

e-concepts

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Church Planting and the Great Commission

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Many “local churches” and “church planting” missions operate on the philosophy that the New Testament model of ministry is the reproducing of “local churches.” This idea is filled with misconceptions incurred by reading our cultural paradigm back into the New Testament, rather than modeling the ministry of the apostles.

First of all, our concept of an independent “local church” was not created by the apostles. It’s a cultural development of the last few hundred years. Second, the Great Commission is to go **make disciples** of the (*ethnos*) *outsiders, unbelievers* (Matt 28:19-20), not to reproduce local churches.

There is no command anywhere in the New Testament to go and make local churches

Paul proclaimed the Gospel that led people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, disciplined those people, and instructed them to follow Christ. He encouraged them to reach their neighbors with the Gospel, study to show themselves approved to God, and to *entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Tim 2:2). Some of those things required assemblies or were aided by assemblies. So Paul, among other things, utilized them. But to say Paul went to cities to establish assemblies is to miss the point.

Neither Christ nor the apostles ever instructed anybody to go and plant “local churches.” If we make church-planting our goal, instead of making disciples, then we will likely be content if our new assemblies are filled with people leaving other “local churches” for ours because we have a better program, a better speaker, or a more well-thought-out agenda. But if, like Christ and the apostles, our objective is to go make disciples of outsiders, then those new disciples will need to assemble. Gathering is something the church does, not what the church is.

The apostles did not think that believers would function on this earth as individual islands disconnected from one another. But their solution to that that was not to create independent “local churches” disconnected from one another. What they created was **a climate of loving one another through networking together in a fellowship of interactions among believers within one’s own city, and then larger geographic regions.**

Believers are individuals, and that **individuality** is essential to understand. They are **individually** responsible for studying to show themselves approved unto God. They are **individually** responsible for evangelism, discipleship, giving to the poor, supporting their teachers, loving their wives, submitting to their husbands, praying, worshipping, loving their brothers and their enemies. They are gifted by the Holy Spirit **individually**. Believers are autonomous **individuals** throughout all of eternity. Communities come, go, and change. **The individual believer will be the same person, individually responsible, individually judged, individually rewarded, individually somewhere forever.**

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