

EDINBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Church planting in the book of Acts

Steve Walton
Trinity College, Bristol

Slides: <http://stevewalton.info>

It's all about God

'...mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God...Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission...**there is church because there is mission, not vice versa.**'

David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390

It's all about God

- Pentecost Acts 2
 - **God pours out** his Spirit vv 4, 16-17 (quoting Joel 2:28)
 - believers proclaim **God's praise** vv 4-11
 - Peter's speech focuses on how **God is acting** vv 14-36
 - response invited from those whom **'the Lord our God' calls** v 39
 - **divine passive** 'three thousand **were added** to their number that day' v 41

It's all about God

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
 - 3:6, 13 '**In the name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth, walk!... **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers**, glorified his servant Jesus...'
 - 3:8, 9 'He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple, walking and jumping and **praising God**. When all the people saw him walking and **praising God**...'

It's all about God

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
 - 3:11-12 '**While the man held on to Peter and John**, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this **he said to them...**'
 - 4:19-20 'But Peter and John answered them, "Which is right **in God's eyes**: to listen to you **or to him**? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'"

It's all about God

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
 - 4:24 'And when they heard this, **they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord...you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them..."**

It's all about God

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
 - 4:29–30 'And now, **Lord, consider** their threats **and enable** your servants to speak your word with great boldness. **Stretch out your hand** to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'

It's all about God

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
 - 4:31 'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit spoke the word of God boldly.**'

It's all about God

- Persecution produces mission 8:1b-4

‘On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and **all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria**...³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.’

It's all about God

- Samaria 8:4-25
 - '5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria **and proclaimed the Messiah there**. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.' vv 5-7

It's all about God

- Samaria 8:4-25
 - '5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.
6 The crowds, with one accord, kept paying close attention to the things that Philip was saying **as they listened and observed the signs that he was doing.** 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.' vv 5-7

It's all about God

- Samaria 8:4-25
 - '5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 The crowds, with one accord, kept paying close attention to the things that Philip was saying **as they listened and observed the signs that he was doing.** 7 **For** with shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.' vv 5-7

It's all about God

- Samaria 8:4-25
 - 'you thought you could obtain **the gift of God** with money!' v 20

It's all about God

- The Ethiopian eunuch 8:26-40
 - 'Now **an angel of the Lord said to Philip**, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."' v 26
 - '**The Spirit told Philip**, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."' v 29

It's all about God

- The Ethiopian eunuch 8:26-40
 - 'So Philip ran to him and **heard him reading Isaiah the prophet** and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"... Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "**Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.**"' vv 28, 30, 32-33 (Isa 53:7-8)

It's all about God

- The Ethiopian eunuch 8:26-40
 - 'And when they came up out of the water, **the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away**' v 39

It's all about God

- Cornelius 10:1-48; 11:4-17; 15:7-9
 - **God speaks** to Cornelius by an angel
10:3-6, 31-32; 11:13-14
 - **God sends** Peter a vision 10:9-16;
11:4-10
 - **God times** the arrival of the visitors
10:17; 11:11

It's all about God

- Cornelius 10:1-48; 11:4-17; 15:7-9
 - **God tells** Peter to welcome the visitors 10:19-20; 11:12
 - Peter recognises **what God is doing** 10:30-33, 34-35, 36
 - **God sends** the Spirit on Cornelius and his household 10:44-47; 11:15
 - **God's action** convinces the Jewish believers that it is God—and **they praise God** 10:47; 11:18

It's all about God

13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for **the work to which I have called them.**' 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

13:1-3

It's all about God

13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for **the work to which I have called them**.' 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

It's all about God

- God's call to Macedonia 16:6-10
 - rare language of God calling v 10
 - God actively prevents Paul and his team preaching in Asia and Bithynia vv 6, 7



It's all about God

- God's call to Macedonia 16:6-10
 - rare language of God calling v 10
 - the Holy Spirit actively prevents Paul and his team preaching Asia and Bithynia vv 6, 7
 - the night vision v 9
 - and the conclusion v 10



It's all about God

- the gospel in Philippi 16:12-15
 - they look for praying people v 13a
 - they speak the gospel v 13b
 - **God opens** Lydia's heart v 14
 - the new believing community is established in Lydia's home vv 15, 40

It's all about God

- the believers do not make things happen
- **limited** strategy and planning
 - travel along major Roman roads
 - going to major cities and towns
 - looking for people likely to be open to the gospel—synagogues
 - seeking bridges into the culture
 - avoiding ditches in the culture

It's all about God

- the believers do not make things happen
- **limited** strategy and planning
 - travel along major Roman roads
 - going to major cities and towns
 - looking for people likely to be open to the gospel—synagogues
- staying as long as possible
 - Syrian Antioch: over a year 11:26
 - Corinth: over 18 months 18:11
 - Ephesus: over two years 19:10

‘This went on for two years, so that **all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.**’ Acts 19:10

‘In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. **You learned it from Epaphras**, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf...**Epaphras, who is one of you** and a servant of Christ Jesus’ Col 1:6-7; 4:12

It's all about God

- the believers do not make things happen
- **limited** strategy and planning
- the danger of forgetting how passionate God is about wanting people to know him
 - the danger of **over-activism**
 - the danger of **inactivism**
 - '**I planted** the seed, **Apollos watered** it, but God has been making it grow.' 1 Cor 3:6

It's all about God

- the believers do not make things happen
- **limited** strategy and planning
- the danger we forget how passionate God is about wanting people to know him
 - the danger of **over-activism**
 - the danger of **inactivism**
 - '**I planted** the seed, **Apollos watered** it, but **God has been making it grow.**' 1 Cor 3:6

What do believers do?

- not 'twitching puppets' (Ernst Haenchen)
- witness and proclamation 1:8
 - 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'

What do believers do?

- witness and proclamation 1:8
- speaking and living the gospel in public
 - temple courts 2:46; 5:12b, 14
 - meeting Lydia in Philippi by the river 16:12-15
 - in a tentmaker's workshop in Corinth 18:2-3 (and Thessalonica, 1 Thess 2:9)
 - meeting outdoors 1 Cor 14:23-25
 - everyone a witness; not everyone a proclaimer

What do believers do?

- witness and proclamation 1:8
- speaking and living the gospel in public
- working in teams and groups, e.g. Paul
 - Barnabas
 - John Mark
 - Silas
 - Timothy
 - Priscilla and Aquila



A map of the Eastern Mediterranean region, including parts of Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, and the Levant. The map is color-coded with green for land and blue for water. Various geographical features are labeled, including the Adriatic Sea, Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Several blue boxes are overlaid on the map, each containing a list of names associated with a specific region. The names are written in yellow text. The regions and their associated names are: Rome (John Mark, Luke, Demas, Crescens, Tychicus, Priscilla & Aquila, Epaphroditus, Urbanus, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis), Macedonia (Timothy, Silas, Luke, Erastus, Trophimus, Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, Epaphroditus), Asia (Achaicus, Stephanas, Apollos, Epaphras, Trophimus, Aristarchus, Priscilla & Aquila, Luke), Greece (Timothy, Trophimus, Apollos, Priscilla & Aquila, Erastus, Achaicus, Stephanas), Galatia (Barnabas, Silas, Timothy), Syria (Barnabas, John Mark, Titus, Silas), Crete (Titus, Tychicus, Apollos), and Cyprus (Barnabas, John Mark).

ROME

John Mark
Luke
Demas
Crescens
Tychicus
Priscilla & Aquila
Epaphroditus
Urbanus
Tryphaena
Tryphosa
Persis

MACEDONIA

Timothy	Euodia
Silas	Syntyche
Luke	Clement
Erastus	Epaphroditus
Trophimus	

GREECE

Timothy
Trophimus
Apollos
Priscilla & Aquila
Erastus
Achaicus
Stephanas

ASIA

Aristarchus	Achaicus
Priscilla &	Stephanas
Aquila	Apollos
Luke	Epaphras
	Trophimus

GALATIA

Barnabas
Silas
Timothy

SYRIA

Barnabas
John Mark
Titus
Silas

CRETE

Titus
Tychicus
Apollos

CYPRUS

Barnabas
John Mark

What do believers do?

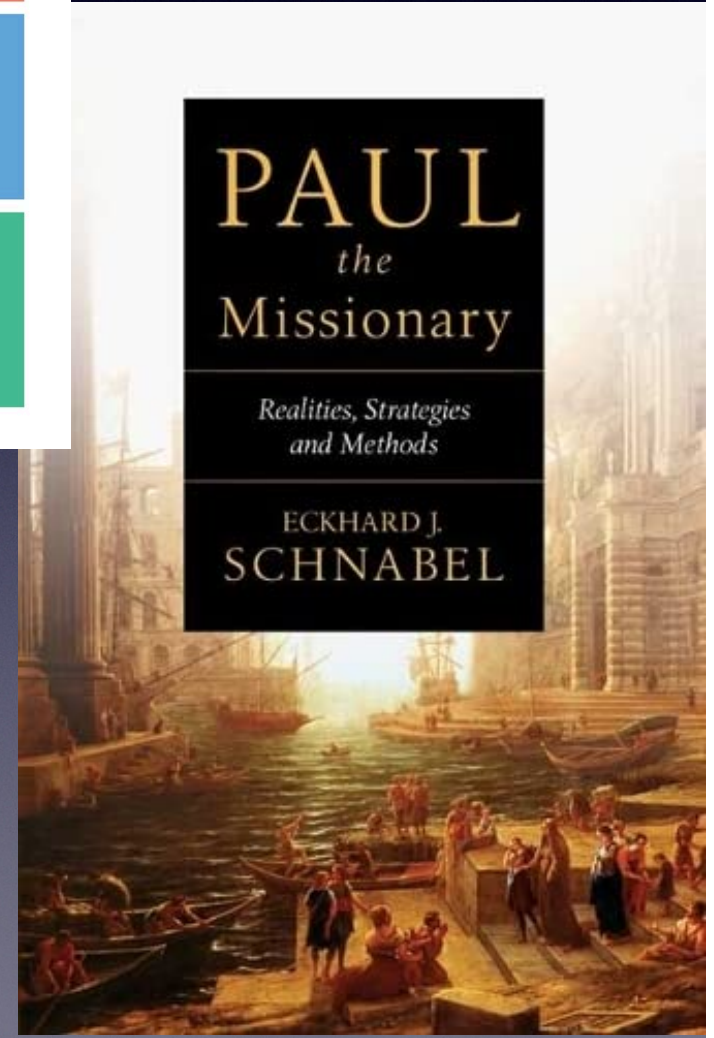
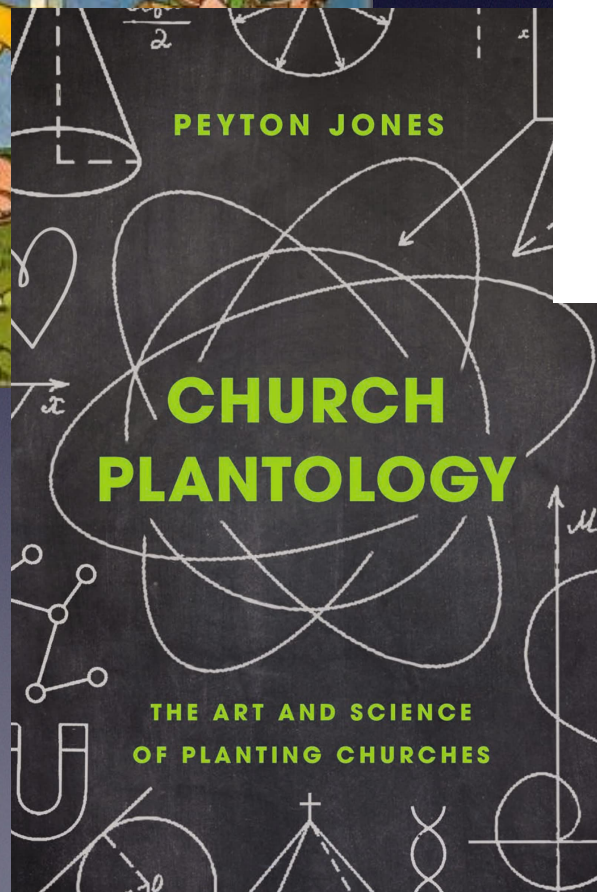
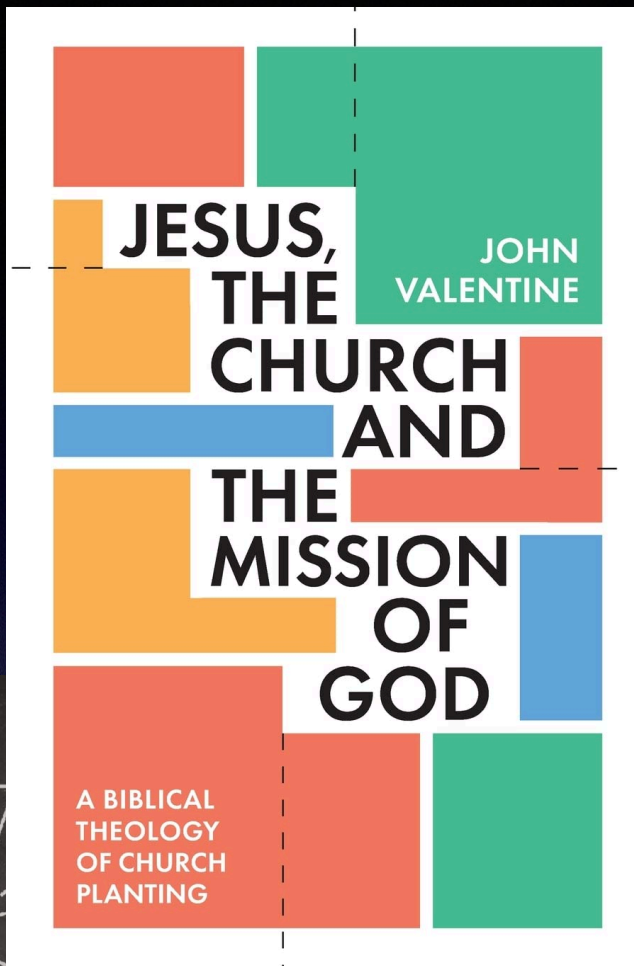
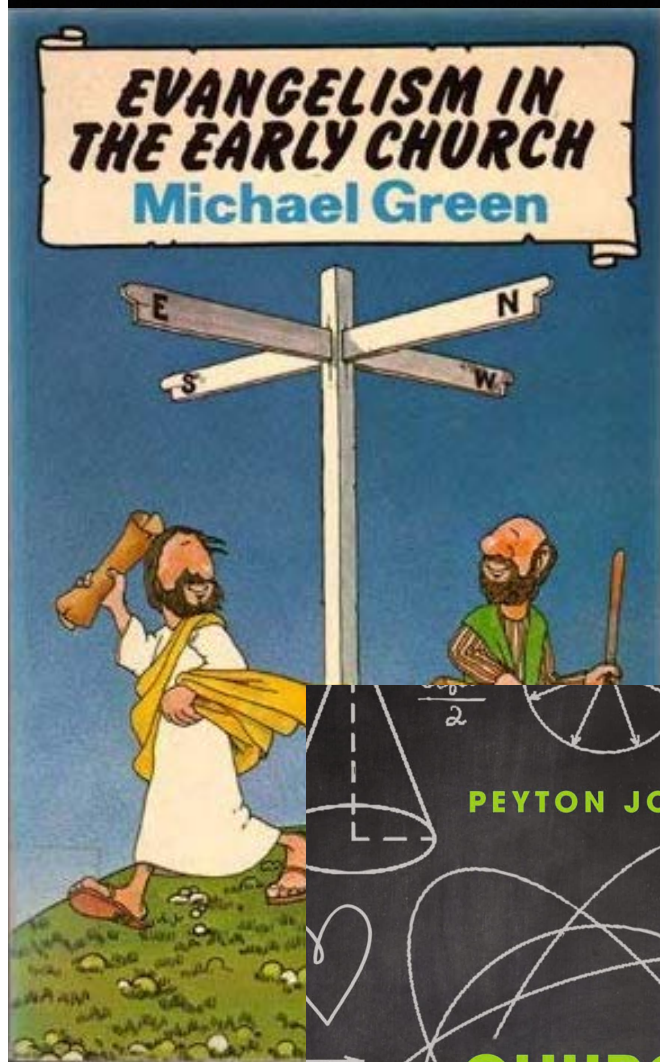
- witness and proclamation 1:8
- speaking and living the gospel in public
- working in teams and groups, e.g. Paul
- responding to God's prompting
 - leaving Antioch 13:1-5
 - not going to some places 16:6-10
 - reflection and discernment needed

‘Although Luke certainly wants to show God’s role in the shaping of the early church and dramatic impact of early evangelism, he also shows human decisions, interpretations and lackluster missionary success. When one focuses too much on the divine side [of] Luke’s story, one misses the fullness of Luke’s message.’

John B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God Had Called Us*, 107

What do believers do?

- witness and proclamation 1:8
- speaking and living the gospel in public
- working in teams and groups, e.g. Paul
- responding to God's prompting
- facing suffering for witness and proclamation
 - 'I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.' 9:16
 - Spirit and suffering linked
 - Peter and John 5:32, 40-41
 - Stephen 7:55, 58-60



You can get these
slides from

Acts and More

<https://stevewalton.info>