



Group Discovery Guide

# *Who Me?*

Help start a church?

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**Help start a church?**

*An Adult Strategy for  
Lay Church Planting*

**Group Discovery Guide**

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# Church Planting

## What will the church of tomorrow look like?

Will the traditional brick building with steeple reaching toward the sky be the standard we've grown so accustomed to? Or will there be smaller, more intimate churches meeting in office buildings, homes or storefronts in urban settings?

One thing is for certain—if society continues to change in the next 10 years as it has in the past 10 years, the church of tomorrow will look very different from the church of today. As our cities swell with the shifting demographics of people moving to North America, the church of tomorrow will take on a new look. Its purpose, however, will remain the same—to reach the lost with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because of today's growing cultural diversity, we must be prepared for the change, and we must adapt to this changing culture without compromising the message of the gospel. If we are not flexible in the approach of our mission, we run the risk of not meeting the needs of those who so desperately need the Savior. It was the Apostle Paul who first recognized this when he penned the words "*I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:22, NIV).

Paul knew the importance of sharing the gospel with those who were lost—so much so that in the end, he gave his life for the cause of Christ. He was willing to step beyond his comfort zone ... travel to places he never cared to visit ... befriend those he would rather not befriend ... and suffer hardship at the hands of others—all so he could gain the opportunity to share Christ with the world. We have a New Testament filled with Paul's example of "*becoming all things to all men so that by all possible means [he] might save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:22, NIV). If it weren't for his passion to share Christ and see new churches begun, we as modern-day Christians might never have learned of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have a responsibility before God to continue His mission—but where do we start?

New churches do not begin by themselves. Churches are planted by God as seeds in the hearts of Christians eager to continue His mission of reconciliation. Evangelism serves as the catalyst to new church starts. The lost rarely come to church on their own, and that is why we must go to them. Evangelism stirs believers into action, stirring within a passion to see others come to know Christ.

Planting a church then, in a sense, is simply telling other people about Jesus. It is what God expects of a group of believers. It is what God expects of *you*. God desires for you to join Him in His mission of planting new churches. What is holding you back?

# The Adult Lay Church

## Planting Strategy

If you open your Bible to the book of Acts, you step into one of the most exciting periods in Christian history. Acts is devoted to the spreading of the gospel and the building of new churches. The First Century Christians were like so many “Johnny Appleseeds”—itinerant evangelists who traveled the countryside preaching the gospel and starting churches wherever they stopped.

The First Century church planting movement was carried on the shoulders of the laity. There was no such thing as the clergy; believers were called equally and gifted accordingly. That’s the way it began, and that’s the way it should continue to be.

It’s time for laypeople to reclaim their rightful role in evangelism and church planting. It’s time for them to become co-laborers in the field with their pastors and missionaries as healthy, reproducing churches are begun.

Today, many laypeople are catching that vision and are becoming on mission Christians—Christians who live their faith every day and see themselves on a mission to tell others about Christ. They see themselves as a vital link in a worldwide church planting movement, and they can’t think of doing anything more exciting!

That’s the spirit of the First Century Christians.

With that being said, the adult lay church planting strategy is simple: make yourself available to God. Look around you to see what people groups are not being reached by a church. Enlist your friends to pray *with* you as you seek to reach the people group and then pray *for* you as you seek to follow God’s direction.

All it takes to begin a new church is to have a call from God and a place to meet. You don’t have to have a large budget, a new building, or a paid staff. All you need is an open Bible, an open heart, and a place to sit down and teach others about Christ. Churches can meet in the open air, in city parks, or in homes, and separate church buildings are not always needed, as they add to further financial responsibilities, including budgeting and maintenance needs. And the fewer financial obligations, the faster the church can grow and multiply itself.

A lay church planter is not required to be a pastor, but rather an on mission Christian who takes the Great Commission seriously. A lay church planter is a facilitator, a leader, a visionary, a dedicated student of the Bible, a self-starter, a team-builder and much more—but he or she is not necessarily a pastor. A church planter will initiate a gathering of people, and it will take many to build a church planting team. Each team will need a pastor, a worship leader, administrative supporters, financial contributors, prayer warriors, encouragers, groundskeepers, and maintenance crews—the list could go on and on! But more importantly, each team will need believers who are ready to answer the call of God on their lives—wherever He may take them.

It’s important to note that not all new churches are planted “abroad.” Many lay church planters remain in their careers as they seek to start churches among their peer groups at work or among unreached people groups in their community. Like Paul, they are “tentmakers”—bivocational individuals who work a secular job to provide an income as they help start churches in the evenings and on weekends.

Is God leading you to be a lay church planter? Pray that He will open your eyes to the possibility of being on mission for Him in this exciting area of evangelistic ministry.

# Church Planting?

## PREPARATION FOR THE TEACHER

This study on church planting will seek to educate and motivate your congregation to see themselves as church planters. Maybe some will respond to a call which they have been delaying for years; perhaps others will hear the call to be on mission for the first time as a result of participating in this study.

In addition to this Group Discovery Guide and the Participant's Handbook, you will need the dated information in the Promotional Packet attached to your *New Churches Needed Church Planting Starter Kit*. Be sure to familiarize yourself with this important packet of information; without it, your preparation for the study will be incomplete.

The Adult portion of the *New Churches Needed Church Planting Starter Kit* includes the Participant's Handbook, the Group Discovery Guide you hold in your hand, one videotape, and access to the North American Mission Board's Church Planting resource website. Each element is an integral part of this study and plays an important role in communicating the concepts of evangelism and church planting. This Group Discovery Guide includes plans to teach a one-hour and three-hour session study format.

There are three very important phases which you will be incorporating into the study. The first is an educational effort to increase awareness, understanding, and interest in church planting. It culminates with a challenge and invitation to commit to involvement. The second phase is involvement in new church plants near home—preferably in your local association—in an ongoing effort to reach and evangelize an unchurched group of people by planting a church. The third phase provides opportunities to nurture an interest or call that an adult may have to long-range involvement in church planting. This nurture is predominantly through a mentoring relationship with a full-time church planter.

When your group completes this study, all participants will have a fresh, new understanding of the basic principles of church planting, and hopefully will be motivated to start a church in your community.

For now, let's begin with the preparation for this study. First and foremost, read the Participant's Handbook and this Group Discovery Guide. It sounds simplistic, but without a thorough understanding of the exciting message of church planting, you will be poorly prepared to enthuse others with the desire to start a new church. This Group Discovery Guide will include an overview of the Participant's Handbook, but it cannot provide you with all the information included in the Handbook. Pray regularly as you digest the book's contents, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where your church could respond with a new ministry.

For the best results, make plans for the following:

- Have all handouts copied and ready to give to participants at the appropriate time for the study.
- Talk to your church secretary about how to promote the study through the church newsletter. Be sure to create interest among church members by promoting the study at least one month prior to the start date of the study. Since many church members only see each other once a week, that means you will only have four chances in 30 days to remind them of this important event in the life of your church.

- Place the study poster in well-trafficked areas of your church.
- Ask Sunday School teachers to mention the study in their classes. Provide them with a brightly colored sheet of paper (one that will not be easily lost) that includes the name, time, date, and location of the study. After the announcement is made, ask the teacher to place the brightly colored announcement sheet on a class bulletin board as an ongoing reminder to members.
- Place a poster above water fountains with wording similar to “Did you know 72 churches close their doors each week, never to open them again? Come to Room \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to learn how we can reverse this trend by learning exciting ways to start a new church in our community.”
- In your bulletin and newsletter, print some of the church planting facts from the study. Then, tell readers that if they want to learn more, they should make plans to attend the study.
- Recognize WMU involvement and partnership.
- Place a VCR and monitor in a high-traffic area of your church and show the video as people assemble for Sunday School or worship services.
- Personally invite people to the study.

## THE TEACHING PLAN

### Session Options

You are being provided with two teaching options for this Church Planting study. The first option is more thorough, and will require three hours to complete. It could be presented in its entirety on a Saturday or broken into two weekly sessions. If time does not allow for this approach, please follow the second teaching option, which will be the one-hour format. Simply condense material in the first option and tailor it to fit the suggested one-hour format.

The three-hour plan allows for five minutes of discussion after the end of each teaching segment. If you prefer to allow discussion as you teach, you can delete this option from your schedule and extend the teaching segment from 20 minutes to 25 minutes.

To make it easier for you as the leader, we have also included reproducible handouts located in the “Appendices” at the back of this Group Discovery Guide. You will find the answers to these handouts underlined in the corresponding section of this Guide. You can also use the handouts as teaching cels, so that students may follow along as you teach the material.

You may encounter some slight duplication of material as you teach this study, so please do not be alarmed. This design is to reinforce certain church planting concepts. Many people learn through repetition, and this study is designed to help members of your church grasp the important concepts of how to start a new church.

You have the option of having two 10-minute breaks during the longer session. Have some soft drinks and snacks in the back of the room for participants to enjoy during this time.

## TEACHING PLAN 1: THREE HOURS

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Introduction/Biblical Basis/What Is a Church?..... | 20 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| Why Do We Plant Churches?.....                     | 20 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| Optional Break .....                               | 10 minutes |
| Who Plants Churches? .....                         | 20 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| What Is a Church Planting Team? .....              | 20 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| How Are Churches Planted? .....                    | 20 minutes |
| Optional Break .....                               | 10 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| Do We Need a New Church in Our Community? .....    | 20 minutes |
| Discussion .....                                   | 5 minutes  |
| Conclusion .....                                   | 10 minutes |

## TEACHING PLAN 2: ONE HOUR

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Introduction/Biblical Basis/What Is a Church?..... | 15 minutes |
| Why Do We Plant Churches?.....                     | 15 minutes |
| Who Plants Churches? .....                         | 15 minutes |
| Do We Need a New Church in Our Community? .....    | 10 minutes |
| Brainstorming/Conclusion .....                     | 5 minutes  |

## TEACHING OUTLINE

### Checklist

**B**efore participants arrive, arrange the room to suit your teaching objectives. Place a handout in each chair so the participants can fill in the blanks as you progress through the study; have extra pens or pencils available as needed. Queue the videotape and make sure the monitor is working. You may also want to provide Bibles to reference a few verses in the introduction. You may want to ask some participants as they enter the room to read a verse when called. Try to give them the verse in advance, so that they will be able to locate it easily in their Bible.

## VIDEO

Included in your Adult Resource Kit is the “New Churches Needed: Our Church Can Help” video. This video has been designed to create an awareness of church planting, as well as encourage study participants to determine how they can be involved in helping start a new church. This video will also aid you as the leader in helping participants understand the fundamentals of the church planting process.

Listed below are ways you can use the video to enhance the “Who Me? Help start a church?” church planting study.

### *For use in the one-hour or three-hour study sessions:*

Before your scheduled meeting, preview the video and note timer values for segments you would like to present during your study session. During the meeting, show the introductory segment and any additional segments you have selected.

### *For use as a “kick-off” to the church planting strategy:*

Show the video during the initial meeting or study time you’ve selected. The “televised Church Planting special” format is an entertaining way to present core concepts of the Church Planting study and encourage discussion about involvement in planting a church in your community, nation, or even around the world.

### SOME TIPS FOR USING THE VIDEO EFFECTIVELY INCLUDE:

- Stop the tape when instructed and discuss the questions.
- Pause the tape after “Factoid” segments and discuss the information bytes.
- After watching each story segment, brainstorm ways your church can apply the church planting principles presented.
- Follow the closing drama segment with a call to become involved in a new church plant.

You may not be planning to use all of the video segments, so show one of the segments as participants begin to enter the room and as they greet each other. This will serve as a good ice breaker for the study.

Welcome each participant as he or she arrives. Give each a listening sheet (reproducible handout located in the “Appendices” of this Guide); there will be one of these for each teaching segment. Ask them to fill in the listening sheet as the study progresses. Keep a listening sheet in front of you to be sure you subtly weave the answers into the lesson.

Open the study with prayer, asking for divine guidance as your congregation seeks to be an on mission church.

Thank each person in attendance for his/her participation. Assure them that, by the time the study is completed, they will be challenged to look at their community through new eyes. More importantly, they will be given options of how to reach their community for Christ.

Condense the introduction from the Participant’s Handbook into a few statements. Give the participants an overview of what they will be learning. This is your chance to catch their attention and whet their appetite. Solicit feedback whenever possible, asking questions and encouraging a response.

Begin by sharing with them the following statistics and remind them to record the numbers on their handout sheet.

- It is conservatively estimated that at least seventy-two churches close their doors each week.
- 68 percent of Southern Baptist churches are considered to be plateaued or declining.
- About 18 percent of Southern Baptist churches, or 6,917, did not baptize anyone in the final year of the 20th Century.

If you are in a classroom setting, write these on a blackboard to further dramatize the information.

Based on these figures, do we really have too many churches? Are we doing the best job we can to reach the lost? Apparently not.

Ask someone to read *Matthew 18:20* (“*Jesus said, ‘For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.’*” NIV). Explain that this verse is perhaps the most simple New Testament definition for a church. Explain that many churches begin to decline and eventually die because they have lost the focus of that verse. Being a church should not consist of bigger buildings and more programs, but should be focused on worship.

Ask someone to read *Mark 1:38* (“*Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come’*” NIV), and have someone else read *Luke 19:10* (“*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*” NIV). Stress that these verses show that God’s purpose for every man, woman, and child is to be reconciled to Himself. According to His purpose, Jesus Christ was sent into the world to die for sins, and the Holy Spirit was sent to call every man back to God through the conviction that His Spirit brings. God chooses to use the church as an instrument for fulfilling His purpose in bringing reconciliation to all. This is the essence of evangelistic missions, and it is the reason we begin new churches.

Therefore, God desires every church to be an on mission church and to be used in its community. Ask the study participants to be sure to write down new ideas about how their church could be more effective in reaching the lost in their community, and share these ideas at the brainstorming session at the end of the study.

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. Paul wrote that he became “*all things to all men, so that by all possible means, [he] might save some*” (NIV). His intent never changed, but he was willing to change his approach so he could reach more people.

Ask the participants to keep these questions foremost in their minds as they participate in the study:

- Are we the church God wants us to be?
- Are we willing to change and embrace new ideas to be more effective for God?
- Has our church decided to be on mission for God?
- Are there new ways we can branch out and reach our community?

If you have time, take just a moment to review the participants’ listening sheets which they have filled out while you were teaching. You may find this will give you a springboard for spontaneous discussion. If this occurs, seize it as an opportunity to teach, even if you have to take some time from the rest of the study.

Now let’s move into the discussion of the definition of a church.

As we discussed, Christ gave us perhaps the most concise definition of a church. Ask the group for its definition of a church, then contrast it with the New Testament definition. Remind the group that it is not wrong for churches to have extensive programs and outreach ministries, as long as they do not detract from the underlying purpose of worship and evangelism.

Stress to the participants that new churches do not begin by themselves. Churches are planted by God as seeds in the hearts of Christians eager to continue His mission of reconciliation. Evangelism serves as the catalyst to church starts. Just as the sun warms the soil and the seedlings, evangelism stirs believers into action ... it stirs within a passion to want to see others come to Christ ... it moves Christians out of the comfort zone of their pews and into God’s mission field—the world.

Rarely will the lost come to church on their own ... that’s why we must go to them.

Close this section with a discussion.

## WHY DO WE PLANT CHURCHES?

In this section you will be discussing “*The Adult Lay Church Planting Strategy*” and “*Why Do We Plant Churches?*” from the Handbook.

Begin by showing one of the factoid segments from the video. This will stimulate the minds of the participants and prepare them for this learning segment.

Begin by asking participants whose role it is to plant churches. If they say it is the responsibility of the clergy/pastoral staff, reply that that answer is only partially correct. In truth, it is the responsibility of everyone, especially laypeople, to be involved in starting new churches; however, it’s not as hard as it might appear at first.

*Stress that many laypeople today are catching the vision of seeing themselves as on mission Christians—Christians who live their faith every day and see themselves on a mission to tell others about Christ. That’s the spirit of the First Century Christians.*

Stress that many laypeople today are catching the vision of seeing themselves as on mission Christians—Christians who live their faith every day and see themselves on a mission to tell others about Christ. That’s the spirit of the First Century Christians.

Explain that all it takes to begin a new church is to have a call from God and a place to meet. You don’t have to have a large budget, a new building, or a paid staff. All you need is an open Bible, an open heart, and a place to sit down and teach others about Christ. Churches can meet in the open air, in city parks, or in homes. They don’t need buildings that require budgets or maintenance. The fewer financial obligations, the faster the church can grow and multiply itself.

The adult lay church planting strategy is simple: make yourself available to God. Look around you to see which people groups are not being reached by a church. Enlist your friends to pray with you as you seek to reach the people group, and to pray for you as you seek to follow God’s direction.

A lay church planter is not required to be a pastor, but rather an on mission Christian who takes the Great Commission seriously. A lay church planter is a facilitator, a leader, a visionary, a dedicated student of the Bible, a self-starter, a team-builder and much more—but not necessarily a pastor. A church planter will initiate a gathering of people, but often he will then hand over the emerging church to a pastoral leader.

Many remain in their careers as they seek to start churches from their peer groups at work or among unreached people groups in their community. Like Paul, they are “tentmakers”—bivocational individuals who work a secular job to provide an income so they can help start churches in the evenings and on weekends.

We need to rekindle that First Century example of starting churches, because we are loosing the battle to win the world for Christ. Take a look at these disturbing trends:

- “No religious affiliation” is the fastest growing religious preference in Canada.
- The largest unreached people group in North America is French Canadians.
- North America is the only continent where Christianity is not growing.

The need is great, but will we ever have enough “professional” church planters to do the job? The answer is “No.” The greatest church starting movement in history was accomplished entirely with laypeople—men and women who saw the spiritual need around them, heard the cries of the lost, and responded to God’s call.

Laypeople are our greatest untapped resource. Not only is this biblical, but it is practical. That’s the purpose of this study ... to share the vision of church planting with the laity whom God has already called and equipped, but who need the mentoring to make it happen.

In brief, laypeople are the backbone of any successful church planting effort. The vast majority of churches today would not exist without a lay- or bivocational pastor. There may be a church field out there where only you will be the catalyst God uses to bring others to Himself.

Close this section with a discussion.

You may want to take a 10-minute break at this time in the session. You may want to turn on the video player and show a segment that you do not plan to use during the teaching sessions.

## WHO PLANTS CHURCHES?

Begin this section by showing one of the videotape segments on a church planter, and then discuss what you have viewed. This will take 10 minutes, or roughly half of this teaching segment. Ask participants to share how they feel the church planter is being true to his calling as an on mission Christian.

Church planting is best accomplished when it is church-based and involves the leadership of your congregation. That's why the first step is to seek those from within your church who share your burden and build a team from those individuals.

By pooling the resources of your congregation, you multiply your effectiveness and have a built-in system of accountability already in place. A new church start should be a congregational-wide effort where all spiritual gifts are enlisted to reach the lost.

For the purpose of this study, we are operating off of two basic premises. The first premise is that God has provided all that is needed for a church's life and ministry within its membership. The second premise is that all members of a church are gifted and called to be involved in ministry. In his book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby reminds the church that God never adds a new member by accident or without purpose.

Some are called as vocational ministers—people who earn their livelihood partially or fully from their church-related ministry. Others are called as volunteer ministers—people who earn their livelihood from another source of income and volunteer their ministry to the church.

Their individual calling into ministry is just as important to the life and vitality of the church as the vocational minister. Imagine what would be the impact of the church in today's world if every mother, carpenter, accountant, teacher, student, and factory worker could be freed to use their giftedness and pursue their passion and calling in ministry.

In brief, church planting is not just for those in vocational ministry. The most important resource for church planting in today's church is the calling and giftedness of those members who are looking for a place to serve. Let's look at one example.

To manage great distances and sparse population centers, Nebraskans have introduced a prototype non-geographic church called a "Church of Fields." Condense the example of Dennis Hampton from the Handbook and explain how he was able to start a field of churches using virtually no professional staff. This story is a testimony to the value of committed laypeople being faithful to their calling. This "Church of Fields" is largely dependent on on mission Christians responding to the call to plant a church in spite of great obstacles.

Who are the potential church planters in your congregation? By developing a sensitivity to those around us, God will reveal those He has already equipped to walk with us in this high calling.

Close this section with a discussion.

*By pooling the resources of your congregation you multiply your effectiveness and have a system of accountability. A new church start should be a congregational-wide effort where all spiritual gifts are enlisted to reach the lost.*

## WHAT IS A CHURCH PLANTING TEAM?

Begin by showing another of the factoids to get this session underway. This could also serve as an ice breaker to introduce the session.

Since we have already established the idea that no church planter should work in isolation but rather in concert with other believers, the next step takes us to building a church planting team. This team is a group of individuals who covenant together to participate in the planting of a new church. In Southern Baptist life, the church planting team has been manifested in four forms.

The most common form is the church planting family. This is when an individual church planter and his family covenant together to invest their lives and ministry in planting new churches. Historically this planter has been a bivocational minister.

A second form consists of a volunteer team—a group of volunteer ministers who go out from a church to give leadership in planting a church. Sometimes this is an intentional team who is commissioned from a church to go into a nearby community. Other times this is an unintentional team where a group of people are pooled from several churches and join together to start a church in a new community. They serve as a sort of nuclear family for the new church start, as catalysts to launching the work.

The third style of planting combines the first two—the vocational planter as the leader, plus the volunteers as the support group.

The fourth style is a team of vocational ministers organized as a church staff. In some settings, the entire staff is fully funded from the beginning. Other times, the lead planter is funded and the rest start bivocationally with plans to be phased-in full-time as the congregation begins to grow.

The most common approach to building a church planting team is to organize around people needed to staff one of the central functions of the new church. For example, historically, many new churches were organized by starting new Sunday Schools. If this plan were used to organize a volunteer team, it would look like a small Sunday School staff with four workers: a preschool, children, youth, and adult teacher.

Close this section with a discussion.

## HOW ARE CHURCHES PLANTED?

*For example, if there is a language barrier, consider starting English as a second language classes in their community. If there are lifestyle issues, such as a dominance of factory shift workers who cannot attend worship at traditional times, consider offering a Bible study when the group can meet. These barriers, and others you may identify, are precisely why one or more new churches may be needed to effectively reach the field.*

The first step to take in planting a new church is to pray. That sounds obvious, but it is frequently overlooked in the headlong rush to do something for God. As Henry Blackaby states, look around and see where God is already working, and join Him in that effort. The hallmark of an on mission Christian is one who is seeking God's wisdom and guidance in all things.

One way to plant a church is to identify a group of people who are not being reached. Make a list of barriers that may be keeping them from being reached, and then formulate evangelistic ministries to overcome those barriers.

For example, if there is a language barrier, consider starting “English as a Second Language” classes in their community. If there are lifestyle issues, such as a large number or majority of factory shift workers who cannot attend worship at traditional times, consider offering a Bible study when the group can meet. These barriers, and others you may identify, are precisely why one or more new churches may be needed to effectively reach the mission field.

Another way would be to identify a place where there is a need for a new church. All across North America there are towns, villages, and communities where there is no Southern Baptist church and, often times, no evangelical church at all. You may want to consider unentered counties, planned communities, multi-housing developments such as apartments or condominiums, or transitional communities where existing churches may have relocated, plateaued, or closed their doors.

Whatever you do, don't limit God to working in these areas alone. Your mission field may have other places where a new church is waiting to be planted.

Often times, communities will develop out of the natural clustering of people around some affinity, whether that is language, race, lifestyle, or some other life situation. For example, in Boston, Southern Baptists are looking to find ways of planting Bible studies tailored to members of the fast-growing medical community. They see these individuals as a

distinct unreached people group who spends much time together but who is largely unchurched. They hope to begin a Bible study that will eventually grow into a church.

After you have identified a mission field—and that could be geographic or demographic—place the vision before your church and challenge them to join you to be on mission with God. Many times your fellow church members are just not aware of the needs and are looking for opportunities to respond. It's not that they don't care or understand. It's just that their normal routines of life and patterns of travel don't expose them to the mission fields that may exist beyond where they live and work.

You might be able to generate interest by conducting a prayer journey, sometimes known as prayerwalking. A prayer journey is different in that it involves any mode of transportation imaginable—roller blading, biking, driving, or jogging. The intent is the same, only the approach is different—and individuals can use a prayer journey at times convenient to them.

Don't reinvent the wheel by doing unnecessary work. Perhaps the foundation has already been laid, and God is waiting for you to build upon it. Save yourself some time and ask the association if a Church Planting PROBE or Laser has been conducted in the area in recent years.

You may have never heard of these tools for church starting, but they can quickly become your best friends. A PROBE is an intensive one-to-three-day field study of an area to determine all types of potential new-work needs. This popular tool emphasizes the need for new churches in various generational, ethnic, language, social people groups, and geographic areas, as well as housing areas.

An approach designed specifically for identifying ethnic church planting needs is called the Laser. If a Laser has already been conducted, you may find it helpful in identifying language and ethnic church planting needs.

After the groundwork has been laid comes the fun part—cultivating the field. Cultivating the field is limited only by your imagination and creativity. Not all tools will work in all fields. Using the farming analogy, you will want to use those “implements” that work best for your field. The following are some suggestions:

- ***Prayer Journeying*** — Walking, driving, even flying as you pray for the people, homes, and communities as you go.
- ***Outreach Bible Studies*** — Evangelistic Bible studies focused on people who will not attend Sunday School or other Bible studies conducted at a church building.
- ***Addressing Community Needs*** — Identifying a community need or needs and then performing an evangelistic ministry to meet that need in the name of Jesus.
- ***Backyard Bible Clubs, Big A Clubs*** — Bible-based activities focused on children as a way of reaching them and building relationships with their families.
- ***Block Parties*** — Evangelistic community parties where you seek to share the gospel and build relationships with those who live in the community.
- ***Support Groups*** — Bible-based groups helping people deal with issues such as addictions, parenting, recovery, and emotional support.
- ***Servanthood Evangelism*** — A simple act of kindness in Jesus' name with no strings attached. Disarming people with kindness can frequently open doors for ministry; but if they do not, you have sown a seed that others may one day reap in a receptivity to the gospel.

Close this section with a discussion.

You may want to take a 10-minute break at this time in the session.

*A PROBE is an intensive one-to-three-day field study of an area to determine all types of potential new-work needs.*

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*Don't reinvent the wheel by doing unnecessary work; perhaps the foundation has already been laid, and God is waiting for you to build upon it. Save yourself some time and ask the association if a Church Planting PROBE or Laser has been conducted in the area in recent years.*

## DOES OUR COMMUNITY NEED A NEW CHURCH?

*Challenge your group to consider ways they could start a new church in their community, or partner with the association or other churches in a larger effort. Remind them that the best church start is based in the local church where spiritual resources are abundant and accountability is built-in.*

Sometimes we are so close to the needs that we don't see them. That was the case in Purcell, Oklahoma, when immigrants began moving into the community. The needs were obvious, but no one knew where to begin. Once they got their feet wet in ministry, however, the church planting movement took off on its own ... people came to know the Lord through the ministries, and the next logical step was to gather them into their own congregation.

Familiarize yourself with the story found under the heading of "Join or Build a Team," condense it, and tell it in your own words to the group. You may want to print it and use it as a handout, so they can follow along with the discussion that is on the student's handout for this session.

This is an excellent way to show a real-life example of how a church is started from "scratch." As you tell the story, instruct participants to fill in the blanks on their handout. Be sure to show how the spirit of evangelism became infectious and spread among neighboring churches ... even to the youth.

After you have told the story, begin the discussion by asking participants if it would be possible to begin such a ministry in their community. If this is not feasible, ask them what kind of church they believe could be started nearby to reach people for Christ.

## CONCLUSION

In this section, briefly review all that has been taught. Stress the importance of prayer as the foundation of a new church start and the important role laypeople can play as they become on mission Christians.

Challenge your group to consider ways they could start a new church in their community, or partner with the association or other churches in a larger effort. Remind them that the best church start is based in the local church where spiritual resources are abundant and accountability is built-in.

You may want to conclude by scheduling a brief prayer walk around your neighborhood after the study, or encouraging participants to conduct their own prayer journey during the next week.

Close in prayer, asking any who might be interested in starting a new church to meet with you at the end of the meeting. If there is enough interest, perhaps you could schedule a group meeting with your pastor.

# R e s o u r c e s

There are a variety of ever-changing, up-to-date resources available to help you in your quest to become a church planter. Here's a list of things to do and articles to read to help you along on your journey.

## STEPS TO HELP YOU

- Pray, pray, pray. After you have prayed personally, invite a few others you trust to pray with you.
- Share your decision with your pastor and other spiritual leaders in your life.
- Consider attending a Church Planter Assessment event or requesting the self-assessment tool provided by the North American Mission Board.
- Begin to consider the people or geographic location where God is calling you. Has He already placed a particular group of people or community on your heart, or do you need to explore where new churches are needed?
- Explore the places or unreached groups of people your local association has identified. Your association's director of missions can help you with this endeavor.
- Your state convention office will have resources and people who can help you in a variety of ways.

## PRINTED RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

*Am I a Church Planter?—A Self-Assessment Tool*, available from the North American Mission Board

*A Brief History of Ordinary Working People Starting Churches in America*, available from the Church Planting Group, North American Mission Board

*On Mission Church Planning Resource*, North American Mission Study 2001

*His Heart, Our Hands: A Guide for Ministry Evangelism*, available from the Evangelization Group, North American Mission Board

*Does a Fire Burn In You To Plant A Church?* by Bob Reccord, *On Mission* magazine, January-February 2001

*Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Aubrey Malphurs

*Design for Church Growth* by Charles Chaney and Ron Lewis

*Biblical Basis of Missions* by Avery Willis Jr.

*Missions in the Bible* by J.B. Lawrence

\*\*\*Prayer journey resources are also available from the Evangelization Group at the North American Mission Board

# A p p e n d i c e s

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## INTRODUCTION/BIBLICAL BASIS/WHAT IS A CHURCH?

### HANDOUT NUMBER 1

At least \_\_\_\_\_ churches close their doors each week in the United States.

A surprising \_\_\_\_\_ percent of Southern Baptist churches are considered to be plateaued or declining.

About \_\_\_\_\_ percent of Southern Baptist churches—or 6,917— did not baptize anyone in the final year of the 20th Century.

What is the New Testament definition of a church, according to Christ's statement in Matthew 18:20:

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\_\_\_\_\_ serves as the catalyst for church starts.

## WHY DO WE PLANT CHURCHES?

### HANDOUT NUMBER 2

All it takes to begin a new church is \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

List some places where it would be acceptable for churches to meet:

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The lay church planting strategy is simple:

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Name some of the traits of a lay church planter:

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What is a “tentmaker,” and who in the Bible demonstrated this vocation as a church planter?

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“\_\_\_\_\_” is the fastest growing religious preference in Canada.

The largest unreached people group in North America is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is the only continent where Christianity is not growing.

## WHO PLANTS CHURCHES?

### HANDOUT NUMBER 3

List some of the traits of the church planter in the video and how he used these to be effective in his ministry.

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What obstacles did the church planter overcome in his quest to plant the new congregation?

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Church planting is best accomplished when it is \_\_\_\_\_ and involves the \_\_\_\_\_ of the congregation.

To combat the vast distances between town, Nebraskans have introduced a prototype non-geographic church called \_\_\_\_\_.

This “Church of Fields” is largely dependent on \_\_\_\_\_ responding to the call to \_\_\_\_\_ in spite of great obstacles.

## WHAT IS A CHURCH PLANTING TEAM?

### HANDOUT NUMBER 4

In Southern Baptist life, the church planting team has been manifested in four forms. The most common form is the \_\_\_\_\_.

A second form consists of a \_\_\_\_\_ – a group of \_\_\_\_\_ who go out from a church to give leadership in planting a new church.

The third style of planting \_\_\_\_\_ – the vocational planter as the leader, plus the volunteers as the support group.

The fourth style is a team of \_\_\_\_\_ organized as a \_\_\_\_\_

The most common approach to building a church planting team is to organize around persons needed to staff one of the central functions of the new church. For example, historically, many new churches were organized by \_\_\_\_\_.

If this plan were used to organize a volunteer team, it would look like a small \_\_\_\_\_ staff with four workers: a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.

# HOW ARE CHURCHES PLANTED?

## HANDOUT NUMBER 5

The first step to take in planting a new church is to \_\_\_\_\_.

One way to plant a church is to identify \_\_\_\_\_.

List two or three examples of ministries that could be started as a way to lay the foundation to start a church. You can use those your instructor mentioned or list those applicable to your community.

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After you have identified a mission field—and that could be geographic or demographic—\_\_\_\_\_ and challenge them to join you to be \_\_\_\_\_.

List four of the seven examples of cultivating the field.

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# DO WE NEED A NEW CHURCH IN OUR COMMUNITY?

## HANDOUT NUMBER 6

### Real-World Case Study: Carlos Cascante

As your teacher shares with your group the story of meeting a need in Purcell, Oklahoma, notice the progression of how this church plant began.

The church did not go into the venture with grandiose plans of spending thousands of dollars to reach the people group. They simply saw a need and stepped in to meet it.

Fill in the blanks as your teacher leads you through this story:

First Baptist Church identified a people group of \_\_\_\_\_ who were trying to adapt to live in a new city.

Next, they identified a need they could meet (\_\_\_\_\_), built a team through partnering with other believers to provide skilled physicians, and used laypeople in support roles such as serving as \_\_\_\_\_ with the doctors and to witness in the waiting rooms.

Give some examples of how the spirit of evangelism began to spread among the churches and even youth.

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