

# THE SEVEN SHARED VALUES IN THE PHILIPPINES: GOSPEL INSPIRED CHURCH PLANTING EFFORTS

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JEFF T. JO

*Editor's Note: Jeff Jo's story captures the heart of our desire for Sovereign Grace Churches to reach the lost through church planting. By doing so, churches like Jeff's are not only winning the lost but growing them into disciples of Jesus Christ.*

I still remember in the early years when God birthed in our hearts the desire to pray and do missions in the third poorest province in our country. In spite of our limited financial resources at that time, we believed that the Holy Spirit was leading us to plant churches in that region 1,300 kilometers away from us.

This led us to cry out to God, "Lord, we are just a small church, but you created in us a big heart for missions. May we be passionate in proclaiming your gospel and planting churches that Your Name may be known among the people and tribes in that region." So, for the past 15 years, we have been planting churches in the southern part of Surigao, Mindanao, Philippines.

Since then, in God's providence, eleven churches have been planted, reaching the Manobo tribes. God willing, three more will be added in 2022. Year after

year, as our fellow elders and pastors congregate, we ask ourselves, “Why do we do missions?” Let’s face it, sometimes we do ministry activities without asking why we do what we do. I believe it’s possible to plant churches with a wrong intention or, worse, with a wrong foundation. This happens when our efforts in church planting are focused on ...

- *Church growth.* We do not do missions so that we can brag to other churches about how fast our denomination's growth is. Both church planting and church growth is God’s work. We should be reminded of Psalm 127:1, which says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, the work of the builders is wasted.”
- *Church name.* When we are after the church’s fame rather than the glory of his name, we are not just diverting from the biblical intention of church planting but worse, we are competing with the glory that is due to his name alone. C.H. Spurgeon once penned, “The moment we glorify ourselves since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High.”<sup>1</sup>
- *Church buildings.* No matter how important the church building is where his people gather for worship, it does not ensure that biblical church planting has been done. Nowadays, there are church buildings that are filled with religious people yet unconverted ones, going through a religious motion but with no biblical conviction or devotion at all.

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Church planting aims for the worship of his glorious name. Both in the lives of an individual person and a congregation, the gospel of Christ is cherished. It is the very foundation in the heart of every genuine disciple of Christ, whose joy is to be in the fellowship of the community of the saints as they grow together “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). At the same time, we expect to see real gospel conversions exercised in marriage, family, and community. How do we do this?

Once a month, we gather as elders with our wives to bond and checking on

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1. C.H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Chester, UK: Discovery House, 2016), August 16 Morning.

how we live out the gospel of Christ inside our families. We encourage the same kind of fellowship to our sister churches down south of Mindanao. We desire to see churches where families have high esteem for the gospel of Christ.

Secondly, we raised up a church-planting team who have been instructed and inspired in the gospel of Christ. This secures their hearts as they do missions and disciple others, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Lastly, in his providence, we prioritize gospel clarity both in the preaching of his Word and in congregational singing, celebrating the beauty of the cross of Christ and the power of his resurrection. In the light of the gospel-inspired gatherings and church planting endeavors, it surely melts every pride in the hearts of those whom he elected for salvation.

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

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## **JEFF T. JO**

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