

WHY START A NEW CHURCH?

CHURCH PLANTING IS GOD'S WAY OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND OF ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY-BASED DISCIPLING AGENCY.

The book of Acts establishes church planting as God's primary way of accomplishing the Great Commission. The local church ministry is the key evangelistic and discipling organization in a community. It is a permanent ministry made up of families and individuals from the community who desire to serve God and offer sound spiritual ministry to everyone in the community. New churches tend to be more evangelistic, more willing to involve lay people, and more open to newcomers. New churches often reach out to the community, while older churches may become stagnant and apathetic. Church planting pastors should have more time available for personally helping those with spiritual needs. The lower pastor to people ratio gives greater potential for attendees' spiritual growth. Some believers who have become stagnant will experience fresh life and service through involvement in church planting.

CHURCH PLANTING IS DESPERATELY NEEDED IN MANY AMERICAN COMMUNITIES.

American culture continues to rapidly decline morally and spiritually. Some people are hungry for the truth and are looking for answers. People's needs are heightened by the breakup of families, the spread of deadly disease, and the rising tide of violence. If the church planter is committed to reaching unsaved people and meeting their needs, he can go almost anywhere and plant a church. If the biblically-sound churches in a given locale are aggressively reaching out to unsaved people, the church planter should look for a needier area. Western USA has many communities in need of the Gospel. The major American cities could use hundreds of evangelistic, fundamental churches. Vast expanses of rural areas need good churches. There are spiritual vacuums all over the country where there is no evangelistic, Bible-preaching church.

CHURCH PLANTING PRESENTS ITSELF AS AN "OPEN DOOR OPPORTUNITY" FOR THE MAN ENTERING HIS FIRST PASTORAL MINISTRY.

Most young pastors want to make an impact for Christ. They are full of energy and ready to take on a great challenge. Their families are young and adventuresome. Their financial needs are not as great as those with older children. Finding an open door to pastor an established church at a young age may be difficult if churches are looking for someone with pastoral experience. An established church often has built-in resistance to a young pastor, established lay authority that may be difficult to lead, and sometimes a negative testimony in the community which will be hard to overcome. Certainly, someone needs to pastor those established churches, but the young man may be more effective planting his own church. The church-planting pastor can build his church around his own biblical philosophy and practice of ministry. He can make his own mistakes!

CHURCH PLANTING EXPANDS THE PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL BASE FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Planting an evangelistic church results in people getting saved, growing in the Lord, and giving to the Lord. Some will surrender to the ministry and foreign missions. These first-generation Christians are often very enthusiastic about serving and sacrificing for Christ. Some missionaries today are finding it very difficult to raise the needed financial support and are spending several years on deputation. Their difficulty stems in part from the stagnant missions budgets of older churches in numerical decline. New churches are needed to help get missionaries to the field and to provide the new missionaries themselves.

CHURCH PLANTING IS AN ALTERNATIVE DURING THIS TIME OF DOCTRINAL DEFECTION, ECCLESIASTICAL COMPROMISE, AND SINKING STANDARDS.

The last century witnessed enormous ecclesiastical changes. Fundamentalists pulled out of liberal denominations early in the century to form their own denominations, fellowships, or independent churches. Theologically conservative Christianity divided over the issue of New Evangelicalism in the middle of the century, leaving many Christians in confusion regarding their religious affiliations. Broad acceptance of ecumenical evangelism, charismatic gifts, unorthodox theology, and unbiblical methods of ministry have all weakened the church.

The church marketing movement with its worldly appeal has diminished standards of personal conduct and Christian music and worship. Large segments of the evangelical church have lost their distinctiveness of holiness, reverence, and righteousness while being market driven to meet the perceived needs of seekers. Areas which once had strong churches now lack them. Now is the time to proclaim the true Gospel through biblical church ministry and leadership. Now is the time for biblical church planting, with an emphasis on evangelistic outreach, intentional discipleship, expository preaching, and personal holiness.

CHURCH PLANTING PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A CHRIST-CENTERED, BIBLE-BASED MINISTRY INDEPENDENT OF DENOMINATIONAL ENTANGLEMENTS.

Every church will have its theological distinctives that set it apart from churches of other denominations. Such emphases are often called denominational distinctives. For example, a Baptist church will hold to baptism by immersion only. There is nothing wrong with that distinctive. There is nothing inherently wrong with like-minded churches forging fellowships to advance the gospel.

However, the spirit of denominationalism is another matter. Denominationalism often holds both liberal and conservative churches together in organizational structures through de-emphasizing doctrine and emphasizing “evangelism,” “missions,” and numerical growth. The Bible way of salvation and sanctification is grossly neglected in most mainline denominations. Pastors in mainline denominations are willing to support theological and moral corruption in their colleges and seminaries as a gamble to recapture the educational system. Blind loyalty overrules Biblical principles of purity and separation, resulting in rapid and massive theological decline. The preacher submits to the subtle control of the denomination through peer pressure, placement services,

financial contribution records, property controls, school and seminary loyalty, job security, and retirement programs. The preacher's accountability shifts from God to man. Denominationalism may distrust and discredit work not done through denominational channels. The church planter of an independent church keeps himself free from the denominational spirit which can be so destructive.

CHURCH PLANTING MAY BE A BETTER START IN THE MINISTRY FOR THE CHURCH PLANTER'S WIFE.

The feelings of the pastor's wife are important. The wife of the typical pastor has not had the extensive ministry or theological training of her husband. Her spiritual gifts may not include gifts of speaking. Timidity or shyness in public settings are natural for most people, especially a young pastor's wife. Pastoral candidates are often uneasy about coming into an established church, but imagine how much more uneasy is the pastor's wife. Church planting allows the church planter and his wife to build a ministry gradually, getting to know people and families one at a time. To be sure, the life of a church planter's wife will be challenged by sacrifice and, at times, loneliness. But what a thrill for the church-planting couple to watch a new church grow and develop!

CHURCH PLANTING IS THE LORD'S WILL FOR SOME MEN.

God gives to some preachers an enduring burden for a city or community. They cannot escape the reality that God wants them in a specific geographical area to start a new church. Others know God wants them to plant a church somewhere, but they search long and hard to determine the exact place. Still others may find that God thrusts a new church upon them, such as in the case where an informal Bible study blossoms into a church.

Just remember that church planting is not new or unusual – it is God's normal way of spreading His Word and Gospel. It has been going on for centuries! Every church was new at one time. Every church mentioned in the New Testament was planted in the first century. Every pastor in the early church was a church-planting pastor. He either started the church as Paul did, or he developed the church toward maturity from its birth and infancy. For those who love to see souls saved, believers grow, and being stretched personally, church planting may be God's will for them!