

SESSION FOUR: A COVENANTAL AND ORGANIC APPROACH

Rev. Paul Murphy

THIS AFTERNOON I spoke on heart preparation and some principles regarding church planting. This evening I want to focus more on practice. So I have two main points this evening. The first is the *practice* of church planting. I will present a couple of ideas with respect to that; and specifically what we are doing in New York City; then the *posture* of church planting. I should emphasize at the outset that though I'll be talking about what we're doing, I trust you understand that there should not be a cookie-cutter approach to church planting. What works in Springfield may not work in New York City; what works in New York City may not work in Springfield, may not work in Indiana or the Chicago-land area. You need to be flexible and adaptable and not take a cookie-cutter approach. Just a warning at the outset here.

With regard to *the practice* of church planting, I would encourage you to pursue an organic and a covenantal approach to church planting.

I. An organic approach. Now, what do I mean by that? I like to look at outreach evangelism in the local church in two ways. By way of explanation, one would be what I would call an intrusion on the community. That is door-to-door, street work. We do all these things in NYC, as I mentioned this afternoon. We do a lot of street work particularly in the warmer months. We go out and have literature distribution, tract distribution. We have book tables set up where we give out literature and Bibles to people who will fill out a survey and tell us a little bit of something about themselves. We actually take surveys of people on the street. Occasionally we do street preaching. So we do all those things. But I'd like to think that those means and programs like them are really an imposition on the community. They tend to be somewhat impersonal, somewhat detached and dispassionate. In the nature of the case, that's just the way it is. Those are things that are fine to do, but I don't think they are optimal or ideal.

What I do think is optimal and ideal is, by contrast, taking a more organic approach to the community. Specifically what I mean by that is, the mission strategy would be: find out where the needs are in your community and meet them with the gospel. This kind of segues or goes

hand in glove with what we just heard about a kingdom approach from Rev. Grotenhuis (see his talk).

So, for illustration purposes, what we do in NYC are three main outreach ministries. We have five ministries in the church, but three main ones with respect to outreach. *First*, we have a Wall Street Bible study in the financial district. New York City's financial district, specifically Wall Street, is the economic engine for the country and the world. *Second*, we have teaching English as a second language using the Bible at a local public high school. And then, *third*, I am a volunteer chaplain at the local hospital, and we have a number of people in our congregation who have been trained to be spiritual providers or care givers at the hospital as well. Let me just tell you basically a little bit about each one of those things.

The Wall Street Bible study is very interesting; I know of nothing like it. It really is unique. Rather than studying the book of Psalms or the book of Proverbs, or the book of John, or the book of Luke or something; it's a topical targeted study in order to better the people in the Wall Street area. That is, it's a Bible study on work and what the Bible has to say about work, what the Bible has to say about finance, what the Bible has to say about business, what it has to say about economics. We studied about three dozen different subjects having to do with those broad topics. Specifically what the Bible has to say about work.

Things are changing for the better somewhat, but I should clarify for you that when I was first converted 20–25 years ago, Christians had a reputation for being the worst workers in New York City. I worked in construction. I was a job superintendant for a contractor in New York City doing interior renovations. I knew other business owners in New York City who refused to hire Christians. If somebody applied for a job and the boss found out they were Christian, it would instantly disqualify them from the job. And the reason why was due to their "rapture mentality," so prevalent in the church; where the only thing that matters, of course, is getting people saved, and evangelism is the only activity that's relevant for a Christian, because of course the Lord is going to come back any time, as we are told by Jack Van Impe, Harold Camping, and everybody else. So, you have this rapture mentality where the most significant thing we can do is get out of here. Why bother about work? If that is one's thinking, then what do such Christians do on the job? They read their Bible; they pray and they witness. *What's missing? Work!* So Christians had a reputation for being the worst workers; and people in the know wouldn't hire them.

So, we are seeking to address that and show people what the Bible has to say about work. That's really the main way in which people can serve the Lord in their work. And the best way to witness for the Lord in the workplace is not to get out your Bible and start talking about Jesus Christ to your colleagues, but the best witness you can have is to be the best employee and to be the best worker. Now I realize that I'm bringing coals to Newcastle here because we have such a strong work ethic in our history and in our tradition. But you have to realize that that's not everybody. Here again is an illustration where doctrine has consequences. If

you have a rapture mentality, how does that manifest itself? It manifests itself in a poor work ethic. Doctrine affects life once again.

So we have this Bible study where we're teaching people what the Bible has to say about work, which is a revelation to a lot of Christians who come to our study. For them the Bible tells us how to get to heaven and have a personal relationship with the Lord, but that's it. So when people begin to see that the Bible has something to say about where they spend 8, 10, 12 hours a day, and it's meaningful, their eyes are like platters. This is just a revelation to them; and, more, that the Bible has something to say about finance! And business! And economics! So again, you get this kingdom perspective applied where people begin to see that the Bible addresses all areas of life. Jesus Christ is the Lord of every area of life. We're to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. People get it. It's really wonderful to see the changes that take place.

Now you might wonder how do we get people to come to a Bible study like that in the financial district in the New York City? (This Bible study is right at Wall Street and Broadway—we meet every Tuesday at lunchtime 12:30–1:15.) We hand out leaflets on the street. We've gotten remarkable results from that. Just tonight at dinner somebody told me they got saved through a Chick tract (www.chick.com). That's happened relatively infrequently in my experience. Not many people get saved through tract distribution. And not many people respond to tract or literature distribution. You should know that, because if you're going to engage in it you should be ready to be disappointed. But we began to hand out leaflets. The leaflet was very simple; it was *Feed Your Heart at Lunchtime*. We hand them out, and as we hand them out we don't want people just taking a piece of paper because you could go through about 2000 pieces of paper in an hour. So we say "Christian Bible study" so people would know what it's about. Most people don't take it.

We've handed out tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands pieces of literature over the time that we've been in New York. Very rarely have we had people come in the door as a result of handing out literature. But last summer we got eighteen people to this Bible study as a result of just handing out flyers on the street. In my estimation, this is nothing short of the hand of the Lord. This is a remarkable response to literature distribution. Unlike anything I've ever seen in my life in New York City. So that's how we got people in. We now have people that have been coming regularly for a couple of years. People love one another, and love that study.

But that's one of our main ministries. And we do that as a service to the community. If people come to church, that would be fine; but we're not intending this as a way to get people into church, for we don't want to play bait and switch. We don't want to be there and say, well, we're going to have a Bible study, but what we really want is for you to come to church. Sometimes we get around to talking about that. But this is really just a service to the community; to serve the financial district with what the Bible has to say about all these subjects.

Second, we teach English as a second language at Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers. The public school environment is

probably one of the most hostile environments in New York City to the Christian religion. There was a young girl in one school some years ago who had lost an immediate member of her family to death. She came to school and was obviously emotionally distraught. A teacher prayed with that student, and as a result got fired just for praying, seeking to evidence some compassion. So you see some of the hostility towards this.

Through a series of providences, I'm on the Business Advisory Council at this school. The Lord opened that door. I'm on the Business Advisory Council at this school because they're preparing people to enter into business careers located in the financial district. You have representatives who come from Prudential; you have people who come from Estee Lauder; you have business persons who come from big banking firms, from the city government. They come to these meetings. The reason I'm there is because as pastor of a local church they consider me a business owner. So I get to go to these meetings. So I'm there one day and the Parent Association president is talking to the principal, and talking about all the difficulty that they have with the parents of students because they don't speak English. There are 3500 students in this school; 1100 are non-English speaking. One third of the students are immigrants who don't speak English. Incredible! I overhear this conversation, and I said, "I think I might be able to help you." "Oh! How can you help?" I said, "I have a program to teach English as a second language." They started expressing interest in this, started some discussion. They were very interested and asked me to provide further information.

So I went to my contact in the school, and I said, "What's the next step? What do we have to do to get going with this?" "Well, the principal wants to see the curriculum." The curriculum is something that's published by the Southern Baptist Convention of the American Mission Board. And what it does is it uses the Gospel according to Mark as the text; then it teaches grammar and vocabulary based on the text of the Gospel of Mark. So when she tells me that the principal wants to see the curriculum, I figured, well that's it, that's the end of this. I said, "I've got the book, let me bring it in." So I bring it in and I call her up the following week and ask her what happened. She said, "Oh, they loved it! They thought you were going to come in with mimeographed notes." The simple fact that it was a bound curriculum by a publisher and followed the Lipson method of teaching excited them.

So we began teaching. Sam has been a teacher there. We have classes on Saturday morning and Tuesday afternoon. The first sentence that students read is: "This is the good news of Jesus Christ, according to Mark." That's the first thing they read. And there are many marvelous opportunities to talk to people about the faith, talk to people about the Lord, talk to people about the gospel. One illustration is when to use a direct article rather than an indirect article (so Jesus is *the* Way, *the* Truth, *the* Life as opposed to *a* way, *a* truth, and *a* life). That is an opportunity to explain the uniqueness of the Christian religion and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

On another day I came to the Lord's Prayer. Most of my students are Hispanic. Some are Christian. Most are nominal Catholics or from nomi-

nal Christian backgrounds. They knew the Lord's Prayer in Spanish. I thought: "This is going to be a great homework lesson because they already know it." So I assigned them to memorize the Lord's Prayer in English. So next week they come in. They didn't do a great job, but we had a whole discussion about this. I said to them after going through this, I said, "What is it that you're praying for in the Lord's Prayer?" Of course they could rattle it off in Spanish, but they didn't know. They had no idea what they were praying for. So we had a discussion for an hour and a half with such questions as: "What is the Lord's Prayer?" and "What are you actually praying for in the Lord's Prayer?"

Another time we were discussing the calendar. We're only a block away from Chinatown and it was Chinese New Year. I said, "What year is it in the Chinese calendar?" It's 4705. I said, "Why do the Chinese have 4705 and we have 2008?" "Why is it 5769 for the Jewish people but 2008 for the rest of us?" They didn't know. I said, "It's because we mark time and history from the birth of Jesus Christ." I told them about B.C. and A.D. and why we have 2008. I said, "Why is Sunday the first day of the week?" No idea. I said, "Sunday is the first day of the week because Jesus rose from the dead on the first ..." just all opportunities like this to talk to people in a public school. Every time I go in there, I think to myself that somebody's going to find out what I'm doing and tell me "you're going to jail!"

One day I walk in. I've got a whole box of books, John Piper's book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*. So I'm bringing them in to give to my students. When I walk in I've got to go past the police to get in the building. So I put down the box to get out my ID. Of course the police are interested. "What's in the box?" I said, "Oh! This is a great book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*." "Can I have one?" "You can have one if you promise to read it. Now you know I'm here every week and I'm going to follow up on you. You've got to read this book." "All right, I promise I'll read it." "Okay, you can have a book." So now I've got all the police at the front desk wanting to read this book. So I finish with them. I take the box and once in the classroom I give them to my students. Then I begin class. I'm teaching. All of a sudden the police sergeant comes in. Now I'm thinking to myself, "I'm a dead man. I'm evangelizing in a public school!" The sergeant's coming to get me; he's asking "Where's that guy who was giving books out in the lobby?" I can see him at the other end of the room asking people, and I can see people's fingers pointing at me. He comes up to me and asks, "Are you the guy who was handing out books in the lobby?" I said, "Yeah, yeah, that was me." He said, "Can I talk to you over here?" We go over. He whispers, "Do you think I can get one of those books?"

We finished our first year of teaching there, and they were apologizing because they couldn't give us any money. I said, "We don't want any money. We're doing this as a service to the community. We are glad to come here and teach the parents." But they wouldn't take no for an answer, they insisted on giving us money. They went and dug up money. They give us awards—platters, pens, and plaques—from the Parent Association. I think I'm going to get locked up and they're giving me money

and awards for teaching the gospel. This is great! Only the Lord could do this stuff. So, we're doing that and hoping to expand that ministry beyond the borders of the local public high school into the community.

The *third* outreach ministry, organic approach to the community, is volunteer chaplain in the local hospital. I mentioned something about that this afternoon, how that got started. But this also people love. There was no chaplain in this hospital for a long time. They welcomed our entrance into this hospital. Again, through a series of providences, we wound up having, I think, six or seven people in our congregation trained by an insurance company to be spiritual providers to the hospital. I won't get into all the details of that. Very much of what Phil was talking about earlier today: They want you to be spiritual without being religious, which means, Don't talk to people about Jesus. But we just do what we want. Forgiveness is easier than permission. These are great opportunities. There are most likely more opportunities at this hospital to talk about the Lord than going door-to-door or anything else. And you're meeting people in the community. You're meeting them at a time of need. You're meeting them when they have time on their hands. They're bored, sitting in the hospital with nothing to do. I just walk into the room and say, "My name is Paul Murphy, and I'm the chaplain. Is there anything I can do for you?"

People tell me their life story. I walked into a room one day and introduced myself. This guy says, "Hi! My name's Peter. I'm twenty-nine years old and I've been a heroin addict since I was fifteen." More than half his life he'd been a heroin addict. I said, "What are you doing in here?" He said, "Well, I was clean, I was in the program, I was doing fine, and then they told me I had been diagnosed with AIDS. So I went out on a bender. So now I'm in here, I'm drying out. I'm trying to clean up." What do you say to somebody like this? The guy just told you his whole life story, right? I said, "Why do you think God let you live?" "That's a great question, can we talk about that?" I said, "Let me get a seat." I sat down and we talked about that.

Just last week I walked into the hospital. First room I go into, fifth floor, surgical floor. There is a young woman in there, a drug addict. She's had major surgery on her thigh because she was using a dirty needle and got infected. So we're talking. "I'm the chaplain..." She said, "Oh, I pray, you know, it helps." I said, "Oh, you pray?" She said, "Yeah I pray, I read the Bible." I said, "What's the gospel?" She had no idea. Like many Catholics—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; that's the gospel. I said, "Well, let me tell you what the gospel is." I sat down, talked to her, and told her what the gospel was. She said, "Wow, I never heard that." I said, "You read your Bible?" She said, "Yeah, yeah, but they took it. I went down for surgery and they cleaned up and I lost it." I said, "I've got Bibles. I'll give you a Bible if you promise to read it. Read the Gospel according to John. When I come back we're going to talk about who Jesus is and what he came to do." "Okay. I'll promise that I'll do that." So I came and had a great conversation with her doing follow up.

Walk out of 501, go in to 502. There's a guy in chains. He's chained to the bed, like a lot of prisoners who are often in the hospital. He's

chained to the bed. I said the same thing; “I’m Paul Murphy, the chaplain.” He said, “No, I’m not interested.” So I go to turn and leave. He said, “You know, I’ve got one question.” I said, “Okay. What’s your question?” He said, “All these chaplains in jail, all these born again people—they’re telling me that if you’re not born again you can’t go to heaven. I don’t think that’s true. Is it true?” I said, “Well, let me tell you. You know what? I was just like you. When somebody first told me that, I didn’t believe it.” I told him the story, the testimony of my conversion. I said, “I didn’t believe that message until I found it in my own Bible. I had to dig my Bible out of a trunk. I had it as a good luck charm so somebody could read it at my funeral. I dug it out and sure enough I looked up John 3:3 and there it was. I said: Wow! That’s in the Bible! He said, “It’s in the Bible?” I said yeah, and I had a Bible with me so I showed him, here it is. He said, “What’s with that?” I had a whole conversation with him.

I walked out of one room into another room—leave him, got him a Bible, got him some sermons from The Back to God Hour, gave it to him, and had a long conversation. Walked down the hall, go into another room. Another prisoner. He’s not interested. I walk out. A guy comes up to me and said “Who are you? What are you doin’ in here?” He was a guard. I said, “I’m the chaplain. If he would have given me anything or told me anything, I would have told you.” He said, “He’s a federal prisoner and we’re FBI agents. You’re the chaplain?” I said yeah. He said, “Who do you work with?” I said, “I’m the pastor of a local church right across the street. We’re just down the block.” He said, “Yeah? What denomination?” So I told him United Reformed Churches. He said, “I’m a Christian.” We sat there and talked about our testimonies, how we became Christians, we were talking about the Lord. We were talking about the gospel. I told him about the two conversations I just had with patients down the hall. His partner, the other FBI agent is just sitting there, captive audience of course, listening to all of this. So here I am: one floor, one afternoon, had three opportunities to talk about the gospel, talk about the Lord. And that’s just one day.

So this is what I’m talking about in terms of an organic approach to ministry: Where are the needs in your community? Determine that, meet them with the gospel. This is not a matter of Word or deed, it’s not just a matter of doing good deeds; it’s meeting a need with the gospel. That’s the mission strategy. Examine your community with eyes of faith and prayer. Where are the needs and how can you meet them with the gospel? When the Lord opens the door, walk through it.

II. A Covenantal approach. What do I mean by that? In saying covenantal, I’m thinking particularly of families—that is, in outreach and in evangelism aim not just for individuals but for families. We of course know, as Reformed Christians, that God’s grace runs in the line of families. That is, that God is a God to us and to our children. But it’s the same on the mission field. We have had a number of families come to church because in meeting with one individual initially, I expressed an interest in the other members of the family. I do that every time I meet with somebody. I am not just interested in them, but tell me about your family, tell me about your parents, tell me about your siblings. And then

an offer goes out to address the needs that are in the family. Oftentimes you're dealing with a lot of baggage, a lot of broken homes, a lot of fragmented individuals and consequences of sin in their lives. Just make an offer to people to meet with them.

But the idea of evangelizing through families is an important aspect of covenantal evangelism. Reaching out and evangelizing families, not just individuals. Especially covenant heads. Very interesting statistic: when a mother is converted and comes to church, something like ten percent of the time the family will come with her. But when a father gets converted and comes to church, eighty-five percent of the time the family will come with him. This is very important. You hear of child evangelistic fellowship. I think they got it all wrong. God bless them, they love the Lord, they want to do the Lord's work, but I think they've got the wrong end of the family here. You've got to go for covenant heads and not just individuals, but families.

Something also along with a covenantal approach to missions is Christian schools. In our tradition, our history has been that whenever a church was started a Christian school was started along with it. I think that would serve us well on the mission field. If you're going to do church planting, I'd encourage you to do it. It's consistent with the demands of the covenant; it's consistent with our understanding of scripture, that God is a God to us and to our children. And it's consistent with taking a long-term approach to mission in any community. Those churches or those missions that have an approach to just reaching the current generation—it's going to be like a flash in the pan, except by the grace of God, particularly if they're reaching only singles. You may have hundreds and thousands of people who are coming, but if they're not getting married, they're not having kids, and if they're not training and nurturing their children in the faith and in the fear and admonition of the Lord, you're going to have nothing in the next generation. If you want to have a long term impact in terms of a kingdom perspective, then you've got to look along the terms of getting the next generation and the next generation and the generation after that.

What we're aiming for in New York City, and what I often tell the congregation, is what we are familiar with in our Dutch Reformed communities, and that is a Christian culture. That's what I want to have in New York City. If it takes 500 or 1000 years, I'm patient. I want to have somebody 500 years from now look back and say, "Look at what God started 500 years ago and God has been faithful to pass the faith down from one generation to the next."

We often have people get up when we have fellowship dinner once a month and give testimonies so that we get to know one another and our backgrounds and stuff. We had a young Dutch couple that was attending our congregation. I asked them to get up and give their testimony because they were the unusual ones; they had been raised in a Christian home. We only have two families now in church that were raised in Christian homes, the rest are first generation. So I wanted them to talk about it. We asked the husband, "How long has the faith been in your family?" He said, 400-500 years. I said to everybody, that's what we

want. Whenever I go and preach in other churches, I always encourage people to come with me because I want them to see what this is like. “You got to see this! This is just amazing what goes on in these churches in these communities. They have a culture, they have a Christian culture. That’s what we’ve got to have. That’s what we’re aiming for.” But you’re not going to have it if you don’t have Christian schools. You’re going to have an individualistic, if you will, a Baptist approach to faith and life that’s not consistent with what we believe the Bible teaches.

One last thing on the covenantal perspective of missions: that’s children and worship. We have a lot of children in our congregation. The one thing that people comment on most when they come to worship is the kids. The children can sit through a service that’s more than an hour and a half in length, a sermon that’s forty-five or fifty minutes. And not only sit there but take notes and then talk to adults about it afterwards. I’m telling you, this is a miracle in the eyes of the world. It just doesn’t happen. We just take it for granted in our churches; this is how we raise our kids. This is how we train our children. I’m telling you it is a powerful witness to a watching world that we take for granted. And it’s covenantal. We’re teaching our children. They’re in the presence of God. God is speaking to us. We’re here to give God the worship and glory due his name. You’ve got to be respectful. You’ve got to sing. You’ve got to be reverent. You’ve got to pay attention. All of these things. But when the world sees that, they say, “How in the world? What do you do? Do you choke them? Do you beat them? Do you threaten them with death? How do they do that?” Again, it’s covenantal.

III. Putting it into practice. How do you get started in practice here? *Get a core group together.* When we started our worship service we had two core groups fall through. In our first worship service we had two people. I wouldn’t encourage you to pursue that particular means of starting churches. Get either seeds from a mother church or a group that has something in common that is connected to you. For example, a lot of the churches out in California, United Reformed Churches, target people who have been listening to the White Horse Inn. You could use a mailing list or contacts that you know. Modern Reformation subscribers, maybe they would give you their mailing list, or some particular Christian magazine. Get a mailing list, target a mailing to that group. But some kind of core group along those lines is needed. Either seeds from a mother church or a group with something in common.

Find a meeting place. Just find a hall where you could meet. You don’t want to get a place that’s too big, otherwise it’s going to seem like nobody’s there, which psychologically has an impact on people. You don’t want to get a place that’s too small. Look at hotels, social club halls, Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis, Lions Club, places like that where they meet. Seventh Day Adventists, because they worship on Saturday, have the place vacant on Sundays. Jewish synagogues, same thing, would be potential meeting places.

Advertise. Advertise in the local papers, shopping circulars. When I came to my first church after I was converted it was from reading a little ad in a shopping circular. It was something like Penny-savers. It was just

a two line ad. "We believe Jesus is the Messiah, how about you?" And a telephone number. That was it. Do you know that for years that was the most successful means of getting people in that particular church? It was just a two line ad in a shopping circular. Something as simple as that. Advertise in the local newspapers, shopping circulars, radio. I mentioned this afternoon that radio has been our most successful means. Put up posters and flyers on lamp poles in the neighborhood if you're allowed. That's been effective. Network with other Christians; it's very important. Also, the cheapest and the best means of advertising is word of mouth. Get people talking about it.

Going back to an organic approach, network in the community. Try to get on the local community board. Work with the fire department and the police. I have a friend of mine, a pastor in Brooklyn, who has not a real large church, but a reasonable size. The police captain in the precinct won't do anything in that community without first talking to him. This is because over the years he ingratiated himself to the police and the fire department in the community. Just by going in, befriending them, sitting down talking, offering his services to them, counseling police officers. He's had Bibles engraved with the logo of the precinct or the particular fire house, then given them as gifts. We've gone down to the local fire department, which was at September 11th. We've gone down and sung Christmas carols to them and given them gifts and bread and stuff like that at Christmas. Then we take photos while we're there. Then I've gone and got the photos framed, and made an appointment to meet with the captain of the firehouse to give them a gift. Just little innovative things like this.

I also tried to get on the board of education in Lower Manhattan. Because I'm on the business advisory council for Murry Bergtraum High School and also a community leader as pastor of a local church, I went down to city hall and applied to be on the local school board. But these are just some ideas of how you can network in to the community. Again, it's consistent with an organic approach.

Costs of starting work. Probably a big thing I think you should have is expenses set aside for start up costs. That's going to vary by region. Cost of living in Chicago, New York, and California is much higher than it would be in Grand Rapids or Northwest Iowa, but you've got to have seed money. Again, if you don't have enough money to pay a pastor, just take that as a providential indicator that you're not ready. That's my personal opinion; I'm open to correction on it.

Accountability and oversight. You need wise elders. I know that Phil has this; I also have it. But you need wise elders who can supervise and oversee without micromanaging things. It is a recipe for disaster if you have men who think they can come in and tell you how to do things when they are not there. I'm a member of West Sayville Reformed Bible Church (URCNA). When you have traffic, they're about three days out on Long Island from Manhattan. There's no way that they know what's going on in Lower Manhattan; they just don't know it. They're too far removed from it ethnically, culturally, geographically in every way. If they come in

and try to micromanage, it's going to be a disaster. So you need wise elders who can supervise and oversee the work without micromanaging it.

You better *be ready for hard work and lots of it*. I thought I worked hard when I was the solo pastor of a 600-plus member congregation. If you think you're working hard in seminary, I'm sure your teachers tell you, wait until you get out. You don't know what hard work is. If you think you work hard in a local church; wait till you get into a church plant. So, be ready for hard work, and lots of it.

And now a few points on posture. I'm going to list these in no particular order of significance, with respect to posture. First thing, if you're going to be a church planter, you have to have an infinite capacity for disappointment. I have had my heart broken and trampled on more times than I care to mention since I've been in New York City. You invest time, you invest effort and energy into people, and they have no sense of loyalty, no sense of commitment. You have these black holes—people that demand your time. Or you just have people that don't have any sense. You think people are getting it; you think they're finally seeing the light. Then all of a sudden they're back and involved in some sin or something.

You have to have a lot of patience with people. People come in, if you are from or used to a church tradition or background where as Phil mentioned earlier, you've got a commitment to two services a day, you know what worship is all about, etc, etc, etc. In a church plant you're dealing with people that have none of that. Absolutely none! You're dealing with people that don't know from Adam literally. And then they get converted and come in the church and you need a lot of patience because you've got a slow and long learning curve that people are going to have. You need to be very patient with them. You should be aware, if you're interested in church planting, that church planting has an eighty percent failure rate. You want to talk about a capacity for disappointment?

Give people time. In a day and age where nobody will give anybody the time of day, when you give somebody time, it's immensely valuable to them. We just had a young woman from Haiti start attending our congregation. I met with her last week. She was asking questions in our new member's class and at Bible study. "What's Calvinism?" Now, this is not a religious person, but she asks "Will I have to stop being a Catholic?" All these kinds of things—I said, "we'd better talk, let's go for coffee." I met her for coffee and spent over two hours with her. As I was driving her home, she said to me, "This is a big thing, that a pastor would take two hours out of his day to just answer my questions and talk to me. I really, really appreciate that." You give people time in a day and age when people won't give them the time of day. That's what you've got to do. Be prepared to do that. I was mentioning to somebody earlier, when people come out of unbelieving backgrounds and they come with all their baggage, and all their problems, it doesn't go away when they get converted. Don't misinterpret 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man is in Christ there is a new creation," as if somehow all of the old is gone and the new is come. Take that redemptive historically but not personally. It doesn't mean all their problems go away; they come with them into the church. And when

I'm talking about giving time, I'm saying that you better be prepared (and you better prepare your people) when you're going to tell them to spend time with somebody—that that is a huge, huge commitment. Huge! We're not talking about an hour Bible study once a week. We're talking about get ready for somebody to call you in the middle of the night and tell you that they just drank a pint of Sneaky Pete wine. Get ready for somebody calling you up and telling you they're ready to snort a bag of coke, and they're calling you because they need help. Or they just beat up their spouse or their live-in girlfriend or something. You're talking about heavy-duty commitment of time.

You have to have a love for the lost. This was mentioned earlier. You can look at Luke, chapter 7, but this is what Jesus did. I started the day by saying that we need the heart of God, who is a missionary God. And when he sent a missionary Son, Jesus loved sinners. He spent time with them, with the *outcasts* and with the marginalized. In Luke, chapter 7, the first incident we have there is Jesus with the centurion. What's the centurion? He was a Gentile. What was a Gentile? He was a *racial outcast* as far as any self-respecting Jew was concerned. You touched a Gentile, you had to be ritually purified. This guy was a dog. He was scum of the earth. Jesus spent time with him. You go on to the widow. What's the widow? The widow, of course, is somebody that didn't have a head, somebody that didn't have a provider. She was a *financial outcast*, very susceptible for being taken advantage of. But Jesus had time for her. You go on in Luke, chapter 7; you have the disciples of John the Baptist. John is asking whether Jesus is actually the Messiah. Jesus tells him the things that he's done to demonstrate that he's the Messiah. Very interesting, Luke notes parenthetically, verse 30, that the Pharisees rejected John's disciples because they hadn't been baptized by him. Who are these people, John and his disciples? They're *religious outcasts*. They are in Hebrew, the "*Am Ha Haretz*," or the people of the earth. They were the common people. In Dutch it would have been Kuyper's "*Kleine Luyden*," the little people. And then, of course, Luke concludes the chapter by talking about the woman who was forgiven much sin. She washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her hair. She's a *moral outcast*. These are the kinds of people that Jesus made time for and gave his ministry to. They were *racial outcasts*, they were *economic outcasts*, they were *religious outcasts* and they were *moral outcasts*. Jesus loved sinners. And you have to have a love for sinners. And believe me, it's not easy to love sinners. But look in the mirror and maybe that will help.

Going along with that, in terms of segue, is that when these people come to church, there needs to be enough room in the church for sinners. Far too many of our churches have no room for sinners, sad to say.

Look at Hebrews, chapter 11, "What more shall I say?" This is the Hall of Fame of Faith, right? "I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David...." Now I'll bet if I took a survey in this room about who should be in the Hall of Fame of Faith, nobody would come up with Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. Maybe David, but when you think about what David did, he probably shouldn't be in there either, right? And yet the Holy Spirit didn't have that problem. Think of

the Corinthian church. You want to talk about a whacked-out church? If there was a church like New York it was Corinth. This is a whacked-out church. Their denying the bodily resurrection, they're abusing the Lord's Supper to the extent God's got to come and take some lives. You've got people there committing incest and they're proud of it. Paul comes to that church and says, "You've been sanctified by the blood of Christ," addresses them as brothers. I venture to say that anybody in this room that heard of a Christian that denied the bodily resurrection of Christ would say "you can't be a Christian." If we saw anybody who was committing incest and proud of it, you'd say they can't be a Christian. That wasn't Paul's attitude. Paul didn't tolerate it. He didn't condone it. Remember, he said that the wicked shall not inherit the kingdom of God, don't be deceived. He rebuked it; he corrected it. He said, get that guy out of the church and hand him over to the devil so his soul can be saved. I'm not talking about tolerating or condoning these things. But I'm just saying there has to be room in the church for sinners. When they come in, you have to recognize, please recognize that when somebody gets converted and comes to church, they do not have 500 years of Dutch Reformed or Scottish Presbyterian tradition behind them. And it is unrealistic, and I think it's the height of self-righteousness, to expect that they do.

Somebody comes to church and they've got a McDonald's coffee cup, there should be no snickering and comments, "Sabbath breaker." Somebody comes in with tattoos and nose rings, there should be no comments, "They're not our kind of people." There has to be room for sinners in the church. Because in the church, we're all sinners; that's who we are.

Pray. This is something I admit to you has been a deficiency, and I'm seeking to rectify it in our own congregation. But pray, really pray. The ministry of prayer is very important. Pray for opportunities, pray for specific people by name, but pray.

I think we ought to send our best to the mission field, not our least or our leftovers. You decide whether that's pertinent to the audience here or whether that's pertinent to other people that are in established congregations and have been there too long and need to get out to the mission field, whatever. But if you're not good enough for the church, you're not good enough for a church plant. Earlier we were talking about this idea that because of the lack of open pulpits in the URC, and maybe some other federations or denominations as well, church plants are the way for seminary graduates to go. That may be true. But recognize that you need to be good enough for that. Not that this is a last resort. Oh, I can't get a call anywhere else, so I think I'll plant a church. You better be able to preach and teach your way out of a wet paper bag or you're going nowhere. Don't do this just because you've got nothing else to do. I'm sure your teachers tell you that about the ministry in general. We do not have careers; we have ministries. And that better be the case with you. You've got to have a sense of the Lord's call, not just that you had no other opportunity.

Last thing, *much of what qualifies a man for the ministry is his family.* I don't think I have a reputation for this, but I've been known to ask questions at candidacy exams or ordination exams of the spouse. I think that's something that ought to be done a whole lot more often. How is a man with his wife? How is a man with his children? How is a man with his money? You read 1 Timothy 3, and the qualifications for elder listed there, much of what qualifies a man is his family. So have your families together. Be a spiritual leader in your home. Don't be spending all your time with other people and none with your family. The reputation the preacher's kids have is an indictment, isn't it? It's a damning indictment that preacher's kids are known as hellions, wild, disobedient kids. This should not be; it's a disqualifying factor for ministry. The same thing applies with respect to money.

Those are some things I wanted to say; that's it. I'll conclude there.