ENTRANCE AND EXIT STRATEGIES IN CHURCH PLANTING

A Seminar Paper

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus once declared to his disciples that He would build his church. Christians may plant, water and harvest, but it is God who gives the increase. Therefore, one may ask, why even bother with a strategy? Just preach the gospel and leave the results to Jesus! Though such a sentiment sounds good and spiritual, in reality it is neither good nor spiritual!

Any church that has experienced years of consistent growth has done so because of good planning. Any mission endeavor that has consistently produced independent churches has done so because of careful planning. The old cliche "those who fail to plan, plan to fail" is very true with regards to Christian ministry.

Planning is essential for any missionary endeavor. A missionary may be a great soul-winner, but without a proper strategy for ministry, his zeal will not translate into healthy independent local churches.

Today, there is no end to the books dedicated to mission strategies and methods. With each generation comes enticing "new" ideas that offer great promises for maximum impact on world evangelism. With such a plethora of new innovative ideas one must continually draw breath and ask the question-is it Biblical?

This paper seeks to examine one such "new" methodology. It is the strategy called Phase-in/Phase-out. There will be six major headings in this work. They are *Defining Phase-In And Phase-Out*, *A Biblical Perspective For A Phase Strategy*, *Two Important Steps In A Phase Strategy*, *The Need For A Phase Strategy*, *The Danger Of Dependency: Church Planting Without A Phase Strategy*, and *The Importance Of Independency: The Reason For Developing A Phase Strategy*.

No two mission endeavors are identical. Therefore, each new ministry will employ its own unique methods and will have its own unique characteristics. However, there are some principles and strategies that can be applied universally. The methods of ministry employed should be determined by the missionary's purpose.

If the missionary desires to plant churches that can grow to become independent then he will need to employ very specific strategies. This paper offers the proposition that any missionary who desires to establish a church that is self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, self-teaching, self-expressing and self-theologizing will have to develop a phase-in/phase-out strategy before entering his work. The end result of his ministry will be determined by the strategies employed at the very beginning of his career.

DEFINING "PHASE IN" AND "PHASE OUT"

Both phase-in and phase-out are but different stages of the same vision. There is only one real strategy. That strategy is for the missionary to enter a field, plant

churches, train the nationals to lead those congregations and then leave that field with healthy churches. If these churches are governed, propagated and led by nationals and not other career missionaries then the missionary has executed a successful phase-in/phase-out strategy. The following subheadings offers a definition of phase-in and phase-out.

<u>Phase In</u>

Before a missionary enters into the field he must ask himself three questions. First, What has God called me to do? Second, How will I do it? Third, How will I know when I have done it? A good phase-in strategy will answer these three questions.

A proper phase-in strategy establishes the missionary's purpose, vision, mission, objectives and goals. This will be done before he begins his actual work. During this pre-entry stage the missionary needs to develop a working model for his future ministry.

Thomas A. Steffen, in his book *Passing The Baton* suggest that a church planting model should include a minimum of five components. This model should be Biblical, Incarnational, Holistic, Empowering and Reproductive (Steffen 83).

The first component is the most obvious. Or is it? Christianity has been in existence for two thousand years. However, not until Donald McGavran's 1955 publication of *The Bridges Of God* has the Christian world understood the

Scriptures from a missiological perspective. There must be a Biblical foundation to any method or strategy employed by missionaries.

To be Biblical the missionary must go beyond defending his strategy with Scripture. He must establish it by Scripture. It must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and saturated with prayer. His strategy must articulate an accurate gospel message.

The second component is the incarnational element. In this component the missionary fleshes out how he will perform his ministry within the context of his target group. He must master the language. He must always be a student of the culture. He must plan out how he will work with both fellow missionaries and the nationals to whom he will be reaching.

The third component addresses the need for holistic ministry. Obviously, the spiritual needs of the community must be met. However, the missionary must not forget about the felt needs of the community.

The fourth component deals with empowerment of the nationals. The missionary must integrate the gradual changing of roles within his strategy. He must know how he intends to phase-out even before he phases-in. Built into the DNA of his strategy is the understanding that his work is temporary and ultimately the churches he plants will be governed by the nationals.

The final component is that of reproducibility. The missionary must train nationals how to do his job. He must

not only evangelize, disciple, lead, organize and reproduce, but he must train the nationals to do the same.

To develop a phase-in strategy is to build a comprehensive model for ministry before entering into the actual mission work. This strategy will tell the missionary why he is ministering. It will tell him how to minister and it will show him when he has accomplished his mission.

When a missionary has adopted a phase-in strategy, he will know when it is time to phase-out. Steffen suggests that "closure must be designed before ministry starts." He stresses this "because a planned phase-out affects all the steps in church planting: preentry, preevangelism, evangelism and postevangelism" (Steffen 19).

<u>Phase Out</u>

If the reader understands the logistics of phase-in he will realize that the phase-out portion of the model will be established long before actual phase-out occurs. According to Gailyn Van Rheenen's article *Learning, Growing, Collaborating, Phasing Out*, the phase-out portion of the missionary's strategy is "thus the farewell period when missionaries overtly and intentionally pass the baton of leadership to national leaders as they transition to other missions contexts" (Rheenen 2000, 45).

Steffen prefers to use the term "responsible phase-out." Simply leaving a field cannot be construed as phase-out. When done properly, the churches established by the missionary will continue, and even flourish in his absence.

The phase-out is to be done incrementally:

> Phase-out oriented church planters build their absences
> over time so they can have interaction with the church
> throughout the disengagement process. They plan their
> disengagement. They start with short absences and move
> towards longer and longer ones until they completely
> withdraw physically, but not relationally (Steffen 19).

Phase out is done both in stages and levels. There is phase out in individual churches. There is phase out from groups of churches in a local context. There is phase out from associations of churches in a regional context and there is phase out of the people group all together. Therefore, "responsible phase-out begins with a strategy of closure for the overall people group, and for each subculture within that community" (Steffen 20).

Before a missionary can initiate a responsible phase-out he must know what the finished product is going to look like. Steffen further elaborates on this:

> For an accurate definition of responsible phase-out, a
> church planter should isolate all related components of
> the ministry, including: (1) a definition of a local
> church; (2) the number of local churches to be planted
> in a given area; (3) the generational cycle of a local
> church; (4) the roles of team members, local believers
> and God; (5) theological training for leaders; (6) when
> to begin phase-out; and (7) ways of maintaining
> relationships after phase-out (Steffen 16).

Responsible phase-out will not result in an abrupt pull-out. Such an action will almost certainly bring injury to the national churches. Responsible phase-out can be defined as a strategy of closure "for the overall people group, and for each subculture within that community" (Steffen 20).

So, what exactly is a phase-in and a phase-out

strategy? Simply put, it is an intentional pre-established plan which a missionary implements. Ideally, the nuts and bolts of this plan will be developed before the missionary starts any ministry activities. The strategy must however have enough flexibility to incorporate mid-stream course changes as different and unexpected situations arise. In essence, Phase-in describes how the missionary enters into his ministry field. Phase-out describes how he will leave that field.

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR A "PHASE" STRATEGY

Before implementing, or even planning any new strategy the missionary must first ask if is it Biblical. This question must therefore be asked regarding the phase strategy. The obvious Bible character to study is Paul. The apostle ventured out on three different missionary journeys. Did he employ a type of phase strategy?

Paul and his team based their mission endeavors in the city of Antioch. After each missionary journey, they returned there. They made several visits to Corinth. When combining these periods, Paul and his team stayed there approximately four years. They stayed in Ephesus for three years. They stayed in Caesarea between two and three years. They stayed in Rome two to three years. Thus their residence in the cities where they ministered and planted churches was always brief.

The book of Acts records a number of different reasons Paul and his team left cities in which they

ministered. However, Steffen points out that "they also departed because of their desire and plan to reach as many people as possible with the gospel" (Steffen 15). On several occasions Paul re-visited cites where he and his team had previously ministered. This was done for the purpose of strengthening the believers and to appoint elders (Acts 9:32; 14:21-22; 15:36, 41).

By the end of Paul's three missionary journeys the church was firmly established in four provinces of the Roman Empire; Galatia, Macedonia, Achia and Asia. Roland Allen in his book *Missionary Methods: Paul's Or Ours* states:

> Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces; in AD 57 St. Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far west without anxiety lest the churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support (Allen 3).

Paul employed a systematic and effective ministry. He never intended to spend his life in one place. It is unlikely that Paul fleshed out a comprehensive missions strategy before he began his journeys. This is probably a good thing. Since the Bible never explicitly defines the order of church worship, Christians in every culture are free to worship within their own context. In like manner, because the Bible never explicitly lays out a concrete missions strategy, Christians are free to reach the world with creative contextually relevant methods.

Neverhteless, the indications are that Paul did indeed have a strategy. He traveled throughout the Roman Empire establishing churches. He preached in the synagogues.

He met converts in their homes. He baptized them. He equipped them. He appointed elders and then moved on. He then maintained contact with these churches either by sending letters, or fellow laborers. He planted local contextual indigenous churches by phasing in and then phasing out.

TWO IMPORTANT STEPS IN A "PHASE" STRATEGY

The first and obvious step is to develop a phase-in/phase-out strategy. By doing so a missionary will have a game plan with objectives, goals and action steps to help him in his venture. However, since every mission endeavor will be dynamic it would be both impossible and improper to offer a declarative chronological list of what to do and what not to do. Nevertheless, there are some fundamental elements that need to be addressed.

<u>Building a Ministry Team</u>

Steffen strongly encourages, and even assumes, that cross-cultural church planting will be a team effort. He believes it will certainly require more than an individual effort. This runs counter to the stereotypical view of the fiery missionary stepping out into the wilderness and single handedly reaching a whole country with the gospel. Such stories may sound inspiring, but they are not accurate.

In his book *Planting Churches In Muslim Cities*, Greg Livingstone echoes Steffens sentiments about team work:

> History shows that only a few loner types have been sufficiently gifted, independent and strong in their relationship with God to recruit nationals alone, to

work so quickly that they could overcome the
disadvantages of being without an expatriate missionary
team... God normally intends for us to serve with a
team of people whose gifts and pastoral care are
complementary (Livingstone 100).

Livingstone then argues that the "paradigm in the
book of Acts" involves teamwork.(Livingstone 100). There
can be found both Old and New Testament examples of team
ministries. In the very nature of the Trinity rests the
concept of team work. Jesus sent out his disciples two by
two (Mark 6:7). The whole book of Nehemiah is a story of
team work. There are at least eleven notable teams in the
book of Acts:

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Barnabus-Saul-Mark                                 13:4-13
Paul-Barnabus and "their companions"          3:13-15:12
Paul-Barnabus-Judas-Silas                        15:22-34
Paul-Silas                                          15:40
Barnabus-Mark                                     15:37-39
Paul-Silas-Timothy                                  16:1-9
Paul-Silas-Timothy-Luke                             16:10
Paul-Silas-Timothy-Luke-Aquilla-Priscilla         18:2-23
Paul-Silas-Timothy-Luke-Aquilla-Priscilla-Apollos
                                                  18:24-29
Paul-Silas-Timothy-Luke-Erastus-Gaius-Aristarchus     19
Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Sopater, Aristarchus,
Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus and Trophimus              20:4
                                         (Steffan 58-59)
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Livingstone suggests that there are three necessary
components of a New Testament missionary team. They are the
team leader, the people's people and the facilitator.
(Livingstone 101-103). Regardless of how many people are
present on the team, these three components are necessary.

<u>Training National Leadership</u>

According to Acts 14:21-23, soon after planting
churches the apostle Paul ordained elders in each place. In
his book *Missions At The Cross Roads*, T. Stanley Soltau

noted that Paul wasted little time before ordaining new believers into primary leadership positions. Some of these new Christians had only been believers for a few short months. Nevertheless, "Paul left them very much to themselves." These new churches "under the guidance of these newly appointed officers," were commissioned to reach their perspective communities with the gospel. Paul trusted new converts with the awesome responsibility of "conducting the meetings, preaching, for instructing new converts in the faith, and for maintaining the necessary discipline among them" (Soltau 137).

Paul was not the only Biblical personality to do this. Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world evangelize and then instruct others to follow him (Matt 28:20). Paul sent Titus to the island of Crete to appoint elders to the churches there (Titus). He then instructed Timothy to instruct others as he had been taught (II Tim 2:2).

Soltau argues that as the "forward thinking missionary" progresses in his work he will place more emphasis on leadership training than on soul winning. The missionary will never learn the language or culture as well as the national (Soltau 175). They will know the language. They will know the customs. They will have an existing network through which they can minister. Therefore, properly trained nationals will be more effective in their own culture than will be the foreign missionary.

THE NEED FOR A "PHASE" STRATEGY

Not all church planters intend to phase out of their perspective churches. Some intend to start what will be a strategically located church that will plant other churches throughout the region. Many church planters desire to invest their lives into one fellowship. Even in a scenario such as this a phase strategy is needed.

If a church planter intends on spending his life behind one pulpit and still be involved in the planting of other churches he will need a deliberate strategy. This will be especially true if the church he pastors intends on sponsoring new church plants. If this pastor does not employ a phase-in and phase-out strategy it is probable that his church planting endeavors will only result in dependent mission points that his church will support for years to come.

Regardless of whether a pastor wants to build a church planting church, or a missionary wants to start a church planting movement, a phase strategy is still needed. Brock believes that any minister who does not know his objectives will walk "with the certainty of a blind person" (Brock 86). This is a Biblical principle. In Luke 14:28 Jesus tells his disciples they must count the cost before starting any ministry. Brock further says, "A good builder knows what he is going to build before he begins".

The missionary will always start his ministry from the position of leadership. However, he must work towards passing that leadership onto the national Christians. He

should be ready, willing and desirous to relinquish leadership as soon as the nationals are ready to take over. Soltau states that "the government of the church should rightly be in the hands of their own people" (Soltau 69).

To be effective in the long run, all cross-cultural missionary work must intentionally progress towards local control. The missionary's roles will change as the ministry develops. Therefore, the missionary must intend to phase out from leadership and ministry. His presence and impact are to diminish and the leadership roles of the nationals are to take his place (Rheenen 2000, 47).

Rheenen's concern is that a movement without a phase-out strategy will exist with missionaries always at the "pinnacle of power." Instead of building independent churches, equipping nationals for leadership and missionary roles, the "missionaries remain lords in their created fiefdoms" (Rheenen 2000, 47).

From the initial phase-in strategy until the culmination of a phase-out strategy, missionaries must take the new church plants and their national leaders from dependency to independency. Without a deliberate strategy this will almost never occur.

The Phase In Strategy

Brock admits that he is very surprised that so many missionaries enter the field and attempt to plant churches without have ever seriously thought through any short or long term objectives, let alone how to achieve any

objectives. The result of this lack of planning leads to a great deal of frustration. This frustration is not necessary. The missionary can know how to develop and achieve his objective. Brock states that "it is possible to have a systematized Biblical approach in church planting" (Brock 124).

George Patterson and Richard Scoggins, in their *Church Multiplication Guide* stress the need for simplicity in church planting:

> "Think Simplicity: We could list hundreds of helpful items to start churches, but we can count on our fingers and toes those few essentials that make the crucial difference between reproductive and sterile churches. Blessed is the Christian worker who knows the difference" (Patterson and Scoggins 13).

They go on to say that new church plants will "take on surprisingly novel forms." This is because the Holy Spirit will lead each worker into a distinct ministry as he multiplies churches in his culture and context (Patterson and Scoggins 13). Patterson and Scoggins stress simplicity, however, the complex nature of their own book contradicts this notion. Building self supporting churches is hard work. No purpose can be served by making it sound simple.

The better and more detailed the phase strategy the more likely the missionary will be able to follow it. Rheenen reduces the phase-out requirement into what he considers three "essential, interrelated tasks during the growth period." The first task is evangelism. This should lead to new churches. The second revolves around the nurturing and maturation of Christians. The third deals

with the actual training of nationals to evangelize and plant other churches. They are to be trained to pastor and shepherd their local congregations and in turn train other leaders. "Effective missionaries successfully develop models for accomplishing each of these central missionary tasks" (Rheenen 2000, 38).

The Phase Out Strategy

No missionary will stay on the field forever. Eventually he will leave. A missionary will phase out of a church, association or region for one of two reasons. One, because he wants to. Two, because he has to.

If the missionary does not develop a phase-out strategy he will never be able to identify times of transition. He will not know when to change his role. He will struggle with handing over the responsibilities of ministry to the nationals. Worse, he may never even consider handing them over.

If the missionary never implements a phase-out strategy his inevitable leaving will create a leadership void that may never be replaced. Missionaries must therefore deliberately develop a ministry plan that incorporates an intentional handing over of responsibilities to the national Christians. Rheenen emphasizes that National leaders must:

> come to own the movement and make decisions for continuity. All too frequently, paternalistic missionaries thwart national initiatives believing the nationals are out of line, usurping authority of acting naively. Effective missionaries however, serve as encouragers and advisors, co-facilitators in decision-

making processes. National leaders and missionaries
thus work together to lay the foundations for eventual
missionary phase-out and for the movement's continuity
Rheenen 2000, 42).

Bottom line, phase-out is a Biblical principle.

Upon leaving the Ephesian church Paul had this to say:

> I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was
> profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to
> house, testifying both to the Jews and the Greeks of
> repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus
> Christ... And now, behold, I know that all you among
> whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my
> face no more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that
> I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not
> shrink from declaring to you the whole council of God...
> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his
> grace (Acts 20:20-21, 25-26, 31).

In the fifteenth chapter of Romans, Paul also

describes how he had fully preached the gospel from

Jerusalem to Illyricum laying the foundation of Christ (Rom

15:19-20). In this process it was his custom to appoint

elders, and through prayer and fasting, "commit them to the

Lord" (Acts 14:23). According to Rheenen, Paul's "words to

the Romans demonstrate the heart and motivation of phase-

out:"

> But now, since my work in these places no longer needs
> my presence... Let us go somewhere else... So I can
> preach there also (Rom 15:23) (Rheenan 2000, 45).

THE DANGER OF DEPENDENCY: CHURCH PLANTING WITHOUT A "PHASE"
STRATEGY

If the missionary never plans to phase out of his

work he will leave behind a dependent congregation. The

danger of dependence on outsiders is seen in Hosea 7:8-11

where the Lord says:

> the people of Israel are like a half-baked loaf of
> bread. They rely on the nations around them and do not

realize that this reliance on foreigners has robbed them of their strength. Their days are numbered, but they don't even know it. The arrogance of the people of Israel cries out against them. In spite of everything that has happened, they have not returned to me, the Lord their God. Israel flits around like a silly pigeon; first her people call Egypt for help, and then they run to Assyria.

The Western missionary must exercise great care. He will represent a channel to wealth and resources that will attract many unscrupulous people. If he is not careful he will attract "leeches and con men of the culture and then attempt to build a church around them" (Rheenen 2000, 39). In his book *The Planting And Development Of Missionary Churches*, John L. Nevius noted that "stations which have paid agents have been comparatively weak and unreliable" (Nevius 43). Paying nationals destroys the possibility of a self-supporting church. It makes nationals completely dependent upon the missionaries.

Defining Dependency

Over the years, missionaries have developed what is known as the "self" formula. In the nineteenth century three selves were identified. They were self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating (Nevius). As the twentieth century progressed three more were added. They are self-expressing, self-teaching and self-theologizing.

An independent church would be one that was able to perform all six of the "self" principles. Therefore, a dependent church is a group of believers that is not self supporting, governing, propagating teaching, expressing or theologizing. A dependent church is a group of believers

that cannot exist without the support of an outside agency.

<u>Dependency: The Natural Result Of Missions Without Strategy</u>

According to Melvin L. Hodges' book *The Indigenous Church*, the missionary's problem rests in his failure to intentionally work towards an indigenous church. It is the missionary's responsibility to teach the nationals the necessity of shouldering their own burdens and facing their own problems. If this is not done the national church "cannot be expected to develop even with the aid of periodic revival outpourings" (Hodges 1953, 5).

Unfortunately, the purpose of missions is often unclear to the untrained missionaries they will therefore enter the mission field and work without any clear strategy. Rheenen lamented this reality:

> It is sad that frequently, whenever missionaries fail to prioritize the essential tasks of missions, little is left after they depart. 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 (Rheenen 1996, 174).

The missionary must therefore prioritize and intentionally do the major tasks of missions. This involves "planting churches, nurturing new Christians to maturity, and training leaders to continue the process of planting churches" (Rheenen 1996, 174). Such a process will produce churches that are self supporting and reproducing.

More frequently, however, national leaders become disillusioned because missionaries will not relinquish responsibility. This paternalism is often based on elements

such as "inappropriate or misunderstood strategy models, missionary turnover, and inadequate equipping of national leaders to assume traditional missionary tasks" (Rheenen 200, 41). This hanging on by the missionaries will often create unnecessary tension between the missionaries and the nationals.

Members of a local church will not assume ownership and leadership if they have no ownership or leadership. Until nationals do have ownership within the organization coupled with the ministry of their churches they will likely show little interest in supporting its expenses and upkeep.

For this reason, Soltau offers four principles that should be internalized for the missionary who is striving to build a self-supporting congregation. First, nationals will not raise money if the missionaries supply money. Second, the use of foreign funds will become a barrier between the missionaries and the nationals. Third, the origin of funds will determine the origin of authority. Fourth, self-support is essential in the establishment of strong churches (Soltau 88-92).

THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENCY: THE REASON FOR DEVELOPING A "PHASE" STRATEGY

The Church Planter Needs to be Free to Plant Other Churches

If the missionary wants to initiate a church planting movement he must not become too closely tied to any individual local church plant. His position must be seen from the very outset as a temporary one.

If the temporary status of the missionary-church planter is made clear from the very beginning the church should not be taken by surprise when the missionary departs. What should be surprising is if the missionary stays.

The ideal is not for the missionary to stay in one place. The ideal is not for the missionary to plant one church and return home. The ideal is for the missionary to be involved in a series of church plants that results in the establishment of independent nationally led churches. For this reason, the missionary must incorporate a strategy that will free him to be involved in multiple church plants.

David J. Hesselgrave in his book *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* recommends that the missionary-evangelist needs to form a "master plan for the withdrawan-transition-continuation" of the churches he plants. Hesselgrave even developed a composit transition schedule that exiting church planters could utilize (Next page).

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                          Figure 51
                 Leadership Transition Schedule

A.    Time Sequence for Leadership Transition
      1.    Projected date of the reassignment of the pioneer
            worker
      2.    Projected date of the coming of a new pastor
      3.    Projected date for initiation of "Steps in the
            Provision of New Pastoral Leadership" (see below)
B.    Plans for the Support of New Pastoral Leadership
      1.    Source(s) of financial support
      2.    Budgetary provision in the local church
      3.    Schedule of subsidy reduction (if subsidies are
            involved)
C.    Steps in the Provision of New Pastoral Leadership
      1.    Preparation of a job description (date)
      2.    Recommendations solicited (date)
      3.    Résumés solicited and reviewed (date)
      4.    Meeting of the candidate with the church board and
            congregation (date)

      5.    Call issued (date)
D.    Items for Consideration in the Preparation and Instruction
      of the Congregation
      1.    Instruction concerning the scriptural role of the
            pastor in the church. Yes No
      2.    Instruction concerning scriptural attitudes and
            responsibilities toward the pastor. Yes No
      3.    Preparation of the congregation by introducing
            appropriate variations into the church program. (This
            is especially important when the identity, ministerial
            style, and aspirations of the incoming pastor become
            known.) Yes __ No—
E.    Planning for Continuity of Ministries
      Ministries now dependent on the missionary-evangelist for
      leadership or expertise:

1.    Replacement leader's name
2.    Date partial responsibility
      to be assumed
3.    Date full responsibility to
      be assumed
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The National Churches Must Be Free From Career Missionaries

      Charles Brock in his book *Indigenous Church Planting* speaks of the dignity that comes to a group of believers when their local church becomes self sufficient. This sentiment can be seen from the author Pius Wakatama.

Rhodesian born, he was saved through a mission station. He has written a compelling book from the perspective of a third world Christian. The very title of his book *Independence For The Third World Church* cries out for the need of independent churches.

This book was written in response to those who call for a moratorium on international missions. Wakatama passionately defends the need for continuing missions. He also qualifies the need for national churches to have their own identity apart from Western influence.

His argument for the continuance of Western missions is not practical, but Biblical:

> The fact that churches can exist and grow without the presence of foreign missionaries is not a compelling reason why missionaries should stop going overseas. (According to the Great Commission) Christ expects missionary work across cultures to continue until his return. He did not command his followers to go until churches became self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Until he returns, therefore, missionaries will be needed in all parts of the world including the United States" (Wakatama 20).

Missionaries must continue their work because God has commanded them. In this process they must train the nationals to run their own churches. Wakatama laments that most African clergy have not received adequate training. What they have received is a "Western theology super-imposed on the African church without systematic or deliberate adaptation to the culture of the people" (Wakatama 55).

The situation reflects the continuing need for missionaries to develop a phase-out strategy. The problem is not the presence of missionaries. The problem is the

lack of planning by the missionaries.

Without proper planning the missionary will not address the pertinent questions of the culture. Nor will the missionary respect innovative ministry approaches by the nationals.

A good illustration can be found in the chapter of Wakatama's book titled *Training Nationals For Leadership*. In this chapter he wrote of the need for training in Scripture, theology, communications and even graduate level education. However, these schools should not only focus on theological training, but also vocational training:

> If Bible schools are going to be relevant, they should incorporate curriculum which meets the felt needs of the people. They must, along with biblical subjects, teach trades... With such training Christian nationals will be able to move into the mainstream of economic life of the developing nations ane be respected members of their communities" (Wakatama 52).

Wakatama gives an example of one Bible School that raised poultry to subsidize expenses. When a western missionary assumed control of the School he immediately ended this practice. The concept of vocational training in a Christian mission school seemed foreign and even silly to the western missionary, but it makes perfect sense to Wakatama. Very few pastors in Africa will ever work in a church large enough to provide a decent income. Therefore, the pastors will have to be bi-vocational. Wakatama understood this, the missionary did not. A missionary will never be able to phase out of any ministry if he does not learn how to respect and even seek the wisdom and council of the people whom he is reaching.

<u>The National Churches Must Be Free To Plant Their Own
Churches</u>

In order for national churches to be self defining,
missionaries must step back and let them struggle. The
missionary does not however abandon the national church.
Instead, he takes on an advisory role. His input must
transition from being authoritative to being instructional.
This will allow the national churches to express themselves
in a manner that embraces their own cultural nuances.

As these churches struggle they will begin to
realize their responsibility. As they exercise self
government they will likely become interested in self
propogation. (Soltau 81).

According to Brock, self-propogation is one of the
five major characteristics of a self-governing indigenous
church. Through Christ's strength national churches can
reproduce themselves without any direct input by
missionaries. Though this is no easy task it is possible.
Brock asserts that "the way a church is born will influence
its ability to reproduce itself" (Brock 125). If the
missionary applied a proper phase-in/phase-out strategy the
development of a reproducing church should be a natural
result.

It is essential for the fulfilment of the Great
Commission that missionaries plant churches that are able to
propagate themselves. For this reason the missionary "must
think reproducible in every aspect of planting a church,
from the time the first seed is sown to the actual birth of

the church, and as it continues to grow" (Brock 125).

When a national church starts reproducing itself the missionary's job in that particular context is complete. He is then free to move on to another challenge. This ought to be the objective of every missionary. It is the objective to any phase-out strategy. Essentially, the missionary will know that he is finished when there is nothing left for him to do!

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of the missionary who utilizes a phase-in/phase-out strategy is to plant churches that don't need him. When the missionary arrives at the point of departure he still has a choice. Since it is easier to work in a self-sustaining church than it is to plant a new one the missionary might be tempted to stay on a little longer than he should.

This is where both a phase strategy and the dynamics of a team effort pay off. Because the missionary will have already planned his exit strategy he will know when it is time to leave. Because he is part of a team effort, his colleagues will not allow him to linger.

In the section defining phase-in three questions were posited. They were, What has God called me to do? How will I do it? How will I know when I have done it? A phase strategy will answer these questions on paper. However, the joy of ministry will be seeing these questions answered by the fulfillment of a God given vision.

After the missionary has endured years of labor; after he has anguished in prayer; after he has toiled amongst strange people; after he has spent his days plodding through a foreign land; he will one day be able to climb upon a hill, look over a vast region filled with people who now have heard and have access to the gospel. He will see tiny churches scattered among the people. Before he heard, but now he will see what God has called him to do. He will see how God has done it. And he will know that his task, for that region, is complete. It will be time for him to phase-out.

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