

Church Planting

In many parts of the world there is a pressing need to plant new churches. Missiologist Ralph Winter observed that around 100 A.D. there were approximately 360 non-Christians for every Christian. By 1000 A.D. this had fallen to 69, by 1900 A.D. to 21, and by 1992 to just 6.8 non-Christians for every Christian. These figures reflect the remarkable growth of the Christian faith over the centuries. (We need to keep in mind however as to what biblically defines a Christian.) As more people come to Christ, they need to be disciplined, nurtured, and integrated into healthy local congregations. This highlights the continuing need to establish many new churches so that believers can mature in their faith and be equipped to reach others with the gospel.

It is vital to recognise that God desires His Church to grow (Matthew 16:18, John 15:8). When numerical growth is lacking, some Christians take comfort in the belief that God's primary concern is spiritual maturity rather than numerical increase. However, Scripture indicates that God desires both. He longs for people to come to repentance and faith, while also desiring that believers grow to maturity in Christ. The Bible consistently teaches that God wants all people to come to know Him and genuine growth often requires patience and perseverance.

It should also be recognised that simply planting a new church in a town or city does not necessarily result in growth through new converts. In some cases, a new congregation grows primarily by attracting Christians from existing churches rather than by reaching those who do not yet know Christ. When this happens, little is gained for the advancement of God's Kingdom, as people simply move from one church to another according to their preferences.

This raises a vital question. Is a new church being planted to glorify God and advance His Kingdom, or to build a particular ministry or organisation? Motives matter. In some communities, the priority may be to strengthen, encourage, and partner with faithful churches already serving there rather than establish another congregation. Discernment requires prayer, wisdom, humility, and careful attention to the local context.

Biblical foundation for planting churches

New Testament Churches were founded in various ways:

1. Evangelistic outreaches, with apostolic follow up- Acts 8.
2. Apostolic outreach with Peter in Caesarea- Acts 10:24-48.
3. Where Paul and company formed a team- Acts 13:1-3 (best method).

Practical approach to church planting

1. Choose the location carefully and prayerfully.

What are the needs of the city or town?

Is there a church already there which is very similar to the one we would plant?

Visit these churches and express your thinking openly.

Are there many from the Mother church living in the area?

Is it the right timing to establish the church there?

2. Send out your very best people. e.g. the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabus.
3. Send out a team with one leader. They need to be there for the long haul. The team must respect the leader planting the new church.
4. Choose the leader/pastor carefully.
Will the leader be loyal to you?
Do they have a good spirit or are they proud and insecure?
Are they suitably gifted?
Is their spouse supportive of the leader's involvement?
Don't rush in and appoint elders. Function is more important than title.
5. Establish a home group in the area first. Foster a vision for growth with much prayer and outreach with those in home groups. Develop a team.
6. Establishment of a church. After home group has been going 6 - 12 months have a Sunday service.
7. Accountability to the mother church is important.
It is necessary for prayer for encouragement and protection.
The mother church normally has more experience and wisdom on which to draw.
Initial contact should be weekly.
It is helpful for the new pastor to sit with the elder's of the mother church. It keeps the vision for the daughter church high in the thinking of the mother church.
The Senior Pastor should preach at the new location from time to time to show his support.
8. Church meeting place.
Remember the church is not the building, but people. The N.T. church met in homes initially. Romans 16:5
A church could meet in a public building as it is often easier for pre believers to enter.
It is cheaper than buying a building.
9. Financial support.
The mother church provides wages for 6 months (while the daughter church tithes to the mother church).
The pastor carries on with secular job.
The pastor works part time with the church supplementing his wage.
A monthly financial statement should be submitted to the mother church. If this proves difficult then the mother church may need to handle the finances.
10. Constitution and statement of faith.
There are some advantages in having a constitution e.g. in some cases there are tax savings and keep the constitution simple.