

Liberty Theological Seminary

The Biblical Principles of Church Planting

A Paper

Submitted to Dr. Rodney Earls

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Course

Church Planting

EVAN 550

By

William D. Corbitt

15 May 2010

The church is mentioned in Matthew 16:18-19, “And I also say to you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”¹ This statement provides the first and only use of the term ‘church’ used in the gospels by Jesus. The Greek term church means ‘called out ones’ which describe the saints.² Scripturally through Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 he states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen”³ which expresses what the disciples were to do and now what the saints are to do in this age and the future. The Great Commission combined with Christ’s words to Peter initiated the instruction of church planting.

Church planting does not need to be implemented per se if the saints are doing their appropriate requirements laid before them in the Bible. The church plant should be inherent from the ground up once a person accepts Christ as their Savior the next step should be to grow. Once the new believer becomes mature through God’s Word then it is time to begin discipling and winning souls for the kingdom. This is where church planting should become a realization of scripture.

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1423.

² Jack M. Lane, *Living the Way.org*, 2010 [online], available from <http://livingtheway.org/ekkleisia.html>. 1 April 2010.

³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1451.

Some who wants to negate that church planting is needed should use the scripture in Acts to prop up their arguments in chapter 7:48-50, “However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

‘Heaven is My throne,
And earth is My footstool.
What house will you build for Me?
says the Lord,
Or what is the place of My rest?
Has My hand not made all these
things?’”⁴

Through this scripture it appears that God needs no dwelling place, but he is referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within each believer. This longing by the people for a structure harkens back to the temple of Solomon. The people even needed a temple after Solomon’s temple was destroyed and when they finally received it from God some wept with sadness at the old memories. Erwin McManus also discusses this, “The reason the older priests and family heads wept when they saw the foundation was that they knew that this Temple was not going to be like the former Temple. They had seen and experienced the splendor of the first Temple, built by Solomon. This was the Temple that caused kings to stand in awe. It was an architectural marvel built from the wealth of Israel.”⁵

The temple is no longer needed since Christ was crucified; the believer’s body became the temple when the Holy Spirit indwelt within the saved soul. This drives the Great Commission and continuing Christ’s ministry while He was here on earth. Ed Stetzer comments,

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1647.

⁵ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Orange: Yates & Yates, LLP, 2001), 83.

“As Christ followers, this direction can’t be clearer. We are to pick up Jesus’ earthly work and continue doing it. It’s a personal message, and it applies to all of us.”⁶ We must continue God’s work through this type of ministry adding souls to the kingdom. By preaching the Gospel to the lost we are in essence creating the church. The misconception of the church leads to the breakdown of church planting.

Numerous saved and unsaved people come to the building, which they conclude is the church, and wait for the church to ‘do’ something for them, whether it be an enlightening experience or leaving refreshed spiritually and emotionally. Unfortunately, many people, including those who are Christians are at a sore misunderstanding regarding why the church exists. Erwin McManus gives an illustration about the ‘me’ mentality of church goers, “On another day Alex, one of our pastors, was engaged in an intense conversation with one of our more gifted artists...Alex stopped him to establish a frame for the rest of the conversation. ‘Remember, this isn’t about you’...Unfortunately, for too many people, when the conversation is no longer about them, there’s not much left to be said.”⁷ When believers understand what the purpose of the church is, it is then they will grow the church in the appropriate manner.

Aubrey Malphurs describes this best by saying, “The church’s vision and a critical core value should be to reach lost people and unchurched lost in particular. This vision has been used as a means to recruit many of the people who make up the new core group.”⁸ When Christians follow the correct avenues of biblical truths they cannot help but end up planting and growing

⁶ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 38.

⁷ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Orange: Yates & Yates, LLP, 2001), 31.

⁸ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 181-182.

churches by the very nature of the Gospel. Each church plant has had to begin with the correct intentions and scriptural basis which should lead to new converts. The church should evangelize as one of its main purposes and primary goals. David Hesselgrave sums it up well, “Call it what you will. Call it church planting, church development, church growth, or church-extension evangelism. Or call it mission-evangelism. This task is the same anywhere in the world. Any community of people without an accessible church—whether they reside in North America or South Africa—is a mission field.”⁹ This statement confirms that the church is to serve as a mouth piece for the Lord.

The most effective way to plant a church is by understanding the culture around us and what people believe about the Bible and the church. George Barna gives some insight,

**“Street-Level Theology:
What Americans Really Believe**

American view: The Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves. (81%)

Bible view: We are helpless; we must rely completely upon God. (Ps. 37:39-40)

American view: It doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons. (38%)

Bible view: Jesus, alone is the Savior of humankind. (Rev. 1:8; 15:4)

American view: All people will experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their religious beliefs. (44%)

Bible view: Only those who believe in Christ will be saved. (Rom. 3:21-26)

American view: The Bible teaches that money is the root of all evil. (49%)

Bible view: Love of money is the root of many evil pursuits. (1 Tim. 6:10)

American view: People are blessed by God so they can enjoy life as much as possible. (72%)

Bible view: People are blessed to be a blessing to others. (Gen. 12:1-3)

⁹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 31.

American view: The most important task in life is taking care of family. (56%)
Bible view: The most important task is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
(Matt. 22:37)

American view: The primary purpose of life is enjoyment and fulfillment. (58%)
Bible view: Primary purpose of life is to love God completely. (Deut. 6:5)

American view: The Bible is not totally accurate in all that it teaches. (34%)
Bible view: All Scripture is from God and therefore is true and reliable. (2 Tim. 3:16)

American view: All religious faiths teach equally valid truths. (40%)
Bible view: Accepting Jesus is the only way to receive salvation. (John 14:6)

American view: All people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what the name they use for
that spiritual being. (53%)
Bible view: There is only one God who can justify people. (Rom. 3:30)

American view: Satan is not a living being but is just a symbol of evil. (60%)
Bible view: Satan is real, powerful, and evil. (1 Peter 5:8)

American view: If a person is generally good or does enough good things for others during their
life, they will earn a place in heaven. (55%)
Bible view: No one is righteous in God's eyes; salvation is by grace alone. (Rom. 3:10; Matt.
19:16-30; Acts 4:12)

American view: When He lived on earth, Jesus Christ committed sins. (44%)
Bible view: Jesus is divine; He never committed a sin, although He bore all the sins of
humankind. (2 Cor. 5:21)

American view: The Holy Spirit is not a living entity but just a symbol of God's power or
presence. (61%)
Bible view: The Spirit dwells within the hearts of all true believers. (2 Cor. 1:22)

American view: After He was crucified, Jesus Christ did not return to life physically. (40%)
Bible view: He was resurrected, spent time with His followers, then returned to heaven. (Acts
1:1-9; John 20-21)

American view: Whatever works in your life is the only truth you can know. (32%)
Bible view: God's truth is made clear through the Bible and the Holy Spirit. (John 8:32; Heb.
4:12; 1 Cor. 2:10-16)

American view: There are some sins that not even God can forgive. (34%)

Bible view: God can forgive any sin if we truly repent. (1 John 1:9)”¹⁰

These statistics are alarming and are blatant accounts as to why the church is not growing at a healthy rate. The church would do well to inform its members of these statistics to alleviate any malformed preconceived ideas on how to proselytize the lost with quick prayers or a series of questions out of a book. The above views from the American culture are disturbing and prove that the church is unhealthy at best and should be revived immediately. Barna gives his view of what we should do, “Having devoted the last eighteen years of my life to studying the American people, their churches, and the prevailing culture, I’ve concluded that within the next few years America will experience one of two outcomes; either massive spiritual revival or total moral anarchy...As a rational social scientist confronted with a warehouse full of behavioral and attitudinal data...well, the prospects are not encouraging.”¹¹

This data is discouraging in the face of the culture which surrounds us, but we know that all things work together for good. The stage is set for the church, ‘called out ones’, to fall upon their knees and cry out to their Savior for salvation from the enemy. Gordon MacDonald describes a possibility of revival, “Somewhere in the early nineties, Drucker wrote about great changes in history:

Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross...a ‘divide.’ Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself—its worldview, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their parents were born.”¹²

¹⁰ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 21-22.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 1.

¹² Gordon MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007), 56.

This information can and should be used to further the church and a revival amongst believers to rally the Christian faith in a dying world. If there is to be a revival there has to be a repentant church. Many create and forward emails and messages in this modern culture about how Christians should behave and what God would have them do so that He would return, but many believers are not walking the walk only using cheap words.

God gives clear instructions in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”¹³ This is a very straightforward solution to the American spiraling culture of gluttony, greed, and selfishness. God always provides a solution for the church. He has also called those who are doing the very thing He commanded and are planting churches...some very large churches.

“Many of these churches have intentionally rejected a Seeker approach, with its nontraditional language and mind-set...It is not surprising that these high-energy megachurches have a large percentage of attendees under the age of thirty-five and from all racial groups. It appears that many of those drawn to these churches have had little experience with Christianity, but unlike the Seeker model, they desire to embrace the established church tradition on their own terms in new ways, rather than reject and eliminate the old practices.”¹⁴ These churches are doing ‘church’ right and getting negative press for the perception of being impersonal. The statistics for megachurches do not seem to back this finding, in fact, they appear to be growing at

¹³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 605.

¹⁴ Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 41.

a quicker rate than ‘average’ sized churches. “Apparently, the megachurch reality isn’t too big for everyone because nearly 4.5 million people attend megachurches each week. Expand this to those who might call a megachurch their ‘home church’ and consider themselves to be members, and this number could easily reach twelve million people or as many as 10 percent of all participating church members in the United States.”¹⁵ This trend is a positive reminder of how the church should be growing. The church also needs to duplicate itself with church plants, otherwise no matter how large the church becomes it has not fulfilled its purpose to reach the lost.

Churches are not necessarily healthy just because they are large, but healthy churches may also be changing with the culture while remaining true to God’s Word. Gordon MacDonald states how trying to change his church culture was difficult due to the music and how he remembers something he read, “I thought of something I’d read by its composer, Matt Redman, in his book *The Unquenchable Worshipper*. He and his pastor had become disturbed about the substandard worship in their church. As a result they stopped all the music for a time until everyone could examine his or her heart and come to a fresh understanding of what it was like to call upon the living God of the Bible, the Father of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ The church must focus upon the Lord at all times, when the church loses focus it can begin to have detrimental effects on all the members as well as the community around it. The community is directly affected by the church; their actions directly and indirectly affect the people in the surrounding areas whether they are aware of this or not. The world is watching the Christian to see whether they are living

¹⁵ Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 46.

¹⁶ Gordon MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007), 124.

by God's Word. John speaks of this in his Gospel 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."¹⁷

"Jesus came and destroyed the dividing wall that not only separated man from God but also Jew from Gentile. God is about destroying walls that divide. The church will gain traction in the multicultural environment when she begins to dismantle the walls created not by the hands of God but by our own hands. Sometimes this will require nothing less than confession of the sin of racism and prejudice and the kind of repentance that leads to change. It isn't enough to go to church with a diverse world; God calls us to embrace those who are different as brothers and sisters."¹⁸ To follow this credo shall prove a healthy church and grow to maturity to plant new churches to further the kingdom of God. Churches will purposefully be planted and grown when the church is functioning as an organism in lieu of an organization.

It is extremely difficult for a church to be a healthy organism in a corrupt culture. "The problem in many of our congregations is not that we've chosen a wrong strategy or have an irrelevant style but that we have an unhealthy culture. It should not be a surprise that if we were to enter many congregations, we could see how the uniqueness of the human spirit and the potential God has placed in each individual is being wasted."¹⁹ Many congregations cannot thrive or grow because they are not using the full body. Without the 'body' of the church functioning as one, the church will inevitably become stagnant then if the waters are not stirred the church will eventually die. Without churches functioning properly there cannot be successful

¹⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1612.

¹⁸ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Orange: Yates & Yates, LLP, 2001), 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 108.

church plants; there may be church plants even from stagnant churches, but the success will more than likely be hindered by the lack of support from the planting church.

“It’s not too difficult to understand that growing churches should plant other churches...Most of these churches tend to be focused inward not outward. They’re concerned with getting themselves off their plateau or turning their situation around. However, what most don’t realize is that one means of accomplishing this is parenting a church.”²⁰ It is not impossible for dying churches to plant a new church, but it is advisable that a church that is in a growth pattern begin to plant churches as a business would begin to create satellite offices. At some point the church must duplicate itself as a healthy cell or it becomes vulnerable to decline, and then ultimately death.

As Christ commanded we, the church, are to go and make disciples of all nations. Stetzer sums it up best, “Even though some people oppose the idea of church planting, we must do it anyway—because it’s biblical...Without church planting, we will not fulfill the Great Commission.”²¹ Evangelism and church planting go hand in hand. Hesselgrave states, “The primary mission of the church and, therefore, of the churches is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches where they can be built up in the faith and made effective in service; thus new congregations are to be planted throughout the world.”²² The church is the body that needs to keep current in the society, but not engulfed by the culture. The church must remain true to its first love, Jesus Christ; with this as the church’s ultimate love and primary focus the worship style, building, and inconsequential things fall to the wayside.

²⁰ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 255.

²¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 14.

²² David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 17.

Paul's method of church planting is one of the most used when proving that church planting is biblical. "There can be little question that if there is a biblical model of the best way to go about the task of evangelizing populations and planting Christian congregations all around the world, it is to be found in the ministry of the apostle Paul...In addition, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to identify himself as a 'wise master builder' of church foundations (1 Cor. 3:10)."²³ The cycle that Paul 'created' is one that has a logical beginning and an end. This does not mean once a church is planted that is the end; however, it means that it is time to move to the next church plant. Each church must create more churches to continue to spread the Gospel for the kingdom.

"Perhaps the best example of a church that reproduced itself through starting churches was the church located in the city of Antioch in Syria. The missionary journeys described in the book of Acts were vital to the spread of Christianity. However, these were largely church planting ventures that came out of the church at Antioch."²⁴ This church was continually planting churches. This is an exceptional understanding of the Great Commission to 'go' and make disciples of all the nations. As a church reproduces it gains momentum and can influence its surrounding community instead of the opposite being true. It is important to be culturally relevant as well. "Realize, too, that growing numbers of people now judge the validity and relevance of a church service by the church's use of technology. Their perception, right or wrong, is that if a church is intimately connected to the new digital world then it is more likely to

²³ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 42.

²⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 255.

understand their pressures and challenges, and is therefore more likely to offer relevant commentary and solutions.”²⁵

To further the church plant we must embrace the pieces of the ‘body’ that have specific gifts to help create a healthy church and why these gifts are important to the church’s survival. “Only in recent years has the church reawakened to the importance of spiritual gifts. One of the great renewals in the last forty years has been the moving away from programs and methods to an emphasis on spiritual gifts. And every one of us who has sought to discover and use our spiritual gifts has begun to experience a more vibrant and fulfilling life...If spiritual gifts are so critical and essential to a healthy church life and a powerful ministry, then how much more powerful would a church be in which faith, hope, and love prevailed?”²⁶ Each individual in the church plays an important part of the church organism. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 Paul writes about the body in verses 12, 14, and 27, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ...For in fact the body is not one member but many...Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”²⁷

As each member is important to the church we must realize there are those who are called out to plant churches. “The apostles (missionaries) and evangelists were at the forefront of the early effort in church-extension evangelism. There were many ordinary saints, of whom only a few are named, who ‘went everywhere preaching the word’ and participating in the task of planting churches...there are those men who had the gift of apostleship and were called

²⁵ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 65.

²⁶ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Orange: Yates & Yates, LLP, 2001), 147.

²⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1748-1749.

‘messengers [apostoloi] of the churches’ (2 Cor. 8:23).”²⁸ These men were called to be the ones who carried the Gospel to the nations and making disciples.

“The evangelist and church planter bear the responsibility to encourage converts to confess Christ, but converts bear the responsibility to actually make such a confession. Situations vary. In one case the convert may be an extrovert, the conversion very dramatic, and the culture conducive to individual decision-making. In another case the convert may be an introvert, the decision to become a Christian may be the result of a long process, and the culture may exact a tremendous toll for conversion.”²⁹ The conversion must be a process in a church planters calling. The church planter becomes a man of many hats wearing the hat required for the specific function required at the time. As noted above, the church planter is still responsible just like the rest of the flock to win new souls to the Lord.

The church has somehow packaged conversion into a small three-step process and when the church planter leaves to go into a new culture this package does not always work. “Imagine a missionary who’s traveled the globe to a tribe that’s never heard the gospel, never seen a Bible, or never heard the name of Jesus. Imagine that the missionary preaches immediately upon arrival, ‘All you need to do is repent of your sins, believe the Bible, and ask Jesus into your heart.’ Only blank stares would follow. The church planter can’t assume that people understand who Jesus is or what sin has done to their lives, even in North America.”³⁰ The assumption that a simple understanding can cause a conversion may be a danger to the lost due to the possibility

²⁸ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 95.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 185.

³⁰ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 184.

of a false conversion. Each person sharing the Gospel must consider the establishment of a relationship with the lost to reach them through a true and meaningful process.

“Clearly, to influence the nation with the truths of Christ demands that we be vigilant in tracking the forces of change. Before we can strategically shape or adapt to the challenges before us, we must be aware of and sensitive to those transitions in reality. Only then can we create and implement responses that position us to have influence for God’s glory... We must be careful to adapt to our environment in ways that establish the relevance of Christianity without going overboard in our efforts to accommodate people’s needs and desires.”³¹ This reiterates the need for the church planter to change with his culture and community around him without sacrificing the Biblical truths set before him. Each culture brings with it baggage that is typically not able to be implemented within Christianity. While this may happen, this does not mean that the entire culture or community’s behavior must be entirely scrapped and set aside. It is important as most missionaries are coming to find that there must be a cultural gap bridged with Christianity not in spite of God’s Word.

A prime example of cultural bridging without losing the message can be found in some of America’s megachurches. “Our experience is that with few exceptions, megachurch senior pastors are not great preachers in the classical, homiletical styles that are taught in seminaries. They are instead gifted communicators who use a variety of styles of teaching and exposition to get across their message. They recognize the value of ‘packaging’ their message with phrases and stories that are easy to understand.”³²

³¹ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 69.

³² Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 65.

Even Paul stated that the church needed to be ever changing. In 1 Cor. 9:18-23 Paul states,

“What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.”³³

This scripture states that we are to do whatever it takes to reach the lost without losing our focus on Jesus Christ. The church can and has done this to some extent, but in America our culture changed so quickly that the church got left behind. The church has to become deliberate in its endeavor to reach the lost where they are.

“Authentic church planting—planting a church that reaches unbelievers—requires what we might call ‘the soil of lostness.’

First, the church planter must be intentional about developing an evangelism strategy, figuring out how to reach the lost instead of just rearranging church members in a given community. Without intentionality, evangelism remains undone. Intentionality causes the planter to plan for personal evangelism and leads to the creation of a strategy characterized by a high level of commitment to reach the unchurched.”³⁴ Deliberately planting a church in a specific location where no one has gone before is specifically where the church is called to go.

³³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1742.

³⁴ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 183.

Where the church goes there will be bumps in the road. The church is called to suffer for Christ's sake. This refining process can make the church purer and maintain its efficiency in evangelism, but when it has dross it cannot function properly. McManus relays some of his own experiences of bumps from congregations as noted, "In the first three years at this church, I had conversations I would have never believed had I not been there. One of our leaders came with his wife to meet with another elder and me. Their complaint was that the church had become too evangelistic! I was shocked that anyone would be that honest." This is how the church becomes immobilized when the vines within are done growing and reaching out for the sun/Son.

Fortunately, for the church and the church planter they can have hope in the fact that God will not let His church fail. Matthew relays Christ's words in 16:18, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."³⁵ The unflappable church will overcome the culture and the community, but not without its share of trials and tribulations so that it can share its burdens with its head, Christ Jesus. Barna sums it up here, "It is important to remember that God does not need us to accomplish any of His ends, yet He has chosen to work through us. We must be constantly sensitive to His guidance, which He gives to us through the Bible, experience, history, and direct revelation.

Remember that the struggle to revitalize the Church is a spiritual battle. As fallible, fallen humans, we are in over our heads...We cannot make progress without the lordship and

³⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)* (Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997), 1423.

influence of God.”³⁶

As Christians go forth in the endeavor to plant churches they are riddled with heavy fire as to why their needs to be a church—this question even comes from other Christians not just the lost. In a lost and dying world the church planter must establish the need, and more importantly, the reason for churches needed. Stetzer realizes this in his writing, “Some people note that the Great Commission does not use the term *church planting*. Thus, they argue that the Great Commission is fulfilled only through existing congregations (particularly in highly church areas). But the early church was filled with the Holy Spirit, according to the book of Acts (2:4, 4:8,31; 9:17, 13:9). These Spirit-filled disciples planted churches. It’s obvious by their actions that the first hearers of the Great Commission assumed its fulfillment required multiplying disciples and forming new congregations.”³⁷ Powerful words for the one called to church plant and the Christian who says that the church is unbiblical. The church is the body of Christ. Simply stated, but the ramifications from the books and studies that surround this simple statement could, and have, fill libraries.

This leads to how church plants are to be received and completed. Church plants need to be completed. This sounds contradictory to scripture, but once a church has been planted it is time to plant a new church in a new community where there is a need to hear the Gospel. Hesselgrave expounds, “Prayer for guidance ascended to the Lord of the church. Potential areas for a new work were surveyed and evaluated. Plans were carefully laid. Then contacts were made, the gospel was communicated, converts were won, believers were congregated, faith was

³⁶ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 99.

³⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 41.

confirmed, leadership was consecrated, the church was commended to the grace of God, and the missionary-evangelists were relocated. From the beginning it was in their hearts that, once established, the new churches would become the bases for the prayers, plans, and participation essential to enter still other territories for Christ both at home and abroad.”

Some say the first church was in Acts, others state it was during Christ’s words to Peter; either way the church is here, and it will survive the culture and the community’s shifting and changing nature. The church can receive its groom with purity only because the groom gave Himself as a sacrifice so that the church, as His bride, may be found spotless before Him. The churches will answer for numerous misgivings and sins that it has committed along the way to understanding how to plant and reproduce itself to reach the lost in this world, but we have the assurance that as long as the church identifies itself with the teachings of Jesus Christ and follows the biblical principles set before it by God then the church cannot and will not fail.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barna, George. *The Second Coming of the Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998.
- Hesselgrave, David J. *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000.
- Lane, Jack M. *Living the Way.org*. 2010. [Online]. Available from <http://livingtheway.org/ekklesia.html> (accessed May 14, 2010).
- MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV)*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997.
- MacDonald, Gordon. *Who Stole My Church?* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.
- McManus, Erwin Raphael. *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind*. Orange: Yates & Yates, LLP, 2001.
- Stetzer, Ed. *Planting Missional Churches*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.
- Thumma, Scott, and Dave Travis. *Beyond Megachurch Myths*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.