

LESSON ESSENTIALS

PASTORAL BASICS

LESSON 6: THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE

Opinions about the practice of church planting reveals a lot about what people think about the ideal size for a congregation, and the most efficient way to function as a church.

When you hear the Biblical instruction to be fruitful and multiply, what is the first thing you think about?

When the members of a congregation take seriously the call to bear much fruit and wholeheartedly join in on the Great Commission, the Lord will use their efforts to expand His Kingdom.

If we consider evangelism and discipleship as multiplying ourselves individually, then church planting can be seen as multiplying corporately. A core group of people separating from a healthy and growing church to begin a new work is a wonderful gift to the expansion of God's Kingdom!

What is the most efficient way of reaching into a community for the glory of God? How is the church best equipped to expand the Kingdom of God? Scriptures teach that individuals are responsible for personal evangelism and discipleship. On a one-to-one basis, believers meet with non-believers and tell them the Good News of Jesus Christ. Over time, many of these people also believe in Christ and join the church. This is one way to be fruitful and multiply.

Through personal evangelism and discipleship the congregation grows. But is there a point when the congregation is too big? Sometimes having a very large church is a blessing. With more people come more gifts and skills to use in the Kingdom, more resources to share with the community, and more people doing personal evangelism. But sometimes being a large church is not a benefit. Large congregations can have too many places for people to 'hide' and not get involved at all, too many opinions that can cause in-fighting, and too many opportunities to choose from with no clear vision of which to pursue. It can get complicated to manage a large church.

Does that mean that at a certain size a church should stop doing personal evangelism and stop welcoming newcomers? May it never be! When the members of a congregation take seriously the call to bear much fruit and wholeheartedly join in on the Great Commission, the Lord will use their efforts to expand His Kingdom. When the church grows in this way, church planting is a glorious way of bearing fruit on the corporate level.

If we consider evangelism and discipleship as multiplying ourselves individually, then church planting can be seen as multiplying corporately. A core group of people separating from a healthy and growing church to begin a new work is a wonderful gift to the expansion of God's Kingdom!

If the church is planted by a group of people who all live or work in the same area of town, then there can be a strong, intentional presence in that community. Part of the blessing of a large congregation is that there are many believers spread out across the city, with wide-reaching influence. However, in a church plant where all, or most, of the members live near to the plant, the influence may not spread as wide, but there is a greater opportunity for the influence to go very deep. There is an excitement that builds in doing evangelism together through church planting. Having support and accountability and a common goal are all great motivators to keep preaching the gospel to friends and neighbours and to make an impact on a community-wide level.

Planting a church is not to be taken lightly, however. There are many things to consider. A crucial part of successful church planting is sending the right people. A group of people who love the idea of evangelism and community engagement but who are terrified of talking to strangers is not going to be your best option! You will need people who are skilled in evangelism, people who love striking up meaningful conversations with new people, people with the gift of hospitality, and people who are devoted to praying for the community. You will need pastoral staff to ensure that the church plant is not just a social group, but that you can function as a proper, Bible-teaching church. You will want people of different ages, different skill-sets, and different workplaces – really just a variety of people who will be able to reach a variety of people in your neighbourhood.

As with growing food, some of the most crucial work is done in preparing the soil for growth, so it is with planting a church. The excitement of beginning a new work may be irresistible and the temptation to spontaneously begin can be strong. However, invest well in the praying and planning that must happen before you send anyone from your congregation to begin the new church. Seek the blessing of your church and your denomination leadership. Plan for an optimal location and right timing. Pray for unity and a common vision amongst the planters. Pray that the Lord would prepare hearts in the community so that they are ready to receive His word when you bring it to them.

Planting a church is a beautiful way to be fruitful and multiply and to expand the good work that individuals are doing through evangelism and discipleship. Not only very large churches need consider planting a new work. Even if your church is small in numbers, there may be a heart, a willingness, and an opportunity to multiply through church planting. Why not begin praying for the Lord to create a vision in your congregation for His plans of multiplying in your area?

Planting a church is a beautiful way to be fruitful and multiply and to expand the good work that individuals are doing through evangelism and discipleship.

IN REVIEW

- There is more than one way to be fruitful and multiply, and church planting is a great option.
- There are many reasons to plant churches, not the least of which is creating an opportunity to have a deep and concerted impact on one small community.
- Planting a new church should not be undertaken lightly, but only after much prayer and planning should a group begin a new work.
- Corporate church planting and personal evangelism go hand-in-hand, both strengthening the other.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Have you ever been involved in a church plant? What went well? What was a challenge?

- Are you committed to personal evangelism? Have you ever considered using that gift and skill in a church plant scenario? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal opportunities to you.

- If you know of some likeminded individuals in your congregation who might be open to the idea of a church plant, begin to pray for a united vision, for the blessing of your church leadership, and for the open door from the Lord to expand His kingdom through a new church plant.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.