

Week 1

The Church on the Move: Then and Now

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During the early years of Xenos, we had the idea that home Bible studies could multiply and expand in a wild-fire movement similar to that in the early church. First dozens, then scores, then hundreds joined in.

Even then, we had little inkling that one day, thousands would begin relationships with Christ. But one thing was clear right from the beginning: The whole thing was being orchestrated by God.

Everyone in our group had a strong inner sense that God was working, and therefore we were responsible to show up and do our part. I felt rocked by surprise as God would move heaven and earth to advance our fellowship.

Always the pattern has been the same: We had to move out in faith trusting that God would be there when the time came:

Today, as we stand on the edge of a new phase of ministry, Xenos prepares to plant entire ministry spheres. The term “sphere” is based on 2 Cor. 10:13 (NASB), where Paul uses the term to refer to the entire group in Corinth.

This fall we are planting the West Side sphere and the first Main Campus sphere will plant in early 2006. We anticipate more spheres will be planted each year. The new facility in the north campus area will open the possibility of planting adult as well as student spheres.

Never have we stood at a more exciting crossroads than today. If our vision for sphere planting succeeds, we may see action in the future that goes far beyond anything we have seen so far!

Read Acts 18 & 19 and the background information on Ephesus.

Ephesus: Judging from the size of the pile of books they burned in this city (50,000 pieces of silver, each equal to a day’s wage) the group must have been huge. Also, later references to churches in seven cities around Ephesus, none of which were visited by Paul in Acts, strongly suggests these were all planted by the vigorous group in Ephesus. (Colossians, Rev. 2 and 3)

Another indication of the immense size of this movement comes from the mouth of Demetrius the silversmith: “you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.” (Acts 19:26,27) Considering that this temple was one of the ancient wonders of the world, it says volumes that Demetrius would have been able to argue with credibility that this cult was threatened by the number of people converting to Christianity. This church planting movement must have included thousands in Ephesus, and many more in surrounding cities.

For discussion:

How did Paul communicate truth about Christ?

How could we follow his example today?

How did God embolden and protect Paul?

How would your witness change if you were confident of God’s protection in your life?

Look at Acts 19:10: How far did Paul’s ministry reach?

What potential do you see for Xenos' future?

What could you do to increase the spread of the gospel?

Prayer Points:

- Ask God, "What more can I do to spread the gospel?"
- Pray for a few people you know who are apart from God.
- Ask God to continue to lead this church and that we will embrace the changes and challenges that God leads us into.
- Pray that God would help every Xenos member, including you, to be generous.