disciplined in that movement, and their spiritual maturity is evident in their lives and families. One visitor to the annual conference of these churches wrote:

I can say without hesitation that these churches are the best African churches I've seen. ... They certainly aren't perfect (one church was resolving a significant battle on the elder board while I was there), but in theology, wisdom, and missionary zeal they far excel any other black churches I've seen. ... I was very impressed with the stability and level of theological knowledge among both the pastors and church members. Thankfully, in spite of their family-like unity and exclusive theological commitments their movement has not become introverted. They have a strong

missionary spirit as evidenced in their church planting reports on the Wednesday afternoon of the conference (James, 2003).

Obviously, the scene in Zambia is dramatically different from South Africa. They are poorer and have far less infrastructure, *but* they are thirty years further down the road from colonialism. Africans there also seem to have had much better opportunities educationally. Economically, many of these church plants benefit from being in the urban, copper belt areas where there is good employment. Despite the contrasts, these dynamic Reformed Baptist churches reflect a God-centredness and a Scripture-saturation that must and can be imitated under any conditions. Any approach to African church planting that is producing nearly 100% healthy churches, versus the estimated 20% of BUSA church plants, surely merits our attention.

After his years of being in South Africa, Kalifungwa observes that South African black Baptist churches are in dismal state in comparison with Zambia. Due to various factors, black Baptist churches in South Africa generally do not seem to have Christians who know how to carefully read their Bibles and think biblically. A major cause of this, he says, is the failure to reach educated, emerging black leaders in urban areas, and to develop them into the Luthers and Calvins and Mbewes of tomorrow. Around such leaders strong churches will rise and cause renewal to sweep across the land.

5.7 Further needs and suggestions for strengthening churches across Africa

An underlying assumption throughout this thesis has been that the condition of young BUSA churches is in many ways *a microcosm of the overall condition of the church and church planting in Africa*. Chapter 1 already exposed the nominalism and syncretism that has infected many branches of the African church. But it would help to look at some of the other, broader needs in churches across Africa. This can also be done along the lines of the African church's *evangelism*, its *establishing* of churches, and its *entrusting* of leadership.

5.7.1 Evangelism in African churches

If the BUSA needs to improve in *evangelism*, so does the church throughout Africa where thousands of 'decisions' for Christ are made every day yet few disciples are being made⁷. Many of those who would claim to be a part of the church in Africa are actually far from what the Bible calls a Christian. It is common knowledge that Africa is filled with professing Christians who are unsaved 'believers' who do not know the true gospel or have not responding with genuine saving faith. Many sit under false teaching in non-evangelical churches like most Catholic churches, liberal and ecumenical mainline churches, and syncretistic

⁷ G. Schwartz (2003b): "Anyone who built a building with foundations that crumbled after a year or two was not considered to be a good builder. But many missionaries were not equally disturbed that, at one point in time, some churches in Central Africa were losing by attrition more than 80% of the 'converts' being baptized each year. What kind of church building was that?"

African Independent Churches (AICs). For example, Johnstone (2001:72) reports how 62% of Angola's Christians are Catholic; and out of the "95% Christian" Congo, 44% are Catholic and 22% are in AICs. In total, Johnstone (2001:19-21) estimates that 118 million of Africa's professing Christians are Catholic and 78 million are in AIC churches. That means over half of Christendom in Africa is outside the circle of evangelical convictions.

Many theologians in Africa try to deny that a false gospel is being taught in AIC churches. One leading example is UNISA scholar Anderson (2000:262-263), who draws this conclusion after his extensive field research on AICs:

...the predominant idea on the subject of salvation in the minds of most Zionist and Apostolic church members was that they were 'saved' because they had left 'sinful things', had been baptised and were attending church. ... These differences, however, probably stemmed from different emphases in these churches rather than from a differing theology.

Anderson (2000:263) says the only difference is that "Western Evangelical theology" has tainted one group more than the other.

Despite all the numbers and activity in African churches, too often spiritually dead ministers are pastoring dead flocks. Professing believers attend evangelical churches too, but the gospel has never penetrated past a veneer surface. De Visser (2001) powerfully illustrates this through his extensive field research on the understanding of Christ's lordship in the lives of South African township believers. As De Visser's survey results prove (2001:177-182), many African 'Christians' only come to Jesus for deliverance from physical ills and fears, not for forgiveness of sin against a holy God. De Visser concludes (2001:236):

Generally speaking, ...the Person of the living Lord is a remote figure in the faith of Christians in Soshanguve [a major township]. This gap is filled in various ways: the laws of the church, the leadership of the church, ceremonies performed by the church, even (a distorted view of) the Holy Spirit. In many cases the church itself stands in the way of an unhindered view of and communion with the living Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Another area of great need in evangelism in Africa today is for effective urban church planting. Johnstone (2001:28) points out that the urban population in Africa has risen from 130 million in 1990 to as much as 240 million in 2000. With this shift have come many of the social ills that accompany urbanisation. African churches must reach their cities for Christ!

5.7.2 Establishing in African churches

Just as the BUSA needs to better establish and nurture young churches, so it is with churches throughout Africa. There is reason for the common saying, 'African Christianity is a mile wide and an inch deep'. One veteran missionary has said, 'Africa is America's theological dumping ground.' Many of the unbiblical

ideas that are churned out in Western churches and seminaries end up devastating African churches through missionaries and through nationals who study abroad and return.

Africa has proven to be a fertile breeding ground for the charismatic movement with its excesses. Pentecostal types of churches are some of the fastest growing (McCain, 2000:111-113; Jenkins, 2002:68-69). Despite the many strengths of the movement, in many parts of Africa being “saved” is almost synonymous with being a charismatic who is driven more by experience than Scripture. Gifford (qtd. in Shaw, 1996:287) says the prosperity gospel of health and wealth is “central to many, probably most” of Africa’s charismatic churches. Their emphasis is on a “private experience” of Christ’s kingdom right now and on bringing heaven to earth through powerful signs and wonders (Shaw, 1996:287; cf. Jenkins, 2002:77-78). Only patient and thorough biblical instruction will stabilise African believers swept up in the charismatic movement. But it can happen, as the researcher has seen in well-taught African churches where believers are being grounded in the Word.

Pentecostalism found its entrance into Africa through the Zionist movement in South Africa in the 1920s (McCain, 2000:110). Today, the only other churches growing as fast or faster than the charismatic churches are their close cousins, the AIC and Zionist churches (Jenkins, 2002:68-69). Anderson’s survey findings among Pentecostals and Zionist/Apostolic churches in South Africa unintentionally reveal the root problem. The editors (2000:xx-xxi) write this in the preface to Anderson’s book:

Significant... is his emphasis on *experience* as the operative word for a characterisation of African spirituality. This emphasis is ...justified with reference to the recognition in modern theology that ‘experience is an authentic source of divine revelation,’ and convincingly used as a distinction between ‘classical’ and indigenous Pentecostalism. To the latter, ‘*experience* of the working of the Holy Spirit and the *practice* of ‘spiritual gifts’ are of greater importance than the *doctrine* of the ‘initial evidence’ of speaking in tongues, which defines ‘classic Pentecostals’. ...He [Anderson] has no hesitation in claiming that ‘Pentecostal and Zionist churches have now become *the* major force to be reckoned with in Southern African Christianity.’ The main strength of this family of churches ...is said to be their ability to adapt to and fulfil African religious aspirations’ (*italics mine*).

As Anderson writes (2000:18), “The great attraction of many new forms of African Christian spirituality is that they claim to provide answers to existential problems”. But this sounds like exactly what Paul warns against in 2 Tim. 4:3-4: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

A common thread running through these fast-growing AIC and Zionist churches is that they are led more by ‘prophets’ with visions, than by preachers and teachers of the Bible. They are founded more upon personal revelations than upon Scriptural revelation. Shaw (1996:245-250) shows this pattern in his history of four of the most influential founders of AIC movements: Shembe, Kimbangu, Harris, and the Aladura—all spoke of personal, extra-biblical visions that launched their new church movements. The same is said of the

Lekganyanes who founded Zion Christian Church, the largest AIC group in Southern Africa (if not the largest across Africa) (Jenkins, 2002:52). A recent *Christian History* (August 2003) magazine disappointingly portrays many of these same AIC leaders as orthodox Christian preachers who have supposedly brought great advances for the gospel in Africa.

Colossians 2:18 (among many other texts), however, warns Christians to not be defrauded of their prize by false teachers who take their stand on personal visions, who are self-inflated, and who specialise in a self-made, ascetic religion. This passage sounds dangerously similar to the AICs sweeping across Africa. Millions in these movements are hungry for the truth and are in dire need of being liberated from deception and false hopes through a true understanding of God's Word⁸. Jackman (2003) writes, "...faithful, relevant, applied biblical teaching and preaching is arguably the greatest need of local congregations across Africa".

The cry has never been more urgent for pastoral training, for in-depth discipling and equipping that brings discernment, for every member ministry, for healthy churches, for biblical counselling centres, for solid Christian universities, and much more. May God use His word to capture the heart of a few Martin Luthers from deep inside of the AIC movements and the charismatic and Catholic movements. May Mbeki's "African renaissance" of today be followed by an African reformation tomorrow!

5.7.3 Entrusting of leadership in African churches

Just as the BUSA needs to improve in *entrusting* church leadership into qualified hands, so many other African churches and denominations face this need. Johnstone (2001:24) identifies leadership training as "the critical bottleneck" in the African church. Buys (2000:15, 16, 21) describes this plight:

In many African countries churches have an average of only one trained pastor for every 20 churches. A pastor from Uganda sitting next to me told us that his denomination has 1,000 congregations but only 8 trained pastors. Another one from [a Zambian denomination] told us they have 675 churches with only 31 trained pastors.... The outcome of the lack of basically trained pastors is nominality, heresies, and syncretism.... Theological education is now the highest priority in all mission work in fulfillment of the second part of the great commission, '...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' ...I am also convinced more than ever that the harvest is so ripe in Africa that a lack of vision and commitment to do everything in our power to accelerate the training of more harvesters will be a grave sin and grossly grieve the Holy Spirit.

Mabuela of Soweto (2001:2) asks, "Where is the pastoral leadership pool to keep pace with the 300-350 new churches being planted in Africa every week?" This same newsletter goes on to say (2001:1):

Everything is growing in Africa. The church is growing. But, so are crime, loneliness, corruption and AIDS. What sort of a church are we planting if it does not impact society? ...Just about anyone can plant a church in Africa. Evangelism and church planting is happening on a mass scale. We may have churches within walking distance of every people group in Zimbabwe, but, and that little

⁸ One such example of skilful Bible teaching applied to the questions of African Christians is a book by Ferdinando (1999) on Christ's triumph over demonic spirits. But it comes from academia, so much more needs to be written on such topics as this for a popular readership.

word 'but' changes everything. Let's ask ourselves, 'But, what kind of church are we planting? Is it a healthy church?'

The diagnosis of P. Kohls below deserves to be quoted at length:

P. Kohls, "A Look at Church Leadership in Africa" (1998)

The Christian Church in Africa is facing a major crisis. The way we deal with it will determine the part that Christians play in the Africa of tomorrow. We are not training a ministry that can meet the needs of Africa today. The church has failed to keep pace with the social revolution which it helped create...

Understandably, Underhill comments, 'almost everywhere the flock is too large for the minister to serve adequately' (1975, 242). Meanwhile the church marches on growing by leaps and bounds. But the underside of this dynamic growth that is lacking an adequate leadership is underscored by France (1978) who characterises the church as a credulous church,

wide open to any appealing new teaching which can quote a biblical verse or a miraculous cure in its support. It needs teaching and direction, from within, not from outside. It needs theology, its own African, Christian theology. Until it has it, while it may continue to grow in numbers, it will not grow in influence on the new Africa, it will be increasingly dismissed as a hangover from the colonial past (1978, 149).

Talitwala (1987) warns that the high growth rate in church membership, accompanied by a scarcity of trained Christian leaders, will lead to problems within the church of secularism, syncretism and fragmentation of the church.

... If the church should fail to hold the confidence and respect of its educated membership, particularly its youth, this will contribute to its eventual death as a vital part of African society. It will not be able to recruit capable leadership, either for its trained clergy or among its trained laity. Neither will it be capable of further development as an indigenous African institution... The future strength of the Church in Africa depends greatly upon the Church's ability to produce for itself a highly-trained, capable leadership (cf. Owen 1965, 7-8).

While the need in Africa for trained pastors is great, the moral-spiritual standard demanded in the Scriptures (I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9) cannot be relaxed for pragmatic reasons. True men of God, full of the Holy Spirit, are desperately needed; men, conscious of God's call, and acknowledged to have the requisite gifts for ministry by the people of God... Pastors must recognise that their primary task is as a teacher and preacher of the Word of God and they must be educated to have a servant spirit...

In terms of training for the ministry, the emphasis must be on biblical exegesis as applied to the African milieu. The need is for pastors to be able to both accurately and convincingly preach the Word, for there is need for both instruction and exhortation. When more pastor-leaders can preach like the Apostle Paul—not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (I Thess. 1:5)—then, by God's grace, the spiritual face of Africa, qualitatively and quantitatively, will be that much more transformed.

Johnstone (2001:25) echoes this concern for evangelical theologians in Africa to lead the way in offering biblical answers to Africa's agonies. Gehman (1987:116) has pointed out, "Evangelicals took the initiative in planting the Christian church in Africa... But it is generally acknowledged today that liberals have taken the initiative in theologising... The big question for evangelicals is this: How can we recapture the initiative in theological reflection in the African context?"

One tool that the researcher plans to start using for developing and motivating church leaders in Africa is to present biographical papers of great African Christians. This could be done at annual pastors' conferences and in other church meetings. Telling the story of 'Heroes of the Gospel in Africa' can be a powerful tool for teaching biblical principles and illustrating their application in Africa.

In concluding this section on the wider needs in the African church (5.7.1-5.7.3), *two other cautions* must be added. Both of these are typical carry-overs from American evangelicalism. First, some evangelical leaders in Africa show ecumenical tendencies, particularly toward Roman Catholics. A key leader, seminary lecturer, and writer in West Africa, Turaki (2001b:206), speaks of uniting with Catholics and AICs as "Christians" to "resolve issues" regarding Christian influence in Nigerian academia and society. An influential lecturer and writer in East Africa, Shaw (1996:284) openly endorses the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document from the USA and says he wishes for more of this in Africa. Evangelical leaders like Turaki and Shaw have been a great asset to the African church. But ecumenicism will be a dangerous road if evangelicals in Africa choose to walk down it. Unity at the expense of truth is not God's definition of unity and will only weaken African churches in the long run.

A second caution for the African church is in the pivotal area of hermeneutics. Like the West, Africa is also facing assaults on the literal-grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture. One example of this is the twice-yearly publication *Booknotes for Africa*, which offers fascinating book reviews on the latest Africa-related Christian publications. But the researcher finds there an alarming number of books (both Catholic and Protestant) trying to find new meanings in Scripture by reinterpreting the Bible through African eyes. Another important publication for African church leaders, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (AJET), recently ran an article called "Cultural Exegesis" where the author openly questions the grammatical-historical method and asserts that the meaning of a text lies not only in the author's intention but also in the response of the reader in his own culture (Wildsmith, 2002:199-209). *AJET* is a fine resource and an exciting trend in the African church; but they must stand firm against these subtle currents that can pull us away from faithfulness to the Word of God.

In the name of contextualisation and accommodation, some African theologians force Scripture to adapt to culture (just as with the church growth trends mentioned in 4.3.1.3). The whole drive to have an "African" theology can be dangerous—just as dangerous as attempting an "American" or "Asian" theology where the modern context governs the biblical text. The yearning of African church leaders to do theology in and for the African context is understandable and commendable. But what Africa needs most is not its own theology; rather, it needs God's Word faithfully expounded and applied.

5.8 Conclusions

In order for the gospel to steadily advance through the BUSA or any churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches.

In summary form, here are the strategies that are strongly recommended and sorely needed in Africa's churches:

- Denominations and mother churches must be gripped by their biblical mandate and must take responsibility for the unfinished business of building up new churches to maturity.
- Denominations and mission groups should mobilise mother churches and church planters to strengthen weak daughter churches. Other key Antioch-type churches must be identified and developed, and must be matched with 'orphan' church plants that are languishing.
- In *evangelising*, churches and church planters must be passionately fixed on the biblical gospel and must practice better evangelism that will lead to more effective church planting.
- In *establishing* new believers and churches, churches in Africa must relentlessly teach and model the Word, must instruct in the biblical basics and foundational doctrines, must prioritise a church membership process, and must target families for discipleship. They must also provide more equipping resources, and must overcome dependency by fostering more responsibility and local initiative. Two long-term dreams of a biblical counselling centre and a Christian university were also suggested as strategic ways to strengthen the church in Southern Africa.
- In *entrusting* church leadership into the hands of qualified, local eldership, church planting must target and disciple men from the outset, must effectively train suitable candidates, must instruct and warn unqualified elders, and must use more on-the-job church-based pastoral training. For those showing special calling to vocational ministry, further quality training must be offered. In developing leaders, churches must also restore a process of serious public recognition for all elders, must equip more bi-vocational pastors and church planters, and must identify and train more deacons and deaconesses in the churches.
- There is an *obvious implication* that flows from these strategies, yet one that is too often overlooked: It may be necessary for some churches and mission efforts in Africa to slow down or even stop *some* of their present efforts in order to shift to a more focused strategy *that will build mature, well-led, reproducing churches for generations to come*. Far from being a moratorium on missions, this is a way to *maximise* missions.

A personal aspiration

The time has come for the BUSA to rise up and become a model to the rest of Africa. Africa looks to South Africa as a leader; therefore, this is a prime opportunity for the BUSA to demonstrate how the gospel can steadily advance by building healthy, reproducing churches.

If the BUSA does not seize this opportunity to fortify the exciting work that has already been done, then the BUSA may become another monument to ineffective church planting. As the BUSA branches out to Mozambique and other fields, one fears that this will yield only more and more weak churches if something doesn't change. Evangelism and church planting must never stop. Expansion and multiplication must never stop. But, if we want to honour Christ and bring lasting results, such expansion must include nurturing churches to maturity.

As the centre of global Christianity shifts southward, churches across Africa must arise for "such a time as this" to offer the world a biblical model of building mature churches. African churches have already taken a strong stance on one of the hottest controversies of our day by speaking out against homosexuality in the church and the clergy. Bishop Rucyahana of Rwanda issued this warning to Western Anglicans: "We don't like your First World way of speaking ambiguous words and not being straight on the issues" (Armstrong, 2003). Archbishop Akinola in Nigeria announced, "We cannot continue to be in communion with people who have taken a step outside the biblical boundaries" (Armstrong, 2003). May this trend continue as African believers call the global church back to the truth!

CHAPTER 6 – SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary

What ground has been covered in this journey toward building more mature churches in Africa? *Chapter 1* introduced the severe problem of church breadth outpacing depth in Africa. There is a critical need for churches to be better planted and better strengthened in order to avoid nominalism, syncretism, and other ills. It was shown that the BUSA is a microcosm of many of these Africa-wide concerns. The BUSA states that since 1990 as many as 413 new churches have been started, which has more than doubled the size of the denomination. Yet there is growing concern over the stability of many of these young churches and their leaders. Key leaders in the BUSA are calling for an analysis of the church planting and a greater emphasis on church strengthening and equipping. The researcher is on staff at a BUSA church that has been at the forefront of BUSA church planting. This church also sees a serious need for strengthening these young churches.

In addition to this practical need, it was also shown that exegetically based literature and case studies on biblical church planting and church strengthening are needed. This was followed by listing the specific problems to be researched, the aims and objectives, and the central theoretical argument. The methods of research were also outlined.

Chapter 2 laid the necessary exegetical foundation for building mature churches, using Acts and the Pauline epistles as the basis. In Acts, the three main keys for the growth of the church were qualified leadership, committed membership, and effective church planting. Section 2.2 drew from Paul's writings his core principles for establishing mature churches. This involved an overview of how each of Paul's epistles served as a tool for strengthening young churches. Paul's concept of the building and maturing process was also examined, both in its extensive and intensive aspects. Paul's profile of a mature, reproducing church was as follows (cf. 2.3.3 for key references that accompany each point):

1. The church must have elders (overseers/pastors) who are qualified in their exemplary, godly character, their doctrinal content, and their ministry skills.
2. Its leaders must be regularly feeding the church with the exposition of Scripture. They must also recognize threats to the church's stability, warn and strengthen the flock, and guard against attacks on the Bible.
3. Its leaders must be faithfully ordering God's household in a biblical way (e.g., worship services, regularly nurturing & educating members, training deacons, handling finances, widows, etc.). This order includes worship services and songs that are God-centred, Scripture-shaped, and edifying for God's people.

4. Its members and leaders must be truly converted through understanding the gospel and responding in repentance and faith.
5. Its members must be preserving the purity of the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
6. Its members must submit to the authority of Scripture and to the authority of their leaders.
7. Its members must stand firm in their faith, unshaken by false teaching, understanding the sufficiency of Christ and His Word.
8. Its members must understand God's purpose in Christ to magnify Himself through the church, and their new position in Christ (personally, and corporately) with its new responsibilities.
9. Its members must be growing in personal holiness, living responsible, fruitful, Spirit-filled lives, not being conformed to this world but being transformed into Christlikeness by the renewing of their minds.
10. It must be committed to the biblical church discipline process for confronting and restoring wayward members and preserving the purity of the church.
11. It must have a good foundation of godly families, starting with leaders who set the example in blameless marriages and parenting.
12. Its members must be committed to genuine fellowship with one another, not being divisive but committed to unity, loving and encouraging one another, and using their spiritual gifts to edify one another.
13. Its members must take financial responsibility for the leaders and ministries of their church, starting with supporting their pastor(s) as much as they are able.
14. Its members must be committed to Christ's two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.
15. Its members must be committed to fervent, biblical praying.
16. Its members must be unified around a commitment to the advance of the gospel through their godly lives, their evangelism, and through church planting.
17. Its elders/pastors must be training up future elders to whom leadership can be entrusted.
18. It should show a growing initiative, responsibility, and ownership in governing itself, supporting itself, and growing itself (spiritually and numerically) (Eph. 4:11-16; cf. all of the above criteria imply responsibility, as does the term "mature", i.e., 'grown up', weaned from over-dependence upon the sponsor/mother church).

This list was followed by a summary of the Pauline process for how to become a mature, reproducing church. Two helpful missiological models were presented, and then the Pauline process was summarised in this way (cf. 2.3.5): From the base of the Antioch church, Paul normally used a three-phase plan of *evangelising* strategic areas, *establishing* congregations through nurture (by letters and visits), and

entrusting leadership to local elders. The content of the instruction in Acts and Paul was then listed under “Kerygma” (evangelistic preaching) and “Didache” (edifying teaching for the church) (cf. 2.3.1).

Chapter 3 laid out the field research showing the condition of churches and church planting in the newer churches (planted since 1990) of one African denomination, the BUSA. The research was conducted through church leader surveys and interviews with key church planters and area coordinators, supplemented by observations of Christ Seminary faculty in their training of many pastors from these new BUSA works. Despite the limitations, it is believed that this research yielded a relatively clear picture of these young BUSA churches and of the church planting process itself. These churches are mostly in black, low-income communities, where the need is the greatest for church planting. Sincere and zealous servants of the Lord have planted these churches. They have many faithful, devout pastors and members. The rapid multiplication of these churches is a tribute to the power of the spreading Word.

However, most of these churches (probably 70-80%) are shackled by limitations preventing them from maturing into responsible, autonomous churches. Most of them were planted quickly, without ongoing involvement from a mother church and without competent local leadership first being identified and properly entrusted with the nurture of the infant church. Most of them see no way toward financial viability, in light of such factors as weak teaching on stewardship, distrust of their leaders, a dependency mentality, and the absence of men due to ineffective evangelism and migrant labour. Most of them desperately need to see a model of what biblical preaching and teaching, and biblical church leadership, membership, and ministry really looks like. Unless these churches are thoroughly equipped in these areas, there is little evidence that they will grow past infancy or adolescence so that the gospel can steadily advance through these churches.

Chapter 4 sought to demonstrate how to analyse the health of churches and church planting in Africa by interacting with the field research in light of Scripture. An analysis was given of the strengths and weaknesses of one African denomination (the BUSA) in its church planting. First, the strengths of these churches were highlighted, such as the longevity of many pastors, their high view of Scripture, and their devotion to prayer. Next, the weaknesses in these BUSA churches were examined in light of the three stages that Paul followed. The weaknesses in evangelising the community and starting new churches were primarily seen in the kind of evangelism that often omits a clear gospel and produces shallow and short-lived ‘converts’. The major concerns under the establishing of new congregations were the detachment of mother churches, the fostering of dependency instead of responsibility, and the spiritual immaturity in many members in such areas as their giving and their personal evangelism.

The next section analysed the entrusting and developing of local, capable leadership in these churches. Major concerns under entrusting were these: the leader’s geographical distance from their congregations; failure to develop enough competent elder/pastors; the lack of true expository preaching; the lack of pastors

who are bi-vocational; unbiblical leadership structures and labels; a lack of adequate teaching and discipleship; the character and the calling of the leaders. After this, some cautions were given against the overemphasis on speed and numbers, and against unbiblical church growth trends that undermine the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. Concerns were also expressed about the common short-term mentality toward church planting, and about the overestimates of a seminary/college's ability to be a substitute for strong churches and more careful church planting.

Chapter 5 offered suggestions and strategies underneath this overarching banner: *"In order for the gospel to steadily advance through the BUSA or through any churches in Africa, mother churches and church planters must take responsibility for strengthening young churches until they have qualified elders and are mature, reproducing churches."*

This vision was spelled out through the following strategies envisioned for church plants and church planting in the BUSA or anywhere in Africa:

- The denomination and mother churches must be gripped by their biblical mandate, must beware of the consequences of ignoring this mandate, and must take responsibility for the unfinished business of building new churches to maturity.
- The denomination should mobilise mother churches and church planters to strengthen weak daughter churches. Other key Antioch-type churches must be identified and developed, and must be matched with 'orphan' church plants that are languishing.
- In *evangelising*, churches and church planters must be passionately fixed on the biblical gospel and must practice more careful evangelism that will lead to more effective church planting.
- In *establishing* new believers and churches, churches and church planters must relentlessly teach and model the Word, must instruct in the biblical basics and foundational doctrines, must prioritise a church membership process and must target families for discipleship. They must also provide more equipping resources, and must overcome dependency by fostering more responsibility and local initiative. Two long-term dreams of a biblical counselling centre and a Christian university were also suggested as strategic ways to strengthen the church in Southern Africa.
- In *entrusting* church leadership into the hands of qualified, local elders, church planting must target and disciple men from the outset, must effectively train suitable candidates, must instruct and warn unqualified elders, and must use more on-the-job, church-based pastoral training. For those showing a special calling to vocational ministry, there must be further quality training. In developing leaders,

churches must also restore a process of public recognition for all elders, must equip more bivocational pastors and church planters, and must identify and train more deacons and deaconesses in the churches.

- An obvious implication that flows from these strategies and that must not be overlooked: Some churches, church planters, and mission groups may need to slow down or even stop some of their present efforts. Only then will they be able to get serious about shifting their energies toward a more focused strategy that will build mature, well-led, reproducing churches for future generations. Too many ministries are spread so thin that they will have little lasting impact.

6.2 Final conclusions

This thesis began with two burning questions: “In light of what Scripture says about building mature churches, what is the condition of recent BUSA church plants and church planting? How can we better plant and strengthen churches, in the BUSA and throughout Africa, to become mature, reproducing churches?” It is believed that these questions have been answered. Likewise, each of the problems stated at the outset have been tackled. In response to the question, “What do Acts and the Pauline epistles teach about the whole process of building mature churches?”, chapter 2 gave a detailed biblical reply. Chapter 3 then gave a case study with a wealth of field data in order to answer the question about the condition of recent church plants and of church planting in the BUSA. The next problem—needing to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of these BUSA church plants and church planting in light of Scripture (as also a model to other African church planting movements)—was solved in chapter 4’s in-depth analysis. The final research problem, “What are some effective strategies for better building of mature, reproducing churches in the BUSA and throughout Africa?”, was remedied through the recommendations given in chapter 5.

This research journey has reached its original destination, since the aim (1.5) was “to offer a better understanding and more effective practice of building mature churches in Africa”. The four research objectives (cf. 1.5) seem to have been fulfilled:

1. The researcher has gained a solid grasp of what Acts and the Pauline epistles teach about the process and product of establishing mature churches.
2. The researcher has gained a better understanding of the needs of recent BUSA church plants and church planting, as well as some of the wider needs of churches throughout Africa.
3. The researcher has gained discernment in how to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of one African church planting movement in light of Scripture. He trusts that a kind of grid and model has been offered that can now benefit many other African church planting movements also.

4. The researcher has crafted biblical and practical strategies for effective church planting and church strengthening in the BUSA and throughout Africa.

In his central theoretical argument in chapter 1, the researcher expected to find BUSA church planting to be reflective of much church planting throughout Africa: breadth without depth. It was expected that the research would reveal serious needs for improved church planting and for strengthening of existing church plants in their leadership and membership. And such was indeed the case, as the field research revealed.

Admittedly, the field research phase was predictable at times because of the researcher's prior ministry exposure to these churches and their leaders. The rewarding discoveries in this research process were more in understanding some of the fine details of the BUSA situation, interacting with key leaders in the BUSA, and then in articulating a thorough biblical analysis and a strategic plan for building mature churches in Africa.

As far as gaps in church planting and church growth literature, this thesis has sought to make a contribution. "Building mature churches in Africa" attempts to fill a critical gap in missiology today by offering an exegetically sound church planting basis and model, combined with a contemporary case study and biblical strategies. In today's wilderness of pragmatic and programmatic missiology and church growth, this thesis should be a distinct voice calling the church back to the sufficiency of Scripture for all missions' strategies. This thesis also deals with the oft-neglected topic of how to consolidate and strengthen *existing* church planting movements that are faltering. The time is ripe in Africa for studies like this that uniquely touch on needs in the African church and offer biblical solutions.

6.3 Suggestions for further research in African churches

One exciting step toward further field research may have already begun. In March of 2004 the researcher was asked to share some of his findings with the BUSA Mission Board. They responded by saying they will propose to the BUSA Executive Board that after completing his doctorate, the researcher visit the other key regions and do more extensive research on the condition of these BUSA church plants (since the findings of this thesis mostly reflected the northern churches). If this transpires, the researcher will trim down the church survey and tighten up some of the questions. Where possible, surveys will also be done orally and in the local languages. Another revealing study would be to find a way to get tapes of a month's worth of sermons being preached in young BUSA churches. A sermon analysis would show the kind of food these flocks are being fed.

Many topics demand further research in the cause of building stronger churches in Africa:

- Why did Christianity expand so rapidly in Africa compared to other fields?

- What is the history of church planting from an evangelical perspective, evaluating the building of Christ's church over the past two millennia? What lessons can be learned from the historical highs and lows in church planting, in light of biblical evangelism, nurture of new churches, and effective entrusting to local leadership?¹
- What are some of the best success stories where church planting movements have produced mature, indigenous churches? Many struggling church planters and denominations have never even seen or heard of truly effective church planting that yields lasting results and mature local churches, especially in rural and impoverished areas.
- What is the biblical view and solution to African inferiority feelings and African identity in light of the past?
- What are some effective ways to do entrepreneurial training for members and pastors?
- What are the effects of certain dominant influences in the African church today – e.g.: the effects of fatherlessness upon black youth and homes in South Africa (with fathers away working in cities); effects of the charismatic movement; effects of the surrounding culture (especially TV) upon views of life's meaning and purpose, and upon values regarding family, church, etc.
- How should the Mosaic Law be interpreted and applied in the African church, in light of the many misinterpretations in AIC and Zionist churches?
- What is the biblical view of cultures (past and present): are they truly equal, when must they be critiqued, when must they be affirmed, etc.?
- What is the biblical role of women in the African church? And the role of children?
- Holistic mission in Africa – How can churches better transform their communities without straying from biblical authority, the purity of the gospel, and the priority of evangelism and church planting?
- Specific studies in denominations, like the BUSA. Do survey research on members beliefs, views, etc., to get the pulse and direction of the churches (e.g., every ten years or so survey the doctrine and practice of seminary students and graduates of denominational training schools, as seen in D. Wells' study [1994] on American evangelical seminary students). One could also do content analysis of the past five years of literature produced by a denomination (e.g., their magazine, like BUSA's *Baptist Today*, their annual handbook, etc.), identifying most common topics, doctrines, errors, trends, values, etc.

¹ Such work is starting to be done on African missions history by writers like Y. Turaki of West Africa (Cf. *Christianity in Nigeria*, parts I & II, in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* [2001a,b]). A biblical analysis of the definitive work on African Church History, Sundkler and Steed's *A History of the Church in Africa* (2000) would make for a worthy study.

A personal burden

Churches and church planting throughout Africa stand at a critical fork in the road. Either the gospel will continue to 'advance' in a shallow way, producing 'converts' and churches that are weak and dependent; or, more churches will wake up to their biblical mandate and plant strong, well-led churches that transform their culture. Either Christ's church will continue to be built in a hasty way that fails to lay lasting foundations; or, it will be built in a responsible way that yields mature churches that bear fruit for generations to come.

Either the church in Africa will fail to take the baton from the devoted labourers who sacrificed their lives to see the gospel cover the continent in the last century; or, the church in Africa will take the baton and will consolidate past gains into a focused effort to build strong churches. May we be found faithful to join Christ as He builds His church and magnifies His name across Africa!

Annexure A – Three survey forms used

A CHURCH-PLANTING SURVEY of Certain BUSA Churches & Fellowships

From Rev. Nicki Coertze, 2002-2003 President of the Baptist Union:

*“As president of the Baptist Union it is my joy to support Tim's efforts in seeking ways to help us as Baptists understand where we are and where we are going in church planting. The success of such an endeavour always depends on our cooperation in the matter. The general tendency is to think, ‘Others will return their survey, therefore mine is not important.’ But for the sake of the kingdom, so that we all can establish how to honour God best through our church planting activities, I want to encourage you to view **your** response as the most important one. Do it, get behind it, and realise that much more work has to be done.... For the sake of your faith in Christ, your love for His church and your desire to see the kingdom of God extended, I therefore urge you with all seriousness to give this questionnaire your utmost urgent attention....”*

October 2003

Dear pastor or church leader,

Greetings in Christ from Polokwane. Thank you so much for your willingness to assist me in this major research project as I seek to complete my doctoral thesis (through Potchefstroom University) on “Building Mature Churches in Africa”. God has been mightily at work in Southern Africa, and one evidence of this has been the 400 or more new churches (or “fellowships”) planted through the Baptist Union since 1990. The goal of this research is to evaluate how these young churches are currently doing and to see how we as a denomination can best strengthen them and build upon the noble efforts of those who first planted these churches. Only as these young churches mature will Christ be honoured and His gospel effectively advance *through* these churches to the many other areas needing to be reached throughout Southern Africa and beyond. (Note: this survey will also include all churches, even older churches or non-B.U. churches, who have received a church building through Samaria Mission.)

I will be very grateful if you could take some of your valuable time and complete this survey. Please answer the questions based on your *actual* situation rather than based upon an ideal situation which you might wish you had. The more honest and truthful we are with strengths and weaknesses, the more helpful this research can be. I also ask that you *not* use your Bible or any other books while answering these questions; just answer based upon what you *already* know and believe. Please *ensure that no more than one survey is completed per church*, and that it is completed by a pastor or leader of that church who is well-informed about the condition of that church. *If you need someone to help translate some of the questions into your language, please seek a reliable source. You are also welcome to reply in your own language, since we have available translators in most of the languages.

When you complete this survey, would you please either: (a) return it to me in person; (b) give it to the coordinator (or chairperson) for your area/association, perhaps at your next members meeting or fraternal; (c) if you prefer, you can e-mail your completed survey back to me at: tandm@pobox.com; or, (d) please mail it back to me at:

Tim Cantrell
P.O. Box 857
Fauna Park 0787

Very gratefully in Christ,

Tim Cantrell
Lecturer & Pastor
Christ Seminary & Christ Baptist Church
Polokwane, Limpopo Province

My phone #: 015-296-0265

PLEASE NOTE:

- For the multiple choice questions, please read all of the possible options before answering, and then circle the letter of your choice (like this, a.). In most cases, only one answer is possible, unless specified otherwise. If a certain question is not relevant to your situation, or if you do not know how to answer a question, just skip it and move on to the next question.
- If you are currently pastoring or leading more than one Baptist Union church or fellowship (planted since 1990), please take additional surveys so that you can complete one survey per church. For the additional surveys, you can OMIT questions # 1-21. But please do complete the rest of the questions (#'s 22-65) separately for each specific church. For each additional survey, perhaps at the top of this page you can just write, "This is church #2, or church #3, etc.". Thank you.

YOUR CHURCH'S NAME: _____

YOUR BAPTIST TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATION:

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Baptist Association of the Northern Cape | e. Free State Baptist Association |
| b. Baptist Northern Association | f. Natal Baptist Association |
| c. Border Baptist Association | g. Western Province Baptist Association |
| d. Eastern Province Baptist Association | h. Other: _____ |

SOME OF YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Your age: _____ 2. Your gender: _____
a. Male b. Female
3. Marital status: _____
a. Single b. Married c. Divorced d. Widowed
- Your phone number(s): _____
4. If you have *other employment* in addition to your work as pastor/church leader, please describe *what kind of employment* you have, and *how many hours per week* you spend on this other work (including travel to and from work):

5. In an average month, how often are you and your spouse staying together (not staying in different places)?
a. We stay together most or all of the time.
b. We stay together only on the weekends.
c. We stay together only one weekend a month or less.

YOUR EDUCATION

6. What is the highest educational level you have achieved (already completed)?
a. Standard 8 (Grade 10) certificate
b. Matric (Standard 10/Grade 12) certificate
c. Further diploma after completing matric (from trade school, Bible school, correspondence courses, etc.)
d. Bachelors degree
e. Other: _____
7. What kind of *pastoral or theological training* have you received or are you receiving? (more than one possible answer)
a. None
b. Independent, self-guided or correspondence studies
c. Informal training from another pastor (or church-planter/missionary)
d. Formal training at the following college (Bible school/seminary): _____
e. Other: _____
8. What person has had the *biggest impact* on your Christian life (your spiritual growth)?
Name: _____
Relationship to you (parent, pastor, teacher, missionary, etc.): _____

YOUR BELIEFS

9. Please describe *in one sentence* how a person can be saved (born-again, converted to Christ):

10. If someone tries to keep the Ten Commandments and shows love to his neighbours, will that ensure that he goes to Heaven?

- a. Yes b. No

11. If someone follows another religion different from Christianity, can they still go to Heaven as long as they are a good person and sincere in their beliefs?

- a. Yes b. No

12. Please describe *in one sentence the process of how a Christian should grow spiritually*. Complete this statement: "The way to grow as a Christian and to overcome sin and become more holy is by _____"

13. What is *the most important way* for a Christian to *find God's will* for his or her life? _____

14. How many times have you read through the *entire* Bible from cover to cover?

- a. I have *not yet* read through the whole Bible one time.
b. I have read through the whole Bible *once*.
c. I have read through the whole Bible *more than three times*.
d. I have read through the whole Bible *more than ten times*.

15. What is the *most important* criteria when you select someone for any leadership position in your church? (select only one answer)

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. They must be faithful in church attendance. | d. They must be an older person. |
| b. They must have good speaking and preaching abilities. | e. They must be well-educated, employed and successful in society. |
| c. They must have a blameless reputation and a godly life. | f. They must not smoke or drink alcohol. |

16. If one of your church leaders discovers that a member in the church is guilty of sexual immorality, what should happen first? (only one correct answer)

- a. The member should be publicly warned or rebuked.
b. The member should be excommunicated, or at least put on probation for a few months.
c. The member should be confronted privately, urging him/her to repent and be restored.
d. In order to avoid offending or hurting, we should not confront him/her.
e. The leader should tell many others in the church to pray for and to warn him/her.

YOUR PREACHING & TEACHING

17. How would you define, *in one sentence*, what is the right way to preach the Bible? (In other words, what does it mean to preach or teach the Bible in a biblical way that is pleasing to God?) _____

18. How do you know when you have been a *faithful preacher* who gave God's message to others? (only one correct answer)

- a. You know you have properly taught the Bible when the people tell you they enjoyed the message.
b. You know you have properly taught the Bible when you feel that the Holy Spirit was really speaking through you.
c. You know you have properly taught the Bible when people clearly understand the correct meaning of that passage of Scripture and know how to apply it to their lives.
d. You know you have properly taught the Bible when many people make decisions and come forward during the altar call.

19. What kind of *regular preaching* do you think is *best* for your church?
- Preaching on various topics and issues that are relevant in society
 - Preaching on whatever relates to the needs of my people each week
 - Preaching on whatever the Holy Spirit tells me to preach that week
 - Preaching gospel messages most of the time so more people will get saved
 - Preaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible
20. How long do you normally spend preparing for your Sunday sermon?
- Less than one hour
 - One to five hours
 - Five to ten hours
 - More than 10 hours
21. For an average sermon, how many other sources (books/tools other than your Bible) do you consult in your study and preparation (like a concordance, dictionary, notes in a study Bible, commentaries, or other theology books)?
- No other sources
 - One to three other sources
 - Three to five other sources
 - More than five other sources

YOUR CHURCH

22. How is your church viewed (recognised) by the Baptist Union?
- As a fully constituted church
 - As a fellowship
23. In what kind of area or context is your church located?
- More urban (township, settlement, town, city)
 - More rural (village)
 - Other: _____
24. What is your position in this church (pastor? leader? elder? deacon? delegate only?) ? _____
25. How long have you been in this position in your church? _____
26. IF *you are not the pastor*, does your church have a full-time pastor?
- Yes
 - No
27. How often are you *living and staying in the same area as your church*?
- I stay there most or all of the time.
 - I go there each weekend, or at least each Sunday.
 - I only go there *two* Sundays per month or less.
28. Birth date of the church (Year that the congregation began meeting and holding services): _____
29. *When the church first began meeting*, what was the total number of adults (age 21 and older) in Sunday attendance (in the main/general service; if unsure, at least give an estimate)? _____
30. Please give the total numbers for your regular Sunday attendance at present:
- Number of women (ages 21 and older): _____
- Number of men (ages 21 and older): _____
- Number of youth (ages 13-20): _____
- Number of children (ages 1-12): _____

[Questions #31-34 ended up being thrown out, because the answers revealed that most did not understand the question.]

31. Out of those adults who are now regularly attending your church, *how many of them* were evangelised by your church and saved within the past two years? _____ (give total number) [
32. Currently, *how many families* (husband and wife, plus any children they might have) are regularly attending your church? _____ (give total number)
33. Out of these families in your church, *how many* do you think have a healthy, strong marriage relationship that is a *good example of a Christian marriage*? _____ (give total number)
34. Out of these families in your church, *how many* do you think are a good example of Christian parenting by *effectively bringing up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*? _____ (give total number)

35. Does your church have its own building?
 a. Yes – If so, who financed or provided the building? _____
 b. No
 c. Other: _____
36. Who planted or started your church? (give their name; or, if you prefer not to give their name, at least describe their relationship to you – e.g., mother church, evangelist, missionary, yourself, etc.) _____
-
37. From the time that your church began, what are the *main ways that your church has been nurtured* (followed-up and strengthened) by the church-planter or mother-church (or other 'parental link') that started your church (for example: further contact, visits, letters, teachings, etc.)?
 a. _____ c. _____
 b. _____
38. How effective is this ongoing nurture (strengthening, follow-up, etc.) which your church is receiving from the church-planter or mother church (or other 'parental link') that started your church or is overseeing your church? In other words, *how much are they helping your church to grow toward maturity and become a viable, healthy church?*
 a. Their nurture is *very effective* in helping us to grow and mature.
 b. Their nurture is *somewhat effective* in helping us to grow and mature.
 c. Their nurture is *not very effective* in helping us to grow and mature.
 d. There is *no nurture* being given at present.
39. Since your church was founded, have there been any *church splits* (major break-ups where a large group of people are upset and decide to leave the church)?
 a. No
 b. Yes – If so, *how many members in total* have left the church because of a church split(s) and have not returned? _____ (total number)

YOUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL SITUATION

40. How many of your church members have full-time employment and earn a salary? _____
41. When the church first began meeting, what was the approximate amount of *monthly giving/tithing* (on average)? R _____ per month
42. What is the *current* amount of average *monthly* giving/tithing? R _____ per month
43. *How much* of this monthly giving/tithing is *sent back* to your mother church or church-planter?
 R _____ per month
44. In the past *two years*, has there been any *steady increase* in the giving/tithing?
 a. Yes b. No

YOUR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

45. Does your church have appointed elders? (Please note: this is *not according to a cultural* definition of elder as just an older man, but *according to the biblical definition* of "elder" as a man appointed by the church or by the leadership to be an overseer and spiritual leader in the church.)
 a. Yes b. No c. Other: _____
46. How many of your current church leadership (pastors, elders, deacons, steering committee members, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, etc.) do you think are living *holy lives* and are godly examples *in their home, in the church, and in the community*?
 a. *Most or all of our leaders* (81-100%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.
 b. *More than half of our leaders* (51-80%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.
 c. *Less than half of our leaders* (0-50%) set a godly example in their home, church, and community.
 d. I am not sure.
47. Out of the men who are regularly attending your church, *how many are godly, capable men whom you are presently training up to become future elders* in your church? _____

48. Are you allowed to regularly perform baptisms and to conduct the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)?
- Yes.
 - No. Only the senior pastor or a leader from the mother church can perform baptisms or Holy Communion when he comes to visit. – If so, *in an average year*, how often does your church get to take Communion? _____

YOUR PASTORAL MINISTRY

49. In *an average week*, how many hours do you spend in doing private *pastoral counselling* with people in your church (not teaching publicly to groups, but using the Bible to help individuals with their specific problems)? _____ hour(s)
50. In *an average week*, how many hours are you currently spending in personal, one-on-one (or house to house) evangelism in the area surrounding your church? _____ hour(s)
51. How many of those hours of evangelism in this community are spent *specifically targeting the working (employed) men in the community*, seeking to build relationships with them and to evangelise them? _____ hour(s)
52. Please describe *in one sentence* the purpose of your church (the main reason that your church exists):

53. List what you believe are the two or three most crucial (most effective) ways that you can lead your church toward maturity in the next year.
“*In the next year, the most important things I can do to lead my church to become stronger are:*”
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
54. If you had to choose, what would you say is *the biggest obstacle* right now that prevents your church from reaching its true potential? _____

55. Personally, what would you like to be doing *five years from now*?
- Still pastoring this church and helping it to grow stronger
 - Moving on to new areas to do evangelism and church-planting
 - Pastoring another church where I can be better supported
 - Other: _____

YOUR CHURCH'S HEALTH

56. How many of your members (including leaders) do you think clearly understand the gospel message and trust in Christ alone (not *any* of their own efforts) for their salvation?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
57. At present, what do you think are two of the greatest *doctrinal threats to the stability of your church* (In other words, what are some of the most common false teachings or dangerous doctrines today that might harm your members)?:
- _____
 - _____
58. If you teach your members next week that the Bible requires them to make *new changes* in a certain aspect of their lives (in their lifestyle, habits, home life, church life, etc.), how many of them do you think will be truly *willing to change and obey Scripture*?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)

59. Outside of the Sunday morning sermon, do you have *any other regular times of in-depth biblical teaching or training (equipping) for your members?*
- No
 - Yes – If so, when does this additional teaching/training occur: _____
60. In all of the preaching and teaching your members have received over the past two years (on Sundays, or membership classes, or at any other times), *which of the following topics have been addressed* through clear, in-depth biblical teaching? (circle each topic that has been covered)
- Some (or all) of these basic doctrines: God's character and His attributes; the person and work of Christ; the person and the work of the Holy Spirit
 - How to study and apply the Bible.
 - How to grow daily as a Christian and to overcome sin and temptation.
 - How to have a godly home - explaining the biblical roles for husbands & wives, fathers & mothers, and children.
 - How the local church should function in its worship services, and in the roles and responsibilities of the leaders and of each member in the church?
 - How to be good stewards of our resources (time, possessions, finances, etc.) and how to be regularly giving/tithing to the church.
 - How to live as a Christian in the world – for example: how to be a good citizen; how to treat the government; and how to honour God at work.
 - How to understand the gospel and communicate it clearly to others in personal evangelism.
61. How many of your members do you think show a *regular commitment to prayer*, both in their personal life and in the corporate prayer life of the church?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
62. How many of your members do you think are *clearly growing in Christ*, showing the fruit of their salvation through living transformed, Spirit-filled lives?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
63. How many of your members do you think are showing *regular participation in the life of the church body* through practicing the 'one anothers' (for example, loving and encouraging one another) and through using their spiritual gifts to edify one another?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
64. How many of your members do you think are *committed to being biblical peace-makers in the church and not peace-breakers* (in other words, they are working towards true unity, not divisions)?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
65. How many of your members do you think show that they are *involved in the spread of the gospel* through their godly lives and through personally evangelising others?
- Most or all of them (80-100%)
 - More than half (51-80%)
 - Less than half (0-50%)
66. If you would like, please add *any other comments* about the overall health or maturity of your church at present, or about any other areas where your church needs the most strengthening:

*Please remember to return this survey right away.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

CHURCH-PLANTING MINI-SURVEY
for BUSA area coordinators & other key leaders

2 Dec., 2003

Dear brothers,

Greetings in the Lord. You may recall that I am endeavouring to research the church-planting scene in the B.U. for the sake of my doctoral thesis and also in the hope of offering something helpful to the church-planting cause in the B.U. and beyond. My previous surveys have yielded limited results, so Nicki has advised me that this mini-survey would also be necessary to get a better indication of the overall situation. So would you please be so kind as to take a few minutes and jot down your responses to these questions, based on your own church-planting experience (or observations) in the B.U.? Please then return this form by e-mail or fax it back to me at this # by 12 December: (015) 296-9959.

1. Out of the 400+ new B.U. churches/fellowships planted since about 1990, approximately *how many* of these are in your territorial association (or how many have you had exposure to or involvement with)? (if unsure, please estimate at least): _____
2. Out of these same churches/fellowships, *how many* of these would you *estimate* have a *capable pastor/leader* who has received (or is receiving) some kind of adequate pastoral training?: _____
3. Out of these same churches/fellowships (i.e., the overall number you gave in #1 above - those planted since about 1990 that you are involved with), *how many* of those churches would you estimate have now become *mature* (viable, healthy, well-established) churches, churches that *would fit these four criteria* listed below:
 - (a) They have *their own pastor* who sets a godly example and who shepherds and preaches in a biblical way.
 - (b) They have a *committed membership* who submit to the Scriptures, who are growing in Christ, who participate in the life of the body, who pray, and who evangelise their community. (This does not mean they are perfect, or that *every* member fits this criteria; but is this their overall reputation as a body?)
 - (c) They are taking *financial responsibility* for the ministries of their church, starting with supporting their own pastor.
 - (d) They are a stable, 'Antioch' (Acts 13) kind of church that is a *model to others* and is ready to reproduce itself by planting other churches.

Please give an *approximate number* of these churches/fellowships that you think have matured to the point that they fit these four criteria: _____

4. What would you point to as the *main reasons* why some of these younger churches *are not* maturing and becoming well-established, while others *are*? [On the original form, they were given more space to reply.]
5. What are the *main ways* you would say *the church-planting process can be improved* in the B.U. so that it will result in more churches that are mature, responsible churches, especially in the underprivileged areas? (Please be as specific as possible. Use additional paper if you'd like. Any input you have will be very welcome.) [On the original form, they were given more space to reply.]

Please return by e-mail to tandm@pobox.com or fax this back right away to: (015) 296-9959.
THANK YOU again for all of your time and assistance!

Interview of Other Successful Church-Planters

Please answer each of these questions and return it to me by e-mail (tandm@pobox.com), by 9 January if possible. Thank you so much for your valuable input!

1. Please describe your church-planting *experience*: where, and for how long, have you been involved in church-planting? how many churches have you planted or been involved with?
2. How do you (or your churches) normally decide on the next location to plant a church? (i.e., What are the main factors in your decision?)
3. Please describe *the process* you normally use in planting a church:
 - (a) what are the typical steps or methods you follow, from your first contacts in that area until the time believers are congregated?
 - (b) how do you know when to move on?
 - (c) do you have any kind of *timetable* in mind as to how long this process takes, to go from initial evangelism to a healthy, autonomous church?
4. Please explain how you normally *nurture* (strengthen) a new church once it is planted. And how do you train up and appoint local elders?
5. Out of the churches you've planted or worked with, how many would you say fit the following *four criteria* for a mature, healthy church?:
 - (a) They have *their own pastor* who sets a godly example and who shepherds and preaches in a biblical way.
 - (b) They have *a committed membership* who submit to the Scriptures, who are growing in Christ, who participate in the life of the body, who pray, and who evangelise their community. (This does not mean they are perfect, or that *every* member fits this criteria; but is this their overall reputation as a body?)
 - (c) They are taking *financial responsibility* for the ministries of their church, starting with supporting their own pastor.
 - (d) They are a stable, 'Antioch' (Acts 13) kind of church that is a *model to others* and is ready to reproduce itself by planting other churches.
6. What are some of the other *most important lessons* you would share with young church-planters, based on your biblical understanding of, and experience in, church-planting? (i.e., what you'd do differently; common pitfalls; keys to success, etc.)

Annexure B- Further responses from BUSA leader interviews

Below are the more detailed responses of the BUSA area leaders and church planters who were interviewed (in conjunction with section 3.2)

From 3.2.1 – Findings from BUSA area coordinator interviews:

4. *What would you point to as the main reasons why some of these younger churches are not maturing and becoming well established, while others are?*

a. *Leadership problems*

- The pastor is the pillar of a growing church
- An initial church planter who is truly called/gifted in that way and who is humble can make all the difference. This means he is humble enough to seek counsel from other more experienced pastors and church planters, and that he is humble enough to be a servant-leader who relates to common people and loves them (does not have the chief mentality, seeking special “Moruti” [Pastor] treatment).
- Entrenched lay leadership
- Not sufficient training and education
- Circuit system (where one pastor tries to cover too many churches)
- Lack of pastors in many churches
- Men are away working in cities, which depletes the pool of candidates for leadership
- “Where are the men today who still have the passion and burden for the ministry and are not just doing it because they needed a job?!”

b. *Uncommitted membership*

- If the people are not receptive to the Word, only fighting and disunity will result.
- When they pray and fellowship together, there is oneness.
- No vision
- Too few members

c. *Finances & resources*

- Many churches seem to have all the other marks of a mature, thriving church, but their financial struggles (and dependence) cast a shadow over everything.
- The migrant worker situation where many men (with their money) are away working in Gauteng. Only women and children are left, with hardly any income.
- Too much unemployment
- Old system, brought by some Baptist missionaries, where each member received a ticket assigning how much they should give (usually tiny amounts, like R2, or R5). Many churches were not taught stewardship and tithing early on.
- They were never taught ownership – They waited for the missionaries or the white churches to build the buildings, and then to return whenever repairs were needed. Now they just ask the BUSA area coordinators to do these same things for them.
- Need buildings before they will grow
- Some churches were given a nicer building than they need, in light of their area (e.g., a squatter camp), and thus their finances go towards upkeep instead of a pastor’s salary.

d. *Cultural issues*

- Party political bias
- Racism
- “Our people are lazy – they plow, and then expect to relax and have lots of intervals and breaks.”

- e. *Their origin (how the church got started)*
-Many churches “just happened,” but were not strategically planned before being planted. Certain key factors were ignored: demographics, over-dependency, solid link with a mother-church, leadership of the new church, etc.
- f. *Doctrinal problems*
-“Ecumenicism” – borrowing practices from mainline churches such as the Presbyterians or Methodists

5. *What are the main ways you would say the church planting process can be improved in your association so that it will result in more churches that are mature, responsible churches?*

- a. *Plant/start new churches for the right reasons and in the right way.* – Don’t just start as a result of a split. Do “more consultation/planning” before starting. Decide in advance if your highest goal is just big numbers or quality churches. Some of the BUSA associations offer support for church planters on a five year sliding scale. But in some cases, this support comes straight from one of the wealthier, urban mother churches.
- b. *Mother church must show greater involvement.* – “Churches must be planted by churches, not by associations!” One region suggested that stronger, urban churches adopt a pastor from a struggling church (usually rural or in squatter areas) to further equip him and to ‘send’ him back out to his existing church, having better trained and equipped him, and offering him some support also. We must stop having “checkbook churches” where the mother church only sends a bit of money on occasion but does not invest the people and time and training that is needed most.
- c. *Encourage self-employment and equip more bi-vocational pastors.* – For example, use teachers who are in the area who are also called and gifted to pastor. This will accommodate better to the church’s poor financial situation in its early stages.
-Some associations offer “seed money” to encourage entrepreneurial projects, like helping ladies to get sewing machines and do sewing.
- d. *More training and equipping of both leaders and members.* This includes knowing what their needs are before marching in with a ‘pre-mixed’ solution.
- e. Have a BUSA-wide indaba to discuss and strategize for better church planting in light of rural and urban realities.
- f. Get more women to be pastors in the rural churches where there are few men.

Strangely, there was one coordinator who simply said, “I am in favour of current system.” This was in spite of his own admission that only a fraction of his churches have a capable pastor/leader, and an even smaller fraction are yet mature and healthy.

From 3.2.2 – Findings from other key BUSA leaders:

4. *What would you point to as the main reasons why some of these younger churches are not maturing and becoming well established, while others are?*

- a. *Cultural issues*
 - Following cultural norms that are unbiblical, or just unbeneficial.
- b. *Preaching*
 - Seminary students are trying to preach more biblical, structured sermons but have sacrificed their passion and liveliness in the process.
- c. *Leadership*
 - The major reason for weak churches is their lack of a capable, godly, trained pastor(s). Too often the mother churches or planters are not taking the time and staying long enough to develop strong local leadership in the new church plant. The mother church or mission group naively trusts that the local leaders know how to plant and nurture churches, so the full leadership is prematurely given into their hands.
 - Lack of pastoral teaching and care. Too many churches without pastors. Some are led by untrained women or untrained men.
 - The planter cannot be left on his own (by the mother church) for months and only be asked to give reports. They need weekly input and feedback on their work. The strength of new churches lies with the involvement of the mother church. Otherwise, the church remains weak.
 - These younger churches are not maturing because of ineffective, immature and untrained church leadership. Too many are placed in leadership prematurely.
 - Pastors lack adequate theological training. Some are teaching charismatic doctrines. They may be growing in numbers, but not in spiritual maturity and doctrine.
 - They lack vision and focus.
 - Some of the leaders have created grave problems. Some are just not capable as leaders. I'm not sure in our training schools we're doing an adequate job of teaching leadership.
 - Leadership style which tends toward control and not body-life.
 - Selection process for church planters needs improvement
- d. *Building*
 - Having a building plays an important part in assuring the stability of the church. People trust a built church.
- e. *Finance*
 - Churches in poor areas don't develop because most of the members are unemployed women.
 - These churches are too dependent on outside sources and are not becoming self-sustaining. Too much support stymies a new church rather than assist.
 - Poverty and unemployment in their contexts delay growth, maturity, and self-sustainability. Poverty is a very real, inhibiting factor.
 - Membership is unstable because of those who are migrant workers.
 - The church must have more people who are employed.
 - The apartheid legacy of dependence hinders the growth of black churches. Stewardship is weak and pastors are often woefully supported. And culture is often used as an excuse.
 - Church planting grants are often seen as a job rather than a calling.
- f. *Origin – How the church was started*

- Too often these churches are started very hastily, with a tent campaign that yields twenty who "came forward" at the altar call, but sometimes only two of them still remain a month later.
- The mother church did not clearly communicate specific instructions or expectations to their planted church.
- Lack of training and field support for church planters
- Evangelistic style, emphasising decision-making and not so much following Jesus.

g. *Time* – Many churches are promising, but are still just getting on their feet. Many also have a leader who is still receiving his pastoral training.

h. *Other factors:*

- Need for more social concern, showing people that Jesus cares.
- Distance between sister churches hinders fellowship and accountability.
- Lack of relevant youth and children's ministries
- Lack of discipleship material for new converts
- Stewardship is a much-neglected emphasis. Even black South Africans could support their man if the spiritual state of the heart was right.
- Nominalism in the church generally in SA tends to be a poor role model for new churches.
- The concept of membership is often misunderstood, and those attending the new churches have no idea who are the real members and who are not.

5. *What are the main ways you would say the church planting process can be improved in the B.U. so that it will result in more churches that are mature, responsible churches?*

a. *Doing effective church planting*

- Place a greater emphasis on biblically defined church planting. There should be a denominational standard that is more defined and biblical.
- There must be a greater emphasis on discipleship and not just evangelistic appeals that have little follow-up.
- “The church that initiates the church planting needs to be out there on the field. They take the place of the old missionary superintendent. It may sound outdated, but it works. Our black pastors need to be accountable to the mother church. The need guidance and vision all the time. I am not talking about controlling, but about bringing these new churches to maturity.” The mother church must train the new pastor so he can then train his people. This is a time-consuming ministry, but if the mother church is willing, we will see new, Antioch kind of churches. ‘We are seeing it work in our area with three men I’m meeting with!’
- The churches planted by the regional association don’t really grow. All the planter does is send back monthly reports and get a visit on rare occasions. He has no real support base or accountability. He does his own thing, and the association only steps in when there’s a problem.
- Start church-to-church mentorship, where a mature church adopts a newly established church for three years. The mature church provides mentoring and facilitates the process of development of the newly planted church, guiding it in areas of administration, fundraising, teaching, discipleship, etc.
- More emphasis on discipleship, qualitative growth, and stewardship.
- “I think we will always have successes and failures. However, to try to ‘guarantee’ only successes will also reduce the number of church starts, including some that are now healthy. Raising the number of total church starts virtually guarantees raising the number of mature churches. It also raises the number of problem churches. This is a problem with which we must live.” (the shotgun approach)

- We must maintain long-term relationships with new churches, for encouragement and teaching.
- Consider training and funding several BUSA church planters/evangelists who would go and live in a certain area for a certain amount of time.
- The momentum of church planting must continue in the BUSA, but we must also explore ways to develop a deeper commitment to Christ from the church planters and from the newly born churches.
- The BUSA associations must give moral support to church planters, and perhaps also clearer objectives/expectations.

b. *Leadership*

- The local leadership in the mother churches and the new churches must be trained in biblical strategies for evangelism and church planting so that they will stop doing hasty church planting that only results in more weak churches. Until the misguided senior pastors of some of the key mother churches are re-taught and change their unbiblical church planting methods, nothing will change.
- Require good biblical training for all those in positions of leadership.
- A pastor without Baptist convictions must not pastor a Baptist church. Pastors must be tested first to confirm their doctrine before they are placed in leadership.
- The church with a well-trained pastor needs to see itself as a missionary church.
- The church planter must be focused on developing the church, not running conferences, funerals, etc., or becoming moderators of other churches. He must be in his church every Sunday.
- Senior pastors with experience must moderate the new churches, along with assistance from the association.
- Need more training of lay pastors and leadership.
- Need ongoing equipping of pastors to be courageous in teaching stewardship.
- The current method of pastoral recognition in the BUSA is no guarantee. Some of the places with the biggest problems were started by "recognized" pastors.
- We must give more thought to character when selecting leaders.
- There must be ongoing training for the church planter, starting at college/seminary and continuing on a regular basis.
- Most of the weak churches where certain seminary students and graduates are pastoring could be changed if their leader would just practice the biblical principles he learned with patience, humility, and love.

c. *Teaching & equipping the members*

- From day one members must be trained in the basics of winning, organizing, and maturing new converts.
- Members also need more training in membership and stewardship.
- Train members that when they move, don't join other non-Baptist churches but rather start a fellowship and connect it with a nearby mother church.
- Members must keep making disciples wherever they go.
- Black/poor churches should commit themselves to missions as well as evangelism. We need more black missionaries.

d. *Finances*

- Teaching on giving is very deficient and misunderstood and needs to be addressed biblically and from diligent leaders who prove themselves more worthy of financial support.
- Pastors of the new churches must be allowed to do tentmaking so he can provide sufficiently for his family. BUSA area leaders can discuss with local congregations and advise, facilitate, and guide in how this can be done. But this option must be seen as a temporary arrangement.
- Churches should not be accepted into membership of the BUSA if they do not provide for their pastor.

- We must stop giving too much assistance from the outside, which creates dependency. A young church must learn to depend on the Lord – it will make them stronger.
- Partner poor churches with those churches with more resources, but give those churches some guidelines to help avoid dependency issues. But realize that in some of the poorest situations, dependency may be an unavoidable issue and accept that up front as a long-term relationship.
- There must be a re-examining of the financial support systems for being a church planter. Are there more creative ways to finance church planting that would create a deeper sense of ownership and commitment?
- These new churches must broaden their focus to include evangelism, discipleship and socio-economic development. This will help initiate ways of generating resources which will lead to sustainable livelihood in its local context.

- e. Another suggestion: Have an indaba, or at least some materials, for church planters to share successes and failures. Possibly use people who have had some success in planting certain types of churches. Find someone who has had success in some of the underprivileged areas of RSA.

From 3.2.4 – Transcript from interview with Rev. Hennie Venter of Samaria Mission

Conducted on 5 January, 2004, from 2:30-4:00 PM at Christ Baptist Church in Polokwane, South Africa.

Note: When Rev. Venter refers to “our church”, he is normally referring to Christ Baptist Church (CBC) in Polokwane, where his mission is based. When he refers to “our seminary”, he is referring to Christ Seminary, a pastoral training work that he was involved in founding in 1997 and which is also based at CBC. This seminary is intimately involved in the church planting work that Rev. Venter has been involved in, as will become clear in the following interview.

Tim: Hennie, could you describe basically your church planting experience. How you got involved in church planting, and summarizing what your experience has been up to the present.

Hennie: I think it started off just doing evangelism in the early 80's. Then in 1985 I discovered that you need to do a little bit more than just evangelise. There is the whole process of disciple making. You can't just leave a few disciples under a tree, which was basically what was happening. I would find a few believers in a village. They would meet under a little shack. But in those days, it was mainly under a tree. From there they would gather in a shack as the congregation grew.

I saw the churches struggle; there was a tremendous lack in discipleship, leadership and education. Most of them had very little knowledge of the Bible. Some of those who had just come to know the Lord would come together, pray and have a little Bible study. With this little knowledge, they would then start to preach. I think this type of development gave rise to the same disunity that Paul writes about in 1 Cor.3. In the church in Corinth, some would say, “I am from Apollos, I am from Cephas, and I am from Jesus”

That was exactly the same situation we had, but Paul says, “It is God who causes the growth”. I plant, another one waters, but God causes the growth. That same basic principle that Paul teaches to the congregation in Corinth, is the one from which we develop our whole strategy. Yes, there is one who sows the seed. This may be talking one to one at taxi ranks, or wherever you spread the gospel, you plant seeds, and God gives the growth. Somebody comes to the knowledge of Christ. From that point on then, the whole process of discipleship has to start.

Some of them we follow up daily. We have Bible study evenings to which they can invite a friend or relatives. This is how the churches were born. For example, we had a situation a few months ago where

there was not even a single believer in the whole village. The gospel was preached. People responded to the gospel. And that's where a nucleus of believers started off.

At this point we start to identify a person with leadership abilities. I look for a person in the group that has zeal. A person who is always there at prayer meetings, and who is quick to read their Bible, and who memorises the scripture verses. If you look at their notes, you can soon enough see if they are really serious. I then focus my attention on that person. I look for other Christians in the vicinity. I put them in contact, with other Baptist believers if possible.

This is where the whole process of partnership started. One planted, and others have to water. I could obviously not stay with them all the time, so I used Paul's model, where he sends someone back to disciple, e.g. Timothy or Titus. They go in there and teach and train. The Samaria Mission team is developed to this system.

These teams are made up of short-term workers of which we have had over 1200 from the USA over the last fifteen years. In addition we had about 800 from South Africa. We are looking at over 2000 workers in all. Some have come once; others have come ten times.

These helpers have very valuable skills and gifts to offer. But it is still the local leader in the church who makes the biggest difference in letting the church grow and continuing to water it. Yes, churches need spiritual highlights like church camps and conferences, but these local leaders also need to be boosted spiritually on a continual basis.

In the late 80's Pastor Nicki and I spoke about the need to train these local leaders. So we decided to enrol them for an T.E.E (Theological Education by Exension) course, but that did not really work. Then we moved on to try "Train & Multiply" curriculum. Although there was some success, this was not the answer. Some of the men did not have basic leadership skills. From this training need the Seminary developed. We needed a formal training, with the guy in class, combined with practical experience.

At this point, now after four years of graduates, we can take the list of those names and see how they and their churches are doing. But even 10 years is very short. Often in church history, it seems it may take 25 to 30 years, except for churches with very strong leadership. In these Mission churches, where there may be no strong leadership and knowledge of the Scriptures to start with, it may take even longer to see growth.

Without nurture, unity in the congregation is a problem and splinter groups develop easily, the same situation that developed in Corinth. Churches split, follow different leaders, and go here and there, and split again.

Another problem is that young leaders are not being trained and developed. We even find students here (at Christ Seminary) in their final year who have not yet appointed one deacon in their church. There is a great reluctance to appoint assistant leaders, even in the churches. Even after graduation this may not have happened.

This may be because certain so called "mother churches" do not nurture the "infant churches". This might be because the so-called "mother churches", though they are not really mothering, will prevent the appointment of deacons in the branch churches, on the grounds that these lack the training and expertise to be in charge of their own churches. If we go back to the Timothy/Titus situation, we note that Paul not only gave instructions for the appointment of deacons, but required that elders be appointed.

There is still the old mindset that only the big Bishop can appoint an elder or deacon. We sit with a tradition of a totally unbiblical church government structure in most of our rural churches, and even in the city churches as well. This is where they elect a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and a pastor. They then can each have a "vice" leader. And this is the governing body who decides where the money is going. Yet I remember one instance where an old lady was elected treasurer who had never in her life been in a bank! So in these churches people with no financial knowledge at all are collecting the money on a Sun. morning, going and buying coke, or whatever, and the money just disappears.

This is still a big problem in a lot of the churches being planted – no financial structure. And thus no administrative structures. Only about 10% of [the approximately 70 churches planted], responded satisfactorily to my request for a financial statement.

Tim: Yes, in a survey of 66 questions to the churches, covering sermon topics during the last two years and what kind of leaders they are training, etc. Factors such as accuracy and honesty in the response also remain potential problems. Are there really 8 men on avg. in these rural churches?

Hennie: What they mean is a female member's husband is viewed as still being a part of the church, yet he actually is working in Joburg, who is not a functioning member in the church who lives and works in the area.

Tim: You, with Samaria Mission, have been involved with approximately how many churches?

Hennie: Our practical involvement, meaning we did a campaign and stayed for at least three weeks, has been over 200 churches.

Tim: And provided buildings for?

Hennie: We provided buildings for 79 churches.

Tim: How many of these did Samaria Mission plant?

Hennie: This is a tricky question which depends on the definition of "a church being planted" If one of the members of an existing church asks us to accompany him to a village where he may have relatives, for the purpose of evangelisation, and a successful church grows from this endeavour, we would say Samaria Mission has started, planted, that church, in partnership with the mother church. But does the duty of follow-up and discipleship rest with the initiating church or with Samaria Mission?

There have, however, been churches established in villages where no one had ever been before. For example, take Mabuzane. We looked on the computer, found it on a map and went there. This is a remote village in Mozambique. We call this remote mission: We go to the Chief, ask to speak to the people. He welcomes us. This was the first contact they had ever had with Christians. Approximately 10% of the churches were planted in this way.

In other instances, we are coming alongside and assisting a church planter and a core group of believers (like Sam Lemolla). So we assist them with a tent campaign, discipleship, ongoing training.

And I would see the training we do at Christ Baptist Church (seminary) extending to meet this need, as the culmination of this process. We would then like them to become part of the bigger group of churches in the region, within the Baptist association of churches (BNA). Now they have a bigger responsibility. By now they should have a trained pastor, a congregation, administration should be in place, and should have good financial accountability. Because these are all requirements to be constituted in the BUSA.

At that point and time they should be a viable church, where they become part of your regional conf., fellowships, and fraternals. This is almost the end of the church planting process.

Then comes church development. Most still do not have youth ministries very developed. Most will have a women's ministries – on a Thurs., consisting of Bible study, and prayer times. But no training and growth-group training is going on. Despite the fact that they do evangelisation and church planting in their immediate vicinity, the larger vision of cross-cultural outreach to other countries and language groups needs to be fostered.

I have started to set up a database of all the planted churches so that a schedule for regular visits to these can be established. We now use our tent & evangelism ministry (with Paul Mabanne) among churches in a certain area.

In some areas, we have to start again and re-evangelise churches where only a sprinkling of women and children are left, after the pastor was sucked in by the Jehovah's Witnesses and he took all the other leaders with him. In these cases the entire process of church planting has to start from scratch. This is a long process.

Tim: In terms of the initial evangelism of an area, how effectively are the men being reached and evangelised, and how do you think this can be improved?

Hennie: It all depends on the area. Whether it is open to the gospel, what kind of religion has already been established there, who was there before you - all these things play a role.

Tim: But what about specifically in this Limpopo Province area with the BUSA churches?

I will just make a general statement. We have evangelistic meeting in the evening. The next morning we go into the schools, do a gospel presentation, share testimonies, and proclaim the gospel as clearly as possible in the short time given. But then on Thursday afternoons the Student Christian Movement may give you 2 hours. This is enough time to show the Jesus film and really do a thorough gospel presentation, and to challenge people to accept Jesus as their Saviour. Then you usually have very good results.

Say if an average attendance of 800 people attend the gospel meetings in the evening, about 120 to 200 may make a positive decision for Christ. Out of those, if you don't have good follow up and discipleship work, by reliable men who can do the job properly, that number may drop to about 20 when you come back 6 months later.

But if you have very good disciplers that care for them, pastor them, look after them and not run off to the next place, they may have grown to 80 or even 100. If they do not structure themselves and develop the various ministries, splinter groups are almost inevitable. Everything depends on leadership developing each of the ministries for different age groups.

The main point of conflict seems to lie between the youth and the older people. The young people want to forge ahead, while the older people are not willing to support this. The youth then tend to leave the church and join other groups who answer this need. Should the older people, however, be able to permit the youth to conduct their own youth ministry, within acceptable guidelines, it will work.

Tim: What methods are most effective though, in reaching the workingmen, do you think?

Hennie: You must build relationships. Even with the unsaved. If you do not build a relationship, it is like Nicki said last night, if you don't go and befriend a guy, there is no contact. If you befriend them and help them, you form valuable relationships, as I have done on many occasions.

I have won many men just by fixing their roads, building their schools, fix their water wells. Just serve the community. We did this in Mozambique and it is the only form of church planting which has resulted in equal proportions of men, women and children attending church on Sundays. This is the only instance in all our church planting efforts where this has happened. In all other planted churches it is mostly women and children attending the Sunday services.

Additionally in serving the community, we have done a more holistic ministry. We have for example, sharpened their tools, and fixed their plows. They appreciate it, so when you invite them to church, they come. If you ask them to make a commitment as the husband of the house to be the leader in the house, they do that.

In the Limpopo Province we have a long history and a totally different situation. In the apartheid years, men had to leave home and family to work far away in the city, and they don't come back to their families. So we are still reaping the fruits of these of unbalanced households.

Tim: Would you agree then that the workingmen are still out there in most of the rural areas? Are there men who just have to be reached through relationships?

Hennie: Oh, there are men absolutely. They have various businesses. Some have tasted the fruits of a successful business. Very few are making money through rely on agriculture for a livelihood. The rest, 90% or so, are making money through bottle stores, taxis and gambling houses and all sorts of soft illegal ways. But when they come to Christ they have to leave all of that. So they have to give up a lot to become a Christian.

Yet, we have a successful businessman in the Tzaneen area who is a leader in the church (Bokgaga?). We built the church there in 1990. He is very stable, and doing extremely well. He has no desire to become rich quickly. He owns a hardware shop and a grocery store. He is helping the poor, and is doing well in the church. The community respects him as the leader. He has no theological background. He may not be the best preacher, but he is a good discipler.

Tim: Do you think it perhaps throws out the balance when there is a two-pronged evangelistic approach: evenings, crusades to mainly impact the women and children, but then during the day, relationship building – forming individual relationships targeting the men. The evening approach, I am sure moves far more quickly than the forming of relationships during the day. If the core group of the church has now become women and children, and you are just coming to know the men, is this a deterrent? It is a new church, there was none, and now there are women and children. Is that a deterrent [to the men]?

I am thinking of this Andrew you met from Kenya mentioned something that in some areas where he has planted churches, they would start with a men's Bible study, and not until he had about 10 committed men, would they invite the women and children. Like Paul did in the old Jewish Synagogues. Not until he had 8 to 10 men who were saved and committed, would he encourage them to invite their women and children. This might not be the only method, but do you think it might be more effective?

Hennie: It is, in certain areas. In Malawi, for example, they use the same method successfully. In our areas it might work. But our problem lies with our younger pastors who don't want to be content with the people whom God gave him, and spend time with them.

It is not the task of the evangelist or missionary to shepherd those people. It must be a person who knows the culture, knows the language and discipled the people successfully. They must not only disciple them, but also counsel them.

This is a tremendous weakness. Real good counselling is generally not available. People have all sorts of problems, and there is no one to counsel them. The educated ones, like teachers, look at the pastors and say, 'Ah, that one, he doesn't really know his Bible. He cannot counsel.'

That is why we need men who have had their theological training, who know their Bibles well. That is why now I *only* build buildings for those who've had theological training. Even if I do not build one more church, I have enough work for the rest of my life to just go back to those churches and work alongside them.

But I do not see this as the answer. You must have a local pastor; he should be the shepherd of the congregation. My task is not to shepherd a congregation. God gave various gifts to the church for this purpose. I would rather go out pioneering work and help the ones that plant new churches.

That is why, if a pastor has planted more than four new churches, I do not help anymore, because he cannot care for so many people. And he must mature them so that they can constitute themselves. That is where we are in Venda now. They still are a little artificial about the matter. They are often prepared to let go of one church in order to retain my assistance. I look in depth at each case.

The maturity and growth of the newly planted churches are important. These are key factors in a decision as to whether a church can continue to exist unassisted by the "mother church". We can only assist a church planter for a limited time. The "mother church" must grow and take responsibility for their own churches. They must learn to walk on their own, not just leaning us like permanent crutches.

Some pastors are just lazy, and take chances. Some would only take a taxi on a Sunday to see their congregation for a few hours and to preach, and that would be the end of the contact with the congregation for the week. No discipling is done. For me, that's not a church planter. Unless they live there with the congregation, and are meaningfully involved, we no longer support them in church planting efforts. So we are more like mobilizers, church developers.

This is similar to the approach the Baptist Association has. They have resources to develop a church only to the point where they become self-sufficient. We at Christ Baptist are in the same position. If we did not have outside resources, our church, the buildings, the seminary and the mission outreach, I doubt that we would have been able to do it alone. Seriously, we did not have the manpower and resources to do this by ourselves.

I think that is a biblical principal right from the very first churches, that the more affluent churches should certainly assist the churches in need. We are, therefore, also under an obligation to assist struggling churches. Some of the graduating students still have nothing. Their church is just a shack.

And that's another thing – will men really come to a place like that. It depends on the pride and the area there. New converts come nicely dressed up, and then arrive and have to sit on the dust and bring their own chairs along. They may attend a few times, and then they might quit.

Although mature Christians may be able to overcome these difficulties, young Christians may not yet have the resilience to do the same. The comforts the world offers may be more attractive to them. In many of the villages there are very attractive houses.

I have not done an in-depth study on this matter, but here's what seems to happen. A person has finally advanced financially enough to move out of their shack into nicer accommodation. But to then worship in a shack on Sunday or under a tree, reminds them too much of the lifestyle they had worked so hard to leave behind them. They just don't want to do it. Often I have asked them.

Another big problem is laziness and alcohol. The men say, 'I know I'm bad, a sinner, and a drunkard. I don't want to go to church and hear you rebuking me as the first thing out of your mouth. I know I'm bad.'

My visits to some of the chiefs revealed a similar attitude. I've told them, 'If that's your lifestyle, that's your lifestyle. But I can tell you what the Word of God says, the way we should live. But I'm here to help in more ways than just to tell you you're not right. You know you're not right.' Then we develop very good relationships with these chiefs, and later on they open their hearts. When they have real problems, they call on you. Some of our younger preachers need to give more grace like this in trying to reach men. Otherwise, you don't make much progress in your churches. But most of the guys that are good disciplers – they will go and visit these men, build relationships with them, and win them for Christ.

Tim: In terms of evaluating the help and maturity of the churches, which is similar to what I was doing with the surveys, I would like to hear your estimates of the percentage of the churches that are healthy, mature, etc. Will you speak only about the 70 or so that you have been most involved with?

Hennie: Yes, and out of the 70 we can probably cut off about 20 – those who have said they don't want any more involvement from us. We do not want to come in and dominate. We want to give this church to the

community, it is their church. I want to earn the right to have a voice to the congregation. We accept this. We see our assistance such as church erection, etc., as a service to the community as a whole. It does not belong to the pastor. We tell them, 'This is your church.'

But still some leaders fall into sin, and various other causes which make a church fall into sin. But if the people are wounded, they will heal, and the congregation can be built again. But the key comes back to a pastor who has proper theological training and discipline.

Our input has been wider than just my own. It goes back to the church, selecting students, training and discipling them for four years. Yet I feel we did not visit and develop them the way we should have. There were various reasons for that.

Manpower was our chief problem. The requests for help are great; I sometimes have up to four calls per week. Some of these involve petty problems. They often expect some kind of miraculous solution from me. These usually involve splits, finances and leadership.

I have just had to take a decision to refuse some of these requests – it is just not possible to attend to all of them. For example a Chief called to remind me that he had not received a gift for Christmas, like he had the previous year. In this case the Lord laid it on my heart to bless him with a few rand and help meet his needs.

But some gifts have to be disregarded. Now if we look at the percentage of the ones which are growing: they are the ones who apply the principals they have been taught, who regularly attend our fraternals, those who are faithful and really want to serve God – they are the ones we are prepared to assist.

This is why we try to use conferences centred on their needs. ... Ask the pastor what kind of training they need. Then when you go, you know you won't miss the mark. The needs they list – *those are* the real needs.

Tim: Just to get some approximate figures on paper, out of the seventy churches, what percentage would you say have a capable godly leader/pastor who has had some kind of adequate training. I tried to break it down to these four criteria:

- (a) their own pastor, who is a good example, shepherding and teaching in a biblical way.
- (b) Secondly, has a committed membership, who submits to the scriptures, which grows in Christ, participating, praying and evangelising. It does not mean that they are perfect, or that every member fits these criteria, but that their overall reputation as a body is according to the New Testament requirements.
- (c) Thirdly: that they are taking financial responsibility as managers of their church, supporting their pastor; a church that is able to function independently.
- (d) Fourthly, that they are a stable Antioch kind of church which is a model for other churches and which is ready to reproduce itself. Obviously, if it were anaemic or unhealthy it would reproduce more sick churches. Ones about which would be prepared to say: yes, we would like more of these. How many of the 70 are in this category would you say?

Hennie: I would have to look at my records to give you an accurate answer. The Venda churches are above average: Sibasa, Ngewanani. Some of these we did not start. There was already a good group of believers gathering. We just supplied a church building to the community, which could also be used for purposes other than church as such, to serve the community (with a crèche). This leads to more holistic ministry, which we encourage.

One of the urban Venda churches has a lot of old members. Although they boomed occasionally, they lacked a good pastor. The old businessman who led them did not fully answer this need. He mainly taught the wisdom which he himself had from an office job in Joburg. He then forced those principles down and cited a few scripture verses in support.

Eventually the people refused to give to leaders like this, and this led to financial instability. Almost all the old Baptist pastors, which we had, they are almost all gone. Many have gone off the rails, and done more damage than good.

It is hard to comment, accurately, they've just faded out and are not active. The good guys are all gone down to the Reef. But they did not train leave many trained leaders behind them, if any. So the church becomes stagnant. If they do not have a godly trained leader the congregation goes nowhere.

I think about one of our good guys (one of the early Christ Seminary graduates). He should *never* have left his area to go down south. But the situation with the old pastor in his area made it so that he'd rather just go away and start from scratch, live in a shack and have 10 people than to try and minister under those circumstances. It is not that we did not try to help. We had meetings after meetings, we had the Baptist Association Executive meeting to try and remedy the situation, but to no avail. It won't be solved until the old man dies....

We had excellent guys around Burgersfort. Another group came in and just spoiled everything. ... We had more than 30 churches there before they wreaked havoc. They led folks away to the Assemblies and other denominations. Right now the growth of charismatic churches, statistically, are the highest in the world in South Africa, based on some Internet statistics I just read this week. I cannot remember the web address, but can get it to you later if you'd like.

In answer to your question about the number of mature churches at present, I would say that there are *about* 20. This would include the churches of some of the students who graduated last year. Although some of these are still struggling. [Their churches may still be very young, but at least they have a promising leader.]

For example, one of the student's nearby village church. He wanted to start a work in town as well. However, if he would just give his full attention to that village congregation, he would achieve more. There are a lot of businessmen and young men there. This is a settled community who commute to the city. It has great potential for discipleship and building a very viable church. This is one of the newest works. We helped him last year with his church building. I was disappointed that he wants to drop them and get a new guy who would become a first year student (at the seminary) to take his place.

How then do you mature churches (if someone does not stay)? They need to see that model. Eric Levhebe and Edson Magoloi (in Venda) give that model. Then down at Driekop: Lucas Mashegoane has been committed to this work for the last 15-16 years. The businessman at Tzaneen is committed to his work. Also Rustenburg (Sam Mokone). And Hans at Thabazimbi. Hammanskraal also has very strong churches. And Soshanguve. Ivory Park is also a very strong church.

City churches are actually more stable than the rural churches. But in these churches our involvement was very little. Within the association (BNA) there is help and giftedness. There are already many established churches in Johannesburg and Pretoria, who can nurture the growing churches, e.g. Hammanskraal. This occasionally leads to conflict. We initiated the evangelistic work and the work in the schools, and a church building.,

We had one real flop where the leader messed everything up. At least, now there is a building, and if a godly, trained man were to be put there now, if he would form relationships with the businessmen, live there, make relationships with the people, he would be successful. But in a few years land may be too expensive and unattainable. There are some faithful Christians there, but they do not know where to go. There is a little group who meet for preaching and teaching... they do the best they can with the little knowledge they have. If someone goes back and does a faithful ministry, then gifted men will be added to the church. In this way serving the community, Sunday School, Bible studies for young and older men, women's ministry will flourish. The people will come.

Tim: How often over these fifteen years did receiving a church building make a noticeable improvement in evangelism, church maturity and attendance – overall health?

Hennie: It depends on the leader. Take Nicholas at Hammanskraal – there was immediate improvement. We went with him on house visitation of the church members. We had a specific purpose of visiting, spending time with people, caring for their needs, and praying with them. We found a very open, friendly response, and then they come to the evening meetings.

Also, baptism now takes place *at* the church, rather than taking a few people in a “bakkie” to a far place. And the sewing ministry, which the women started, could make use of the building immediately. In this way they could equip the ladies to possibly earn a living..

Near Matibidi (Graskop), where a church building was erected in 1963, we came to help them and there was immediate improvement after we helped them with their building.

Tim: Would you say it was a similar figure to what you mentioned before, about 20 or so out of the 70? Are they the ones which had a leader in place?

Hennie: (Yes) I think the rest of them do not have qualified leaders yet. They are not qualified and not mature.

There are about 5 of them, because of the political change in S.A., mines closing down, or forceful removal, relocation of the churches has to be considered. Payment for the relocation of churches can be claimed. A few family members may remain on the old site, and other re-allocated members continue to walk with the Lord in their new places of residence.

We are trying now to look at more stable places – like nearby here in Mankweng/Turfloop. We don’t just come in anymore and say, ‘Hey, we’re here to build you a church. No, we come and help you to build up what you’ve got.’ They already have a site, and a shack where they meet. Now we can help them build a hall which can be also used as a day care centre, church, and be used to serve the community in other ways. There are many arrangements such as getting permits, doing surveys of existing day care centres, finding out whether teachers are available, that have to be done in these instances. This extends the influence of the church to the parents of children who attend the day care. A children’s ministry can be started, and more educated people may attend church in a suitable venue. Then the congregation can do their own planning and dreaming, and eventually build their own church. ... They have the ability to do that.

The supporting churches (from USA) who come on Mission trips to help Samaria Mission either want to evangelise, want to render medical services, are equipped to do construction work, or others want to sink boreholes. We like to allow each church a chance to do what they are best equipped to do. They raise their own funds for their projects. In this we carefully have to consider whether it is God’s will that, for example, a new church be constructed. There are some congregations that just cannot help themselves at this point. If we’re not coming alongside them to build a little church [building], they would not be in existence today. The building is also important to pastors who come to poor congregations where even essentials like food may be lacking. Otherwise, they will leave and go to a better place. Especially when a man graduates from our seminary and is qualified and expects something better.

Tim: As one of my final questions, what is the key do you think, to get over the hump of over half of our churches who never get beyond infancy, or never growing past adolescence, mainly because of leadership. What is the key to leaders staying put, especially in these rural areas?

Hennie: We must have a church development program, or better, let’s call it a lifestyle. We must have more partnerships with them. We must help them; they cannot help themselves.

Tim: How do we get rid of the idea that because Samaria Mission is planting a lot of new churches, therefore, each new church should follow their example? By this they spread themselves so thin, which leads to the complications you mentioned?

Hennie: That must become a part of their official 4-year training. We need to teach them not to be greedy, but to seek God's will in the matter. This to stop carnal competitions of who can plant the most churches.

We have to give them a clear vision of their task. Closer relationships with the Seminary students will open doors for guidance on the wisdom of certain decisions. In our own church we have absolutely godly leaders, with wisdom and so much knowledge.

In our church here (CBC), we have godly leaders and elders with wisdom and knowledge, guys from the business world and the church. So we can reach good, sensible conclusions before we do something. But these guys (in the black rural churches) have nobody! They just talk to their wives, or to one of the youth, and then off they go. They have no real eldership counsel. If that can happen, where they can have a group of elders in a church that can really reach wise decisions. And the pastor is the one equipping and training these elders.

But at the moment 90% of the churches are not run by a biblical structure. Instead, the congregation votes the leader in, he's a deacon, and the church is actually run by a committee structure. Until this changes, the church will not come right – it must change. How to change this will be a real process, but we can do it through proper training.

A pastor cannot just walk in and say, 'Listen, I'm just going to appoint elders and deacons, etc.' But they didn't disciple them in this – they just dominated, so they upset a whole lot of people. And they especially threaten the key man in the church who is treasurer or committee chairman.

But through proper training, we must teach them the role of the elders, and deacons, and the women in the church. This is real process (i.e., it takes time). And guys cannot implement this alone. Perhaps starting in their 3rd year at seminary they start implementing this in their congregations. And they cannot do this alone. If they have a mother church over them.... Now if we have a good relationship, and church development, we can come alongside of them.

Take for example one of the seminary graduates working out in Venda, living in a little box, in a little church building that is falling apart. The mother church thinks things are going fine at that church. But we have to go and say, 'No, things are not going well there.' They don't have their own bank account, etc. When he enters his final year of seminary, that church should be at a point where they will all be there with him when he graduates. They should be able to say, 'Here is our church leadership, our own bank account. We're now in fellowships status with the BNA. Within 3 more years we will constitute as a church having at least 40 solid adult members in our church.'

Yet, if you speak to that pastor there in that little church in Venda, he sees it as a hopeless situation with no direction. He doesn't feel he can improve himself, because he lives under the system that the individual like me doesn't have a say, but rather the community, "our people", decides for me (i.e., the mother church). The mother church has a *bunch* of churches, and no time to take care of the branch churches, or even all of their own affairs. So I said, 'You guys must mature first (i.e. slow down'. But again, I think without external development help, they cannot help themselves.

Their own church (Sibasa) is doing well, but they need serious help in developing their daughter churches. In the past, they've had a good track record of each new church constituting every five years or so. But I think now they just wanted to grow too quick. That's why we also cannot be irresponsible by helping them in their rushed growth.

A good example is another seminary student who's entering his fourth year now and is just floating around. He doesn't know where he belongs. They move him here, they move him there. Once we built a building, and they promised us he was the one assigned to this work. But then they changed it, and now they just send deacons to that work from time to time. But we must train a guy who can stay there and build up that congregation and build relationships. These things need serious attention and better partnerships with these mother churches.

One cause is that there are still not good models so they still don't really know how it works (good church-planting). ...But if I could sit with that guy and do his training, get him in one place, let him work, do his preaching and teaching, and train leaders there, with the approval of the mother church, it will work! That guy will blossom, and he will do his job. We've seen this on our house visitations, where the time comes that he (the man we're training) preaches. He did an excellent job.

But, again, we sit with the cultural situation where he thinks, 'I'm young, I'm not married, I'm nothing.' Not all are like that, but I tell you, in the rural areas, the *majority* are like that. They are so afraid to stand up as a strong leader and lead. They feel they are not acknowledged by the community.

Tim: Then maybe they shouldn't be put in leadership so soon.

Hennie: Yet Paul said to Timothy not to let them look down on you. Young leaders are sometimes needed. The additional responsibilities of marriage and children often sap the zeal of some preachers. It all depends on the character of the individual. There is no easy answer. At least we are giving the guys good theological training. But we must add the practical implementation – how to do what they've learned, e.g., church administration.

Samaria Mission wants to focus on this aspect in the next few years. We want to focus on the current seminary students and their churches, rather than starting new work within the next ten years. We envisage, when we do outside mission, to concentrate on the students in the seminary to visit their homes, build relationships, do discipleship with them, build churches and assist them to establish a viable church. I think the third and fourth year students would be a good place to start.

They need face-to-face, discipling time. I know that our seminary lecturers alone cannot do this. They don't just need someone to come and evaluate them. They need someone to solve their problems. You can't solve all of them, but we must solve some. E.g., teach them to fix their vehicle. This is where we can equip the leaders so that they can then help their congregations with similar problems.

I think that's where we really want to focus now. Our whole mission must build better relationships with all students. When we can go and live on site with a student for 30 days. Then you really get to know him, his place, see who knows him, see his ministry skills. And we must take out, over the border to Mozambique. It expands their mind, it shows them real poverty. We've seen even the rural churches responding by sending clothes to the poor in Mozambique. Our role can be to help expose them to needs, especially the churches that don't have the resources.

TIM: Is there a time you would actually encourage a church to disband? and to transport to a more stable church that is nearest to them? If there were only a couple of women and children left, would you do this?

Hennie: We have already done that. We directed the few remaining members to another evangelical church, (eg. Church of the Nazarene). One pastor wants us to build another building 5 kms. from his previous church that he caused to split. We said no. Those two churches must overcome their differences.

Everything has its time. There was a time for us to build new churches, but that time is running out. The funding for this is drying up. The International Mission Board (Southern Baptists) has shifted their whole emphasis toward the unreached countries. They think countries like ours can help themselves.

Annexure C – Greg Gilbert's review of David Garrison's booklet, *Church Planting Movements*

[Note: This review by Gilbert (2004) is included for several reasons. One, it nicely summarizes Garrison's booklet, one of the key writings on this subject of church planting movements, from a key partner of the BUSA—the Southern Baptist Convention. Two, it expresses the researcher's own excitement over many aspects of these movements, and it reinforces many of the suggestions made by the researcher. Three, it raises the very questions and concerns which the researcher has attempted to raise with regard to church planting in the BUSA and across Africa. Some of the most pivotal statements in this review have been placed in bold print by the researcher.]

[Greg Gilbert, a graduate of Yale University, is a pastoral assistant at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.]

It is genuinely exciting to read the International Mission Board's booklet on "Church Planting Movements." I am proud to be a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, in large part because of the good work that is being done around the world by men and women who are supported and funded by the IMB. This is the reason the SBC was founded in the first place, and I am glad to see the men and women of the IMB so determinedly pursuing their goal of preaching the gospel of Christ to every people group on the earth. The philosophy of church planting in the IMB is mostly good, and new in many respects. Certainly people have written and talked about indigenous churches for centuries—since the days of Matteo Ricci in China—but the last few decades have seen the IMB wisely scuttle its strategy of erecting mini-Southern Baptist churches in the rural wilds of Africa and East Asia. What has taken that strategy's place is a much better one—to establish indigenous Christian churches within a given people group or population segment. More specifically, as David Garrison puts it, the goal is to nurture among all peoples what he calls "Church Planting Movements," which are defined as "rapid and multiplicative increases of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment." (7)

A Church Planting Movement begins when a foreign missionary brings the gospel to a people group for the first time. "The gospel is not able to spring up intuitively within a people group," writes Garrison. "The gospel always enters a people group from the outside; this is the task of the missionary," (8). Once the missionary has established a church among that people, the task is to instill in them a passion for starting new churches, not under the direction of the missionary, but by their own authority and with their own resources. In fact, Garrison writes, by the time a third-generation church is planted, the original missionary should have little or nothing to do with it. The work by that time is entirely indigenous. Most churches in a CPM, as he calls them, are either house or cell churches, small in number, and led by what Garrison calls "lay leaders," which he seems to define as leaders who are not formally trained in theology by an institution such as a seminary and who are usually bi-vocational.

In several ways, this is a radical and important departure from missions efforts of the past. Where the Foreign Mission Board of yore might have spent thousands of dollars and many years planting a single church—you have to send the pastor to seminary, send Southern Baptist youth groups over for a week to construct a building, set up Vacation Bible Schools, etc.—this new approach seems to have a much higher metabolism. There is an urgency here to see these people groups won to Christ. The focus is not on creating a denomination or an institution but rapidly spreading the gospel to as many people as possible. That urgency in itself (even if it raises some questions that we will later discuss) is commendable. Another well-conceived aspect of this strategy is the obvious determination to keep the movements indigenous. IMB missionaries are to be conscious and deliberate about making sure that every part of the church planting effort is autochthonous.

Whenever missionaries begin planting churches with components that cannot be reproduced by the people themselves, they have undermined a Church Planting Movement. The temptation is always there: it seems quicker and easier to import a solution for a local challenge than search for an indigenous solution. Extraneous items may be as innocuous as cinderblocks for construction, electronic sound systems or imported folding chairs. . . . CPM practitioners evaluate every aspect of each church start with the question: "Can this be reproduced by these believers?" If the answer is "no," then the foreign element is discarded, (50).

This, I think, is a wise strategy. It is refreshing to hear this kind of strategy discussed with no trace of the normal reasoning that so often lies behind this kind of “nothing-American” talk. The end here is not simply to preserve culture for the sake of preserving culture. My guess, in fact, is that the IMB would have no problem at all with Buddhist or Muslim or any other satanic, pagan culture being completely erased, so long as the gospel reaches these people. On the contrary, the end of limiting American and Western assistance is to preserve the “wild” in these new believers so that even when Western financial assistance dries up, they keep their resolve to carry the gospel of Christ to their lost countrymen. A commendable goal, in my opinion. Finally, I think the use of house churches is a fine aspect of the IMB strategy as laid out in Garrison’s book. Church buildings are fine to have in a culture where Christianity is firmly ensconced. But among a nation where the frontier of the gospel expands with each passing day, there is hardly time or need to take a few years off to build a nice worship center. Christian churches may meet just as well in homes as in steepled structures with glass doors. In fact, meeting in a church building could actually lead to church members having an unhealthy sense of establishment and permanence, and so losing their passionate urgency. **These three aspects of the IMB’s strategy—urgency, indigenous churches, and house churches—are, I believe, wise and commendable.**

If there is one part of the Church Planting Movement strategy that raises questions in my mind, it is the insistence on rapidity. I have said that I think there is a right sense of urgency in Garrison’s book, but I wonder also if there is some measure of a wrong impatience. Speed is a part of the very definition that Garrison gives of a CPM. It is a “rapid . . . increase” of churches, (7). He lists “Rapid reproduction” as one of the Universal Elements of CPMs. “Some have challenged the necessity of rapid reproduction for the life of the Church Planting Movement, but no one has questioned its evidence in *every* CPM,” (36). The logic there is slightly tortured—the reason no one has questioned the existence of rapid reproduction in *every* CPM is that you have *defined* a CPM by rapid reproduction. That’s a little like saying that no one has questioned the presence of peanuts in *every* jar of true peanut butter. But tortured logic aside, there is in Garrison’s work a pressing demand for rapid growth, a demand that raises legitimate questions.

The desire to see these Church Planting Movements exploding with “multiplicative” speed has forced Garrison into a defensive posture against institutional theological training, or to be less euphemistic, against seminaries. Consider this statement: “Since the first theological school at Alexandria, Egypt, seminaries have proven themselves capable of transmitting heresy as well as sound doctrine. The same is true today,” (47). Or this: “It is striking that moral character and willingness to follow Christ are given much greater weight [by Paul] than theological training or academic degrees,” (51). I can sympathize with what Garrison is writing. In the past, a denominational demand that church leaders be pulled away from their brand new churches to go through three years of seminary has been disastrous. I agree with Garrison that it is good to avoid that temptation, (44). Seminaries are a luxury that we can afford as a result of having a fairly established Christian witness in the West. But long seminary training programs are not what we see in the New Testament. Church leaders were trained in the churches themselves. That is what we are seeing on the frontier of the gospel. Leaders are being trained within the churches and are then turning to mentor others for the same task of leadership. We cannot expect the church of the frontier to conform to or even benefit from the luxuries that we have as a society with a long-established Christian witness (making no statement there, of course, about the *health* of that witness, which is another question entirely).

That said, I am left with many unanswered questions from Garrison’s description of the IMB vision. Most of those questions have to do with the development of strong leadership in an environment where rapidity is so prized. I worry that the push for speed may be cutting the feet out from under these many churches before they are even started. It is one thing to start a huge number of churches in a short time; it is quite another for those churches to remain healthy and sound witnesses for decades to come. For that, you need solid, well-grounded leadership. I cannot say for sure that Church Planting Movements are not producing these kinds of leaders, but from Garrison’s book, neither is it clear that they are. Garrison mentions a training program that consists of “eight two-week modules,” (29). If you do the math, that comes to a grand total of four months of formal training in the doctrines of Christianity before a person is sent to

plant another church. Those leaders are presumably being trained in their churches for longer than those four months (Garrison, in fact, says that the four months of formal training are spread out over two years). Maybe that's enough. God, of course, is sovereign. **The concern here is not that leaders of these churches have formal training. They can all be "lay" leaders, for all I care. My concern is that they all be solidly instructed in the doctrines and beliefs of Christians, and be taught how to rightly divide the Word of truth.** One section of the book is particularly disturbing. Garrison writes: "Church Planting Movements are driven by lay leaders. These lay leaders are typically bivocational and come from the general profile of the people group being reached. In other words, if the people group is primarily non-literate, then the leadership shared this characteristic. If the people are primarily fishermen, so too are their lay leaders," (35). Fishermen, okay. But illiterate Christian leaders? That can't possibly be a good idea. How is a Christian leader supposed to rightly divide the Word of truth if he is illiterate? Garrison defends the practice like this: "This reliance upon lay leadership ensures the largest possible pool of potential church planters and cell church leaders. Dependence upon seminary-trained—or in nonliterate societies, even educated—pastoral leaders means that the work will always face a leadership deficit," (35). Seminary-trained I am not so worried about, but a pastor needs to know how to read. That's okay. **Let the explosion of new churches slow down for a few years because of a leadership deficit while these men are taught, at the very least, how to read. Otherwise, a decade from now, you will undoubtedly see a thousand indigenous churches with an orthodoxy-deficit. Wouldn't it be worth the time spent to teach these leaders how to read the Bible instead of planting thousands of churches who claim to have the Bible as their authority but are utterly incapable of knowing what it says?**

My final question is with how these new churches are being structured. Garrison writes on page 34, "Even among nonliterate people groups, the Bible has been the guiding source for doctrine, church polity and life itself." That's a good sentence to read. I am glad to hear that these churches are at least intending to be structured according to biblical teaching (church polity). I still have some questions, though. For example, it is strange to me to see a Baptist publication talking about cell churches, and describing them as being "linked to one another in some type of structured network, often linked to a larger, single church identity," (35). I thought Baptists were settled in their conviction that the Bible teaches that churches are to be fully autonomous, each having what theologians have historically called "the keys," that is, the authority to admit and discipline its own members independent of any other earthly authority. Other questions: **Are the churches in CPMs being established with a strong body of elders to lead them permanently, or at least long-term? What is the role of deacons in the churches? These are not just academic questions that one can sweep aside by saying, "We're winning people to Christ and you're worried about church politics!" No, these are the leadership structures that the Lord has set up to make sure that CPM churches, or any churches for that matter, are not just flashes in the evangelistic bucket. It is part of the essence of planting a church to teach it what the Bible says about how it is to structure itself, how it is to sustain itself. What we want here are strong, healthy churches that maintain their witness for decades and centuries to come. It is precisely to that end that Christ has instituted leadership structures such as elders and deacons. The IMB would be wise to consider that the Lord does not intend for churches simply to be planted, but also to be taught from the Bible, at the very beginning, how they are to be sustained.**

This is all in all a fine book. I am excited by reading it to think and pray about the churches that are being planted among nations all over the world. I look forward to the day when every tribe and tongue and people and nation will erupt in praise to our Redeemer! I would, though, encourage the IMB to give some further thought, and put into writing, a sound strategy for teaching these churches what the Bible says about how they are to organize and structure their lives together as a church. In other words, don't simply plant churches; teach them how to sustain themselves for decades to come. The Bible has much to say on that topic—even about how their leadership structures should look. Fortunately, this is an area in which Baptists are well-practiced. The structure of the church is our denominational *raison d'être*. I hope that the leaders of the IMB and of the Church Planting Movements around the world will see the wisdom of learning from their forbears, and especially from the Bible, about these important matters.

Annexure D – Worksheet for equipping members

EXAMINING & IMPROVING YOUR PARTICIPATION IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH BODY

For each question, give yourself a score on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "very poor involvement" and 5 being "very good involvement (by the grace of God)".

1. In the Sunday worship services:

- a. Do you come prepared for public worship by being well-rested, having a pure heart and a focused mind, and praying beforehand for the service(s)? (Ps. 15; Heb. 10:22, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- b. Are you committed to listening attentively to the sermon and applying it to your life? (Acts 2:42; Jam. 1:25, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- c. Are you regularly, sacrificially, cheerfully giving of your finances to the church so that the Lord's work may continue? (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 9:6-8)

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- d. Do you have genuine Christian fellowship with other believers, going beyond mere socializing by also discussing spiritual things together? (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:24-25, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- e. Since being saved, have you publicly confessed Christ through being baptised (Acts 2:41, etc.)?

YES / NO

Do you regularly partake of the Lord's supper, making sure that your heart is properly prepared and that you are coming to worship and remember Christ afresh?

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- f. During the singing, do you sing wholeheartedly to the Lord, also concentrating on the words you are singing? (Eph. 5:18-19; John 4:24)

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

- g. How is your commitment to corporate prayer with other believers: do you participate and concentrate when others are leading in corporate prayer? do you have other weekly times of fervent prayer with other believers?

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

2. In using your spiritual gift(s):

- a. In which of these areas of giftedness has the Holy Spirit gifted you to help build up the church body? (1 Pet. 4:10-11) *Circle one or more :*

In words (speakers):

- Evangelism – reaching the lost for Christ (Eph. 4:11)
- Teaching – explaining God's Word clearly to others (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28)
- Pastor-Teaching – shepherding God's flock (Eph. 4:11)
- Exhortation – comforting, encouraging, and counselling others (Rom. 12:8)
- Governing – leading and administering in church matters, and guiding others in godliness (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

In deeds (servers):

- Helps, or Service – any supporting or assisting in the various practical needs of the church (1 Cor. 12:28)
- Showing Mercy – caring for the hurting, such as the sick, the elderly or disabled, or the poor (Rom. 12:8)
- Giving – sacrificially sharing one's resources to meet the needs of others (Rom. 12:8)
- Governing – helping to administrate or organize various ministries or church matters (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

- b. IF you have *no idea* of what your spiritual gift(s) is:

(a) Which ministries at this church would I most like to be involved with, learn more about, and contribute to? _____

(b) Who will I speak to for advice on discovering my spiritual gifts and finding a place to serve at this church (where I might be needed, where I might be most useful, etc.)? _____

- c. IF you do have an idea of what your spiritual gift is, how actively have you been using it to serve and edify this church body? Do you truly see yourself as one of the "ministers" (1 Cor. 12:5) at this church who plays a vital role?

1 2 3 4 5

→What are some ways you will improve your involvement in this area?:

3. In practicing the 'one-anothers':

- a. *How actively and intentionally have you been practicing each of the following commands in your relationship with fellow believers?:*

Being devoted to others with brotherly affection? (Rom. 12:10)	1	2	3	4	5
Honouring and affirming others? (Rom. 12:10)	1	2	3	4	5
Pursuing opportunities for hospitality? (Rom. 12:13)	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting the practical needs of others? (Rom. 12:13)	1	2	3	4	5
Pursuing peace and unity with others? (Rom. 12:16,18; Eph. 4:3)	1	2	3	4	5
Greeting other believers in a warm-hearted, Christian way? (Rom. 16:16)	1	2	3	4	5
Verbally encouraging and building up others so that they grow in Christ, seeking to spur them on toward love and good deeds? (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25)	1	2	3	4	5
Confessing your sin to others? (Jam. 5:16)	1	2	3	4	5
Treating others as more important than yourself, looking out for their interests above your own? (Php. 2:3-4)	1	2	3	4	5
Praying consistently for others? (1 Thess. 5:16)	1	2	3	4	5
Showing kindness to others, patiently bearing with them and overlooking minor offenses? (Eph. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:7)	1	2	3	4	5
Being careful only to speak what is loving and edifying to others? (Eph. 4:32)	1	2	3	4	5
Confronting and seeking to restore others when they fall into serious patterns of sin? (Prov. 27:5-6; Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15)	1	2	3	4	5

→How do you specifically plan to improve in some of the 'one-anothers' where your score was the lowest? (use other paper if needed):

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ADDENDUM:

The following books were not formally used by the researcher in the thesis, but were recommended in chapter 5 as useful resources in strengthening churches and equipping believers:

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- Biblical Decision-making: Is it God's will to "find" His will? (© 2001)
- The Companionship Principle: Bringing biblical sanity to the insanity of dating. (© 1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- Forgiving Like God Forgives: God's plan for restoring peace to sin-shattered relationships. (© 1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- How to Handle Calamity: A study in fear-of-the-Lord faith from the book of Job. (© 2003)

- Identifying False Teachers: A biblical checklist for identifying false teachers in the church. (© 2001)
- Overcoming Anger: A biblical guide for becoming patient, tolerant, and slow to anger. (© 2000, 2001 Revised edition)
- Questions and Answers about Healing, Tongues, and Prophecy (© 2004)
- Testing Today's Prophets: Does today's "prophecy" measure up to biblical standards? (© 1999, 2001 Revised edition)
- What Will Heaven Be Like? (© 2003)
- Infant Baptism vs. Believer's Baptism (© 2003)
- How to Study the Bible: A course for serious Bible students and teachers (© 2004)

These booklets can be purchased by contacting Rev. James on e-mail at joel.james@pixie.co.za, or by contacting Grace Fellowship Church in Pretoria.

JAMES, JOEL. 2003. Elder's ordination study manual. Pretoria : Grace Fellowship Church.

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THEOLOGICAL ADVISORY GROUP. Machakos, Kenya : Scott Theological College. Various books recommended:

Prayer & Worship in the Church in Africa (1989, 1991)

Biblical Marriage & Family in Africa (1996)

The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa (1999)

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