

## Introduction

During a church planters retreat held in one region, I was struck by the testimony of a member of the region New Church Planting Committee. This man was a deeply committed disciple who attempted to faithfully raise his children to trust in Jesus. However, he had one son who turned his back on Christianity when he left home and even distanced himself from his family. Some years later, a new American Baptist church was planted in the area where this man's dechurched son lived. This new church and its pastor reached out to this "lost" son, bringing him and his family into a vital community of faith. The father, who previously had not been strongly supportive of new churches, expressed his deep and moving thanks to this planter for reaching his son.

A couple in their thirties was looking for a fresh start. Both of them had been married and divorced. Neither of them had been part of a church, nor had their families, nor anyone else in their circle of friends, for as long as they could remember. They received fliers in the mail about a new church starting in their neighborhood, but never thought about going. Then they received a visit from a couple from the new American Baptist church. This retired couple was not anyone with whom they would normally have related. And yet something "clicked" when this particular couple from the new church showed interest in them. Soon they were in a Bible study and then they started attending worship. This younger couple now acknowledges that they would never have made it (in their own attempt at a fresh start) if it were not for members of this new church reaching out to befriend them.

New churches reach more new people than existing churches, whether the new people are unchurched or dechurched. Since the numbers of unchurched and dechurched people are growing in the United States, new churches are needed more than ever. Our hope and prayer is for existing churches to start sponsoring new churches. Our hope and prayer is for individuals and groups to pray for laborers for the harvest. Our hope and prayer is for churches and disciples to focus on reproducing churches and disciples for the glory of God.

In the end, it is not an issue of numbers or market share or bragging rights. It is about doing what Jesus has commanded us to do — make disciples of every nation. People of every nation reside next door, down the street, shopping with us at the grocery store, attending our schools and serving in every segment of our society. Do you see them? Are you praying for them? Will you get involved in planting new churches to reach them?

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