

FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE

Welcome to “**FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE**” – the FCA leadership conference seminars on Church-planting and Evangelism. **Our aim is to encourage each other, the FCA and the wider Anglican Communion to boldly and joyfully give ourselves to Evangelism and Church-Planting that is both “Faithful and Effective”.** We don’t want to promote whatever seems effective unless it is **faithful** to the Gospel of the Bible **that Jesus Christ is our unique and sufficient Saviour and Lord who came as our King, died for our sins, rose to rule and will return to judge.** We want to ensure that our planting is driven by the message, motives and methods of God’s Word rather than our own cultural or pragmatic preferences (for church-planting and evangelism conferences and books can give the impression that the need for innovative strategy and pragmatic realism excuses us from observing God’s church-planting principles). But we also want to share the practice of those faithful ministries that have proved **effective** in different contexts for making new disciples and establishing new gospel-preaching churches for Christ rather than ineffective theories or ministries that merely grow our own denomination or network by poaching people from other faithful churches (for evangelism and church-planting can be a thinly veiled exercise in building personal influence rather than the Kingdom of God). To achieve this **we intent to profile the work of God in biblically faithful and culturally effective Evangelism & Church-planting in a variety of contexts** around the FCA world-wide. We want to show that by the Gospel of God according to the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God, people of all nations are come to salvation through evangelism and church-planting that is both “**Faithful and Effective**”. It seems wise to begin with a brief reminder of Jesus’ great commission to make disciples for him:

*“18 And Jesus came and said to them, “**All** authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and **MAKE DISCIPLES** of **all** nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe **all** that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you **always**, to the very end of the age.” (Mat. 28:18-20 ESV)*

The four universals in Jesus’ words have massive implications for us today:

1. “**All AUTHORITY**” means we must go **EVERYWHERE!**

Our motivation in making disciples is the resurrection of Christ to enthronement in heaven with uniquely absolute and eternal supremacy over heaven and earth i.e. **everywhere!** Because of his self-humbling in penal substitutionary self-sacrifice on the cross, the Father has raised and exalted him, as promised in Dan. 7, to be publicly recognised as the **LORD** of heaven and earth.

Everywhere belongs to Jesus – there are no nations that don’t belong to Jesus – an African nation can declare itself Muslim and China can declare itself Communist and Brittan can declare itself secular – but in truth, they all belong to Jesus; every community and post-code belongs to him – the departing Arch-bishop was quite wrong to suggest that some post-codes be surrendered to Sharia law and the British government is completely wrong to suggest that God has no role in the public sphere such as defining marriage for modern British life – Britain belongs to Jesus;

Everywhere must be reached for Jesus – this Commission is not a suggestion or invitation but a command – and we shall be judged by our obedience to it. Even if the penalty for our disobedience has been suffered by Jesus, we shall be rewarded in eternity for our efforts to obey him. We are obliged to try to reach into every unreached community a city and not leave it to others if we can do something – everywhere must be reached for Jesus;

Everywhere can be reached for Jesus – since Jesus rules every area, no-where is beyond his power and protection. Even if he permits us the honour of suffering opposition to become more like Jesus, he is more protective than any police force, more influential than any government, with more money than any bank. Jesus rules the world, so everywhere can be reached for him!

2. “*All Nations*” means we must seek EVERYONE!

It was a shock for me to realise that making disciples of all nations was not a command for some disciples with an interest in cross-cultural mission – but in fulfilment of a) the creation mandate to fill the earth and subdue it and of b) the promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through him and of c) the role of Israel to be a light to all nations, Christ is now enthroned over all peoples and sends us all to follow his Apostles as his witnesses to the ends of the earth. We are all “*knots in the net that Jesus has thrown over his world*”. Even if the word “Go” is the infinitive “going” meaning as we go through each day and go through our lives, the word still has a sense of movement because it is attached to the imperative to make disciples i.e. in some sense as disciples of Jesus, following our cross-cultural missionary King, we must be constantly leaving our comfort zones to make new disciples. Now a church doesn’t go out – church is the gathering of God’s people that welcomes in those who are saved – but the members of the church must go out into the world to search for the lost sheep of Christ and invite them to Jesus in the community of his church. We can’t simply wait for unbelievers of all nations to find us – that’s why a constant attractional and missional outlook as well as seasons of intensified mission are necessary and why we need to intentionally invade different social communities with the gospel to plant more churches. While heaven is one gloriously multi-cultural church, the pagan cities and countries in which we live are populated by segmented communities. We probably need to recognise a process of gospel integration i.e. to reach the people of a community we need to contextualise the culture of our evangelism and church-planting ministries without altering the content of the gospel and then as we teach the Bible and as people are transformed by the gospel they will become increasingly tolerant of believers of different kinds and we should seek to encourage increasing regional, national and global networks to prepare people for the perfect integration of heaven. The dominant global reality of urbanisation has three major implications:

- a) We better reach younger generations, culture-defining elites, ethnic minorities and the poor if we find ways to evangelise and church-plant in cities;
- b) We can reach a whole nation from its cities, because the cities increasingly influence and dominate their regions;
- c) Since the people of the great cities of the world share an increasingly common popular culture which is distinct from the culture of the surrounding countryside, and are in contact with those in other cities, we can access communities in many cities of the world through that community in one city of the world.

3. “*All that I’ve COMMANDED*” means we must teach **EVERYTHING!**

Baptising believers into the Trinitarian name of God, we’re to teach them **not part but all of Jesus’ teaching relayed to us** through the writings of the Apostles in the N.T. in the context of the O.T. This means that **making disciples by evangelism and planting churches will always remain essentially a bible-teaching ministry and not something wholly different such as community development or corporate strategy**. Moreover, while we may consider it wise to take out time over some more difficult aspects of the Scriptures and it may be wise to avoid confronting all the most counter-cultural issues in our first talks. But **we are not at liberty, in the name of evangelism and planting, to tear out of the Bible the pages that are unpopular or to declare someone a Christian before at least explaining all the gospel to some extent** e.g. the gospel that Jesus is Christ our Lord (Romans 1) is explicitly concerned with Christ coming as King, dying to bear the penalty of our sins, rising to rule and returning to judge (Mk. 1; 1 Cor. 15; Romans 1:16).

- a) We need to keep investing in high quality theological training for evangelists and church-planters;
- b) We mustn’t burden evangelists and church-planters with expectations or financial burdens of speedy numerical growth;
- c) We mustn’t plant with shallow-rooted, diseased or tangled leaders or church plants – If we evangelise or plant with shallow plants (immature Christians) they will give up when it costs to follow Jesus; if we evangelise or plant with **diseased plants** with serious theological misunderstandings we’ll soon have division and conflict within the churches; if we plant **tangled plants** with people who are choked by worldly concerns we’ll soon have churches with some people inactive and others exhausted. **We need to evangelise and plant with well taught disciples who teach the Bible well.**

4. “*Always*” means we must take **EVERY OPPORTUNITY!**

The power for planting is the presence of Christ. “*And surely I am with you always*” is the wonderful assurance of the presence of the Spirit of Christ whenever we’re engaged in making disciples for him. We’re never alone – and never abandoned. Indeed he is not joining our mission – we’re joining his – and the greatest joy of evangelism and planting churches is watching him at work. If we really want to get to know Jesus well, let us throw ourselves into making disciples for him. This also liberates us to attempt apparently impossible missions in confidence that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. This has 3 implications:

- a) **Weariness need not stop us:** God’s power is made perfect in weakness;
- b) **Conservatism need not stop us:** there’s always a risk that something might not work and we’re often tempted to wait until we have things perfectly organised, but with Christ anything obedient is possible;
- c) **Cost need not stop us:** often it is not only the costs to our own discomfort and health but the costs we perceive to our wives and children who won’t have the standards of living we wanted for them. But apart from allowing them the privilege of making sacrifices for Christ

there is the need to trust Almighty God to provide for them as much as for us, for Christ is with them too. It is often not realised by those who quote the decisive moment in the decision of Hudson Taylor, the mission and founder of the China Inland Mission (now OM) to go to China with the gospel, that the last hurdle was not fear for himself but for those who would go to China with him. He records that in Brighton on the south coast of England, *“I feared that in the midst of the dangers, difficulties and trials which would necessarily be connected with such a work, some who were comparatively inexperienced Christians would break down, and bitterly reproach me for having encouraged them to undertake such an enterprise for which they were unequal... On Sunday, June 25th 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, while millions were perishing for lack of knowledge, I wandered out on the sands alone, in great spiritual agony; and there the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself for this service. I told him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with hi, that as his servant, it was mine to obey and follow him – His to direct, to care for, and to guide me and **those who might labour with me.**”*

⇒ **Let us give ourselves to more evangelism and church-planting.** Let our motive be that **all** authority has been given to Jesus – so we must go everywhere! Let our goal be to reach **all** nations – so we must reach everyone! Let our ministry be teaching **all** that Jesus has commanded – so we must teach everything! And let our confidence be in the presence of Christ **always** – so we must take every opportunity! Go...and make disciples of all nations!