

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
TO CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
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The thesis of this dissertation is that existing churches can successfully overcome common obstacles to planting new churches when church leaders learn to adopt three vital practices: communicating a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations, cultivating a spirit of bold faith within their congregations, and implementing a sustainable church planting strategy for their congregations.

The literature review will survey some of the key literature and research on church planting generally and on the mother-daughter model of church planting specifically. Using the case study method, three churches that have successfully overcome obstacles to develop an ongoing rhythm of planting daughter churches will be analyzed through interviews and surveys. From the findings of these cases, applications will be drawn to assist other churches seeking to regularly plant daughter churches.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

What do healthy apple trees produce? “Apples” would be a correct answer, but not a complete answer. A single apple tree can produce about 1,000 apples per year. That’s an impressive harvest, but it is only a small percentage of that tree’s actual potential. If the handful of seeds from each of those 1,000 apples were to be planted in the ground, that single tree could easily produce an entire orchard of new apple trees which in time would yield an annual harvest of millions of apples. Such is the power of exponential reproduction. Healthy apple trees don’t just produce apples; they produce more healthy apple trees which in turn produce even more apples.

In the realm of ministry, one might ask a similar question: what do healthy churches produce? “Disciples” would be a correct answer, but not a complete answer. A single church has the potential to produce numerous disciples. But if that same church were to reproduce itself in multiple daughter congregations, its discipling impact would be multiplied many times over, and the resulting harvest of souls would far surpass that of the original congregation. Such is the power of church planting. Healthy churches don’t just produce disciples; they produce more healthy churches which in turn produce even more disciples. It’s no wonder missiologist C. Peter Wagner observed that, “the

single most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven is planting new churches who in turn reproduce themselves.”¹

This kind of church multiplication is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission, but there are significant obstacles which often stand in the way of churches planting churches. These obstacles typically fall into one of three broad categories: 1) a lack of vision, 2) a lack of faith, and 3) a lack of strategy.

A “lack of vision” here refers to a church’s failure to understand and embrace the importance of church planting. This generally stems from a failure on the part of the church’s senior leadership to personally embrace and effectively communicate the biblical rationale and practical necessity of church planting to their congregations.

A “lack of faith” refers to an unwillingness on the part of the church membership or leadership to take the necessary risks and release the necessary resources in order to advance the Great Commission through church planting.

A “lack of strategy” refers to the absence of a carefully considered, *sustainable* plan for harnessing and deploying the necessary human, financial and ministry resources, not merely to plant a single church, but to plant multiple churches over time.

These are the primary obstacles which must be overcome if churches are going to successfully and sustainably plant churches.

Research Problem and Question

The problem that this research project will seek to address is identifying those factors which have enabled existing churches to successfully overcome these common

¹ The original quote comes from C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2010), 11. The phrase “who in turn reproduce themselves” was added by Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers*, 1 edition. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 16.

obstacles to planting daughter churches. The corresponding research question this study will seek to ask and answer therefore is this: What factors have enabled existing churches to successfully overcome common obstacles to planting daughter churches?

Research Design

In this project, answers to the research question stated above were sought by conducting case studies of three churches that have successfully overcome common church planting obstacles and have developed a healthy rhythm of planting daughter churches. The churches that were studied were: Northeast Bible Church of Garden Ridge, Texas; Bedrock Community Church of Bedford, Virginia; and Midtown Fellowship of Columbia, South Carolina. For each of these churches, personal interviews were conducted with the lead pastor or the pastor responsible for church planting, and surveys were conducted with a key lay leader in the church and one or more of the daughter church pastors. Policies and procedures relating to church planting were also collected from each church.

To better understand the nature of the obstacles which stand in the way of churches planting churches, a survey was also conducted among attendees at the Evangelical Free Church Texas-Oklahoma district conference on February 22, 2019 and also at the Evangelical Free Church national conference on June 20, 2019. To gain the insights of a noted expert in the field of church planting, I also conducted an interview with Dr. Ed Stetzer on August 22, 2019.

Hypotheses

Charles Kettering, the well-known inventor, engineer, and businessman once said, “A problem well stated is a problem half solved.”² In other words, the solutions to

² <https://www.inspiringquotes.us/author/8425-charles-kettering>

problems often become evident when we rightly define the problems themselves. If that is the case, and if the three most common obstacles to churches planting churches are a lack of vision, a lack of faith, and a lack of strategy, then it would seem evident that church leaders must adopt three important practices if they wish to successfully birth daughter churches from their congregations, and these form the working hypotheses for this research project:

1. Church leaders must learn to embrace and communicate a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations.
2. Church leaders must learn to cultivate a spirit of bold faith within their congregations.
3. Church leaders must learn how to develop and implement a long-term, sustainable church planting strategy for their congregations.

Definitions

There are a number of words in church planting discussions that are used in various ways, so for purposes of clarity, the following definitions will be followed in this project:

1. Mother church – A “mother church” is an existing church that sends and supports a planter and/or members from its congregation to start a new church. The mother church may also be referred to variously as a “parent church,” a “sending church,” or a “sponsoring church.”
2. Daughter church – A “daughter church” is a new congregation that was intentionally birthed out of an existing congregation. The daughter church may also be referred to variously as a “spin-off church” or a “hive church.” Since the goal of a daughter church is to become an independent local church with its own leadership, it should be distinguished from a satellite church campus in the multi-

site model which remains dependent on and subordinate to the main church campus.

3. Partner church – Unlike a sending church, a “partner church” does not assume primary responsibility for birthing a new church, but it does come alongside the new church to support it in meaningful ways (by providing families, funding, etc.).

Preview of Remaining Chapters

Chapter two of this dissertation surveys the previous research that has been conducted and the most relevant literature that has been written pertaining to the subject of church planting in general and of churches planting churches in particular. This review is organized around the three hypotheses of this project.

Chapter three explains the case study research methodology utilized in this project and the specific procedures used for developing the instruments and conducting the interviews and surveys.

Chapter four comprises the main body of research for this study. It shares the stories and strategies of the three churches that were studied: Northeast Bible Church in Garden Ridge, Texas; Bedrock Community Church in Bedford, Virginia; and Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, South Carolina. The interviews and surveys conducted with these churches focused on the obstacles they faced in planting churches and the strategies they employed to overcome these obstacles.

Chapter five summarizes and analyzes the results of this study. It highlights several important principles that will better enable churches to overcome obstacles to planting churches. In addition, it suggests some related topics for future research.

Conclusion

If the tremendous discipling power in church multiplication is going to be unleashed in any meaningful way, then churches must develop the necessary skills and strategies to successfully overcome these obstacles. It is the purpose of this research project to help them do just that.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Much has been written on the subject of church planting, and most of the church planting literature falls into two basic categories. First, there are resources which encourage and educate individual planters who are seeking to plant a church. Second, a number of resources have been written to encourage churches, networks, and denominations to move beyond an addition mindset to the kind of multiplication mindset that spawns genuine church planting movements. In recent years, the ministry of Exponential³ founded and led by Todd Wilson and Dave Ferguson has been at the forefront of producing much of the literature in this latter category of resources.

This emphasis on church multiplication is healthy and necessary, but the fact remains that before a church can experience multiplication, it must first experience reproduction; that is, it must first take the bold step of planting its first daughter church. (You can't have multiple grandchildren until you first have a child!) Yet this is something that is still very rare among churches in America. Ed Stetzer surveyed over one thousand Protestant churches, and found that of these, only 3% had accepted primary responsibility for starting a new church within the previous twelve months.⁴

Statistics like this reveal that a primary bottleneck to the kind of sweeping church planting movements we desire to see nationally and globally is the unwillingness or inability of individual churches to plant even a single daughter church locally. This

³ www.exponential.org

⁴ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply*, 2nd edition. (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2016), 321–322.

phenomenon is not surprising when you consider the difficulty of giving birth to a new church. Yet relatively little has been written to specifically assist existing churches in this birthing process. The various literature in the afore-mentioned categories often contain a chapter or two on this subject, but there are very few resources that: 1) specifically address the obstacles that established churches face when attempting to plant a daughter church, and 2) set forth practical strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Clearly more needs to be written on this subject if the church at large is going to successfully move beyond mere addition to meaningful multiplication.

The good news is that the existing literature that seeks to equip individual church planters and encourage broader church planting movements already contains much of the raw data necessary to help existing churches plant daughter churches. But for that data to be useful to this end, it must be culled and adapted to the unique needs of potential mother churches and their leadership. That will be the purpose of this literature review.

Obstacles to Churches Planting Churches

For churches that have never planted, the immediate goal should be to give birth to their first daughter church. But the longer-term goal should be to develop a sustainable rhythm whereby the mother church is able to regularly give birth to daughter churches who in turn will give birth to more churches.

This kind of exponential reproduction is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission, but there are significant obstacles which often stand in the way of churches planting churches. In a personal interview with this researcher, Ed Stetzer identified four such common obstacles: 1) the fear of harm to the mother church, 2) the lack of a culture of multiplication, 3) the lack of a kingdom vision, and 4) difficulty in finding leaders. On this last point, Stetzer noted a significant shift in church planting that has taken place in the last couple of decades. In the 70's and early 80's, churches

themselves were the driving force behind church planting, but in the late 80's and early 90's, the entrepreneurial planter became the driving force. Whereas previously, churches had called new pastors to assist them in planting a new church in their area, now the situation is reversed. Entrepreneurial planters are now looking to start churches on their own with only limited involvement from other area churches. The result is that it has become more difficult for mother churches to find qualified pastors to assist them in planting daughter churches. Stetzer said, "The mother church was put in the back seat and the entrepreneurial planter took the wheel. I think we need to get the mother church back up in the front seat."⁵

The obstacles cited by Stetzer are in line with the broad categories of church planting obstacles mentioned earlier: 1) a lack of vision, 2) a lack of faith, and 3) a lack of strategy. The reality of these obstacles was confirmed in a survey conducted by this researcher among 157 Evangelical Free Churches. Of these churches, 26% reported that obstacles relating to a lack of vision had hindered them from planting, 34% reported that obstacles relating to a lack of faith had hindered them from planting, and 40% reported that obstacles relating to a lack of strategy had prevented them from planting.⁶

It is my belief that if church leaders are to successfully overcome these obstacles to church planting, they must adopt three important practices: 1) they must learn to embrace and communicate a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations, 2) they must learn to cultivate a spirit of bold faith within their congregations, and 3) they must learn how to develop and implement a long-term,

⁵ Ed Stetzer, "Interview with Brent Burckart," August 21, 2019. Following this interview, Ed Stetzer shared some similar thoughts in his blog at: Ed Stetzer, "Church Planting Series: Why Don't We Plant?," *The Exchange | A Blog by Ed Stetzer*, last modified September 18, 2019, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2019/september/church-planting-series-why-dont-we-plant.html>.

⁶ This survey was conducted among attendees at the Evangelical Free Church Texas-Oklahoma district conference on February 22, 2019 and also at the Evangelical Free Church national conference on June 20, 2019. A copy of this survey is included in Appendix D.

sustainable church planting strategy for their congregations. These hypotheses form the outline for the literature review that follows.

Communicating a Vision for Church Planting

Understanding the Vision

John Maxwell is often quoted as saying that “everything rises and falls on leadership,”⁷ and that’s definitely true in the realm of church planting. Without the solid support of the lead pastor, a church’s efforts to plant daughter churches will be significantly crippled and will probably fail. The lead pastor must be the chief vision caster, publicly celebrating the church planting adventure and encouraging people to be part of it.⁸ But before the pastoral leadership of a church can effectively cast a vision for church planting corporately, they must first embrace that vision personally. This means that they must clearly understand both the biblical and practical rationale for church planting generally and for mother-daughter church planting specifically.

The Biblical Rationale for Church Planting

Jesus loves the church, and so must we. The apostle Paul reminds us that “Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her”⁹ on the cross (Ephesians 5:25). He promised, “I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). And how did Christ intend to build His Church? Through local churches, that is, through local assemblies of His followers which serve as the visible

⁷ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, Revised & Updated edition. (Nashville, Tenn: HarperCollins Leadership, 2007), 293.

⁸ Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 51.

⁹ All Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

manifestation of His universal Church. Since Christ has ascended into heaven and is no longer physically present on earth, the local church now functions as “the body of Christ,” the visible hands and feet of Jesus through which He presently accomplishes His work in the world (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16). Though our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) we now function as “ambassadors for Christ” on earth, inviting people “to be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20) who “rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). The church is to be an ever-expanding enterprise that bears witness to the saving power of Jesus “even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This noble calling of the church is beautifully and succinctly laid out in Jesus’ Great Commission in which He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Some would argue that the above verses highlight the importance of the church and its evangelistic mission, but that they do not in themselves form an argument for church planting. For instance, J.D. Payne believes that while there is a strong pragmatic argument to be made for church planting, the Scriptures contain “no direct command to plant churches.”¹⁰ This is technically true, but what is often overlooked is that there is, at the very least, a strong implicit command to plant churches contained within the Great Commission itself.

Jesus commanded us, not merely to “make disciples,” but to “baptize them” and “teach them” as well. It is the significance of baptism and the context for this

¹⁰ J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 4.

teaching that is often missed here. Water baptism not only signifies our spiritual baptism “into Christ” (Romans 6:3), but also our spiritual baptism into “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13), that is, the church.¹¹ The reason baptism is a public act and not a private one is because in baptism, individuals are not only pledging their commitment to the Lord, they are doing so in the presence of a local community of believers who will be able to celebrate that commitment with them and hold them accountable to it. As such, baptism serves to incorporate newly-made disciples into local church families who can “teach them” and encourage their spiritual growth.

This is the role that baptism played in the early church. Speaking of the church in Jerusalem (the first church founded in response to Jesus’ Great Commission), Acts 2:41-42 says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship.” Notice the pattern: 1) they received the gospel (i.e., they became disciples), 2) they were baptized/received into the fellowship of the Jerusalem church where 3) they were taught Jesus’ commands by the apostles. The “make disciples/baptize them/teach them” pattern contained in the Great Commission is clearly seen here. What is notable, however, is that the early disciples saw these functions as being inextricably tied to the local church.

Jesus command was not merely to make individual disciples who would flounder about in the world as spiritual orphans. His intent was that these new disciples would be enfolded into loving spiritual families who could nurture them and help them grow in their faith. Properly understood, the Great Commission cannot be fulfilled apart from the involvement of a local church. And when you combine this reality with the fact that Jesus’ commanded us to make disciples “of all nations” (Matthew 28:18), “even to

¹¹ Elmer L. Towns, *Planting Reproducing Churches* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2018), 16–17.

the remotest parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8), then the Great Commission logic for church planting becomes clear—wherever disciples are made, churches must be planted.

That this is how the early Christians understood the Great Commission is evident, not only from the example of the Jerusalem church in Acts 2, but throughout the New Testament. These early Christians did not see their mission as simply one of individual evangelism, but of intentional church planting. For instance, although Paul and Titus had enjoyed a fruitful ministry of evangelism on the island of Crete, Paul wrote to Titus, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). This same pattern is seen in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in the region of Galatia.¹² Acts 14:21-23 says,

²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." ²³ When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

In Paul’s mind, the work was not done until the new disciples in each city had been gathered together into spiritual communities under the caring leadership of qualified elders. In other words, wherever disciples were made, churches were planted.

The wide-reaching ministry of Paul would not have been possible, however, were it not for the church in Antioch which serves as a wonderful example of the mother-daughter church planting model. This church had been forged in the fires of persecution (Acts 6:19), and it was known for its heart for the lost (Acts 6:20-24), its intentional discipleship (Acts 6:25-26), its commitment to prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2-3), and its generous spirit. This church’s generosity was seen, not only in its financial contributions to the impoverished church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), but also in its willingness to

¹² Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting*, 11.

send out its best and brightest leaders, Paul and Barnabas, to plant daughter churches in the surrounding regions (Acts 13:1-5).

There are other examples in the New Testament of churches that facilitated the planting of daughter churches.

For example, the church in Ephesus, (apparently founded by the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla after Paul's second Missionary journey), is thought to have been the mother church of the other six churches of the Revelation: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These cities surround Ephesus and were connected by a circular Roman road which would have made a natural path of church planting in the region.¹³

The Great Commission and the practice of the early church as seen in the book of Acts and Paul's epistles provide a strong biblical argument, not only for church planting generally, but for the mother-daughter church planting model specifically.

The Practical Rationale for Church Planting

Perhaps there was a case to be made for church planting in the age of the apostles when almost every place in the inhabited world was virgin territory for the spread of the gospel and the planting of churches. But can the same be said today in our current U.S. culture where churches abound? Do we really need more churches? At first glance, it would seem perhaps not, but a closer look reveals a different story.

In fact, our current church planting efforts are not significantly adding to the total number of churches in America—not yet anyway; they're just barely beginning to replace the multitude of churches that have closed their doors over the past several decades. In 1988 Win Arn reported, "In America we are closing seven more churches per day than we are opening."¹⁴ Gratefully, that trend is slowly being reversed. In 2007

¹³ Paul Becker and Mark Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook* (Dynamic Church Planting International, 1999), Section One, 2-3.

¹⁴ Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, 1988), 16.

Warren Bird reported that more U.S. churches are now being started each year (approximately 4,000) than are being closed each year (3,500).¹⁵ That's good news, but at that rate (a mere net gain of 500 churches per year), it could take a century or more just to erase the deficit of churches caused by decades of net decline. Even if we merely wanted to achieve the modest goal of planting churches at a pace consistent with the growth of the general population, we would need to start over 7,200 churches each year.¹⁶ It's evident that because of the growing population and the vast number of churches which close their doors each year, more churches must be started, if only to keep from losing further ground.

But this raises another question: if so many churches are struggling to keep their doors open, shouldn't we focus our limited resources on revitalizing those struggling churches rather than on starting new churches which will only serve to increase the competition? This oft-asked question creates a false dilemma, namely that we must choose between either revitalizing existing churches or planting new churches. The truth is, there's no reason we can't do both. Furthermore, the question is built on several false assumptions. It assumes: 1) that the existing number of churches are sufficient to reach the American population, 2) that existing churches hold the greatest promise for reaching people for Christ, and 3) that starting new churches will somehow hurt existing churches. Let's examine each of these assumptions.

Is it true that the existing number of churches are sufficient to reach the American population and that no more churches are needed? Stephen Gray observes, "With the American population topping the 300 million mark, that means that there is one church for every 2,220 people. This suggests that even if every American wanted to

¹⁵ Warren Bird, "More Churches Opened Than Closed in 2006," *Rev Magazine*, August 2007, 68.

¹⁶ David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 119–120.

go to church on Sunday morning, there would not be enough seats to hold them.”¹⁷ And Phil Stevenson says,

We will never fill up all the existing churches in any denomination or community. The best way to increase our capacity is to add more containers, not to fill existing ones to the brim. We must not allow the unreachable goal (filling all existing churches to capacity) to hinder us from pursuing an achievable one (planting new churches).¹⁸

Is it true that existing churches hold the greatest promise for reaching people for Christ? The reality is that 65 percent of existing churches are plateaued or in a state of decline and are not effectively reaching new people.¹⁹ In 2001, Tom Clegg and Warren Bird wrote in their book *Lost in America*:

Of the nearly 280 million people in the United States today, only 40 percent of the adults said they went to church last week. That’s down from 42 percent in 1995 and quite a slide from 49 percent in 1991. Other research indicates that only about half as many people actually go to church as say they do.²⁰

George Barna reported in 2004 that “since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15%. During that same period the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million – a 92% increase!”²¹

Is this decline in church attendance the inevitable result of an increasingly secular society? One might be inclined to think so were it not for one thing—the continuing powerful evangelistic impact of *new* churches. Lyle Schaller says:

¹⁷ Stephen Gray, *Planting Fast-Growing Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2007), 35.

¹⁸ Phil Stevenson, *The Ripple Church: Multiply Your Ministry by Parenting New Churches* (Indianapolis, Ind: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 83.

¹⁹ Thom S. Rainer, “Dispelling the 80 Percent Myth of Declining Churches,” n.d., <https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-percent-myth-declining-churches/>.

²⁰ Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America: How You and Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001), 25–26.

²¹ “Number of Unchurched Adults Has Nearly Doubled Since 1991,” *Barna Group*, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/number-of-unchurched-adults-has-nearly-doubled-since-1991/>.

The most important single argument for making new church development a high priority is this is the most effective means for reaching unreached persons. Numerous studies have shown that 60-80 percent of the new adult members of new congregations are persons who were not actively involved in the life of any worshiping congregations immediately prior to joining that new mission. By contrast, most long-established churches draw the majority of their new adult members from persons who transfer in from other congregations.²²

A study conducted by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board reported that “if baptism rates per 100 members are used as a measure of efficiency for a church, then young churches are more efficient than old churches. The older a church gets, the less efficient it is in baptizing new converts.”²³ A similar cross-denominational study conducted by Keith Lusk of churches in the Santa Clarita Valley revealed that “older churches were baptizing at the rate of four baptisms per 100 members per year, while newer churches were baptizing at the rate of 16 baptisms per 100 members.”²⁴

The research clearly demonstrates that new churches are more effective at reaching the unchurched than existing churches, but why is this the case? Phil Stevenson suggests the following reasons:

1. Attraction – The energy and vitality of a new venture is attractive to people.
2. Camaraderie – Personal bonds are more easily formed in a church that is just beginning.
3. Urgency – New churches are more effective at evangelism because they have to be.

²² Lyle Schaller, “Why Start New Churches?,” *The Circuit Rider*, May 1979.

²³ Phil Jones, “An Examination of the Statistical Growth of the Southern Baptist Convention,” in *Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978* (New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), 351.

²⁴ Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 32–33.

4. Focus – New churches are on the cutting edge of the church’s purpose—winning the lost.
5. Flexibility – New churches do not live under the prohibitions of the past and therefore have a greater degree of flexibility in trying new methods.
6. Specificity – New churches can afford to target the specific needs of people groups.
7. Multiplication – New churches are often able to reproduce more quickly.²⁵

Roger McNamara and Ken Davis note that in contrast to long-established churches,

New churches seem to have a higher degree of motivation and greater sense of shared responsibility to win their lost friends and neighbors to Christ. Church planters and the teams they gather are often more passionate about winning the lost. New churches tend to be innovative, energetic and growth oriented. They are more willing to try new methods and are open to feedback from the community. New churches more readily foster an environment of love and acceptance of newcomers, enabling people to come to Christ and into the church where they can grow in Him. In short, new churches have a spiritual vitality that many older churches have lost!²⁶

None of this is to say that existing churches should not be revitalized, but given the proven evangelistic success of new churches, church revitalization should never be done at the expense of church planting.

Is it true that starting new churches will somehow hurt existing churches? Not necessarily. Peter Wagner said, “In more cases than not, a new church in the community

²⁵ Stevenson, *The Ripple Church*, 46–50.

²⁶ Roger N. McNamara and Ken Davis, *The Y-B-H Handbook of Church Planting* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2005), 53–54.

tends to raise the religious interest of the people in general, and if handled properly can be a benefit to existing churches.”²⁷ Similarly, Lyle Schaller observed,

Contrary to conventional wisdom, congregations usually benefit from interdenominational competition. While it is impossible to isolate one factor as being decisive, the presence of two or more congregations with the same denominational affiliation usually results in a higher level of congregational health and vitality than if one congregation has a denominational monopoly in that community.”²⁸

Tim Keller notes that because new churches have the freedom to be innovative, they often serve as the “research and development department” for churches throughout the city, generating new ministry ideas that can be of use to everyone.²⁹

But if a mother church sends out people to start a new daughter church, won’t that hurt the mother church? Possibly, but not necessarily if handled properly. To the contrary, birthing a daughter congregation is often the very catalyst that plateaued and declining congregations need to experience revitalization. Dean Merrill observes,

...when a church has not seen recent growth, it may be a signal that it is time to prune—by planting a daughter church. Such a move is likely to stimulate the church to new heights by breaking in on established relationships and patterns in a positive way. Growth will be spurred again by the recent memories of how the sanctuary used to be full. Everyone will know that these pews are now empty because the church selflessly gave people to the daughter church. A holy dissatisfaction will engender enthusiasm to fill those places once again. The newfound momentum may take the mother church to the next plateau that previously seemed out of reach.³⁰

This sounds good, but is there evidence that planting daughter churches actually promotes greater health and growth in the mother church? Jeffrey Farmer studied 160

²⁷ Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 40.

²⁸ Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 29–30.

²⁹ Timothy Keller, “Why Plant Churches?,” 2002.

³⁰ Dean Merrill, “Mothering a New Church,” *Leadership*, Winter 1985, 103.

Southern Baptist churches that had planted daughter churches and found that these churches experienced an increase in Sunday morning attendance, baptism, and Sunday School involvement up to five years after planting.³¹ Commenting on Farmer’s research, Ed Stetzer observes that “the data did not simply reflect the tendency that healthy churches are more likely to plant churches. It showed that the planting of churches actually makes churches healthier as an end result.”³²

The reason for this is that church planting is an inherently outward focused effort, and it directly counteracts the inward focus that is the cause of so many churches’ decline. Bob Logan states,

Not only is (church) multiplication biblical, not only is it more effective than addition, but it also increases the health and growth of local churches that participate...NCD (Natural Church Development) has conclusively found that multiplying churches are healthier than non-multiplying churches. The health scores on the NCD survey for churches that multiply are consistently higher than the scores for those that haven’t. Cell-based churches, which are founded on a principle of multiplication and tend to plant more churches, were also found to be healthier. A recent survey by NCD found that multiplying churches also continue to grow at a faster pace than non-multiplying churches, even when they give away people. A recent study found that, within a five-year period, for every 25 attendees, multiplying churches gained 9 new attendees while non-multiplying churches gained only 5. That’s a growth rate that’s almost twice as fast, even without accounting for the people given away to start new churches.³³

Not only does church planting have the potential to benefit the mother church in significant ways, it also holds numerous advantages for the daughter church. The

³¹ Jeffrey C. Farmer, “Church Planting Sponsorship: A Statistical Analysis of Sponsoring a Church Plant as a Means of Revitalization of the Sponsor Church” (Ph. D., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007).

³² Ed Stetzer, “5 Reasons Established Churches Should Plant Churches,” *The Exchange / A Blog by Ed Stetzer*, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/june/5-reasons-established-churches-should-plant-churches.html>.

³³ Robert E. Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, ed. Stuart Hoffman, 1st edition. (St. Charles, Ill.: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006), 27–28.

mother-daughter model of church planting overcomes the loneliness, the lack of finances, and the difficulty of finding core team members that are inherent in many of the other church planting models.³⁴ If linked with a residency in the mother church, it also provides the planter time to train, plan, and recruit under the guidance of a seasoned team of pastors. Furthermore, “as research shows, attendance is higher in church starts with an involved mother church, especially in the early years.”³⁵ For these reasons, the mother-daughter method of church planting has the lowest failure rate among all the various church planting methods.³⁶ As in a biological family, so too in God’s spiritual family, the church—a caring mother makes all the difference in the life of her children.

Embracing the Vision

As we have shown, a significant biblical and practical case can be made, not only for church planting generally, but for the mother-daughter model of church planting specifically. It’s not difficult to understand the value of this kind of church planting, but it is often very difficult, particularly for lead pastors, to embrace the vision for church planting, because to do so may well require a significant paradigm shift in their approach to ministry.

Describing the shift in thinking that his own church had to undergo to become a multiplying church, Pastor Larry Walkemeyer said this:

³⁴ Stevenson, *The Ripple Church*, 29–30.

³⁵ Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 46.

³⁶ Fred Herron, *Expanding God’s Kingdom through Church Planting* (New York: iUniverse, 2003), 72.

The vision was to stop becoming a *lake church* and instead become a *river church*,” he writes. “In a lake church, people flow in and stay. It seeks to get more and more people around one pastor in one place. In a river church, the people flow in but keep moving downstream. God takes them to other places to minister. The measurement becomes about ‘flow rate’ instead of ‘volumes contained’; about ‘gallons per minute’ instead of ‘gallons retained.’³⁷

Along these same lines, Todd Wilson highlights three tensions that the senior leadership of a church must wrestle through if they are to fully embrace the vision for church planting:

1. **Tension of Motives:** “Here or There?” – This tension is rooted in our definition of success. Is our vision limited to accumulating and growing larger *here*, or is it balanced with an equal focus and passion for sending *there*?...
2. **Tension of Measures:** “Grow or Send?” – This tension is rooted in our priority of focus: Where do we focus our time, talent and treasure? Growing *here* or sending *there*? The same staff and finances that can help us grow *here* are the ones needed to send *there*...
3. **Tension of Methods:** “Safety or Risk?” – What will we actually do (and what hard decisions will we make) to become a...multiplying church?³⁸

This last question is especially important, because although we have seen that there are significant benefits to church planting, there are also significant risks involved and significant sacrifices which must be made, at least in the short-term. This is why J.D. Greear says:

A “sending” ministry always starts with a heart exam. Sending out people and giving away your resources, you see, will most often *compete* with your church’s “bottom line,” not benefit it. Sending means giving away some of your best leaders and letting go of needed resources. It means giving away opportunities in the kingdom, and watching others get credit for successes that you could easily have obtained for yourself. The only way you’ll be willing to do that is if you love Jesus’ kingdom more than your own. If your heart prayer in ministry is really “my

³⁷ Todd Wilson, *Spark: Igniting a Culture of Multiplication* (Exponential, 2014), 24.

³⁸ Todd Wilson and Dave Ferguson, *Becoming a Level Five Multiplying Church Field Guide* (Exponential Resources, 2015), 26–27.

kingdom come,” you will never be an effective sender. You won’t really even want to try.³⁹

Casting the Vision

When a lead pastor comes to understand the biblical and practical rationale for church planting, and when he is personally ready to embrace both the rewards and the risks involved, he is then ready to begin casting a vision for church planting to his congregation. As with all things in the church, this should begin with Scripture. The pastor should look for opportunities in his preaching to communicate to his congregation the biblical basis for church planting. This can be highlighted in expository sermon series, for example, in the book of Acts where the early Christians modeled aggressive church planting and in Paul’s epistles in which he regularly expressed his love for the churches that he had planted. It can also be sprinkled into topical sermon series dealing with the nature of the church and the call to evangelism and discipleship.⁴⁰ The pastor should look for every opportunity to highlight that the Great Commission is not only a call for individuals to make disciples, but for churches to plant churches.

In addition to looking back to the commands of Jesus and the example of the early church in Scripture, the pastor must also help his church look forward to envision what church planting could look like in their current context. In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes & Posner state that,

...leaders make a commitment to envision the future by mastering two essentials: imagin(ing) the possibilities (and) find(ing) a common purpose. You begin with the end in mind by imagining what might be possible. Finding a common purpose inspires people to want to make that vision a reality.”⁴¹

³⁹ J. D. Greear, *Gaining By Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Zondervan, 2015), 45.

⁴⁰ Becker and Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook*, Section One, 22.

⁴¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 6 edition. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 97.

This is good advice for pastors. At some point, a pastor must address the congregation's concerns and fears, but that is not where he starts. He starts with the positive. He starts by helping his congregation "imagine the possibilities" of what they could become and what they could accomplish if they embraced this vision for church planting. He highlights the multiplied impact that is possible through planting churches and the eternal impact of a greater harvest of souls. This is essential, because "when people are part of something that elevates them to higher levels of motivation and morality, they feel energized and more committed; they feel that what they do matters."⁴²

In casting vision, the pastor must also "find a common purpose" with his congregation, that is, he must connect the church planting vision to values that the congregation already holds dear. This may be a concern about the moral decay of our culture. This may be a desire to honor the church's founders by following in their footsteps. This may be the common joy that we all feel as parents at the birth of our children. This may be a broken heartedness over the spiritual condition of our grown children and the traditional church's inability to reach them. This may be a church's passion for missions. But the skillful church leader will study his congregation to find values that align with church planting, he will tap into the emotions that those values evoke, and he will show that church planting is an indispensable means of honoring those values.

Moving a church towards a church planting vision takes time, and the lead pastor should be prepared to help his church take baby steps in the right direction. Ed Stetzer suggests that if a church is reluctant to immediately become a parent church, they might consider becoming a partner church first, providing financial assistance and volunteer manpower for an existing church plant in their area. And if they are reluctant to send out families from their own congregation, they might consider opening up their

⁴² Ibid., 112.

facility to a church plant that desires to reach a different ethnic or cultural demographic than that which they are currently reaching. Each of these are significant steps toward growing a church's vision for church planting, and whenever these steps are taken, they should be loudly celebrated, for as Stetzer noted, "What we celebrate, we become."⁴³

Cultivating a Spirit of Bold Faith

Once a congregation understands the vision for planting daughter churches, its members then have an important decision to make—will they embrace that vision? Will they actually take the steps necessary to plant a daughter church? Here is where fear often creeps in. Fear is not in itself a bad thing. In fact, to the extent that fear drives us to depend on God more deeply or causes us to plan more wisely, fear can be a good thing. But when we allow our fears to paralyze us and prevent us from embracing God's mission, then those fears will not only rob God of the glory He deserves, but they will rob us of the blessings which come only through faithful obedience.

A clear biblical example of the debilitating effects of fear is seen in Numbers 13. After spying out the land which God had promised to give to the people of Israel,

³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."³² So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size."³³ "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." (Numbers 13:30-33)

Because this generation of Israelites chose fear over faith, they were robbed of the blessings of a permanent home and forced to wander as nomads in the desert for forty years (Numbers 14:27-35).

⁴³ Stetzer, "Interview with Brent Burckart."

Like Caleb, whenever we call people to follow God into unfamiliar territory, we can be sure that we will face resistance, and much of that resistance will stem from fear. The wise leader will respond to those who express concerns by both addressing their fears and calling them to faith.

Addressing the Congregation's Fears

The fear of church planting is often expressed in the following objections:

We need more information.

Sometimes peoples' fears stem from simple ignorance, and all that is needed to overcome these fears is some additional information. Phil Stevenson explains:

One reason people resist church parenting is that they do not understand what it entails. Their initial resistance is a call for more information. It provides an opportunity to lead by anticipating and answering questions.

- What does it mean to parent a church?
- What impact will this have on us?
- When would we do this?
- How much will it cost?
- Do I have to go to the daughter church?
- Why do we have to get involved in this?
- Pastor, does this mean you are leaving?

The bottom line is that people want to know how a proposed change might affect them and how it will be accomplished.⁴⁴

These are legitimate, fair-minded questions, and they deserve thoughtful answers. If a leader can anticipate and answer these kinds of questions before they are asked, he can often head off unnecessary resistance, and he will greatly increase the likelihood that the congregation will buy into the church planting vision.

⁴⁴ Stevenson, *The Ripple Church*, 101.

We can't afford it.

Church planting is an expensive undertaking, but to those who object that the cost is too high, Peter Wagner offers this important reminder: “The truth of the matter is that in terms of dollars spent by the sponsoring church or agency, new church planting can be the most cost effective method of evangelization.”⁴⁵ The mother church should do all that it can to give generously and sacrificially to the daughter church, but it’s important to keep in mind that the cost of this undertaking need not rest entirely on the mother church. Other sources of funding could include the planter’s personal fund-raising, denominational funding, special startup grants, the support of partner churches, and giving from the emerging core team. By pursuing various funding sources and thinking creatively, even a small church can often plant a daughter church affordably. “Even a church of 100 or fewer people can rally behind a church plant sufficiently to provide not only the emotional and spiritual support needed but in fact most of the financial needs as well.”⁴⁶ And, as noted earlier, if a church doesn’t feel ready to take on the financial commitments of being a *parent* church, it can still make a meaningful contribution by becoming a *partner* church that invests financially in a daughter church that another area church is planting. “Church planting can begin with a small outlay as part of a larger sponsoring team of churches. Down the road as your church expands, you might have the tremendous blessing of sponsoring the entire new work.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 38.

⁴⁶ Rodney Harrison, Tom Cheyney, and Don Overstreet, *Spin-Off Churches: How One Church Successfully Plants Another* (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Academic, 2008), 60.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

We'll lose manpower and momentum.

This is usually true in the short term, but not in the long run. Doctoral studies by David Henion⁴⁸ and Brian Larson⁴⁹ found that any losses that mother churches experienced in attendance and giving due to planting were ordinarily regained within a few months to a year.

But often the most significant concern centers on the potential loss of key leaders. Regarding this, J.D. Greear comments:

Sending out leaders creates more leaders. What you send out inevitably comes back to you in multiplied form. I think this is true for two reasons—one natural and the other supernatural. The “natural” reason: Leaders are attracted to places where they can grow to their potential, and sending out when the time is right is part of that process. If leaders see that you are primarily seeking cogs for your machine, they will likely stay away...or, if they do come to your church, stay safely disengaged on the sidelines....The supernatural reason: Just as God promises to multiply our money when we are generous with it, he does the same with the leadership talent we give away for His kingdom. (Prov. 11:24, Prov. 11:25, Mal. 3:10, 2 Cor. 9:10-11)...As we give away our leaders, he multiplies the numbers of leaders we have to give away. Pastors know how to teach the principle of the harvest as it relates to their people's money. Why would we not abide by the same principle when it comes to our leaders?⁵⁰

We're already stretched too thin.

This may be a legitimate concern that needs to be addressed. A church that is struggling to staff its already full slate of programs may not have the bandwidth to take on a church plant. And a pastor whose plate is already overflowing may find it difficult to invest the necessary time to work with a church planter. But if, in fact, “church planting is the most biblical and effective method of evangelism...can we set it aside and focus

⁴⁸ David Henion, “The Local Mother Church Gives Birth to a Daughter Church” (D.Min., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2006), 89.

⁴⁹ Brian Larson, “Church Planting Mother-Daughter Style: A Study of Procedures and Results” (D. Min., Talbot Theological Seminary, 1984).

⁵⁰ Greear, *Gaining By Losing*, 112–114.

our time exclusively on other endeavors?”⁵¹ Given the importance of planting churches, to put off doing so indefinitely because of busy-ness is not an option. To make room for church planting, the church may need to make some difficult decisions with respect to its programming, and the pastor may need to make some difficult decisions with respect to how he spends his time. Some good things may need to go by the wayside in order to create the necessary margin to begin the important work of planting churches.

Having said that, there may be brief seasons in the life of a church when planting may not be optimal. Phil Stevenson comments:

It is more difficult to complete a parenting project when the parent church is experiencing major change. Major changes include relocation; an open or just completed building project; pastoral transition, loss of a larger number of members due to conflict, job transfers; and a downturn in the local economy. Changes like these require internal adjustments in the parent church and make for less-than-ideal conditions for reproduction.⁵²

We’re not healthy enough.

This too may be a legitimate concern. Just as a mother reproduces her DNA in the life of her children, so too a mother church reproduces its DNA in the life of its daughter churches. For this reason, a church does need to be basically healthy before it seeks to reproduce itself in another church. A lack of church health, however, should not be viewed as a reason not to plant; rather it should be viewed as a reason to get healthy.

How can a church’s leadership assess whether it is healthy enough to plant?

Phil Stevenson suggests the following positive and negative indicators:

Positive Indicators

1. A Burden for Lost People
2. A Willingness to Step Out in Faith
3. A Vision for Regional Influence

⁵¹ Becker and Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook*, 25–26.

⁵² Stevenson, *The Ripple Church*, 95.

4. A Spiritual Maturity
5. A Generous Spirit
6. A Willingness to Risk
7. A Kingdom Mindset

Negative Indicators

1. Major Change
2. Spiritual Immaturity
3. Lack of Leaders
4. Lack of Reproducing Systems
5. Blurred Focus⁵³

Our fellowship will be disrupted.

Peter Wagner answers this objection bluntly:

I have no answer for this except to say that it is true, and it is one of the prices that must be paid for new churches. But I would point out that if the average member of the objecting church receives a promotion and raise in salary that requires a job transfer, few will complain that longstanding Christian fellowship will be broken.⁵⁴

Jesus was equally blunt when He instructed His disciples that they must be willing to sever even their closest relational ties in order to follow Him and advance His kingdom (Luke 14:26). Fellowship is not an end in itself. It should always be that which prompts believers to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24-25). To the extent that it instead discourages obedience and hinders the advancement of the gospel, it cannot properly be called true fellowship.

Calling the Congregation to Faith

Some of the fears addressed above are exaggerated or based in misunderstandings about the nature of church planting. But many of these fears are

⁵³ Ibid., 92–98.

⁵⁴ Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 40.

driven by a disobedient heart and an unwillingness to endure short-term losses for the long-term gain and greater good of God's kingdom. These fears must be confronted with three important reminders:

1. The nature of our mission – we have been called to glorify God by making disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. The call to sacrifice – we must be willing to sacrifice everything to advance the mission. (Matthew 16:24-26)
3. The faithfulness of our God – we serve a God Who can be trusted to meet our every need and Who will reward our every sacrifice. (2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Timothy 4:5-8)

When we learn to live in light of these truths, our fears will give way to faith, and our objections will give way to obedience.

Implementing a Sustainable Strategy

The question of *whether* existing churches should plant daughter churches has a clear answer—yes! But the question of *how* to actually go about it is a bit more complicated and requires careful consideration. It's an exciting moment when the leadership of a church embraces their God-given responsibility to reproduce themselves in a daughter church. But it is at this point that churches sometimes find themselves overwhelmed by the complexity and the enormity of the strategic challenges. A full 40% of the churches surveyed by this researcher identified strategy-related issues as being a major obstacle to their planting churches.⁵⁵

The purpose of this section will be to break down the church planting process, not from the perspective of the planter, but from the perspective of the mother church.

⁵⁵ This survey was conducted among attendees at the Evangelical Free Church Texas-Oklahoma district conference on February 22, 2019 and also at the Evangelical Free Church national conference on June 20, 2019. A copy of this survey is included in Appendix D.

When developing a strategy for giving birth to a daughter church, a mother church must ask and answer at least six basic questions:

1. Prayer – how will we enlist widespread prayer support?
2. Planter – how will the church planter be selected?
3. Place – where will the church plant be located?
4. Partners – who can we partner with to plant this church?
5. Provision – what will the mother church provide for the daughter church?
6. Process – what are the necessary tasks and recommended timeline?

PRAYER

Psalm 127:1 says “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” Any endeavor undertaken without the Lord’s blessing and empowerment will ultimately fail, and this is certainly true with respect to church planting. For this reason, new churches must be built on and bathed in prayer.

The need for new churches is clear, and there are significant opportunities for gospel impact in communities all around us. Yet it is sometimes difficult to motivate people to step outside the comfort of an established church to go and help plant a new church. For this reason, we should remember Jesus’ words to His disciples in Matthew 9:37-38: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” Samuel Faircloth says that “any local church that proposes to plant a new church must look to the Lord in believing prayer that He might effectively select and enable those who should form the team.”⁵⁶ Significant time should be spent at the leadership level, praying for the right location, the right planter, the right team, and for receptive hearts in the target community. And as early in

⁵⁶ Samuel D. Faircloth, *Church Planting for Reproduction* (United States: Xulon Press, 2012), 51.

the process as possible, a special team of prayer supporters should be enlisted from within the congregation to pray for the specific needs of the new church as they arise.

PLANTER

Of all the factors which contribute to the success of a church plant, none is more important than finding the right planter with the requisite character, competencies, and compatibilities.⁵⁷ Where can qualified church planters be found? Possible pools to draw from include the church's leadership pipeline, personal and professional networks, past or current ministry interns, the church's pastoral staff, trusted colleges and seminaries, and various denominational and church planting networks. A church's interest in recruiting qualified church planters can be disseminated by word of mouth as well as through various online outlets including social media, ministry employment services, and the church's own website.

What qualities should a church look for in a planter? First and foremost, a church should examine the potential planter's character to ensure that he fulfills the biblical qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3. One advantage of recruiting from within the existing leadership and membership of the church is the ability to directly observe the candidate's character as exhibited in his attitudes and actions over time. For outside candidates with whom this is not possible, the potential planter's character can usually be validated through in-depth interviews and careful reference checks.

Upon confirming the candidate's character, the church should next seek to evaluate whether he has the necessary competencies to plant a church. In general terms, Becker and Williams suggest that churches should look for people who have proven

⁵⁷ Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters*, 38.

success in two basic roles: evangelist and entrepreneur.⁵⁸ Beyond these basic giftings, Charles Ridley has identified the following thirteen characteristics which are normally found in successful church planters:

Primary Behavioral Qualities

1. Visioning capacity
2. Intrinsically motivated
3. Creates ownership of ministry
4. Relates to the unchurched

Secondary Behavioral Qualities

5. Spousal cooperation
6. Effectively builds relationships
7. Committed to church growth
8. Responsive to community
9. Utilizes giftedness of others
10. Flexible and adaptable
11. Builds group cohesiveness
12. Resilience
13. Exercises faith⁵⁹

Online and in-person assessment tools have been developed to evaluate potential church planters in light of these important characteristics.⁶⁰ These tools can serve not only to qualify or disqualify potential planters, but they can also surface

⁵⁸ Becker and Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook*, Section Two, 44.

⁵⁹ Charles Ridley, *The Church Planter's Assessment Guide* (Saint Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2002).

⁶⁰ "Church Planter Candidate Assessment," accessed May 13, 2019, <http://churchplanter.lifeway.com/>.

potential gaps in knowledge or maturity which, though not disqualifying, may need to be shored up if the planter is to be fully prepared for the task. Church planters who were assessed prior to planting show significantly stronger track records than those who weren't, so mother churches would be wise to make a formal assessment part of the planter selection process.⁶¹ Upon confirming a potential planter's character and competencies, the mother church should also confirm his compatibility with their doctrine and distinctives, along with his personal compatibility with the culture of the target community.⁶²

PLACE

If the daughter church is targeting a significantly different demographic group than that of the mother church (for instance, a different language group), then proximity to the mother church is not an issue. The daughter church might even be planted on the same campus as the mother church. But if the daughter church and the mother church are focusing on reaching essentially the same demographic group, it would probably be wise to create some geographical distance between the two churches for a couple of reasons: 1) it will maximize the geographical reach of the two churches and enable them to reach a broader area more quickly, and 2) it will minimize the potential for relational friction between the two churches. It would be nice to think that a spirit of competition would never arise between mother and daughter, but it happens in biological families, and sadly, sometimes it happens in God's family as well. For this reason, it may be wisest to target a location for the new church that is close enough to enable the mother church to send core families and be meaningfully involved, but far enough that the two churches are not

⁶¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Academic, 2003), 79.

⁶² "Assessing a Planter's Fit in a Specific Place," accessed May 13, 2019, <http://church-planting.net/FreeDownloads/General%20Church%20Planting/Assesing%20Planters%20Fit.pdf>.

essentially reaching the exact same area. In most cases, this will mean a fifteen to thirty-minute drive from the mother church. “If the daughter church is over a thirty-minute drive away, participation will be more difficult and core members of the mother church will likely have to take the major step of relocating to the new community. Participation of short-term workers will be severely limited.”⁶³

Once the proximity question is answered, the mother church can now look at the communities on the outer edges of its reachable perimeter as potential church plant locations. Among the questions that should be asked of these communities are:

- Which of these communities has the strongest concentration of people who attend the mother church? (since these could be potential core members of the daughter church)
- Which of these communities is experiencing the most growth? (since new families moving into an area are often looking for a new church)
- Which of these communities is being least effectively reached by other good churches?
- Which of these communities is most spiritually receptive?⁶⁴

Since “the vision for a church plant must be birthed in the heart of the individual planting the church,”⁶⁵ perhaps the best approach would be for the mother church to identify a handful of possible target communities but allow the planter to weigh in on the final decision.

17. ⁶³ Becker and Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook*, Section Two,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁵ Gray, *Planting Fast-Growing Churches*, 80.

PARTNERS

While the mother church bears primary responsibility for the daughter church, this does not mean that it should bear sole responsibility. To strengthen the web of support for the daughter church, the help of outside individuals, churches, and organizations should be enlisted when possible. Here's where denominations can be especially helpful. "Although the occasional pundit will still claim that denominationalism is dying, church planting has created a renewed relevance for many denominations."⁶⁶ The reason for this is that increasingly denominations are assisting churches in the process of recruiting, assessing, training, and funding church planters. When a mother church is part of a denomination that has these kinds of healthy church planting systems in place, the mother church should fully utilize them and not feel the need to reinvent the wheel themselves. For those churches who are not part of a denomination, there are a variety of church planting networks that can provide help in some of these same areas. In addition, the mother church should consider approaching like-minded sister churches in the area to see if they might be willing to help provide funding or even families for the daughter church. The more sources of support that can be found for the daughter church, the stronger it will be.

PROVISION

The mother church should provide at least three significant resources for the daughter church: mentoring, money, and members.

Mentoring

To ensure that the church planter is fully equipped for the task, the mother church and its leadership should take on a mentoring role in the life of the church planter.

⁶⁶ Harrison, Cheyney, and Overstreet, *Spin-Off Churches*, 205.

This involves providing him with at least three important experiences: training, coaching, and a residency.

Training

Denominations and church planting networks offer a variety of church planting “boot camps” and seminars designed to orient potential planters to the planting process and equip them for each step in that process. This kind of specialized training is vital to the success of a church plant. A 2003 study conducted by the North American Mission Board revealed that churches planted by pastors who had received this kind of specialized training experienced worship attendance that was three times higher than those started by untrained church planters.⁶⁷ But a study conducted by Stephen Gray revealed that not all training is equally effective and that one significant factor in the effectiveness of the training is its length. Because church planters need to develop proficiency in multiple areas, Gray’s research found that at least one full week of training is necessary to make a meaningful difference.⁶⁸ Because of this, very early in the church planting process, the mother church should require and, if possible, fund at least one full week of church planting training for its planters.

Coaching

Another vital component in the success of any church plant is the ongoing involvement of a qualified church planting coach. In their book *Transformational Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World*, Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl cite a church planting study from the Foursquare Church:

⁶⁷ Ed Stetzer, *An Analysis of Church-Planting Process and Other Selected Factors on the Attendance of Southern Baptist Church Plants: A NAMB Self Study* (North American Mission Board, 2003).

⁶⁸ Gray, *Planting Fast-Growing Churches*, 96–97.

That study, done in 2004, showed that two-thirds of church planters had the benefit of a coach as part of their church planting experience....Of those who were coached, 77 percent reported that coaching had “some” to “very significant” impact on their personal effectiveness and productivity, with 54 percent reporting coaching had “significant” or “very significant” influence...Of the 425 churches planted between 2001 and 2003, 90 percent of Foursquare churches were successful. Of those that failed, 60 percent of the failed plants did not have planters who received coaching in their efforts.⁶⁹

Similarly, a 2003 study conducted by the North American Mission Board found that there is a noticeable increase in attendance among churches led by church planters who received regular coaching in contrast with those who did not. “In year one, the gap is 12%. In year two, that gap is 16%. Year three is 13%. Finally, year four evidences a 25% gap.”⁷⁰

Bob Rowley who wrote his doctoral dissertation on “Successfully Coaching Church Planters” defines coaching as “coming alongside another person to encourage, equip, and empower them through the process of self-discovery in an effort to help them succeed.”⁷¹ He argues that effective church planting coaches share three characteristics: 1) they build caring relationships with their planters, 2) they know the stages of church planting and can help their planters progress through those stages, and 3) they know how to help their planters realize their potential as a church planter.⁷² An important role of the

⁶⁹ Ann Roth, *Study of Church Planting Effectiveness* (Los Angeles, CA: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 2004)., cited in Steve Ogne, Tim Roehl, and Ed Stetzer, *TransforMissional Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World*, 53188th edition. (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Books, 2008).

⁷⁰ Stetzer, *An Analysis of Church-Planting Process and Other Selected Factors on the Attendance of Southern Baptist Church Plants: A NAMB Self Study*, 4.

⁷¹ Robert J. Rowley, “Successfully Coaching Church Planters” (D. Min., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005), 73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 36–37.

church planting coach is to provide some healthy accountability to ensure that the planter stays on target (doing the right things), on time (doing the right things at the right time), and in balance (with his ministry life and personal life).⁷³ While the pastor of the mother church can play a helpful role as an encourager and ministry mentor, Rowley does not recommend that the mother church pastor serve as coach to the daughter church planter since this can set up unnecessary conflict between the two.⁷⁴ Qualified church planting coaches with personal church planting experience can generally be recruited from within one's denominational or personal ministry network.

When the coach meets with the planter, Bob Logan and Gary Reinecke suggest the following simple agenda for their coaching meetings:

Relate: Establish the coaching relationship agenda

Reflect: Discover and explore key issues

Refocus: Determine priorities and action steps

Resource: Provide support and encouragement

Review: Evaluate, celebrate, and revise plans.⁷⁵

Ogne and Roehl suggest that these coaching meetings should take place on a weekly basis for the first quarter, bi-weekly during the second quarter, and monthly in the third and fourth quarters.⁷⁶ These meetings could be conducted in person, by phone, or by video teleconference.

⁷³ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁴ Personal correspondence with the researcher via e-mail on May 23, 2019.

⁷⁵ Gary B. Reinecke and Robert E. Logan, *Developing Coaching Excellence* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 2.

⁷⁶ Steven L. Ogne and Tim Roehl, *Coaching Missional Leaders*, 2004, A2-1.

Residency

In the medical profession, students training to be doctors are not only required to spend considerable time in the classroom where they learn important information, they are also required to get on-the job training in a clinical setting where they learn important skills. So too, churches are increasingly seeing the value of this approach in ministry, especially for church planters. George Patterson suggests that to attempt to teach something as difficult as church planting in an academic setting outside the real-world environment of the local church is tantamount to “teaching high diving in the classroom.”⁷⁷

In a church planting residency, the mother church brings the church planter into the womb, so to speak, bringing him on staff for a time to enable him to develop important ministry skills and grow a core group prior to birthing. Church planting residencies are usually no shorter than six months and no longer than two years in duration. Unlike internships which are generally shorter and open to people who may be inexperienced and still exploring their calling to ministry, residencies are designed for people who have already confirmed their call to ministry and have some proven ministry experience under their belts.⁷⁸ A residency is not an exploratory process, but a preparatory one.

During the church planting residency, the resident should be given a seat at the table in all pastoral staff meetings, elder meetings, and leadership retreats. This will help him to better understand the heartbeat of the mother church, develop relationships with its leaders, and observe a healthy approach to team dynamics, decision-making,

⁷⁷ George Patterson and Richard Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide: The Miracle of Church Reproduction*, Rev. (Pasadena, CA: W. Carey Library, 2002), 9.

⁷⁸ Raymond Y. Chang, “Developing a Church-Based Model for Training Church Planters at Ambassador Church: A Field Study of Two Church-Based Church Plant Residency Models and Their Best Practices” (D. Min., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2010), 99.

shepherding, goal setting, and budgeting. A formal curriculum is sometimes utilized with assigned reading on the topics of leadership and church planting.

One of the churches that Raymond Chang studied for his doctoral dissertation on the subject of church planting residencies had the following expectations for planters during their one-year residency:

1. Create and fulfill the learning contract established between you and the church planting center director.
2. Exegete the targeted culture with a compelling analysis of demographics/psychographics.
3. Establish a prayer base.
4. Enlist, envision, and engage a missional core of at least ten families/households (which you have freedom to enlist from [the mother church] if appropriate to your targeted field.)
5. Develop the key ministry systems for launch.
6. Develop a clear Ministry Action Plan with a granular execution detail, to include a 120-day assimilation plan post launch.
7. Develop a First 120-Day Budget and First Year Outlook Budget.
8. Raise funds to underwrite your first year's budget. (Funds may come from core group, [the mother church], and outside fundraising.)
9. Identify 200 qualified prospects.
10. Qualify fifty gatherable people.
11. Identify, develop and select a minimum of two elders. (If this is not possible, consideration will be given to a post launch development strategy.)
12. Network in the community.⁷⁹

As can be seen from this sample list, there is much to be accomplished in a relatively short period of time during this residency. For this reason, a resident may become involved in the teaching ministry or small group ministry of the mother church to the extent that these opportunities give him a broader exposure to the congregation and allow him to build relationships with potential core team members. Beyond that, however, the resident's direct participation in the ministries of the church should be kept to a minimum to enable him to maintain his focus on the primary purpose of the residency which is to prepare to plant the daughter church.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 126.

Money

Planting a church is an expensive undertaking. Church planting costs include the planter's salary and benefits, start-up expenses (sound equipment, nursery furniture, trailers, etc.), marketing, adequate property/liability insurance, and meeting and storage space rental. While the mother church is not solely responsible for covering all these costs, it does have a significant responsibility in helping the planter identify and approach possible sources of funding which may include the following:

- Direct funding from the mother church budget
- Financial commitments from the core group
- Personal support raised by the church planter
- Funding from partner churches
- Denominational funding
- Special grants for new churches

Extensive research conducted by Stephen Gray into the financial differences between fast-growing and struggling church plants revealed the following:

1. Church plants led by full-time pastors grew significantly faster than those with bivocational planters. (This is due to the full-time planter's ability to give his undivided attention to the growth and health of the new church.)⁸⁰
2. Church plants that received salary support for no more than three years grew significantly faster than those that received salary support over a longer period of time. (This may be due to the increased motivation to grow and become self-sufficient created by the shorter time frame.)⁸¹

⁸⁰ Gray, *Planting Fast-Growing Churches*, 65.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 66–67.

3. Church plants that received additional start-up money beyond the planter's salary grew significantly faster than those that did not, and the majority of these funds were given in the first year.⁸²
4. Church plants in which the planter was personally involved in raising his own financial support grew much faster than those in which the planter did not engage in raising personal support. (This is because having some financial skin in the game creates a greater sense of ownership and personal responsibility.)⁸³

Gray concludes:

From this analysis we can form the ideal financial profile for a church planter. A church planter should be paid, for no more than two years, to do the work full-time with an amount that is commensurate with the average median income of the area in which he is planting. The planter should receive somewhere between \$25,000 and \$50,000 in the form of a start-up grant and should be required to be personally involved in raising funds for the church plant.⁸⁴

Again, not all of this funding needs to come from the mother church, but these recommendations are helpful for the mother church as it considers its financial involvement in the daughter church.

In addition to its budgeted contributions, the mother church should provide special opportunities for its individual members to give to the daughter church. These could include taking special offerings, establishing memorial funds, and hosting “baby showers” in which the daughter church creates a registry of needed start-up items and equipment that individuals or small groups within the church can purchase for them.⁸⁵ The mother church should also consider other practical short-term ways it can help

⁸² Ibid., 68–71.

⁸³ Ibid., 72.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁸⁵ Stevenson, *The Ripple Church*, 113.

reduce the financial burden of the daughter church in its early days such as providing office space, allowing them to use their copier, etc.

Members

Ron Sylvia has written extensively about the credibility, stability, and momentum that accompanies a church plant that is able to “launch large.”⁸⁶ On the flip side, many have observed that churches which start small often tend to stay small and struggle even to survive. For these reasons, it is in the planter’s best interests to recruit as many people as possible prior to the public launch of the church. But building a core group prior to launch is no easy task.

In a “parachute drop” church plant, since the planter has no existing relational connections in the target community, he is forced to develop a core group from scratch, something that is very difficult and often yields discouraging results. This is a major advantage of the mother-daughter model of planting. In this model, the planter is given the opportunity to recruit a core group from within the mother church which gives him a significant head start and usually a strong foundation of committed believers to build upon.

But there are potential disadvantages to the mother-daughter model as well. One good thing about the “parachute drop” model is that the planter is forced to focus on evangelism and recruiting from within the target community from the very start. But in the mother-daughter model, instead of focusing on evangelizing and recruiting from the target community, the planter’s temptation could be to spend all his time recruiting mature believers from within the mother church. And if the planter is able to recruit a comfortably large group of believers from the mother church, that young church will

⁸⁶ Ron Sylvia, *Starting New Churches on Purpose* (Lake Forest, Calif.: Purpose Driven Publishing, 2006), 109–110.

sometimes lack the urgency to grow and reach out to others, especially if they quickly become financially self-sufficient. Furthermore, if the planter recruits a sizable percentage of the mother church's leadership base, it may hinder the mother church's ability to recover quickly and reproduce again.

Bob Roberts, founding pastor of Northwood Church, explains this dilemma:

Studies have shown that a church can hive one time. Some can do it twice. Rare is the church that can do it three times. Hiving is intentionally sectioning off a part of your church to go and start another one. No matter what size the original mother church, it takes five years to regain the leadership group lost during the hiving process. That makes sense because the top percent of entrepreneurial people in the church will want to start the new church.⁸⁷

Roberts may be overstating the case a bit here, but he does put his finger on a valid problem. And how does his church address this problem? By requiring their church planters to start small groups *within* their church that are largely comprised of new people *outside* the church. They do not necessarily discourage families from the mother church from being part of the new church, but neither do they actively encourage them to do so. He explains,

Instead of being the rare church that can hive three times and start three churches, we use a different system. We look for church planters to start a core group from scratch, not planters who have to have a ready-made church handed to them. If we planted churches primarily through hiving, we could not continue to plant the number of churches we plant, nor could we do it at the rate we plant them.⁸⁸

The church planting intern starts small groups in our church, so they are part of our normal, ongoing community. They get to "take with them" anyone they reach in their small group, keeping in mind that the majority of their people are going to come from outside Northwood. If they can't start a small group, why should they think they can start a church? If all they do is gather existing members for their

⁸⁷ Bob Roberts, *The Multiplying Church: The New Math for Starting New Churches* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008), 58.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

small group, they haven't indicated their ability to plant a church. When they gather people from outside Northwood, we start getting excited.⁸⁹

To require daughter church planters to start a small group from scratch with little or no assistance from the mother church may be setting the bar unnecessarily high for the church planter, and it fails to take advantage of one of the main benefits of the mother-daughter model, namely the planter's ability to recruit members from the mother church. But the motivation behind the Northwood model is correct—the planter must be expected to recruit not only from the mother church, but from the target community as well.

It was this realization that caused Hill Country Bible Church in Austin, Texas to make a major in shift their church planting strategy.

Initially, HCBC used the “Hive” church planting model that focuses on sending a large group of families (50-75 families) into a new geography with HCBC DNA/background. After planting a number of solid, sizable churches with this model, they found that the model was unsustainable in terms of rapid multiplication. In addition, this model tends to focus on the “Modality rather than the Sodality” – the Ministry rather than the Mission – building ministry programs for the already convinced rather than living with the central sense of being sent to evangelize a new community. While funding for the hive provides security, historically there is a low conversion growth rate.⁹⁰

As a result of this realization, they shifted to “a leaner, meaner, more demanding, missional model of church planting” that emphasizes “gathering people from the harvest instead of sending so many from the planting church.”⁹¹ They still allow planters to recruit from within the body of the mother church, but the focus has changed from

⁸⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁹⁰ Hill Country Bible Church, “Church Plant Coaches Handbook” (Austin, TX, 2011), 4.

⁹¹ Ibid.

developing a “core group” to developing a “missional core.”⁹² This means that those who are sent out from the mother church must see themselves not merely as church *members*, but as *missionaries* whose primary role is to evangelize and connect with the unreached and unchurched people living in the target community. The question then becomes not so much “how many” people will the mother church send out as “what kind” of people will the mother church send out.

Having said that, the question of “how many” is not an insignificant one, and it is one that every mother church must wrestle with. The first decision which must be made in this regard is whether *any* limits should be placed on the church planter regarding which people and how many people he may recruit from the mother church. The idea of limiting the number of members and/or leaders that a church planter is allowed to recruit may at first sound contrary to the generous spirit which we have argued for up to this point, and it may well be, depending on the motive. But having healthy discussions regarding such boundaries is not an inherently selfish or sinful thing. In fact, it may be wise.

Some have found the analogy of a “fishing license” helpful here.⁹³ In order to legally catch fish, you must acquire a fishing license from the fish & game warden. This fishing license prescribes for you how many and what kind of fish you are allowed to catch, when you are allowed to catch them, and when you have to stop. In placing these limits on fishermen, the warden is not being stingy with the fish population—the fish

⁹² Dwight Nash, “Case Studies of the Core Philosophies and Practices of Selected Church Multiplication Centers” (D. Min., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2012), 98.

⁹³ A similar “hunting license” analogy is found in: B. David Mobile, “Case Studies of Church Planting Churches in the Upper Midwestern United States” (D. Min., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010), 61.

don't belong to him in the first place! He is simply acting as a good steward to ensure that the fish population remains strong enough to rebound from its losses each year so that the practice of fishing remains sustainable over time.

Similarly, a pastor who places numeric limits on church planters is not necessarily being stingy with the church's members—those members don't belong to him in the first place! He may simply be acting as a good steward to ensure that the church remains strong enough to rebound from its losses so that the practice of church planting remains sustainable over the long haul. When rightly understood, the primary concern here is not preserving the comfort of the mother church but rather preserving its ongoing ability to reproduce.

Becker and Williams offer a balanced approach in this regard:

We recommend that the senior pastor and leaders of the mother church join with the daughter church staff and leaders in prayerfully setting a goal for the size of the core team of the daughter church. There is tremendous power in praying and working together toward a prayer-goal! You will probably want to divide the goal into two sections: those you hope will come from the mother/partner churches and those you hope will come from other sources: evangelism, miscellaneous contacts, out of town recruits, staff members and spouses, etc. Set a goal that is both visionary and realistic, given the realities of your ministry setting.⁹⁴

For those recruited from the mother church, this numeric goal should be large enough to stretch the mother church into the realm of sacrifice and to give the new church a generous head start. But it should be small enough to require that the planter engage in evangelism and additional recruiting in the target community. It should also be of a size that would enable the mother church to recover quickly enough to be ready to reproduce

⁹⁴ Becker and Williams, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook*, 67–68.

again in a timely manner. Once decided, this target number of families should serve as a rough goal and broad boundary to guide the church planter in his recruiting efforts.

The church planter should be encouraged to start a small group in the target community and start evangelizing and recruiting in that community immediately. The focus of his recruiting efforts in the mother church should be primarily (though not exclusively) among those members who live in or near the target community, as this would give them immediate relational connections through which to recruit others in that area. To facilitate his internal recruitment efforts, the mother church should give the planter significant exposure in the Sunday morning worship services and ample opportunities to connect with various classes and small groups within the church. Members of the mother church should not merely be given permission to join the daughter church, they should be actively encouraged to do so as the Lord leads. If more than the targeted number of families decide to join the new church, then the mother church can rejoice in God's provision for the daughter church and trust that He will be equally faithful to them.

In addition to sending out members with the daughter church, the mother church can also provide temporary workers to help staff the daughter church's Sunday morning ministry. These short-term workers are sometimes called SWAT teams (Servants, Willing And Temporary), and they can be used to staff the nursery, help with setup and tear-down, and serve as greeters, etc. during the early stages of the new church.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 157.

By providing mentoring, money and members in these ways, the mother church will help provide a strong foundation for the daughter church from the very start.

PROCESS

The mother church should also work with the planter to develop a functional timeline for each of the various stages in the church planting process. The mother-daughter metaphor is particularly appropriate here, because there are a number of parallels between the church planting process and the human life cycle:

- **Conception Stage:** the laying of a solid foundation through proper spiritual preparation and strategic planning. (Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:10,11)
- **Prenatal Development Stage:** the development of a strong core group through outreach evangelism and discipling of the target community (Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)
- **Birth and Infancy Stage:** the launching of celebration worship and public ministry with the gathered believers (Key Scripture: Hebrews 10:24-25)
- **Adolescence and Growth Stage:** the training of leaders for balanced church growth – spiritually, numerically, organizationally. (Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 2:42-47; 6:1-7)
- **Adulthood and Reproduction Stage:** the mobilizing of planting teams/leaders for multiplying new congregations (Key Scripture: Acts 1:8; 9:31; 19:10)⁹⁶

The birthing metaphor contained in these stages is a helpful one. As with a child, if a church is birthed prematurely before it has had sufficient time to develop important systems, it may suffer crippling effects from which it may never fully recover. Each stage must be completed, and critical mass must be achieved before a church is ready for birth. On the other hand, if a daughter church remains “in the womb” of the parent church for

⁹⁶ McNamara and Davis, *The Y-B-H Handbook of Church Planting*, xv–xvi.

too long, it risks losing momentum and a healthy sense of its own identity. For this reason, the mother church should assist the planter in establishing a timeline that balances flexibility with urgency.

Recognizing that getting a new church from the conception phase to the point of birth will normally take at least a year, and recognizing that the three most opportune times to launch a church are early fall, early in the new year, and around Easter,⁹⁷ a flexible target launch date should be selected, and appropriate milestones and goals that lead to this date should be set accordingly.

Creating a Culture of Multiplication

The six areas discussed above (prayer, planter, place, partners, provision, process) represent the major components of a sound church planting strategy. But the goal is not merely to implement a sound strategy, but a *sustainable* one—that is, to enable a church to develop a healthy rhythm of planting multiple churches over time. And for a church planting strategy to be sustainable, it must flow from a deeper culture of multiplication.

Peter Drucker is often quoted as saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” What that means is that if an organization’s strategy does not flow from its most deeply held values and practices (i.e., its culture), it will most likely not succeed over time. A deeply engrained existing culture will undermine any strategy that does not align with it.

⁹⁷ “When Should I Launch?,” accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.churchplanting.com/when-should-i-launch/#.XUH0EehKjIU>.

In the context of church planting, this means that if a church does not yet value and embrace ongoing multiplication at the micro level (multiplying disciples, leaders, ministries, and small groups within its existing congregation), it will have a difficult time achieving ongoing multiplication at the macro level (multiplying new congregations) because it will be acting contrary to its culture. On the other hand, if a church has developed a healthy rhythm of multiplying disciples, leaders, ministries, and small groups, then the process of multiplying churches will be a natural outgrowth of that existing culture, and the prospect of success will be much greater.

Practically speaking, how does a church cultivate the kind of culture of multiplication that makes a church planting strategy sustainable? Part of the answer lies in effective vision casting (discussed above). But perhaps a bigger part of the answer lies in making small, but significant structural changes within your church. Todd Wilson says:

Your specific culture (subtraction, addition or multiplication) is formed not by who you want to be in the future, but rather by who you are and what you're doing today. The collection of small, consistent daily decisions are each a stone in the foundation of the culture you foster. Want a multiplication culture? Figure out how to multiply in your setting today.⁹⁸

If a church desires to generously send out money, disciples, and leaders to plant a new church, then it must figure out how to replace those resources if it is going to survive. But if it desires, not merely to survive a single church plant, but to thrive in planting multiple churches, then it must develop a long-term strategy for not only replacing those expended resources after the fact, but for proactively cultivating and multiplying those resources before the fact. This means that any church that is serious

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Spark*, 9–10.

about church multiplication must become equally serious about developing healthy systems in the areas of finance, evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. It is beyond the scope of this project to delve deeply into these subjects, but suffice to say that a church's effectiveness in planting new churches will be directly proportional to its ongoing effectiveness in raising new funds, making new disciples, and developing new leaders. Learning to multiply these important human and financial ministry resources is a vital component of any truly sustainable church planting strategy.

Conclusion

The relevant church planting literature and research confirms that church planting is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission and that the mother-daughter model is perhaps the healthiest and most effective method of planting churches. It also validates the essential nature of the leadership practices set forth in the three hypotheses for this project.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

The problem that this research project seeks to address is identifying those factors which have enabled existing churches to successfully overcome common obstacles to planting daughter churches. The research question this study seeks to ask and answer therefore is this: What factors have enabled existing churches to successfully overcome common obstacles to planting daughter churches? The answers proposed to this question as the working hypotheses of this dissertation are that: 1) Church leaders must learn to embrace and communicate a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations, 2) Church leaders must learn to cultivate a spirit of bold faith within their congregations, and 3) Church leaders must learn how to develop and implement a long-term, sustainable church planting strategy for their congregations.

The research method I selected for evaluating these hypotheses is the qualitative case study method. Robert Yin, in his book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, says that “in general, case studies are the preferred method when (a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.”⁹⁹ The research topic of this dissertation meets each of these three criteria:

⁹⁹ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edition. (Los Angeles, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2008), 2.

1. The “contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” at issue here is the ability of some churches to successfully overcome common obstacles to planting churches.
2. The corresponding research question is essentially a “how” question: *How* have these churches been able to successfully overcome these obstacles?
3. This question is not one that can be validated through any kind of controlled experiment.

Because the research problem being investigated here meets these three criteria therefore, the case study method seemed the most appropriate research method for this project.

Research Subjects

In general terms, the kind of case study churches I was seeking for this project were those that had overcome significant obstacles to successfully plant daughter churches. Since I was specifically wanting to understand how a church can develop a sustainable rhythm of church planting over time, I needed to find churches that had successfully planted at least two daughter churches and were well on their way to planting more.

While I was not opposed to considering megachurches for this study, I did not want these to comprise the majority of my sample group since their size and available resources are not typical and many of their strategies are unlikely to be transferable to the majority of churches. My strong preference was to find mid-size churches with attendance ranging from 400-800, since a larger number of churches fall within this range (including my own), and the research would therefore be applicable to a wider church audience. Since I am generally familiar with the church planting processes in my own denomination (EFCA), I also wanted to study at least a few churches outside of my denomination to gain a broader perspective.

Finding churches which fit these criteria proved more difficult than expected. I found a large number of megachurches that had planted multiple satellite campuses using the multisite model, a smaller number of megachurches that had planted a handful of independent daughter churches, and an even smaller number of churches (of various sizes) that had planted a single daughter church. But it took considerable effort to locate mid-size churches that had planted multiple daughter churches over time. While frustrating, this difficulty in locating such churches confirmed the need for this research project. There simply aren't many mid-size churches that are involved in ongoing church planting, and this is a problem that needs to be solved.

I attempted to locate viable case study churches through a number of avenues, including my personal ministry network, my denominational network, and online research. In the end, I managed to find three churches that met the criteria I was looking for.

The first of these was Northeast Bible Church in Garden Ridge, Texas, an Evangelical Free Church with about 800-1,000 in attendance. I was familiar with this church, because it is part of my church's denomination and because its pastor, Drew Leaver, is a personal friend. Because our paths cross frequently, I have been able to observe the good work that Drew has done in re-awakening a heart for church planting in this long-established church. Under his leadership, Northeast has had a hand in planting three churches.

The second church that I selected as a case study was Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, South Carolina, a Southern Baptist Church with about 600-800 in attendance. In a rather round-about way, I discovered this church through a workshop taught by one

of its pastors, Allen Tipping, on the subject of “Churches Planting Churches.”¹⁰⁰ The audio for this workshop was posted on the website for the Carolina Greenhouse, a coalition of South Carolina churches committed to church planting. From this online workshop, I learned that Midtown fit the criteria I was looking for, and I was impressed with its intentional approach to church planting. I reached out to Allen and was grateful when he agreed to participate in this study. Midtown has currently planted five daughter churches.

The third church that I selected as a case study is Bedrock Community Church in Bedford, Virginia, a Southern Baptist Church with about 700-800 in attendance. I learned about this church through my son and daughter who attended this church and one of its daughter church plants while students at Liberty University. During trips to visit my children at college, I had the opportunity to attend worship services at Bedrock’s church plant in Lynchburg, and the more I learned about what God was doing through the “Bedford Network,” the more I excited I became to include them in my research. Bedford currently has a legacy of about nine churches, with more on the way.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument for collecting case study data was a questionnaire which I administered with the lead pastors of each of the mother churches through a semi-structured phone interview (See Appendix A). This questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first set of questions was designed to collect general background information on both the mother church and the daughter churches they had planted. The second set of questions was designed to assess the major obstacles which the mother churches had encountered in the process of planting. The third set of questions was

¹⁰⁰ “Churches Planting Churches – Allen Tipping,” *Carolina Greenhouse*, September 24, 2018, accessed November 15, 2019, <http://www.carolinagreenhouse.com/podcast/episode-25-churches-planting-churches-allen-tipping/>.

designed to determine the strategies that the mother churches employed to overcome these obstacles. This final set of questions was loosely structured around my three hypotheses.

A second instrument I developed was a survey which was emailed to each of the daughter church plant pastors (See Appendix B). The questions in this survey were designed to validate and supplement the information provided by the mother church lead pastors. I felt it was important to receive objective feedback from those who were on the receiving end of the mother church's planting efforts to determine what went well and what could be improved.

A third instrument I developed was a survey which was emailed to a key lay leader in each of the mother churches (See Appendix C). These were individuals who had been around long enough to witness the "before and after" of the planting process. I felt that the perspective of a layperson would be especially helpful in assessing how effectively the congregation had been shepherded through this process.

In addition to these primary case study instruments, I also developed a couple of secondary instruments. The first of these was a survey that was designed to assess the most common obstacles that stand in the way of churches planting churches (See Appendix D). This survey consisted of 18 questions that centered on three categories of obstacles: a lack of vision, a lack of faith, and a lack of strategy. This survey was conducted at both the district and national conferences for the Evangelical Free Church. I also designed an informal questionnaire in preparation for my phone interview with Dr. Ed Stetzer. These questions sought to solicit Dr. Stetzer's expert opinion on both the obstacles to church planting and the solutions for overcoming these obstacles.

Research Procedures

Since the focus of the research project is to help churches overcome obstacles to planting churches, I felt it would be prudent to do some preliminary research into what

some of those primary obstacles are. To this end, I conducted the “Obstacles to Church Planting” survey among attendees at the Evangelical Free Church Texas-Oklahoma district conference in Garden Ridge, Texas on February 22, 2019 and also at the Evangelical Free Church national conference in Naperville, Illinois on June 20, 2019. In total, I received 157 responses.

Upon securing the agreement of the case study churches to participate in this study, my first step was to request that they send me any materials relating to their church planting efforts, such as:

- Written stories of their church plants
- Church plant prospectuses
- Church planter residency handbooks or training materials
- Church planting policies, procedures, financials, etc.
- Materials used to cast vision for church planting to the congregation

The information gleaned from these materials helped me better understand the respective church planting strategies of each of the churches and helped me prepare for the next step which was conducting the case study interviews.

Since my hypotheses related to the behaviors of church leaders, I decided to interview either the lead pastor or the pastor responsible for church planting in each of the case study churches. All of these interviews were conducted over the phone. On July 23, 2019, I interviewed Pastor Chris Dowd and Pastor Jonge Tate from Bedrock Community Church in Bedford, Virginia. Also on July 23, 2019, I interviewed Pastor Drew Leaver from Northeast Bible Church in Garden Ridge, Texas. On August 21, 2019, I interviewed Pastor Allen Tipping from Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, South Carolina.

During these interviews, I requested permission to send email surveys to a key lay leader in each of the mother churches as well as to the lead pastors of each of their respective daughter church plants. Upon receiving this permission along with a list of the

requested names and email addresses, I sent out these surveys in August 2019 and received most of them back by the end of September 2019.

On August 21, 2019, I conducted a phone interview with Dr. Ed Stetzer to glean his expert opinion regarding the most common church planting obstacles and the solutions for overcoming them.

The final task was to compile and analyze the data from all of these sources. To assist in this process, I had each of the phone interviews professionally transcribed. Going back and reading through these transcriptions, I looked for common themes and information that would help answer my research question and either confirm or undermine my proposed hypotheses. These transcribed phone interviews served as the primary source of information for my case studies, and the email surveys and requested church planting documents were secondary sources which served to validate what was said in the interviews and fill in the details.

Conclusion

The case study method proved very useful in gathering the desired data for this project. By utilizing a number of data collection methods (acquiring key documents, sending out email surveys, and conducting in-person interviews) from a variety of sources (mother church pastors, daughter church pastors, and key lay leaders), I was able to obtain a wealth of information relating to my research question.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

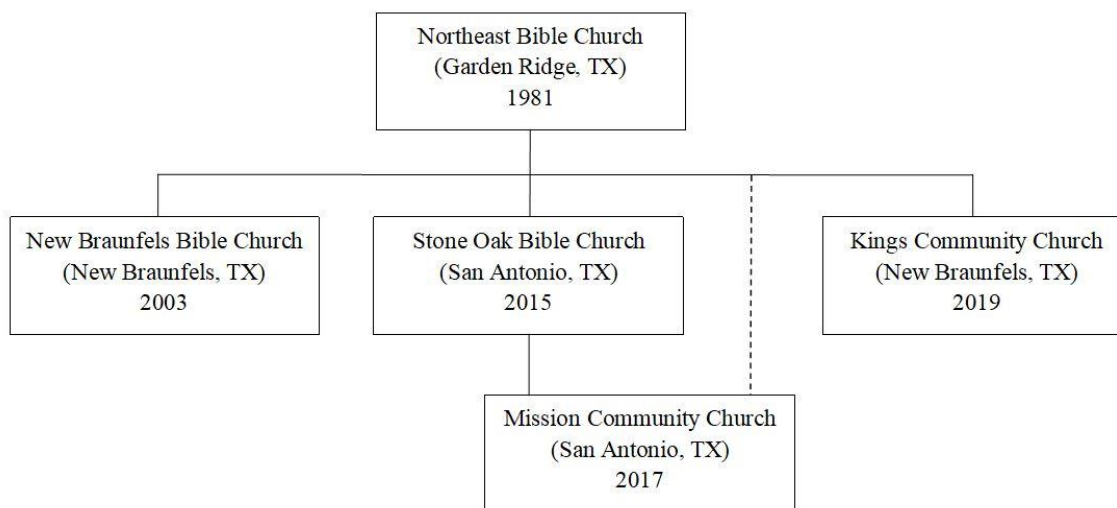
The case studies that follow will describe the church planting history of each of my three case study churches, the church planting obstacles that they faced, and the church planting processes that each of them followed. Special attention will be given to how these processes enabled them to overcome church planting obstacles and how these processes align with the three hypotheses of this project.

Case Study One: Northeast Bible Church

Northeast's Church Planting History

Northeast Bible Church was founded in 1981 as a church plant of Wayside Chapel in San Antonio, Texas. Fourteen years later in 2003, Northeast planted its first daughter church, New Braunfels Bible Church, in New Braunfels, Texas. The dream was to plant more churches, but over time, that dream gradually faded and eventually all but disappeared. Then in 2010, Drew Leaver assumed the role of lead pastor at Northeast and reawakened the church's dormant vision for planting. Under his leadership, two more daughter churches have been planted: 1) Stone Oak Bible Church in San Antonio, Texas in 2015, and 2) Kings Community Church in New Braunfels, Texas in 2019. While still in the planting process itself, Stone Oak brought on a church planting resident and planted Mission Community Church in San Antonio, Texas in 2017. Since Northeast was also significantly involved in the planting of this "granddaughter" church, Drew sometimes likes to say that they've actually planted 2 ½ churches!

Thus, the Northeast “family tree” spans three generations:



Northeast’s Church Planting Obstacles

One of the major obstacles which hindered Northeast from advancing its original church planting vision was fear. In the years immediately preceding Drew Leaver’s arrival as lead pastor, Northeast had been through some difficult leadership challenges. As a result, the church had begun to turn inward, focusing more on healing than outreach. In this vulnerable season, the idea of church planting evoked considerable anxiety. Drew voiced the mindset of many in the church at that time like this: “If we plant, we’ll lose people, and we’ll lose family, and we just need to keep everybody together, and we need to get healthy again.”¹⁰¹ Northeast had once been a fairly large church, running about 1,000 on Sundays, but the church’s attendance had begun to dwindle over the years. So, while many in the church were willing to give more to overseas missions or to building new facilities, they were unwilling to invest in local church planting, fearful that it would create competition that would only further their own

¹⁰¹ Drew Leaver, “Interview with Brent Burckart,” July 23, 2019.

church's decline. The healthy vision for church planting which had once characterized this church was now falling by the wayside, a casualty of fear.

Another obstacle to church planting which Drew would have to wrestle with personally was the sheer amount of time required to adequately invest in a church planter's development. Some of this can be delegated to people other than the senior pastor, but in Drew's opinion, much of it can't and shouldn't be. For one thing, most lay leaders in the church work full-time jobs outside the church which necessarily limits their availability and accessibility to the church planter. More significantly though, Drew said, "This guy's going to be a senior pastor, so he needs to understand ministry from and hear about it most from another senior pastor, because it's a unique role. And there are unique challenges to it that textbooks can't tell you about, and you don't fully understand until you're in it."¹⁰² But how does a senior pastor find the time to invest in a church planter amid all the other ministry needs vying for his attention? This was a real challenge for Drew as it will be for any church planting pastor.

In time, Northeast did succeed in planting its first daughter church under Drew's leadership, but then it immediately faced another obstacle that church planting churches often experience: the pain of post-planting losses. Drew put it this way:

There was a sense of, "Oh, that was hard! Let's not do that again, because that was painful. We lost a friend, we lost a ministry partner, and we lost momentum, and we lost energy." And I think maybe that's one of the reasons why churches struggle to plant more than one—just because all of those losses add up and the six months to a year afterwards is just a total change of pace. And you have to reorient and get your legs back under you. And then the thought of doing it all again is kind of like, "Oh, that labor was hard. I don't know if I want to get pregnant again!"¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

One of the most painful aspects of planting out, Drew said, was the leadership vacuum left behind from sending out some of their best leaders and volunteers. This vacuum revealed an area of weakness in their church which poses yet another obstacle to daughter church planting, namely a lack of leadership development. Churches that don't have a robust leadership pipeline will be unable to back-fill the holes left by departing leaders, and this will eventually hinder their ability to continue planting out. In the aftermath of this church plant, Northeast realized this was a problem they would need to address.

How did Drew and the Northeast team go about overcoming these obstacles to enter into a healthy rhythm of planting daughter churches? By adopting several essential practices which, as shall be seen, mirror those set forth in this project's three major hypotheses.

Northeast's Church Planting Practices

Hypothesis 1 – Casting a Compelling Vision

Commenting on vision, Drew said, "If churches have a vision for church planting, that's a good vision, but it's still a bit too narrow. The vision really has to be about the Great Commission."¹⁰⁴ Drew cautioned that when church planting gets disconnected from a Great Commission focus, it can easily become about simply "pursuing notches on a belt," and when the pain hits, the novelty will wear off and that vision won't survive. But if one truly sees church planting as essential to the fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission; if one sees it as a healthy outlet for evangelism and disciplemaking and leadership development; if one sees it as an opportunity to look

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

beyond the four walls of one's own church and to expand the church at large, then the vision for church planting will be much more healthy, focused, and sustainable.

With this Great Commission focus in mind, one of Drew's first priorities when he arrived at Northeast was to begin casting a vision for church planting. Although Northeast had itself been a daughter church plant and although it had planted one daughter church many years earlier, by now, these were distant memories that only a handful of old-timers could recall. Fortunately, one of those old-timers was the chairman of the elder board and a founding member of the church. When Drew was initially interviewing for the position of senior pastor at Northeast, this elder chairman looked him in the eye and said, "Drew, we haven't planted a church in a number of years. We had dreams of planting more, but it never happened. I'm 73 years old now. How will I know if you come here that you can help us plant another church before I die?" Drew knew then that he had at least one strong ally for church planting, and he and this elder formed a kind of mutual commitment to make it happen.

Given that Northeast had some church planting experience in its DNA, instead of framing church planting as a brand-new vision for the church, Drew simply called the church back to its roots, encouraging them to once again embrace their original vision for church planting. Both behind the scenes and in front of the congregation, Drew took considerable time explaining what church planting is and why it matters. He framed it as an opportunity for everyone to use their gifts, and he found that those with the gift of generosity were especially motivated by this bigger vision and the prospect of giving to something significant that would have an enduring legacy.

Drew said that storytelling was key to communicating this church planting vision and motivating people to embrace it. Specifically, he said,

(We tell) the stories of people who have been a part of a church plant, people who have been reached by Northeast because it was planted in this corner of San Antonio. And we use their stories to say, "There are people just like you out there right now in this community who don't know Jesus yet, and ten years from now,

they are going to be thankful that we planted a church, because it introduced them to Jesus, and now they're attending, and their kids have been baptized” and so on and so forth. Storytelling is so key in that regard.¹⁰⁵

And how has the church responded to this church planting vision? One lay leader in the church whom I surveyed said, “It has become so ingrained in our DNA that the congregation gets excited when we bring a new church planter on board.” Though it took time, Drew said the church is now “less self-centered...because they now have a broader vision of the church than just our particular church.”¹⁰⁶ He has been pleased to see that the church’s embrace of its earlier church planting vision has renewed some healthy momentum in the church. He said,

People just walk a little bit taller. They feel like they are a part of something bigger. Because I think it's just hard for the average Christian in the pew to figure out how they fit into the Great Commission. They get the discipleship part, and so they contribute maybe by being part of a small group or Sunday school. If I'm really lucky, maybe they actually disciple someone. But church planting does something where all of a sudden, everybody feels like they play a little part in fulfilling the Great Commission. Even if they're not discipling someone, even if they're new in their faith, they feel like they've been a part of something really big. And if you celebrate that well and celebrate that often, it just creates some missional DNA, some missional momentum.¹⁰⁷

Hypothesis 2 – Cultivating a Spirit of Bold Faith

Many in the Northeast congregation had been fearful of losing friends and momentum. The finance team had been fearful of losing money for the budget. The staff had been fearful of losing key leaders. So how did Drew go about leading the Northeast church family from a spirit of crippling fear to a spirit of bold faith?

Recognizing that all change begins in the heart, Drew began regularly challenging the church to adopt a “posture of surrender where my arms are out, and my

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

hands are open.”¹⁰⁸ He said this is an acknowledgement that all that we have belongs to God, and so we’re giving Him complete access to our lives—the freedom to both take from us and to give to us whatever He desires. Drew encouraged this posture of surrender in every aspect of life, whether worship or parenting or career or money or church. He reminded the congregation that the human and financial resources that God had sent their way were not ultimately theirs, but His, and so they needed to be open-handed with them. Drew not only increasingly used the language of “surrender,” but also of “kingdom.” He regularly reminded the congregation that the kingdom of God is bigger than Northeast Bible Church, and that to be kingdom-minded required that they be willing to commit resources beyond their own church.

To counteract the fear of loss, Drew emphasized that this kind of kingdom-minded generosity actually leads to greater blessing. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus taught that God will be faithful to meet the needs of those who are focused on building His kingdom rather than their own. Proverbs 11:24-25 paradoxically teaches that the more you keep, the less you will have, but the more you give away, the more you will be blessed. And 2 Corinthians 9:8-9 says that when we generously use our God-given resources to bless others, God will “make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” So the issue really is one of faith—are we willing to trust God’s promises? In light of these biblical truths, Drew did his best to “convince people that if we give resources, and if we give people, even if we're going to say goodbye to some friends, that is not a loss. That is actually a gain, not only for the kingdom, but it will be a gain for us, too, because God will bless us.”¹⁰⁹ As Drew taught these truths from the pulpit and modeled them in his own life and leadership, the congregation began to respond.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

And what has been the result of Northeast's willingness to release people and resources to plant churches? Did their finances suffer? Drew said, "we've met budget all but one year, and in that year, we were still able to meet our expenses."¹¹⁰ Did their attendance suffer? They sent out a number of people with their first church plant, but Drew said, "We were able to backfill within about a year or so. And that was something that we very intentionally celebrated. When you send out a bunch of people, it is a faith step, and people wonder, 'Will it hurt our giving? Will we meet budget next year?' And then you see the blessing of God, and you see that He had people waiting in the wings to kind of step up and step in."¹¹¹

But Northeast has not bounced back quite as quickly with its most recent church plant, and Drew was refreshingly honest about what God's taught him in that.

One of things that I've been reminded of most the past six months is that this commitment is about investing in the fruit from other people's trees. It's humbling when you lose people, because, let's face it, we're all flesh and blood, right? As pastors, we like to see our seats full on Sunday, so giving up people is hard. And then when it doesn't backfill as quickly as you had hoped, and when God doesn't pour out this mountain of blessing like you had envisioned for this great noble thing that you did, you've got to constantly remind yourself that there is fruit that you can't see and trust that it's fruit that God is pleased with. You have to believe that the fruit that is happening at the new church is worth everything that we may not be seeing here at our church right now. And that's not always easy. There's a huge mental and spiritual battle with that on a very regular basis.

And when our church feels stagnant and our numbers haven't grown for a year or more, the enemy shines his light down on that and messes with your head and makes you feel like you're a bad leader. And there are all kind of things that start playing out internally. So there has to be a commitment to God's kingdom, a commitment to Christ and His mission. And it has to be a commitment taken without a view to numbers and without a view to your personal church's success and believing that there's something even beyond those things that you can't see and maybe you never will see until you get to Heaven. So you have to just say,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

“Please, God, let this bear fruit somehow even if I can't see it here right now. I'm just choosing trust, choosing to believe that this is bearing fruit.”¹¹²

This is a good reminder that God's promise to bless our generosity does not always equate to non-stop numeric growth in our own church. It takes the boldest kind of faith to continue to obey God even when the fruit of our generosity shows up on someone else's tree.

Hypothesis 3 – Implementing a Sustainable Strategy

When I asked Drew about church planting strategy, he agreed that it's important, but he cautioned that:

There are so many resources out there now on church planting, which is great, but it can be so overwhelming. And churches get so caught up on having the right strategy or the perfect strategy. And that's where I push back and say, “Look, just do something.” We have retuned and reframed our strategy multiple times over, and our resources are really underwhelming once you see them. But we've been able to plant two-and-a-half churches and we're working on our next planter now. With the wealth of resources out there, you don't need to recreate the wheel, and your wheel doesn't need to look all that impressive. What's impressive is how God meets you where you are and makes even a very average strategy work.¹¹³

Northeast's Church Planting Culture

Drew has sought to cultivate a culture of multiplication at Northeast at a number of levels, and it began with his own schedule. As noted earlier, a very real obstacle which prevents many pastors from investing in church planters is just their lack of time in the face of so many other pressing ministry priorities. But Drew noted that,

The senior leader has got to figure out what his priorities are. The churches that are faithfully planting churches are led by guys who have made breathing life into young leaders a part of their ministry. And if the senior leaders aren't willing to

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

change their calendars or give up other types of projects to see this through, then it's just not going to happen.¹¹⁴

Because of this, Drew spends a considerable amount of time investing personally in the development of church planters, both through his own church's residency program and through his denomination's coaching networks.

Another obstacle Northeast faced after its first plant was a dearth of leaders, highlighting the importance of more intentional leadership development. Following Drew's personal example, the Northeast elder board is now much more actively involved in developing "the young eagles" in their congregation. In their meetings, they regularly ask themselves, "Who are the potential leaders in our church, and how are we developing them?" And each elder is expected to be personally involved in discipling someone else, and they hold one another accountable to that.

At the staff level, Drew regularly emphasizes to his team members the importance of developing leaders within their respective areas of ministry. He said he's learned that just because someone is a caring pastor, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're automatically going to be good at developing people, delegating ministry, and deploying new leaders. This is something that has to be constantly emphasized, so Drew regularly asks his staff, "How are we raising up the next batch of leaders? Because those leaders aren't just important for our current ministries, they're important for future ministries and even future churches."¹¹⁵

Northeast's Church Planting Process

Northeast Bible Church is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) and falls within the Texas-Oklahoma district. Under the leadership of District Superintendent Bob Rowley, this EFCA district has developed a robust set of church

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

planting systems, including church planter recruitment, assessment, training, coaching, and funding systems. Northeast avails itself of all of these resources in its church planting efforts.

In addition, Northeast has established a church planting residency program that is structured in three phases over a period of about eighteen months:

PHASE 1: PREPARATION [first 6 months]

The preparation phase of the residency is designed to lay the foundation for a healthy church ministry in the future by exposing the resident to systems and structures necessary for leading a healthy church. This phase will include key conversations that are both personal and theological as well as structural as we focus on the health of the planter along with the systems in a church.

PHASE 2: PLANNING [middle 6 months]

The planning phase of the residency is designed to assist the planter in setting up the systems and structures necessary for launch. Moving from information to application, this phase focuses on group and systems development, identification of key leaders, building teams and strategizing launch details.

PHASE 3: PLANTING [final 6 months]

The planting phase of the residency is designed for execution. The residents time during this phase is increasingly external and away from Northeast as he builds into his core team and leadership, builds critical relationships in the community and organizes events, preview services and ultimately a successful launch.¹¹⁶

During each of these eighteen months, an assigned book is read, and a ministry topic is explored with the resident according to the following schedule:

MONTH 1 - Health: Personal & Spiritual, Leadership Rhythms

MONTH 2 - Health: Ministry Health & Ministry Rhythms

MONTH 3 - Health: Marital & Relational, Life & Family Rhythms

MONTH 4 - Theology: Christ, Word & Preaching

MONTH 5 - Theology: Church, Mission & Leadership

¹¹⁶ *Church Planting Residency Guide* (Garden Ridge, TX: Northeast Bible Church, 2019).

- MONTH 6 - Theology: Discipleship, Distinctives & DNA
- MONTH 7 - Strategy: Church Plant Strategy
- MONTH 8 - Strategy: Groups & Discipleship Strategy
- MONTH 9 - Strategy: Community Engagement & Mission
- MONTH 10 - Strategy: Launch Strategy
- MONTH 11 - Leadership: Budget, Finance & Fundraising
- MONTH 12 - Leadership: Volunteers, Teams & Recruiting
- MONTH 13 - Leadership: Leadership Development, Staffing
- MONTH 14 - Leadership: Staff & Church Culture, Philosophy
- MONTH 15 - Leadership: Elder Boards & Governance
- MONTH 16 - Other
- MONTH 17 - Other
- MONTH 18 – Launch¹¹⁷

The resident is required to select two conferences to attend during their program, and these are funded by Northeast or the EFCA district. The resident is also required to visit a minimum of seven churches in his target community and its surrounding area. “This will not only expose him to ministry ideas for the future plant, but it will also allow him to become acquainted with the other churches and pastors which may play an integral part in his ongoing development in the years to come.”¹¹⁸ During his residency, the church planter will be assigned various roles, responsibilities and ministry tasks for the purpose of giving him ministry exposure and experience. This includes attendance at various meetings/events such as Worship Services, Elder Meetings, Staff Meetings, LifeGroups, EFCA training events, and weekly meetings with

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor. He will also be given various preaching, discipling and leadership assignments.

Northeast church planters are expected to work in partnership with the EFCA and the steps outlined in its “Path Toward Maturity,” and to develop and maintain accountability at several levels:

- **SPIRITUAL / PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:** The resident should identify a mentor and maintain a healthy relationship that includes regular meetings. The identity of this individual is flexible, and it is up to the resident to select this person.
- **MINISTRY ACCOUNTABILITY:** The resident must have a coach. This is a requirement for all EFCA church planters and is a crucial component for health. The resident must identify a mentor coach who can come along side of them during the process of planting the new church.
- **RESIDENCY ACCOUNTABILITY:** The resident will have monthly progress meetings to inform Northeast of the progress that has been made toward the launch of the new church.
- **POST-RESIDENCY ACCOUNTABILITY:** The resident commits to forming and maintaining a Plant Advisory Team (PAT) to serve as encouragers, advisors and accountability until a formal elder board can be established to serve along-side the pastor at the new church plant.¹¹⁹

Northeast’s Church Plant Resourcing

Drew said, “We’ve been very willing to allow a resident to come in and steal whoever he wants from our congregation. And we leave the decision up to the Lord as to who’s going to go with them.”¹²⁰ On average, Northeast has sent out about 40+ people (including children) with each of its direct church plants.

Northeast provides a partial salary for the church planter during their 12-18-month residency and then for another full year after the church’s launch. This partial

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Leaver, “Interview with Brent Burckart.”

salary has been about \$30,000 annually, plus insurance benefits. They also provide a guaranteed amount in launch funds. Beyond what is provided through the church budget, they also encourage church members to give individually through designated gifts and corporately through special offerings. And once an individual or family commits to be part of the new church, even months before the new church is launched, their giving is immediately diverted away from the Northeast budget and directed into a special savings fund for the new church. Northeast also encourages other churches to partner financially with the new church plant. Drew said that their goal is to give the new church at least \$50,000 out the door.

They intentionally do not fund 100% of the church planter salary both for financial and philosophical reasons. Drew says,

It's less about fundraising and more about casting vision. Asking people to support you personally is a great test of whether or not you can cast a vision for your church. Can you get people excited about what you're doing? If you can't do that with people who already know Jesus, then how are you going to do it when you're a senior pastor trying to cast vision? How are you going to cast your church's vision to an unbeliever and convince them to come?¹²¹

Case Study Two: Midtown Fellowship

Midtown's Church Planting History

In 2007, Pastor Allen Tipping and a small handful of college friends planted Midtown Fellowship, a Southern Baptist church in Columbia, South Carolina. Since then, Midtown has been instrumental in planting several other churches. The churches they plant fall into one of two groups: 1) their family of churches, and 2) their network of churches.

¹²¹ Ibid.

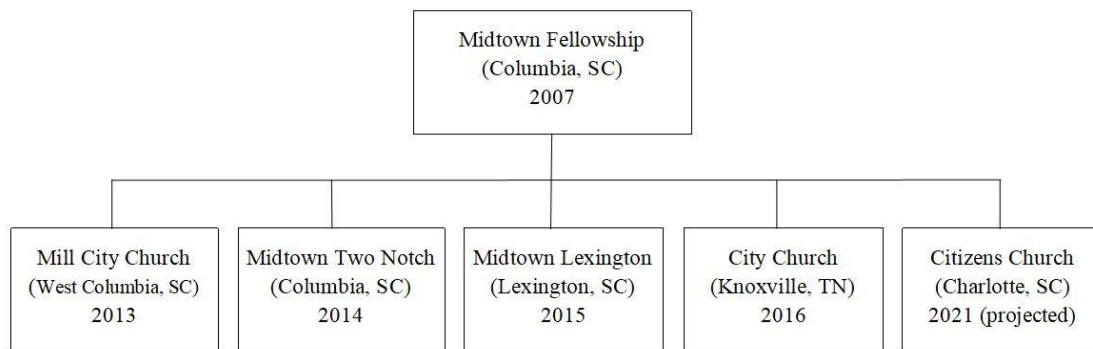
The Midtown “family” of churches consists of the original Midtown mother church (the “downtown” church) and a couple of church plants that are located within the greater Columbia area. These are independent churches, but they all bear the Midtown name, and because of their proximity to one another, they share various central resources. These churches are described as follows on the Midtown Fellowship website:

- **Our Downtown church** is the church that's been around the longest. It probably feels more "established" which may be a good or a bad thing, depending on your preferences. Our Downtown church is also focused on reaching the people within a five-mile radius of the Statehouse.
- **Our Two Notch church** was planted in 2013 with the goal of reaching the (inner city) neighborhoods and communities, and schools in and around Two Notch Road. Where there is poverty, above-average crime rates, and below-average education, our Two Notch church desires to bring the gospel.
- **Our Lexington church** was planted in August 2015 with the goal of reaching the greater Lexington area. It meets in the neighborhoods and suburbs of the greater Lexington area.¹²²

Unlike their “family” of churches, the Midtown “network” of churches consists of churches that were planted further distances from the Columbia area and thus have a looser connection to the mother church. These churches must meet “mandatory minimums” in terms of Midtown’s doctrinal and philosophical distinctives, but after being launched, they operate with greater independence than those in the family of churches, sharing only occasional networking and training opportunities. Churches in the Midtown network include: 1) Mill City Church in West Columbia, South Carolina, planted in 2013, 2) City Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, planted in 2016, and 3) Citizens Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, which is currently slated to launch in 2021.

Thus, the Midtown “family tree” would look something like this:

¹²² <https://midtowncolumbia.com/churches/>



Midtown's Church Planting Obstacles

In my interview with Allen Tipping, I shared with him my view that the most common categories of obstacles that church planting churches must overcome are a lack of vision, a lack of faith, and a lack of strategy. To this list, Allen suggested that I might add a fourth category: a lack of readiness. In retrospect, Allen sees that although God blessed their early efforts, when he and his team initially planted Midtown, they were “brave,” but “ignorant” and “not ready” to plant a church. From their negative experiences in the past, they knew what kind of church they didn’t want to be. But they did not yet have a clear biblical picture of what kind of church God was calling them to be. They had a heart to plant churches from the very beginning, but Allen said, “we did not want to multiply something that was not healthy... we needed to get to a healthy enough place that it was worth reproducing, because not all reproduction is good reproduction.”¹²³ Because of this, they waited several years before they attempted to plant their first daughter church. Allen believes that in their case, this was wise, and he cautioned against the popular church planting concept of “planting pregnant,” since, in his view, it can inadvertently rush churches to plant before they’re healthy enough to reproduce.

¹²³ Allen Tipping, “Interview with Brent Burckart,” August 21, 2019.

Another obstacle to planting that Midtown had to overcome was a lack of qualified church planting candidates. Because Midtown did not have an existing pool of ready-made church planters to draw from, they had to develop them from within, and this took time. Alan feels a keen sense of responsibility in this regard, since Hebrews 13:17 says that pastors will give an account one day for how they shepherd their flock. He said,

When we send out church planters, we are saying (to our congregation), ‘Hey, some of you need to go with this person.’ If we send somebody with a bad shepherd, then we have not shepherded our flock well, and we’ll be accountable for that—meaning, I’ve got to know who I’m sending out. We undertake a slow process, testing their character and getting to know them before we send them out.¹²⁴

Another potential obstacle to church planting that Midtown had to wrestle with in its early years was inadequate funding and facilities. Columbia is home to the University of South Carolina, and the college students that Midtown started reaching brought lots of energy, but very little money. This reality placed a significant financial strain on the church. Midtown also had a very difficult time acquiring functional worship space in the downtown area of Columbia. The local school district there refused to let them rent space in any of its schools, and the only meeting place they could find was the South Carolina State Museum at 5:00 PM on Sunday evenings—hardly an ideal time or place. Nevertheless, the church grew, and they soon had to add a 7:00 PM service and then a 9:00 PM service. The church continued to grow, and, unable to add more services at the museum, they began a fourth service at a nearby church building on Sunday evenings at 5:00 PM. They kept growing and once again had to add a 7:00 PM service and then a 9:00 PM service there at the church building as well. At this point, they were running between 600 and 800 people in attendance, holding six services between two locations in less than ideal facilities. These challenges might easily have weakened their

¹²⁴ Ibid.

resolve to plant churches, but they persevered through them, and it was in the midst of these chaotic times that they began training their first two church planters.

Around year six, they were able to move into a better facility that finally allowed them to worship together on Sunday mornings, and it was in this same season that they sent out several families to plant their first two churches, Mill City Church and Two Notch Church. These were all positive developments, but undergoing this much major change in such a short period of time was “gut wrenching.” In retrospect, Allen acknowledged,

That was just dumb. If you look at each of those decisions independently, it was the right time for each one, but when you put them all together, it was the wrong time to do all three. We sent out four pastors and about eighty of our best people as we were moving into a new facility, and we just felt gutted...One of the lessons we learned is that we have to be intentional when we send people out and not send multiple groups at the same time. We just didn't have the capacity for that. It literally took us a good two-and-a-half to three years to recover from the loss of people and financial resources, and to just culturally regroup after that. So one of the lessons we learned is that timing does matter.¹²⁵

This season also revealed another obstacle which they knew they would need to overcome if they wished to continue planting churches, namely inadequate leadership development. Moving forward, they knew they would need a better system for back-filling the holes left by the leaders they sent out with their church plants.

In time, Midtown overcame each of these obstacles to develop a healthy rhythm of planting daughter churches. The following section will explore the practices which enabled them to do that, and these practices will be evaluated against my three hypotheses.

¹²⁵ “Episode 25.”

Midtown's Church Planting Practices

I've posited that the first two obstacles that church planting churches must overcome are a lack of vision and a lack of faith. It would not be quite accurate to say that these were obstacles that Midtown Fellowship had to overcome. Rather, these were obstacles that Midtown Fellowship largely bypassed by proactively adopting the practices prescribed in my first two hypotheses, namely, casting a compelling vision for church planting and cultivating a spirit of bold faith from the very start.

Hypothesis 1 – Casting a Compelling Vision

Each member of the original team that planted Midtown Fellowship embraced the vision for planting multiple daughter churches from the beginning. And they have shared that vision with their congregation and kept it alive over time in a number of ways. During their membership classes, they retell their own history as a church plant, and they discuss their vision for church planting. "So," Allen said, "no one's ever really surprised about it."¹²⁶ The church is also regularly exposed to church planting candidates who teach on Sundays as part of their training. The congregation receives regular ministry updates on their daughter churches, especially those that are part of their family of churches, and church members are encouraged to regularly pray for their church planters. And then, of course, every so often, the church gets to publicly celebrate and send out families to start a new church. It seems the leadership of Midtown keeps the vision for church planting alive, not so much by what they say as by what they do. Church planting is so woven into the fabric of their ministry that the vision for church planting is almost assumed.

One of the key lay leaders at Midtown who responded to my email survey said that the pastors "are constantly narrating the vision of church planting and training up

¹²⁶ Tipping, "Interview with Brent Burckart."

leaders in order to plant and share the gospel.” When asked if she believes if the Midtown congregation buys into the vision for planting churches, this same leader responded this way:

Yes! I truly do, and I think this has a lot to do with the way that our leadership addresses church planting and has made it our “norm,” so to speak—like, “this is just what we do.” We have planted a few churches since I have become a member, and it’s been a beautiful thing to watch. Church planting has been part of our vision since the very early days. And our church has really welcomed and accepted that vision.

Hypothesis 2 – Cultivating a Spirit of Bold Faith

Trusting God to meet their needs is something that Midtown has been forced to do from the very beginning. As noted above, being in a college town, they have always had strong human resources, but very limited financial resources. Alan laughed when he recalled that things were so tight financially in the early days that there were times when they would actually have to say, “Hey, would you please not use that full piece of duct tape? Could you maybe split it in half?”¹²⁷ At one point in time, among all the Southern Baptist churches in the nation who reported their numbers, Midtown ranked at the very bottom in terms of per capita giving for churches their size. As a result, they’ve never had the money to afford big-budget items or pull off high-end events with the kind of excellence that other churches of comparable size may be able to do. In fact, they’ve had to consistently cut corners to make ends meet. But in that, they’ve learned to rely on God to meet their needs, and He has always proven Himself faithful.

This kind of necessary reliance on God for everything has become so habitual that Allen said that he probably wouldn’t use the phrase “bold faith” to describe their church. It doesn’t feel bold to them, he said, it just feels normal. As he thought about it, he said that “sacrificial faith” might be a truer description of their experience. With

¹²⁷ Ibid.

limited financial resources, they could easily be tempted to focus on their own needs as a church. But they intentionally sacrifice to make church planting a priority, trusting God to meet their needs.

As an example, Allen said that they anticipate that their upcoming church plant will result in about a ten percent drop in their giving. In anticipation of that, they're asking all their ministry team leaders to cut their budgets by ten percent so that they can collectively bless this new church. This is not unusual for Midtown. They've gotten used to making sacrifices and working hard to make ends meet and to advance the gospel. But they've also gotten used to seeing God take care of them at every turn. In fact, this dynamic has given rise to an expression that is frequently heard around Midtown, and it's this: "We hustle. God provides."

Hypothesis 3 – Implementing a Sustainable Strategy

Midtown's Church Planting Culture

At several points in our conversations, Allen affirmed the priority of having the right culture. He said, "We always try to keep a finger on the pulse of our culture, because if you have the right culture, people will be willing to move. It will be very hard to implement a new idea or a new strategy without a culture that reinforces it."¹²⁸

It was noted earlier that for a church planting strategy to be sustainable, it must flow from a culture of multiplication that is present throughout the existing structures of the church. Such a culture definitely exists at Midtown, and this is especially evident in their discipleship pathway which takes place primarily through their small groups which they call "Life Groups." Midtown's mission statement is to be a "Jesus-

¹²⁸ Ibid.

centered family on mission,” and the church engages in four strategic, successive steps in moving people from unbelief to being on mission for Jesus:

1. Inviting in neighbors. “Neighbors” are defined as people living in proximity to Midtown church members that they don’t yet personally know. The goal is to get to know these neighbors and invite them into one of Midtown’s neighborhood Life Groups.

2. Sharing with friends. “Friends” are defined as “neighbors” who have joined a Life Group. The goal is to share the gospel and to share life with these friends in the context of a Life Group.

3. Growing up family. “Family” is defined as “friends” who have placed their faith in Jesus. The goal is to grow them to spiritual maturity through Midtown’s Life Groups and Sunday gatherings.

4. Sending out missionaries. “Missionaries” are defined as Midtown “family” members who are sent out to help start new Life Groups.

In many churches, the final step in the discipleship process is number three above, namely growing believers to maturity. But Midtown adds another step, believing that mature Christians need to see themselves as missionaries. This means that they must be willing to be sent out from their existing Life Group to help multiply new Life Groups so that their neighborhoods can be further saturated with the gospel. So, when the church takes the next logical step of sending out people to multiply new churches, this is not a foreign concept—it’s already part of their culture. It is simply doing outside the church that which they’ve already been regularly doing within the church. And as Life Groups begin multiplying and clustering in geographical areas that are some distance from the main church campus, these areas can be considered as potential target locations for new church plants. All of Midtown’s church plants started as a single Life Group that multiplied out of another Life Group.

Midtown's Church Planting Process

Some of Midtown's church planting candidates had been part of the church and had gone through their leadership pipeline which involved: 1) being in a Life Group, 2) leading a Life Group, 3) multiplying a Life Group, 4) becoming a coach of Life Groups, and then 4) moving into a pastoral role. Other Midtown church planting candidates had some previous connection or relationship with Midtown but had not personally been through their leadership pipeline.

This latter group of candidates are required to undergo a detailed interview and assessment process. This begins with the candidate submitting an application which includes a self-evaluation, along with evaluations by their spouse, a friend and two references. The candidate also completes various personality profiles (DISC, Meyers Briggs, Enneagram, Strengths Finder) and the Prepare and Enrich marriage assessment. This is followed by an interview weekend in which the candidate undergoes four separate interviews: 1) the candidate with the Vision Team, 2) the candidate and his wife with the Vision Team, 3) the candidate with all of the pastors, and 4) the candidate and his wife with all of the pastors and their wives. The purpose of these interviews is not only to evaluate the candidate's character and competency, but also his chemistry with the Midtown team.

Following a successful assessment, Midtown develops its church planters in six phases:

Phase One—Learning: The Learning Phase includes attending all weekly leadership meetings, observing counseling sessions, participating in a Life Group, serving on Sundays, involvement in Midtown's Leadership Institute and various training opportunities, doing required reading, and receiving one-on-one pastoral coaching.

Phase Two—Leading: The Leading Phase builds on the Learning Phase by adding various leadership opportunities such as leading a Life Group, leading a recovery

group, leading a Sunday team, and conducting premarital counseling, along with various teaching and preaching opportunities.

No commitments are made to the church planting candidate until he has completed phases one and two. At that point, the Midtown leadership will re-evaluate his readiness to plant a church. If it is felt that the candidate's leadership skills are not sufficiently strong to enable them to whole-heartedly endorse him to the congregation as a church planter, then some frank, but loving conversations will ensue. The candidate's desire to be involved in a church plant will be affirmed, but he will be encouraged to pursue other levels of involvement in the church planting process. If, however, the church planting candidate successfully completes phases one and two, he will graduate from "candidate" status to "planter" status, and he will move to phase three.

Phase Three—Recruitment: During the Recruitment phase, the target location for the plant is determined, a timeline is established, and the planter begins recruiting, developing, and setting expectations for the core group.

Phase Four—Team Formation: During the Team Formation phase, the planter "meets with the team to discuss exit strategies so that they can work on replacing themselves." The expectation is that all departing leaders would have trained new leaders before they leave, so that when they leave, there will be no leadership gaps left behind. During this time, church by-laws are written, 501c3 status is secured, and a formal Fundraising Plan and Vision Book are developed so that support raising can begin.

Phase Five—Team Preparation: In the Team Preparation phase, after everyone has replaced themselves, the core group then begins functioning as its own Life Group. If the church plant is some distance away and requires that core group members physically relocate to a new city, the logistics of that are worked out during this time. Vision trips and even family vacations are planned together to the new city.

Phase Six—Launch: The new Life Group is transplanted to the new location, it begins the process of multiplying other Life Groups, and when critical mass has been achieved, the new church begins Sunday gatherings, first periodically and then weekly.

Midtown's Church Plant Resourcing

Although numbers have varied, Midtown Fellowship typically aims to send out about 30 people from their congregation to start a new church. Since they started planting, they've been steadily running between 600-800 in attendance, so a contribution of 30 people represents about 4-5% of their total attendance. The Midtown leadership has been very generous in releasing families to their church plants, but they do ask that their residents talk to them first about who they wish to recruit, and they reserve the right to say no.

Church planting candidates who come to Midtown to enter their residency program must raise their own support to do so. However, Midtown has a person on staff who specializes in helping residents get fully funded. Midtown is also pursuing funding through their denomination's state association which they think may be able to help them cover a housing stipend for their residents moving forward.

When the new church is sent out, Midtown provides them with a one-time gift, usually ranging from \$40,000 - \$60,000, and they also require their church plants to give back to a revolving fund, so new churches in their family or network of churches also have access to some of those funds. In their early church plants, Midtown wasn't prepared for the financial shock that accompanies the departure of faithful givers, so in recent years, they have been more intentional about planning in advance for this reality through careful financial projections and wise budgeting.

Case Study Three: Bedrock Community Church

Bedrock's Church Planting History

In 2007, God burdened the hearts of three families—the Tates, the Dowds and the Minors—to plant a church together in North America. After researching various church planting models and praying for God's direction, they moved to Bedford, Virginia, to plant a church that could reach Bedford County and the surrounding areas.

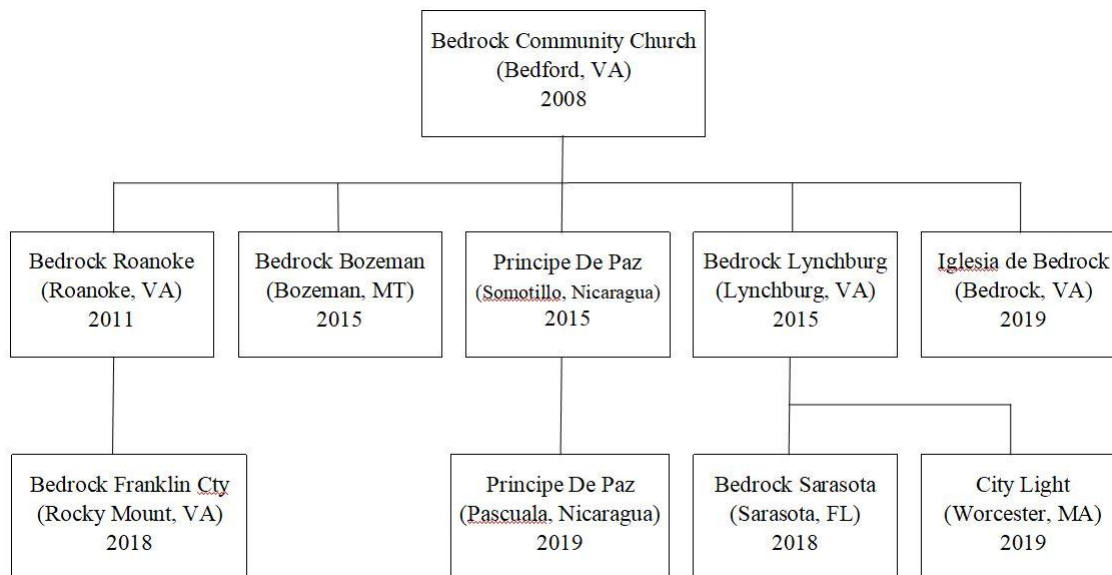
The church began as a small group that met weekly in the home of the Tate family and then began to grow and multiply. Within eight months the church had six small groups meeting weekly and had a core team who was gathering for monthly preview services. The year was spent developing systems, serving the community, and communicating the very simple vision that God had placed upon their hearts to: 1) build relationships, 2) build believers, and 3) build churches.¹²⁹

Bedrock Community Church officially launched on September 7, 2008 with 191 people in attendance at their first worship service. Their vision was to birth a church planting movement, and the Lord has enabled them to see that vision fulfilled. Including the original mother church, ten churches have been planted in about ten years, and three more are currently on the way.

Five of these ten churches are regional church plants in the state of Virginia (Bedford [2], Roanoke, Lynchburg and Rocky Mount), three are national church plants (Bozeman, MT, Sarasota, FL and Worcester, MA), and two are international church plants in Nicaragua (Somotillo and Pascuala). The regional church plants will be the primary focus of this research project.

Five of these ten churches are daughter churches planted out of the original Bedford church, and four are granddaughter churches planted out of some of the daughter churches. Thus, the Bedrock “family tree” would look something like this:

¹²⁹ Christopher J. Dowd, *Lessons in Team Church Planting in North America: The Case of Bedrock Community Church* (Evangelical Missiological Society, March 2012).



All of these churches are considered part of the “Bedrock Network.” As such, most of them share the Bedrock name, and although each of them have unique ministry styles based on their individual contexts, they are all committed to the following values which are the “irreducible minimums” of the Bedrock Network: 1) Team, 2) the Word, 3) Community, and 4) Service.

Bedrock’s Church Planting Obstacles

Since Bedrock was launched with the stated desire of being a church planting church and birthing a church planting movement, they did not struggle so much with a lack of vision or a lack of faith—they were trusting God for big things from the very start. Rather, their struggles were more in the area of strategy—not that they didn’t have strategies, but some of the strategies that they thought would be effective, in fact, proved unworkable and had to be revised along the way

The first example of this was in their site selection strategy. Bedrock initially targeted what they believed to be two strategic areas for church plants. Their initial plan was to start a Bedrock small group in each of these areas and then multiply these groups with a view to spinning them off as independent churches once they had critical mass.

However, these areas were a good thirty minutes away from the mother church. This distance made it difficult to establish Bedrock small groups there, since the church didn't already have a presence in these areas, and the locals weren't familiar with the mother church or eager to attend it since it was so far away. They found that this model of multiplying small groups didn't work well for them when they tried to force it in a remote area with limited connections to their church.

“So,” Pastor Chris Dowd said, “we stopped trying to manufacture it and just went back to normal rhythms and found that there were more natural groups forming on their own in the corridor between Roanoke and Lynchburg. And within a couple years we had multiple small groups in both of those locations.”¹³⁰ These cities became the locations for their first local church plants. From this, they learned that it worked better for them to be more organic in their site selection process, allowing the geographical growth of the congregation to help determine their church plant locations.

Once they figured out *where* they would plant, they next had to figure out *how* they would plant, and here again, they faced some obstacles. Some of the Bedrock leaders had heard a well-known pastor advocate using a multi-site strategy for areas within a 30-minute radius of your church but using a church planting strategy for areas outside that radius. That made a lot of sense to the Bedrock team, so when they started their first church in Roanoke, since it fell within that 30-minute radius, they initially decided to view it, not as an independent church, but rather as their first multi-site campus. This meant that the Bedford leadership team retained oversight of the campus, the Bedford finance team maintained their books, and pastors on the Bedford teaching team alternated speaking between campuses on Sunday mornings.

¹³⁰ Chris Dowd and Jonge Tate, “Interview with Brent Burckart,” July 23, 2019.

This campus model seemed like a good idea at first, but it quickly proved unworkable. Chris said,

Roanoke was a completely different context, completely different people, a completely different community, and it required some completely different methodologies. The differences between Roanoke and Bedford were stark, and so it needed its own shepherd leader. So we brought in a guy, and we had to turn the keys over to him once he caught the vision and mission, and that took some time. Cutting the umbilical cord on a campus and making it a church was harder than we thought it was going to be, but that's what it needed.¹³¹

Chris admitted, “We learned what *not* to do in Roanoke.” So when they shifted their sights to their next location, the city of Lynchburg, they took a very different approach, opting to make it an independent church from the very start. This was a much healthier scenario, and the daughter church fared much better. As a result, Bedrock has abandoned the multi-site model and now exclusively pursues a church planting model.

With the planting of this second church in Lynchburg, however, they faced another major obstacle. Although the health of the daughter church fared much better this time around, the health of the mother church took a significantly harder hit. Bedrock had been drawing a large number of Liberty University students and families from the Lynchburg area, so when they planted a church there, they lost about 200 students and about 100 adults to the new church. Prior to this, Bedrock had been running about 650 on Sunday mornings, but the Sunday that they launched the new church, that number dropped to about 350. Looking back on that time, Pastor Jonge Tate said, “It was awful. I felt personally empty. All of that electric energy that comes with college students was gone. They were all in Lynchburg now.”¹³²

But it wasn't just the college students who were missed. Among those whom Bedrock sent to Lynchburg were twelve of their small group leaders (along with their

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

small groups), one of their main pastors, their worship pastor, and several other key ministry leaders. From one week to the next, the Bedford congregation lost about half its members and about a third of its best leaders. Chris said that they looked around and said to themselves, “Okay, now we're back to church plant year one. We're training a new group of volunteers, developing new leaders and starting over again.”¹³³ In retrospect, he said,

We should've had stronger, more intentional leadership multiplication systems in place. The problem wasn't that leaders left. The problem was that leaders left, and there was no one trained behind them. We should have done that better, and we're still working to strengthen our internal systems and assimilation processes and leadership multiplication processes to ensure that that doesn't happen again.¹³⁴

Despite these early challenges, Bedrock went on to experience tremendous fruitfulness in their church planting efforts. Chris said,

We witnessed a movement of God. It was raw. God had the throttle wide open. We were water-skiing behind a powerboat trying to hold on for dear life. It snowballed on us. Our obstacles were that it was happening too quickly, not that it was happening too slowly or that it was met with opposition from the body. Just the opposite. Our biggest challenge was keeping up with the pace that God was setting.¹³⁵

Liberty University students who attended Bedrock during their time in college began to catch their vision for church planting, and some of them wanted to replicate what they had experienced in this church back in their home states. So that created unexpected opportunities to send some of them out of state to start churches across the country, and this created another obstacle—how do you provide any level of meaningful oversight and connection for churches that are so far removed from the mother church? That's not just a problem of logistics, but also of bandwidth since a single group of

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

pastors and elders has only a limited amount of time. These problems were only compounded as they began planting in Nicaragua, an entirely different country.

These, of course, were good problems to have, and Bedrock is still working through some of them. Nevertheless, these obstacles have not proven insurmountable to Bedrock's church planting efforts, in large part because they have adopted the practices that form the basis for the three major hypotheses of this project.

Bedrock's Church Planting Practices

Hypothesis 1 – Casting a Compelling Vision

Unlike Midtown, the Bedrock team fully bought into the concept of “planting pregnant,” that is, they wanted to start birthing churches as quickly as possible after their own birth as a church. And they didn't just want to plant a single church or even a small handful of churches. They wanted to be part of a “church planting movement,” and this language showed up in their earliest discussions before they ever even formed their first small group. It was prominently featured in their vision statement, their vision video, and their vision packet/prospectus for potential supporters. Chris said, “There was no doubt that people knew what we were about. We said, ‘Don't get comfortable sitting here, because we're here to plant churches.’ So it was not a shock to anybody when we were only in year two, and we said, ‘Okay, it's happening already.’”¹³⁶

They began regularly talking about church planting from the pulpit and in newcomers' classes. And once they actually began planting churches, they started regularly featuring prayer updates and video testimonies from these new churches in their worship services. But, as Chris said, “You have to capitalize on more than just the

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Sunday morning environment. You've got to get outside of an hour and a half on a Sunday morning when it comes to vision casting. So we've implemented church planting principles within our small group strategy."¹³⁷ This highlights the importance of not just announcing your vision, but of actually building it into the culture and structures of your church. When asked how the church has responded to this church planting vision, one key lay leader that was surveyed said, "Since I've been at the church, I've heard or seen no resistance to the vision, but only a celebration of the vision."

Hypothesis 2 – Cultivating a Spirit of Bold Faith

The Bedrock leadership team has cultivated a spirit of bold faith in their congregation not only through the principles that they teach, but even more powerfully through the example that they set. Their personal willingness to trust God by generously releasing their best resources and their brightest leaders for church planting has set the tone for the rest of the congregation.

Reflecting back on their decision to release such a large number of their best and brightest leaders to plant in Lynchburg, Jonge remembers thinking, "Okay. We either believe the principle of the tithe or we don't. We're going to give God our first and our best and let the chips fall where they may. We're going to be more about reaching than keeping."¹³⁸ But he was also very honest about how hard that decision was for him personally. He recalled meeting with the Lynchburg launch team over lunch and seeing all the gifted people that they would be sending away. He said,

I just started feeling my own angst and my own flesh and selfish desires, and I just paused, and I said, "Man, guys, if you were Satan, where would you fire a dart right now? Where would you fire an arrow that could disrupt what God is wanting to do in Bedrock Lynchburg?" And somebody said, "Right here at this

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

table," and I said, "Yep, and I just have to confess my heart-- I'm struggling. I'm struggling with the fact that your passion now is moving somewhere else." And it was rough, but we just had to just acknowledge it.¹³⁹

As noted earlier, the Sunday following the Lynchburg launch, Bedford's worship attendance dropped by about 300 people. And, as if to add insult to injury, Jonge recounted, "I was on stage preaching and the screen behind me that has to be erected every Sunday—half of it fell down because the team members who put it up were all new. And we just went ahead and used it that way."¹⁴⁰ But rather than being disheartened, Jonge said,

I can remember Chris and I having a conversation about that and saying, 'I hope this is the norm for us—where we always feel this way, because God has called us to church plant. We're never going to get to be that big, fat, happy "we've arrived" church where you and I don't have to show up early and move signs or set up flags. This is just who we are.'¹⁴¹

God has honored this spirit of faith. Although the short-term pain of planting has been significant, so too has the long-term growth and impact. In 2011, Bedrock was running about 500 in attendance, but then they planted their first church in Roanoke, and they dropped down to about 425. By 2015, they had grown to about 650 in attendance, but then they planted in Lynchburg and dropped down to about 350. But this past Easter in 2019, four years later, they had about 800 people in attendance. "So each time," Chris said, "God not only refilled the bucket, but He added about 150 more people." He also observed that the number of people gathered in a Bedrock-affiliated church on any given Sunday is now in the thousands rather than the hundreds—a testament to the exponential impact of church multiplication.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Jonge said, “The proof is in the pudding. We either believe that God is faithful, or we don't. And then we proceed forward, believing that truth and that He is who he says He is, and He's going to do what He says He's going to do.” Chris added, “What we found is, you cannot out-give God. Period.”¹⁴²

Hypothesis 3 – Implementing a Sustainable Strategy

Bedrock’s Church Planting Culture

When asked about the church’s approach to vision casting, one key lay leader who responded to my email survey said, “I don’t know that we cast a vision for church planting as much as we cast a vision for people to listen to and obey God.” This same respondent said that while Bedford members “do not always necessarily think about church planting, they are constantly thinking about the mission God has for us as a church and for them.” Ironically, by moving the focus beyond church planting to personal and corporate obedience to the Great Commission, Bedrock has created a church culture that is ripe for church planting.

That culture is reinforced through their ministry model. Planting with teams is not just something that Bedrock does when it sends groups out to start new churches. It is a concept that is built into the very fabric of their small group ministry. Chris said, “From a design standpoint, the team philosophy permeates every aspect of our culture and our philosophy of ministry. We team across the board, and that includes in our small groups. Our small groups multiply with a planting model.”¹⁴³ Chris contrasted this model with an apprenticeship model (where you send out a trained leader) or a cell division model

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

(where you simply split one group into two). In the group planting model, Chris explained,

We'll send out a team from a group and say, "Hey, we've got two or three couples that live over here in this neighborhood, and we need to send them out to go start a small group in that community. So let's champion them. Let's have a baby shower. We're going to give them a pound of coffee and some Walmart cookies and a basket of stuff. We're going to have a big party and a cookout. But then these couples are going to go and start meeting weekly over in one of their houses in that community." And so, our groups are planting groups. And this idea of planting is embedded within the DNA and the culture and the vernacular of our people, because we talk about it on a regular basis on Sunday. But then our groups are also actively participating in it. And so, when we start talking about planting a church in a specific area, our small groups already "get it." They're excited about it. They say, "Let's get it done." And we've already got a core group for a church planter and his team to take with them.¹⁴⁴

Despite their eagerness to "plant pregnant," Chris and Jonge both stressed the importance of having the right culture in place before a church attempts to plant. Jonge suggested that churches should adopt a mindset that says: "If we're not healthy enough to reproduce, then let's do what we need to do to become healthy so that we can reproduce."¹⁴⁵ Some questions they suggested that a church's leadership team might ask in assessing the health of its culture and its readiness to plant are: 1) Do we have a conviction that church planting is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission? 2) Do we have a healthy ecclesiology so that we know what kind of church it is we should be planting? 3) Do we have any reproducible discipleship systems? and 4) Do we have the right motivation?

One practical step Jonge suggested that a church could take to begin creating a church planting culture is to immediately start supporting the efforts of other area churches that are planting churches. He said, "You may not be ready to start a church, but

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

somebody else is. So instead of adopting a missionary from across the globe, adopt a missionary from the next city who's trying to plant a church. Pray for him, support him in your budget, and send teams there to help him. You can do that tomorrow."¹⁴⁶

Bedrock's Church Planting Process

What's interesting about Bedrock's church planting process as compared to the other case study churches is its relative lack of structure. For instance, Bedrock does not have formal systems in place for recruiting or assessing church planters, nor do they have a formal residency program. "This all happens very organically," Chris said. "So, I wish I had a book on systems and a policies and procedures manual for the Bedrock church planting network, but it just doesn't exist."¹⁴⁷

In talking with Chris and Jonge, I got the sense that some of this lack of structure is due to the rapid growth of their network, that is, they simply haven't had time to create some of the structures into which their movement can grow. But I also sensed that some of their lack of structure is intentional. Their early attempts at a more cookie-cutter campus model didn't go well, so it seems they've intentionally moved toward a less standardized and more contextualized approach for each individual church plant. I suspect another reason for their lack of internal structure may be that it just isn't needed in some areas due to some very helpful external resources, namely their strong denominational ties and their proximity to Liberty University. They rely heavily on the SBC for the legal and financial administration of their church plants, as well as for networking and training opportunities for their church planters. In addition, Bedrock's relationship with Liberty University connects them to a network of committed Christian college students, seminary students and professors from which they can draw church

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

planters and build church planting teams. Access to these kinds of human, financial and strategic resources reduces the need for Bedrock to create many of its own internal systems and structures in these areas.

But there is another reason for Bedrock's relative lack of structure in the area of church planting. It's because they've designed a ministry model that promotes multiplication organically. Their small groups model discussed earlier is a good example of this, and so too is their leadership model. To this point, Bedrock has not actively recruited church planters from outside their church, because they haven't had to do so. All of their church planters have been developed from within, and this has been made possible largely because of their unique team leadership model.

In this model, there is a lead pastor/elder who serves as "first among equals" within a larger pastoral team. But unlike the traditional senior pastor model in which "there is a delegation of responsibility, but not necessarily a delegation of authority," the Bedrock pastors "not only have shared duties but also shared leadership"¹⁴⁸ at every level. This extends even to the pulpit where a rotating team of about three pastors alternates preaching on Sunday mornings. When the time is right to plant a church, one or more of these pastors is sent out to lead the new work, and other leaders then step in behind them to take their place. Bedrock not only sends out teams of lay people that have been developed through their small groups; they intentionally send out teams of pastors so that this model of team leadership can be implemented in the new church from the very beginning.

Because the church planting teams that are sent out are led by experienced pastors who have already proven themselves in the congregation, the need for highly

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

structured systems for recruitment, assessment, and a formal residency program is greatly reduced. All of these things happen organically within the culture they've created.

Bedrock's Church Plant Resourcing

Once the decision is made to send out one or more of the Bedrock pastors to plant a church in a new area, that planter is free to recruit anyone within the Bedrock congregation. As noted earlier, in the case of the Roanoke church, about 75 people were sent out, and in the case of the Lynchburg church, about 300 people were sent out. Among these who were sent were some of their best lay leaders, and in each case, two to three staff pastors or ordained ministers were sent as well.

Bedrock church plants are financed through a combination of personal support raising, denominational funding, and contributions from partner churches and the mother church. Although multiple pastors are sent out as a team, typically only one of those pastor's salaries is fully funded. The other pastors on the team are bi-vocational which means that their salaries are funded through a combination of personal support raising and part-time employment outside the church. The one pastor whose salary is fully funded, however, actively assists the others in their support-raising efforts, sharing his contacts with them and doing his best to funnel resources in their direction.

Bedrock supports its church plants on a three-year tiered basis following their launch. In the case of one church plant, for instance, they provided \$30,000 in the first year, \$20,000 the second year, and \$10,000 the third year, after which the church was on its own financially.

Conclusion

As anticipated, the leaders of each of these churches embraced the three essential practices reflected in the hypotheses of this project. While correlation is not the same as causation, in each of these case studies, there was a clear causative relationship

between the leaders' adoption of these practices and their church's ability to effectively overcome those obstacles which might have otherwise hindered them from reproducing. These case studies therefore affirm the basic validity of this research project's hypotheses.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Some of the most common and challenging obstacles that stand in the way of churches planting churches are a lack of vision, a lack of faith, and a lack of strategy. This study has demonstrated that these obstacles can be overcome as church leaders adopt three key practices which formed the hypotheses of this project:

1. Church leaders must learn to embrace and communicate a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations.
2. Church leaders must learn to cultivate a spirit of bold faith within their congregations.
3. Church leaders must learn how to develop and implement a long-term, sustainable church planting strategy for their congregations.

In both the survey I conducted among churches within my denomination, as well as in the three case studies that I conducted for this research project, it was evident that the most challenging of these practices was the third one, that of executing workable, sustainable strategies. This is actually encouraging, because it shows that the renewed emphasis on church planting over the last couple of decades has begun to move the conversation in churches beyond the “why” question to the “how” question. In other words, most of the churches surveyed and studied in this project understood the value of church planting and had a general willingness to do it but often lacked sustainable strategies for resourcing and releasing daughter church plants. For this reason, the most meaningful insights that I derived from this study were related to implementing the kind

of strategies that would enable churches, not merely to plant a single church, but to plant multiple churches over time.

Interpretation of Results and Conclusions

In addition to affirming my three hypotheses (but certainly consistent with them), the following important principles emerged from this study, and these all relate directly to overcoming obstacles to churches planting churches.

The Importance of Pastoral Commitment

The obstacles to planting daughter churches are significant, and the first and most important prerequisite to overcoming them is a lead pastor who is absolutely committed to church planting. This was a common denominator in all the case study pastors I interviewed. For them, church planting was not simply a nice idea or the most current ministry bandwagon. Each of them possessed a deeply held conviction that church planting is not peripheral, but central to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Without this commitment on the part of the senior leadership, it is unlikely that churches will be able to successfully overcome the many obstacles to planting other churches. In fact, Chris Dowd of Bedrock said, “If the senior leadership of the church hasn’t bought in to the church planting vision, it won’t happen. If this is a lay led movement, it won’t happen. The vision has to come from the top.”¹⁴⁹

The Importance of Planning Ahead

Proverbs 6:6-8 says, “Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer *and* gathers her provision in the harvest.” This proverb highlights the wisdom of planning and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

working ahead to cultivate resources *before* you need them, so that *when* you need them, you won't find yourself unprepared or short-handed. This principle has significant application for churches desiring to plant churches.

I was both convicted and inspired by the bold faith of the case study churches and their willingness to send away unlimited numbers of people and dollars to help their daughter churches get off to a strong start. But I was also struck by the fact that every one of them described at least one excruciatingly painful season when an extended period of recovery was required, because the mother church had been significantly weakened by the birth of a daughter church. This led me to wonder, are these excruciatingly painful seasons inherent to parenting new churches? Or are there perhaps ways to minimize this pain and better preserve the strength of the mother church so that it can bounce back more quickly and be ready to reproduce again?

Here again, the birthing metaphor is helpful. Because of sin's curse, pain is an inherent part of biological childbirth (Genesis 3:16). But this doesn't mean that there aren't things that can be done to minimize the mother's pain in childbirth and shorten her recovery time. Healthy habits such as good nutrition, proper exercise, adequate rest, and qualified medical care can significantly minimize complications during childbirth and expedite the mother's physical and emotional post-partum recovery.

So too, there is a very real sense in which giving birth to a daughter church is an inherently painful process. It will always be difficult to send out faithful workers and to release financial resources when we plant daughter churches. But there are many things that a mother church can do in advance to ensure ongoing congregational health, minimize the pain of planting, and shorten the recovery period so that it can be ready to reproduce again.

Leadership Planning

One missing element that all of the case study pastors acknowledged could have made the birthing process less painful for them was a more proactive leadership development strategy. Each of the case study churches experienced a season when they sent away leaders to help start new churches without having an adequate plan in place for replacing them. As a result, they had to contend with a significant leadership deficit until new leaders could be sufficiently trained. This painful experience made them realize that they needed to do a better job of developing leaders *before* they needed them, so that *when* they needed them, they'd be ready to go.

Midtown enacted a simple, but effective policy to address this problem. If one of their church planting residents recruits key ministry leaders from the mother church, those ministry leaders are required to find and train their replacements *before* they leave to start the new church. The church planting resident is expected to coach them through this process which is not only good training for the daughter church they'll be starting, but it also shows consideration for the health of the mother church which they'll be leaving. As Allen Tipping said, "It is not a kingdom win if you take a group leader from an existing group without a plan to care for their group. (You must) give people time to transition out of the leadership roles they are in, so the sending church is not caught short of leaders unexpectedly."¹⁵⁰ A policy like this, if faithfully followed, would significantly minimize the mother church's leadership gaps that so often occur in the wake of a new church plant.

But an impending church plant must not be the only thing that precipitates leadership development. A church must be identifying, developing, and deploying leaders

¹⁵⁰ Tipping, "Interview with Brent Burckart."

at every level *all the time*. This kind of robust ongoing leadership pipeline is absolutely crucial if churches are going to be able to plant in a sustainable, healthy way.

And this leadership pipeline should not only include the development of lay leaders, but church planters as well. A potential mother church could have all the systems, strategies and funding in place to plant a daughter church, but if it lacks a reliable pool of qualified church planters from which to draw, it will not be able to move forward. This is becoming an increasingly common obstacle. Because of the greater emphasis on church planting in the past couple of decades, it has become an increasingly attractive option for young men pursuing ministry which means that there are more available church planting candidates than ever. But with this increased focus on church planting has also come the multiplication of church planting networks that are all vying for the same pool of candidates. Because of this, many churches and denominations are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified church planters from the outside. If churches are going to overcome this difficulty, they must begin intentionally developing church planters from within. This will take longer, but in time, it will provide a deeper pool of candidates who not only have the skills to plant a church, but whose character has been vetted and whose ministry philosophy is consistent with that of the mother church.

So far, Midtown has recruited all of its church planters from within, or at least from among people with whom the church had some pre-existing discipleship relationship. Some of them have been students who were discipled at Midtown during their time in college, went on to get seminary training, and then came back for the church planting residency. Similarly, Bedrock often develops relationships with college and seminary students while they're in school and then hires them as pastoral staff with a view to sending them out as church planters when the time is right. These churches have not merely *recruited* church planters, they've had an active hand in *discipling* them into mature believers and then *developing* them into church planters. Their leadership

development process doesn't start after seminary or at the beginning of the residency. It starts much earlier.

Churches desiring to develop a deeper pool of church planters would do well to follow these case study examples by extending their leadership pipeline at both ends. On the front end, they should constantly be on the lookout for ministry-minded church members with teaching, leadership, and gathering skills. These skills should be intentionally developed wherever they are found, whether in high school students, college students, or adult members. One especially fruitful pool of potential future planters could be ministry interns who are usually college or seminary students who have a general interest in ministry and are actively looking for short-term opportunities to develop their skills and explore their calling. At this stage in their spiritual journey and education, none of the afore-mentioned groups of people will be ready to plant a church. But by developing discipleship relationships with them early on, churches can identify church planting potential in them and instill a church planting vision in them. And once they have the necessary maturity and education, the pre-existing discipleship relationship will facilitate natural opportunities to engage them for church planting.

Churches might also consider extending their leadership pipeline on the back end as well. By this, I mean looking beyond the limited experience you can provide a one-year resident to the more robust ministry experience that is already present in your pastoral staff. Bedrock hires even their most highly visible teaching pastors with a view to working with them for a time and then possibly sending them out to plant new churches. There are certainly disadvantages to this approach, namely the frequent turnover of key leaders and the challenges that come with that. But these challenges are matched by the confidence and excitement of being able to send people out with known, trusted leaders who share the vision of the sending church and have proven ministry experience.

One often overlooked candidate who could have the makings of an excellent church planter is a church's youth pastor. A youth group is a microcosm of the larger church, and it requires the same basic skill set as a lead pastor, namely teaching, leadership and shepherding gifts. Furthermore, the most effective youth pastors tend to be young, tuned in to current culture, high energy, willing to try new things, and good at gathering people. These are all skills that translate well to church planting. And ironically, hiring youth pastors with a view to possibly sending them out as church planters could actually result in longer-tenured youth pastors and thus, more stable youth ministries. Cameron Cole notes that "While statistics vary by U.S. region, the average youth leader's tenure is 18 months."¹⁵¹ Could it be that youth pastors might be willing to stay longer if they knew that the churches they served were committed to their ministry development, willing to support them in their seminary training, and ultimately willing to entrust them with a congregation of their own if they proved themselves? This is just one example of how a church could think strategically about looking to its own pastoral staff as a potential pool for church planters.

Financial Planning

This principle of developing resources *before* you need them, so that you'll have them *when* you need them applies to financial resources as well. When a mother church sends out a daughter church, it is sending out a significant portion of its income, both in terms of short-term budgeted gifts and long-term givers. If all of this income walks out the door at once and the mother church has not made plans for this sudden

¹⁵¹ Cameron Cole, "3 Reasons Your Youth Leader Needs Seminary Training," *The Gospel Coalition*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/3-reasons-your-youth-leader-needs-seminary-training/>.

decrease in income, the financial struggles that ensue could well hinder the mother congregation from planting again in a timely manner, if ever.

There are several strategies that could be employed to minimize the financial pain of planting in this regard. First, the mother church should develop a church planting savings fund, and a significant percentage of the church's annual budget should be designated to this fund each year. By intentionally and aggressively saving toward future church plants, the mother church can help ensure that it will have both the necessary resources to be generous with its daughter churches and the necessary reserves to withstand the short-term loss of income caused by them.

Second, the mother church should consider the concept of a revolving fund for its church plants, that is, it could require its daughter churches to give a percentage of their budgeted income back to the mother church, either for a pre-determined period of time or until the amount given by the mother church has been repaid. This is not only a healthy expression of gratitude on the part of the daughter church, it also allows the mother church to replenish its church planting savings more quickly, and thus, enable it to plant again more quickly.

Third, the mother church should seek to reduce the financial shock of a daughter church plant by making the decrease in giving less sudden and more gradual. Northeast has adopted a creative and generous way of doing this. During the residency period, whenever a Northeast member commits to be part of the new church—even months before launch—their giving is immediately shifted away from Northeast's budget and into a special fund for the new church. This has a couple of advantages. It allows the daughter church to significantly grow its savings prior to launch. And it also allows the mother church to gradually wean itself off the support of the members who will be leaving and to make more informed giving projections for future budgets.

Fourth, the mother church should actively assist the planter in finding multiple sources of funding for the new church. The more outside sources of support the daughter church has, the less crippling the financial burden will be for the mother church.

The Importance of Core Group Size

Part of what made planting so painful for my case study churches was the sheer number of people that they sent out with some of their daughter churches. Midtown sent out about eighty people on one occasion. Bedrock sent out about seventy-five with their Roanoke plant and about three hundred with their Lynchburg plant. In each of these instances, the pastors adopted a selfless mindset, generously releasing people for the greater good of the kingdom. But they and their churches also definitely felt the pain of these mass departures for some time, and again, I found myself wondering if there was perhaps a healthier way to send out church planting teams without destabilizing the mother church.

Here again, the parenting metaphor is helpful. All loving parents want to be generous with their children. But all wise parents also recognize that generosity without limits can ultimately hurt a child more than help him. And giving extravagant gifts to one child today at the expense of the parents' ability to care for the rest of the family tomorrow is unwise.

So too, when the vision for church planting takes hold in a church, the purest hearts among us will want to be as generous as possible, sending away members and money without limits. This generous spirit is commendable, but such unlimited generosity may not ultimately be helpful for the mother church or the daughter church. If the mother church hands the planter a core group so large that it disincentivizes him from having to diligently evangelize and recruit from the target community, then it has done the new church a great disservice. As noted earlier in the Literature Review, it was this very dynamic that caused Hill Country Bible Church in Austin to change its approach and

opt for sending out smaller core groups with its church plants. They observed that the larger numbers which they had been sending out with their earlier plants had actually hindered the evangelistic effectiveness and missional mindset of these daughter churches.

Sending out too many members can also have a negative effect on the mother church's ability to carry out its core ministries and to reproduce again in a timely manner. Ralph Moore is a noted pastor and church planter who has directly participated in at least sixty church plants in the last thirty years. On several occasions, his church gave away in excess of twenty percent of its members to start some of these new congregations. He has never regretted any of these plants, but he did begin to observe that his church was having an increasingly difficult time bouncing back from these mass exoduses of people.

Ralph had always said that when you plant a church you lose three things: people, cash-flow and part of your leadership base. But in an insightful conversation with his wife, she pointed out to him that you lose another key ingredient: passion. She observed, "The most passionate people are usually the newest converts—their passion drives them to want to help plant a new church. The transfer members always stay with you. You are gradually turning our congregation into a church of dispassionate transplants."¹⁵² Ralph had to admit that she was right, and in a meeting with several other pastors whose churches had launched multiple congregations, he sought out their wisdom on this issue. He recalls,

In that meeting I discovered a paradigm that I had not only overlooked but had disdained over the years. Most of these churches limit the number of people they allow a planter to take with them...Each of these pastors had a different formula for the number of people they send on a church planting team. The numbers ranged from a handful to fifty. The middle ground of twenty to thirty was most common...What struck me about these pastors was their determination to control numbers in order to protect the mother church. They likened the loss of too many people to the loss of blood a new mother can face while bringing a little kid into the world. Each of them set a quota on the number of people a planter could

¹⁵² Ralph Moore, "Lowering the Cost of Planting Churches," n.d.

recruit from the mother church. Most of them asked the planter to show them a regularly updated list of who they were recruiting. All of this was necessary if the planter wanted the blessing and financial support of the mother church... They require planters to recruit a wide mix of leaders, followers and new Christians. They actually discuss who will be invited before the invitation is made.¹⁵³

A couple of points are noteworthy from this. First, these pastors did not try to dictate to the congregation how many people could go with the church planter. They merely provided boundaries for how many people the planter himself could actively recruit. From a practical standpoint, no pastor can dictate how many church members may leave to help start a daughter church, nor should he try to do so. Each person should be free to follow the Lord's leading in this regard.

Second, these pastors were not primarily motivated by a desire to keep as many people as possible within their folds—they were all outward-focused men who had each planted multiple congregations after all. Their goal in limiting their short-term losses was to preserve the health of the mother church and its long-term ability to reproduce over time.

The goal should never be to give away the fewest members possible to the daughter church so as to maintain the comfort of the mother church. Rather, the goal should be to give away as many members as possible without doing harm to either the mother or the daughter churches. This level of generosity should be difficult for the mother church, but it should not be destabilizing. Ed Stetzer says, "It should involve some level of sacrifice. If you don't feel it, it's not really your baby, because having a

¹⁵³ Ibid.

baby is hard. But you want to plan and pace things in such a way that the mother church will be able to recover on the other side.”¹⁵⁴

What might this look like specifically? Every situation will be different, but to encourage the church planter to recruit from the target community and not just the mother church, a healthy goal might be that 50% of the core group would come from the target community and 50% would come from the mother church. My denomination requires that church plants have a minimum of 40 adults prior to beginning public worship services. Applying the 50/50 goal to this baseline number would mean that about 20 adults should be recruited from the target community and about 20 adults should be recruited from the mother church prior to launch. This number coming from the mother church is consistent with the 20-30 range mentioned above by Ralph Moore, and it is also consistent with my own church planting experience. The mother church out of which I planted my current church graciously gave me permission to recruit ten families, or about 20 adults, from its congregation. This was a large enough number to get us off to a solid start, but it was not so large that it did not require us to be serious about evangelism and outreach. Nor was it so large that it devastated the mother church in the aftermath of our launch.

Regardless of the specific number a church lands upon, these are the principles that should be considered, and this is this is the kind of thought process that should be undertaken. By getting this number right, the mother church can help to ensure that it is both genuinely helping the daughter church *and* preserving its own ongoing ability to reproduce.

¹⁵⁴ Stetzer, “Interview with Brent Burckart.”

The Importance of a Culture of Multiplication

Going into this project, I understood the importance of a culture of multiplication, but conducting these case studies helped me see that cultivating this kind of culture has less to do with the values you profess and more to do with the structures you create. Both Midtown Fellowship and Bedrock Community Church built miniature versions of their planting process right into their small groups ministry. The result was that planting churches outside the church was just a natural and logical extension of something they were already regularly doing inside the church. To the extent that churches can build this kind of multiplication right into their ministry structures, they will be setting the stage for a much smoother transition to church planting.

Another way that my own church has cultivated a culture of multiplication is by being directly involved in planting churches on our foreign mission trips. We primarily work with missionaries who have a heart for leadership development and church planting in their respective parts of the world. These missionaries develop native church planters and identify villages in need of a gospel witness. During our week-long mission trips, our trained mission team members go home-to-home (often hut-to-hut) throughout the target villages sharing the gospel through translators. This is sometimes accompanied by children's outreaches, musical outreaches or medical outreaches. Through these efforts, we have the privilege of leading some to faith in Christ, and we are also able to identify those villagers who are already believers and those who are spiritually seeking. At the end of the week, we leave behind a small group of people who are interested in being discipled by the local church planter, and the following year, it is exciting for our team to return and see a new little church worshiping together in a village where none had previously existed. As we have gone back to the same region year after year and seen churches multiply through our efforts, like the Apostle Paul, we have been able to encourage the churches we helped plant while continuing to help start new ones. I have

seen this done in Uganda, in Honduras, and we will soon be starting a similar ministry in Costa Rica.

The benefits of this approach are numerous: 1) it bolsters the discipleship and church planting efforts of the missionaries and local pastors on that foreign field, 2) it emboldens our church members to more actively share their faith at home (“if we did it there, why not here?”), and 3) it creates a small army of church-planting advocates within your congregation. Once people begin to see the exponential power of the gospel at work through church planting on the foreign field, they’re much more excited about doing it in their own city.

The Importance of Team Leadership

I’m not yet convinced that a team leadership model and planting with multiple pastors is absolutely essential to effective daughter church planting, but since two of my case study churches have done it with good success (Midtown and Bedrock), I felt I should include it here as a subject worthy of consideration and further exploration.

Bedrock, in particular, the most prolific of the three case study churches, regards their team leadership model as central to their church planting strategy. Each Bedrock church is led by a team of pastors who share leadership and Sunday morning teaching responsibilities, and future church planters are selected from the pastors on this team. Bedrock not only sends out multiple laypeople to plant churches, they also intentionally send out two to three pastors from their staff with each church planting team so that this model of team leadership can be implemented in the new church from the very beginning.

If a church can pull it off, this team leadership model solves several problems relating to church planting. First, it helps solve the problem of pastoral bandwidth. Many lead pastors who may desire to plant a daughter church feel unable to do so, because they simply do not have the time to invest in a church planter. This is often due to the fact that

they bear the sole or primary responsibility for preaching and pastoral leadership within the church. By expanding the size of the pastoral team and sharing the preaching responsibilities from day one, Bedrock increases the personal bandwidth of each of the pastors, thus allowing for a greater focus on church planting from the very beginning.

This team leadership model also solves many of the challenges relating to church planter recruitment, assessment, residencies, and core group development. By viewing the pastoral team essentially as a team of potential church planters in training, Bedrock has created its own natural recruiting pool and its own organic residency program. Furthermore, since there is already a close personal and working relationship with the planter, a robust assessment process becomes far less important. And because the members of the church already know the planter as one of their pastors, the process of recruiting core group members from the mother church becomes much easier. Chris Dowd said, “We believe this is not only a great model for developing and multiplying teachers, but it can also sow the seeds towards eventual independent congregations.”¹⁵⁵

The potential disadvantages of this model are the challenges that accompany staff turnover and the additional funding required to support multiple pastors. Given the potential advantages of this model, however, it is a subject worthy of consideration and further research as noted below.

The Importance of Taking Action

General George Patton once said, “A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.” It is easy for churches to wait until they have formulated the perfect strategy before planting churches. But no such perfect strategy exists, and churches that wait for it will never plant.

¹⁵⁵ Dowd and Tate, “Interview with Brent Burckart.”

One thing that struck me about each of the case study churches was their refusal to fall prey to the “paralysis of analysis.” They were willing to move forward with less-than-perfect plans, accepting that mistakes would be made, but committed to learning from those mistakes and perfecting their plans along the way. The happy result is that churches actually got planted! Chris Dowd of Bedrock said, “We did a lot of things not by the book, and we would never do some of those things again, but we learned a lot through our mistakes.” And Drew Leaver of Northeast said,

Churches get so caught up on having the right strategy or the perfect strategy. And that's where I push back and say, “Look, just do something.” We have retuned and reframed our strategy multiple times over, and... what's impressive is how God meets you where you are and makes even a very average strategy work.¹⁵⁶

This research project has affirmed the importance of having a sound church planting strategy. But churches that desire to plant churches must overcome the obstacle of inertia and develop a propensity towards action, even in the absence of a perfect strategy.

Limitations

For my three case studies, I tried to select a wide variety of churches and contexts in an attempt to represent the widest possible set of challenges that church-planting churches might face. The result was a validation of some broad, but helpful church planting principles and strategies that generally hold true in most churches. Nevertheless, three is a very small sample size, and the churches studied cannot possibly yield solutions for every possible challenge that churches of differing sizes and settings might face. Specifically, since this study focused primarily on mid-sized churches, some

¹⁵⁶ Leaver, “Interview with Brent Burckart.”

of the principles and strategies gleaned from this research might require significant adaptation for smaller churches.

This example highlights the limitations that are inherent to the case study method. Based on the study of only a small handful of churches, it would be impossible to say definitively that adopting the three essential leadership practices advocated here will enable all churches everywhere to overcome church planting obstacles. All that can be demonstrated is that the hypotheses set forth in this research project proved true in the specific churches that were studied and that they would most likely prove true in churches that are similar.

The limitations of the case study method are especially apparent in ministry contexts where so much depends on God. The fact that God has chosen to bless a particular strategy in one church is no guarantee that He will do so in every church. Apart from those things He has specifically promised in His Word, His methods and His timing are often unpredictable. In fact, He regularly delights in using strategies that are counterintuitive to us, so that He gets the glory. Nevertheless, He encourages us to pursue wisdom and to be good stewards of the resources He has given us, and it is to this end that I have undertaken this research project.

Implications for Ministry

In the course of writing this dissertation, I found my own vision renewed and my own faith strengthened. I was reminded again of the biblical and practical importance of church planting, and I was motivated to be more selfless and strategic in my own church-planting efforts. In addition, this study has prompted me to make several changes in the way that I lead the church where I am currently privileged to serve as pastor.

First, I simply need to talk more about church planting to my congregation. It is a regular topic of conversation among our pastors and elders, but I'm realizing that we need to do a better job of bringing the congregation in on these discussions on a more

regular basis. Among other things, church planting needs to feature more prominently in my preaching and vision casting.

Second, while we have a fairly good strategy in place for developing small group leaders and ministry team leaders in our church, we do not currently have a strategy for developing church planters from within. As noted above, we need to extend our leadership pipeline on both ends. On the front end, one practical step we can take is to utilize more ministry interns. The cost of hiring interns is relatively low, but if chosen carefully, their potential as future church planting candidates could be significant. On the back end, as we grow, we need to think about more intentionally hiring pastoral staff with a view to possibly sending them out as church planters.

Third, we need to develop a more detailed plan for a church planting residency. We currently have the general outlines of a plan, but this research project has provided helpful information for filling in those outlines with some of the best practices of the case study churches I reviewed.

Fourth, we need to consider restructuring our small group ministry so that it feeds our church planting efforts. On at least an annual basis, we need to chart on a map where our regular attenders live. Based on what we see, we should take steps to “plant” new small groups where we see growing numbers of people clustered on the edges of the perimeter we are currently reaching. This could include a process similar to that which Bedrock and Midtown have implemented: 1) identifying areas on the edge of our reachable perimeter that need small groups, 2) identifying at least 2-3 core families in an existing small group that live in those areas, and 3) intentionally sending them out from that small group with a launch party to begin a new small group in the target community. This method of small group multiplication not only mirrors the church planting process, it could actually serve as the initial step toward developing the core group for a new church plant.

Since much of the data I collected for this project came from churches within

my denomination, I am hopeful that the insights it provides may prove useful to the denomination's ongoing church planting efforts. Furthermore, since the questions explored in this dissertation are ones that many other denominations and church planting networks are currently wrestling with, I am hopeful that this research project will in some way make a positive contribution to the ongoing church planting conversations taking place throughout the wider body of Christ.

Implications for Future Research

This project has surfaced several potential topics for future research including the following:

1. Case studies of small churches that have successfully planted daughter churches
2. Case studies of daughter churches that failed and the factors which led to their failure
3. Case studies of mother churches that experienced significant, long-term decline following the birth of a daughter church and the factors that contributed to this decline
4. A survey of church-planting churches to assess the short-term and long-term effects of church planting on the mother church
5. The relationship between the number of people sent from the mother church and the overall health and evangelistic vitality of their daughter churches.
6. The relationship between planting with multiple pastors and the church plant's overall health and ability to reproduce.
7. Methods of funding multiple pastors on a church planting team.
8. The need for adapting our church planting methods in light of America's increasing secularism and hostility towards Christianity

Conclusion

If churches wish to maximize their disciplemaking impact, then they must embrace their responsibility to plant other churches. Yet this is a difficult process, fraught with numerous challenging obstacles. This research project studied three churches who have successfully overcome these obstacles to plant multiple daughter churches. By gleaning lessons from their examples and experiences, it is my hope that this research project will provide existing churches with the knowledge and tools they need to confidently plant new churches and thus, reach more people for Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

Lead Pastor Interview Sample Questions

General Introduction

1. Was church planting part of your church's vision from the beginning?
2. How long had your church been in existence when it first planted?
3. How large was your church when it first planted?
4. How many churches has your church planted and what years were they planted?
5. How would you assess the general health of the churches you've planted?
6. Have any of your daughter churches planted churches themselves? If so, which ones?

Vision

7. What do you believe to be the strongest arguments for church planting?
8. How did you go about casting a vision for church planting to your congregation (both initially and in an ongoing way)? What do you believe to be the most important factors in effective vision casting for church planting?

Faith

9. Did you face resistance from the leadership or membership of your church when you started discussing the idea of church planting? If so, what specific objections were raised and how did you answer them?
10. What were the most significant challenges that you faced in your church planting efforts, and how did you overcome those challenges?
11. Taking the necessary risks and releasing the necessary resources to plant churches requires a spirit of bold faith. What have you done to cultivate this kind of bold faith in your congregation?

Strategy

12. How did you go about recruiting and assessing your church planters?

13. Did you start with a single paid planter or were there other paid leaders on the team? If so, what were their roles?
14. How did you determine the location for your church plants?
15. Did you provide funding for your church plants? If so, approximately how much, in what form, and for how long?
16. Did you provide a core group of members for the new church from within your congregation? If so, how many? How were they recruited or selected by the church planter and/or leadership of your church?
17. Did your church encourage or require training and/or coaching for your church planters? If so, what did that look like?
18. Did your church provide a residency for the church planter? If so, how long did it last, and what was the basic format and focus?
19. What else, if anything, did your church provide for the church plant?
20. What does a typical timeline look like for your church plants? (How long from recruiting planter to launch? primary phases in between?)
21. To what degree do you believe that a healthy culture of multiplication and leadership development need to be in place before an existing church should attempt to plant a new church? What are some ways that your church has sought to cultivate this kind of culture throughout its ministries?

Post-launch

22. Would you say that planting churches has been a generally positive experience for your congregation? What impact (positive or negative) did planting a church have on your church? (in terms of attendance, giving, leadership, volunteers, morale, etc.) How long was the impact felt?
23. Describe the nature of your church's relationship and involvement with its church plants after they are planted.
24. What are some key lessons that you have learned about church planting? What worked? What might you do differently next time?

Conclusion

25. An underlying assumption of my research is that churches fail to plant churches for three basic reasons:

- a lack of vision (they don't understand its importance and value)
- a lack of faith (they're afraid of losing resources and taking risks)
- a lack of strategy (they don't know how to do it or lack a sustainable strategy).

Do you agree that these are the primary obstacles to churches planting churches? Would you add any others? Which obstacle do you think is most common?

26. My hypotheses are that in order to successfully overcome these common obstacles, church leaders must adopt three important practices:

- They must learn to communicate a compelling vision for church planting to their congregations.
- They must cultivate a spirit of bold faith within their congregations.
- They must implement sustainable church planting strategies for their congregations.

Do you agree with these hypotheses? Would you add any others? Which of these do you think are most important?

APPENDIX B

Church Planter Survey Sample Questions

(distributed via email)

1. What was the approximate start date for your church plant?
2. How far is your church located from your sending church?
3. What specifically did your sending church provide for you? (amount of funding, number of families, residency, etc.)
4. Did you feel adequately supported by your sending church? Are there areas where you wish there had been more support or guidance?
5. How would you describe the overall health of your church? What have been some of your greatest challenges in the process of planting?
6. Do you plan on planting a church from your congregation? If so, how soon would you like that to happen, and what steps are you taking in that direction?
7. What are your greatest fears or concerns about planting a daughter church? What are some of the primary obstacles that you will have to overcome?

APPENDIX C

Key Lay Leader Survey Sample Questions

(distributed via email)

1. How did the lead pastor of your church go about casting a vision for church planting to your congregation initially? How often is it discussed in an ongoing fashion?
2. Has there been much resistance within the congregation to the idea of church planting? If so, what objections have been raised?
3. Do you think that, overall, your congregation buys into the vision for planting churches?
4. Would you say that planting churches has been a generally positive experience for your congregation? What impact (positive or negative) did planting a church have on your church? (in terms of attendance, giving, leadership, volunteers, morale, etc.)
5. Would you recommend that other churches follow your church's example of church planting? Why or why not? What might you recommend that they do differently?

APPENDIX D

Obstacles to Church Planting Survey

THANK YOU for taking a few moments to complete this brief survey. Your response will be part of a research project aimed at helping existing churches overcome obstacles to planting daughter churches. Your feedback will remain confidential. **Please return your completed survey to the envelope provided at your table.**

For purposes of this survey, mother/daughter church-planting is defined as follows: *The process by which an existing church intentionally sends and supports a planter and/or members from its congregation to start a new church.*

1. By this definition, which of the following statements best describe your church?

- Our church has planted at least one daughter church. How many? _____
- Our church is attempting to plant a daughter church.
- Our church is interested in planting a daughter church.
- Our church is not interested in planting a daughter church.

The following statements express common obstacles that prevent existing churches from planting daughter churches. Please indicate the degree to which these statements are true of your church. (If your church has already planted a church, please indicate the degree to which these statements were true of your church *prior to* planting your first church.)

2. There are already a number of churches in our area, so we don't feel there is a need for more.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

3. We don't know how to start a new church, or we lack a strategic plan for doing so.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4. Planting a daughter church would hinder us from fulfilling our main priorities as a church.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5. We've had negative experiences with church planting, or we've seen it go badly elsewhere.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

6. We haven't found a qualified planter to help us start a church.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

7. We can't afford the decrease in giving that would result from sending people out from our congregation to plant a new church.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

8. Our church leadership team does not have a shared vision for planting churches.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

9. It would be better to wait until we're much larger to think about planting a daughter church.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

10. We don't have a pastoral staff member or qualified layperson who has the time and energy to oversee the development of a new church.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

11. We do not really see a compelling biblical reason to plant daughter churches.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

12. We can't afford to lose some of our key leaders to a church plant right now.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

13. Our church's financial situation makes it difficult for us to fund major initiatives like church planting.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

14. Our senior pastor is not enthusiastic about church planting.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

15. Given our church's full slate of ministries, we just don't have the capacity to take on a church plant right now.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

16. It would be too difficult to see close friends and key families leave our church.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

17. Are there any other significant factors that have hindered your church from planting a daughter church? If so, what are they? _____

SURVEY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

18. Name: _____

19. Email (optional but helpful): _____

20. Church name & location: _____

21. Your role in the church: _____

22. Approximate total church attendance: _____

23. Approximate year the church was founded: _____

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