

Phases in the Life of the Historical Church

	Unreached	Movement	Established	Institutional
Status of Believers	Few scattered believers	Many within the ethnic group believe & churches multiply quickly	The % of believers increases and wants to impact society. Society is more accepting of the church.	Heritage Faith that emphasizes the institutions and hierarchy of the denomination.
Evangelism	Mainly done by outsiders	Almost all believers share the Gospel and do the Great Commission wherever they go but especially with their friends and family. Apostles go area by area sharing the Gospel and starting churches that multiply.	Many believers share the Gospel and do the Great Commission. Superstar sharers/methods emerge. Mass evangelism helps get the Gospel to a wider audience and sometimes saturation. The % of believers can grow rapidly.	Many Christians but some born into Christian families or join for benefit. Evangelism is done by sharing with children and youth in institutions/camps, inside the church building, foray evangelism, mass evangelism, and by paid ministers. Lay believers' responsibility is to invite people. Church starts are done through experts.
Discipleship	Few if any believers are being disciple	Everyone disciples! Obedience and multiplication are normal. People disciple anywhere, at any time.	The focus becomes transformation – transform all aspects of society. Children and youth ministry emerge. Materials written by well known person/entity to explain the Scripture. Many times that person begins having sermons.	Discipleship is gaining knowledge/information, obedience is not emphasized. Expected to use the expert / institutional material. Transformation of society is done through institutions. If the denomination or network is big enough it sometimes becomes connected with a political group.
Church Meetings	Few if any gatherings of believers	Churches gather in homes and various other places, but the number of churches are multiplying rapidly! Everyone can start a church.	The church meeting becomes more formalized. Buildings are built to accommodate the increase in believers, especially in areas without heavy persecution.	The weekly service/church programs become most important. Sermons become the norm. To be a church, you must have a building. The functions of the church have become activities or committees/teams of the church and are done at the building. Abundance of activities and meetings.
Training of Leaders	None	Done by the local church or local network. Little clergy/laity gap. Priesthood of the believers is emphasized.	Much training being done! Some institutions established to further facilitate training especially at a deeper level or with a successful teacher. The more established a network, the more the clergy/laity distinction emerges.	Only specialists do the training. Training is mostly or only done at an accredited institution – with some extension that has a certificate or degree. Training focuses on increasing knowledge and the ability to defend the status quo.
Status of Missions	None	Churches send apostles to new areas; most members are sharing the Gospel where ever they go.	Churches send apostles to new areas; organizations started to help facilitate those sent.	Denominational organizations do missions for the churches. The churches just support the organizations.
Origination & Structure	None	Very little structures. There are leaders – especially apostle/ prophet types who go around in the networks but the focus is on building the Kingdom not the network or denomination. Some churches have deacons.	A moderate amount of structure. Hierarchy grows but still is focused on the Kingdom. The structures are not restrictive. Deacons become common. Specialization becomes more common.	Highly organized and focused on structure and hierarchy. Top down. Doctrinal statements on par with Scripture. Churches not agreeing with the top leadership or doctrinal statement are ostracized or kicked out. Much time maintaining structures and institutions. Leaders want to strengthen the denomination. Clergy/Laity separated. Certain things can only be done by the clergy – baptism, Lord Supper, etc.
Status of Persecution	Persecution effective in keeping the church limited. Believers fearful	Believers willing to pay price for God's Kingdom. Boldness in the face of persecution multiplies the church.	Persecution causes problems for the institutions / hierarchy. But the heavy persecution usually slows down or has seasons.	Persecution causes the church to stop sharing the Gospel with non-believers or the persecution goes after the few top leaders in the hierarchy and severely weakens the church.

The idea for the first 3 phases came from Nik R and Don D.

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What moves a people group from Unreached into the Movement Phase? Bold local believers who decide they will risk it all and face whatever price for the sake of their people hearing the Gospel. Also a DNA in the new believers that all believers are expected to do the Great Commission with a plan that groups people into churches quickly.

The longer a people group is in the Movement and Established Phases, the greater the % of believers will be and the larger the number of churches will be.

What moves a network or denomination from the Established Phase into the Institutional Phase?

Though the move from established phases to the institutional phase usually happens gradually over time, there usually is an event (a doctrinal problem, a desire for more official recognition, or a desire for more power) that triggers the final shift to the institutional phase. Usually certain leaders try to grab hold of the denomination structure when a doctrinal or methodological problem occurs to get it back to the right way but they usually only succeed in making it more controlled from the top and the denomination begins to decline.

The Lord then brings up a grassroots renewal movement that goes back to the New Testament style and the institutional church either joins the movement in some way so that the denomination begins growing again or the institutionalised church rejects it and those churches begins a decline. Sometimes the grassroots renewal movement is rejected so strongly by the institutional churches that the movement is kicked out or leaves the institutional church. General, the new movement starts growing quickly but eventually goes through the same cycle that the original church went through and a new denomination, network, or para-church organization is formed.

The exception: The group of churches that had an outsider from an Institutional church start the churches with an institutional model from the beginning will probably be a very small group of churches. Usually they insist on a building from the very beginning and the outsider starts some type of school or seminary from the very beginning for training. Since the people cannot support the financial costs of either, the churches rarely multiply and the outsider finances most if not all of the costs. The result is a small group of churches that grow very slowly or not at all. If the local churches every have to take over the institutions, it causes a great burden on them. Many of these groups of institutional churches that have been started in unreached people groups are seen as foreign and hate/are hated by the indigenous culture.

It is important to help church planters and missionaries to UPGs who come from an institutional church to begin their work in a way that fits movements and not try to import their institutional church from their home areas.