

# discipleship essentials

## Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study Guide

### PASTORAL BASICS

#### LESSON 6: THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE

### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Pastoral Basics. This module will be helpful for untrained leaders who are serving as pastors, for churches who are looking for a pastor, and for those pursuing a pastoral role. It will outline the many duties a pastor may have in a local church, and what church members should expect from their pastor. Some specific challenges are also included, such as ministry to different age groups as well as considerations for church growth.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).



# PASTORAL BASICS

## LESSON 6: THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson examines the cycle of church reproduction: beginning a church, growing it, and then starting a new church to expand God's Kingdom. Methods and challenges to church planting are addressed.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

In previous lessons we have looked at cycles of spiritual growth and maturity. Each person begins as an 'infant' in Christ upon being born again, and then grows in their spiritual maturity and ability to share the Gospel with others. When churches establish new congregations, this is called 'Church Planting'. If your church is already doing this, this lesson will be helpful. If the idea of starting a new congregation is new to you, prayerfully consider if this is something God wants you to be a part of. Congregations all over the world have found great benefit in planting churches, and great fruit has resulted from their efforts! Church planting can revitalize existing congregations and reach unsaved people in unique ways. Read on to learn more.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Are you aware of an area where there are no churches or very few believers? Have you visited such a place? What would be necessary for a church to become established there?

2. What difference has being a part of a community of believers (a church) made to your spiritual life? How have you been blessed by your church community this week?



## STUDY

❖ **WHAT CHURCH PLANTING MEANS:** The term ‘Church Planting’ describes the practice of starting a new community of Christians meeting together as a Church. This may be part of missionary efforts far away, the result of evangelism and discipleship within a targeted area, or the product of an established church dividing itself in order to better fulfill its mission.

- **Planting and Birthing:** The Church planting metaphor brings to mind a small seed planted in the ground, and cared for until it is grown and able to reproduce on its own. A second metaphor often used is “birthing” a church, which treats a new church as a ‘daughter’ of the established church, and offers support and parenting until the community has grown and is able to care for itself.
- **The Goal of Church Planting:** Eventually, new churches should support themselves, disciple people, and plant churches of their own. Church planting usually involves targeting a specific area with evangelism, then bringing new Christians together in a meeting place to worship and be taught. Financial support and skilled people are often needed from an established church. New believers also need to be disciplined in order for them to grow spiritually.
- **Fulfilling the Great Commission:** Church planting is one of the most successful methods for spreading the Gospel and fulfilling the Great Commission! Simply communicating the Gospel will produce slow spiritual growth unless those who accept it can connect to other Christians in a meaningful way. This lesson will outline the basic principles of church planting so you can see how God uses this important work to impact His Kingdom in your corner of the world.

❖ **CHURCH PLANTING IN THE BIBLE:** The Apostle Paul was the greatest missionary of the New Testament. He started churches in cities of great importance, and watched them grow in their faith and fruitfulness. While the phrase “Church Planting” does not appear in the Bible, we can see Paul and others initiating new communities of Christians where none existed.

- **The Beginning of the Church:** We read in the second chapter of Acts that after the Holy Spirit was given to the believers at the feast of Pentecost, many believed in the message Peter spoke, and they asked what they should do. Read [Acts 2:37-44](#). What did Peter tell the believers to do once they received his message? What did they do?

- **Apostles from Jerusalem:** This first group of believers was located in Jerusalem where James was a head elder, serving alongside others. Many of the Apostles went out to the surrounding towns and villages to baptize new disciples. The act of baptism was a sign of professing faith as well as an initiation into discipleship and a specific community of believers ([Acts 4:4](#), [Acts 5:14-15](#)).



- **Paul and Fellow Workers:** The Apostle Paul instigated many churches (most scholars count at least 14) in his lifetime using similar methods each time. Acts 13 and 14 describe how he accomplished this. Read the following passages and write down what you learn about each stage of church planting, as Paul accomplished it.

Stage	Verses	What you Learn
Sent Off	Acts 13:2-3	
Travelled to a New Place	Acts 13:4, Romans 15:20	
Proclaimed the Word	Acts 13:5, 13-41	
Performed Miracles	Acts 13:9-12, 14:8-9	
Gathered the People	Acts 14:27-28	
Taught Disciples	Acts 13:42-43, 14:1-3	

Notice that Paul often worked with others, sometimes working with God’s servants already in the area. He used the opportunities that arose, and watched for opportunities to preach and disciple. After teaching in an area, he did not leave without discipling or leaving someone to teach the people. How can we learn from Paul’s example when we engage in church planting?

❖ **REASONS TO PLANT A CHURCH:** Starting a new church may seem like a difficult task, but remember that God’s power is available to you and you are not alone! Churches are like organisms that constantly change: they are born, they grow, and they may die. Consider that none of the original churches planted by the Apostle Paul are still in existence! Those people went out and planted new churches and they, in turn, planted new churches! People may criticize this concept by saying :

- o There are already too many churches.
- o Our church is too small or inadequate to plant a new church.



- o We don't have enough leaders to plant a new church.
- o Isn't simple evangelism enough?

The responses listed above demonstrate a lack of understanding of how God works and how beneficial church planting can be. Here are just a few reasons why we should be involved in this important ministry:

- **New churches grow more rapidly:** Just like all organisms, the first few years see the greatest growth. Churches gain the greatest percentage of converts to Christianity in their first 10 years, and after that usually level off. Christian Schwarz of Natural Church Development Group looked at over 1000 churches from 32 countries on 6 continents. He found that churches of about 100 people were 16 times more effective in their evangelism than mega churches (those over 1000 members).

Do those statistics surprise you? Why do you think a new church grows more rapidly than an older one?

- **New churches reach new believers:** Established churches often have their own traditions, customs, and are more resistant to change. This can be a difficult environment to enter as a new believer. Church plants overwhelmingly attract younger generations and new believers. They have the energy, outward focus, and flexibility to try new methods that attract those who do not attend church. Some denominational studies have found that a new church gains most of its members (60-80%) from those not attending any church. Churches over 10 years old gain 80-90% of their new members from other congregations (Acts 29 network). The purpose of a church plant is not to pull people from existing churches, but to reach the lost.
- **New churches encourage new leadership:** When churches have long established leadership, new emerging leaders are given little or no opportunity to practise leadership. New congregations don't have existing leadership to rely on, so are forced to trust God, learn new skills, and recognize emerging leaders.
- **New churches revitalize entire communities:** Because of their effectiveness at evangelism, church plants not only send new believers into their own community, but also into the communities of other churches in the area. As a result, people may choose the style and location of whatever church is right for them. Evangelistic strategies and church plants often increase attendance at other nearby churches.
- **New churches reach unreached people:** There are still places in the world where the Gospel is not preached and there is no existing church. It is imperative that the Gospel is available and the Church established in these places, because God's Kingdom



includes every people, language and nation on earth. People need a church close enough to where they live so that they are able to meet together regularly.

- What are some of the things that you want to see happen in your church? Are any of them listed above?

❖ **CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGIES:** There are several strategies employed by people who plant churches.

- **Solo Missionary:** Some people feel specifically called to plant churches, and so they move (sometimes along with their family) into a region in need of a church. They learn the language, the culture, and begin to evangelize. Often they start with one person who is interested in the Gospel, followed by their network of friends and family. The solo missionary may be sent and funded by a church, or may cover the costs from their own resources. This can be difficult and dangerous, but some people have planted churches this way!
- **Church Planting Team:** When a church identifies a region in need of a church, they may send a small team from their congregation and fund this evangelistic effort. They usually plan this activity far in advance, and the team benefits from the support, prayers, and financial gifts of the sending church. The new church is funded by the sending church for a time until leadership is established, discipleship is underway, and the church is functioning on its own.
- **Church Birthing:** A church may decide to birth a new church in another area of the city. To do so, it will send out several families from its own congregation as a nucleus to begin the new church.
- **Strategic Steps:** For each of these three types of church planting, a strategy is necessary. Bringing people together to pray, discuss, and map out a strategy will result in greater success. The following steps have been useful to many church planters. Some of these steps will overlap.

STRATEGIC STEPS IN CHURCH PLANTING		
1	<b>Set Vision</b>	Decide what it is you want to do and why. Pray about the vision. Ask God to direct your vision and bless your plans.
2	<b>Identify Team</b>	Who is going to carry out the work, and what skills and gifts do they have? Who will lead the group?
3	<b>Train Team</b>	Train the team in evangelism, discipleship and church growth.
4	<b>Set Goals</b>	Decide what you want to accomplish, by what timeline, and with what resources. Set a date for any events, meetings or start times.
5	<b>Research Target</b>	Learn about your target neighbourhood or people group and their



		particular needs. It may involve some member moving there. Do you need a meeting place? Where can church events be held?
<b>6</b>	<b>Make Contacts</b>	Make contacts in your target community through spiritual surveys, meeting practical needs in the community and establishing friends.
<b>7</b>	<b>Evangelism</b>	Hold evangelistic events and introductory Bible studies, distribute evangelistic literature, and go where people are. Often meeting practical needs of people is a good way to increase contacts. This should be an ongoing activity of the church planting team.
<b>8</b>	<b>Discipleship</b>	Once people begin to accept the Gospel, begin the process of discipleship in small groups or one-on-one.
<b>9</b>	<b>Fellowship</b>	Once some people have begun discipleship, they should come together with all the team members to fellowship and worship. This is when to begin church services.

- What types of people should a church send on a solo missionary trip? What skills and gifts are necessary? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?

- What types of people should a church look for to join a church planting team?

- Consider the role that the following might play in a church plant – even those who may be difficult to work with. How could they use their gifts and nature for this purpose?

Small business owners	
School teachers	
Positive thinkers	
People of great faith	
Prayer warriors	
Young people	
Those who are critical of leaders	
Those who make friends easily	
Those who are weak in faith	

- Why is it necessary to research the target area of a new church before arriving there? How did the Apostle Paul do this? ([Acts 17:23](#) and [Acts 20:18-19](#) give two ideas.)



- Why is it necessary for a church planting team to set goals, and be of one mind in their purpose?

❖ **THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE:** All organisms on earth go through a growth cycle. Infants have different needs than adults. The newly birthed church is like a young child, and relies on the parent church until it can function by itself. When this happens, it will be able to plant churches of its own!

THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE	
<b>CONCEPTION</b>	The parent church goes through the strategic steps of church planting mentioned previously. It may face opposition, doubt and fear. It should be a time of focus on prayer. They should decide where and when the church will be planted.
<b>BIRTH</b>	This step is accomplished when the first public worship services are held, along with baptisms. This should be a celebratory event, and can be advertised if it is safe to do so.
<b>CHILDHOOD</b>	The new church will need support from the parent church to grow. They require spiritual food (sound teaching) and instruction (discipleship) as well as financial support if a building is purchased or rented. The church planting team must spend much time to care for new believers and their spiritual growth.
<b>ADOLESCENCE</b>	This is a time of increasing independence for the young church. The church planting team will identify those who have leadership potential and train them. They will assign leadership in specific areas of the church, and begin withdrawing financial support when no longer needed. The church will now exercise financial responsibility.
<b>ADULTHOOD</b>	At this stage, the church has reached maturity. It is self-governing and no longer requires the support of the church planting team. It has appointed elders and pastors, uses resources wisely, is unified in vision, is engaged in evangelism and discipleship, has a stable meeting place, and able to pursue and reach their own goals. (Some goals could be: purchasing a building, operating a Christian school, child care center or clinic, addressing community needs, sending missionaries.)
<b>PARENTHOOD</b>	This is a time when the cycle continues and the daughter church is able to plant new churches of its own. This church will go through the strategic planning steps and multiply itself through parenthood.

- At what stage is your church at? What are its next steps in church planting?



❖ SUMMARY

- The term ‘Church Planting’ describes the practice of starting a new community of Christians who meet together as a Church. The goal of planting a church is to establish self-sufficient communities of believers which can then plant churches of their own.
- New churches are important, because they grow rapidly and have unique ability to reach unreached people. They also revitalize the sending church.
- Church planting can be done strategically by a specific team of people who are prepared spiritually; they must seek God’s help and direction as they carefully plan this undertaking.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What cautions can you think of when starting a church plant? When should a church not engage in church planting?

2. Where do you want to see a church planted? What are the needs there? How can you be a part of seeing that vision become a reality?