

Cooperative Evangelism?

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From the title, you might think this is about Billy Graham. *But . . .*

Evangelism = Church Planting
Cooperative = Churches Working Together

Question: How can and should churches work together in church planting?

Answer: Begin with the New Testament pattern.

1.

Acts 11:19–26 (ESV)

¹⁹Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

²⁵So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

2.

Acts 13:1–5 (ESV)

¹Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they

sailed to Cyprus.

⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

Acts 13:13 (ESV)

¹³Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,

3.

Galatians 2:1–10 (ESV)

¹Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

²I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

³But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

⁴Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

⁵to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

⁶And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

⁷On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised⁸(for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),⁹and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

¹⁰Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Note: it would be interesting to know exactly when Titus did accompany Paul. His name does not appear in the record of Acts at all, even when he must have been part of Paul's company.

2 Corinthians 2:12–13 (ESV)

¹²When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord,

4.

Acts 15:1–2 (ESV)

¹But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

²And after Paul and Barnabas had no small

Acts 15:22–24 (ESV)

²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

²³with the following letter: “The brothers, both

5.

Acts 15:36–41 (ESV)

³⁶And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”

³⁷Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

³⁸But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the

¹³my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

²⁴Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

work.

³⁹And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

⁴¹And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

6.

Acts 16:1–5 (ESV)

¹Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

²He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

³Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of

the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

7.

Acts 16:6–12 (ESV)

⁶And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

⁸So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia

and help us.”

¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,

¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

8.

Acts 20:1–6 (ESV)

¹After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

²When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.

³There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

⁴Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus,

accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.

⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas,

⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

9.

2 Timothy 4:19–20 (ESV)

¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

²⁰Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.

2 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

10.

2 Corinthians 8:18–9:5 (ESV)

¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel.

¹⁹And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.

²⁰We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us,

²¹for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

²²And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you.

²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

²⁴So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

¹Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints,

²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year.

And your zeal has stirred up most of them.

³But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.

⁴Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.

⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

11.

2 Timothy 1:13–2:2 (ESV)

¹³Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

¹⁵You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,

¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—

¹⁸may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

¹You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

So, what is the picture that emerges?

1.

2.

3.

4.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

4 In terms of present-day Baptist organization, the following patterns are in use. None of them can be ruled out on the basis of the New Testament witness.

- a. Single-Church Initiative: one church commissions people to do the work, and perhaps other churches contribute.
- b. Associationalism: churches form separate organizations do the work, the hold these organizations accountable to the churches by church-appointed boards. These churches cooperate through the organizations they create.
- c. Service Organizations: individual church members form organizations to do the work, then hold these organizations accountable (either through elected or self-perpetuating boards).
- d. Preacher's Fellowships: pastors form organizations to do the work, then hold these organizations accountable through pastor-chosen boards.
- e. Combination Organizations: for example, an association of churches may endorse independent service organizations that share its values.

No form of organization is proof against decay and corruption. None can accuse the others of violating New Testament patterns.