

Contemporary Issues

Why Plant a Church?

Rev. Stephen King

You have your Bibles; you can turn to Matthew 28. We'll be looking at verses 19 through 20 this evening. Hold your place there. We're going to come back to it. The topic we have before us this evening is why plant a church? This is a topic that I am very passionate about probably stemming from my days with campus outreach when I worked for campus outreach at the College of Charleston, because church planting and campus ministry mirror one another said for campus ministry is probably on a micro scale of out planting is you have to raise support. Then once you have your support raise, you go to a campus and you're trying to create something out of nothing, right? You're trying to meet people, you're trying to build contacts through sports teams, through dorm rooms, through fraternities & sororities. And you're hoping to share the gospel as many people as possible to start a Bible study or start multiple Bible studies and hoping that people come to know Lord. And through that, maybe one day you start a large group gathering, a large group meeting, and then you're discipling, you're sharing the gospel, you're equipping, you're developing leaders. It's very much a front line type of ministry. It's very exciting. It's difficult. It's challenging in many ways, but you get to see lives change, and every year you almost have to start over because there's new freshman to meet, there's new ministry, there's new people to share the gospel with.

And that very much mirrors church planting. So you think about church planting, and many people are not quite sure what that is. Or how do you do that? Some people think you just show up to a city and you open up shop, open up a building and say, come on in. That's not quite how church planting happens. It happens very much like campus ministry.

You raise support, you go to a city, a city of need, see, that needs a church, maybe needs the gospel. And you begin building contacts. You begin meeting people. You begin building relationships and sharing the gospel with as many people as possible. And you're hoping to start a Bible study, maybe in your home, or maybe in somebody else's home or in a coffee shop, and you're hoping that that Bible study grows and multiplies and more people reach for the gospel, and more people are gathered in, and more people want to be a part of this movement to eventually you can launch a worship service, and then hopefully you can launch a string of worship services

to eventually you can plant a church and have a church established. They very much mirror one another. And so I'm very passionate about it because my experience with college ministry, because of my experience with some church plants, through that ministry. And I'm also passionate about this topic because of my time here at Wood. Brier wood is a church planting church.

It's probably not news to you. You've probably seen the fruit and the evidence of that in our National Missions Conference or Global Missions Conference were highly engaged in the mission that Christ has called us to do, and we get to see planters from all over the U.S. and all over the world tell their stories. We are a church planting church.

I want to give you a little bit of a history, kind of a brief overview. This isn't all that we have done with church planting, but I want to give you some highlights along the way. And again, you're probably very

familiar with that. We ourselves or our church plant in 1960, Birmingham Presbyterian Presbytery of the Pca's desire to plant a church and a growing area of Birmingham called Cahaba Heights.

And they asked a young, up and coming pastor named Frank Barker to see if he would start it. He agreed. They started in a storefront and Cahaba Heights. And Frank had this idea, this philosophy of ministry, to share his faith with as many people as possible, to preach God's Word faithfully exegetical going, verse by verse, and to pray and ask God to move in big ways.

That was his ministry, philosophy. And God blessed it and blessed it tremendously. And he had this heart for evangelism. He had a heart to share the gospel as much as possible. And he wanted to give ministry a way. And that began to multiply, and we began to grow. And that DNA in which we want to reach people for Christ, kept multiplying and kept showing itself in different ministries like campus outreach may be ill and a whole host of others, but it also showed in church planting.

In 1983, there was this upcoming pastor in Miami, Florida. You may have heard of him. His name was Harry Reeder. And he had seen, by God's grace significant success in Pinelands. And so Briarwood and Frank and some others decided, hey, what if we ask him? He was from Charlotte, North Carolina. What if we ask him? Because now we're in this new denomination called the PCA. What if we ask him to go to Charlotte, his hometown, to plant a flagship church in Charlotte, to plant in a key city, a key church that can multiply and not just plant one church, but plant a presbytery. And we will support him significantly. And so they got the session together, got others together, and agreed to give him support him \$25,000 a year each year for three years, which was a significant sum of money back in 1993 because we believed in him, because Pastor Reeder had the same vision as Frank Barker, that he wanted to share the gospel with everybody they could possibly share the gospel with. He wanted to preach the God's Word, exegetical verse by verse, and he wanted to pray, asking God to move in mighty ways. And God blessed it so much. So God was allowed him to plant, help plant through the ministry, through his church and through his ministries, multiple churches in Charlotte and throughout the United States and throughout the world, and the church groups, and evolved over 3000 members by the time he became the Senior Pastor of Briarwood.

The Gospels multiply and the gospel was moving. You know, Frank, in those days was asking God to make Briarwood into a mighty church that reaches the nations. You began to see the fruit and the evidence of God answering that prayer. In 1988, Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church, the church we planted, we called a guy named Bob Flayhart who had years earlier established a satellite campus down in the Oak Mountain community at the Upper School. Frank Parker would preach the preach, from this pulpit at 8:00 in the morning, and he would drive down to the upper school, preach a service down there, and come back and preach at 11:00 service. And so there was already rumblings. There was already a start of a church. And so they had this idea, what if we call somebody to go there and plant in the Oak Mountain community and they began conversations with Bob. We supported him. We sent him to the Oak Mountain community. The same vision, that same heart, that same passion to reach people for Christ, to preach God's word, to pray and ask God to move in mighty ways. And the church got founded in 1998, and we helped him by supporting him. And we made thousands and thousands of phone calls in the Oak Mountain community gather in interest for this new church. And then God blessed them with church planting as well. Even in our own city, they birthed three daughter churches in our city Red Mountain Church, Christ Community Church in Helena, and Homewood Community Church. These are our

granddaughter churches. More people being reached by the gospel because they multiply in effect of the mission, which was a stirring in the heart of Frank and Barbara and our members.

In 1999. One of our own, Billy Barnes, was our long time singles pastor had a heart again. It's like, hey, we want to reach more people for the gospel. There's a city that needs a church. It's a key city. So he felt led he and his wife and family to go move to a place called Scottsdale, Arizona, right outside of Phoenix. And through that ministry and through his ministry there and planting a church there, they ought to see three churches planted. Now, their church no longer exists, but they were investing God's kingdom. Multiple churches were planted. We supported him, sent people to help him. In 2008, we called a guy name, a pastor named Ronnie Garcia, to plant a church in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico had zero churches at the time, so his vision of what we call a man to go down and send a team, support him to plant a church in Puerto Rico and through their ministry, three churches in Puerto Rico now exists in the PCA. The gospel multiplying 2013 out. Alton Hardy had this vision to plant a church in a very difficult area in Birmingham in Fairfield, Alabama and conversations through our presbytery.

This wasn't a Briarwood plant, this was a presbytery plant, but we were significantly involved and significantly engaged. This is a sister church of ours that we still partner with today, and God has used Elton and his team over there to do some incredible ministry in Fairfield. Some of our members actually went on to be members at their church, and now Elton has this manifest vision to plant multiple churches like urban Hope and other places in Birmingham, and Gospels multiply current works that we are doing and engaged with as they work in Detroit. There's a guy named Ryan McVicker. You may have heard him at our national missions conference. He came in asking for support from our church planting committee. With this vision. And this is to reach Detroit for Christ. So that time the PC had a small presence in Detroit. He wanted to plant ten churches by 2030. In Detroit, and by God's grace, they're now at six and a half, according to the executive director, Dan Millward with The Detroit Project, say a half because they got a planter, they got a team. They're ready to go. They're just not quite off the ground yet. Ryan has planted two of those ten already. The gospel multiply to the vision. The mission to reach people for Christ to plant churches. And then currently, the most recent project that we're undertaking is Joel and Ste. Richards. Joel came here as a pastoral intern. This is a vision to equip to establish him after seminary.

They had a vision to go to Hungry. You can't really plant a church in Hungry, so they want to plant a PCH in Hungry, you know, Presbyterian Church in Hungary. And not just plant one church but plant a presbytery. This is a key area with a low gospel presence. They are particularly called and equipped to reach and we come alongside, pray for them. One of my communities have adopted them, get regular updates and we're excited to see what the Lord will do. Why I'm passionate about this topic. Just because God moves in some mighty ways to the ministry of church planting, and this is who we are. This is our DNA. We're a people of mission. We're a people who love to hear about God moving. And it comes from our mission statement. So our mission statement, it says this For God's glory. Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ? That is what we're called to do as a church. We want to worship God. We want to equip you to do so, and they want to equip you to reach.

Now where do we get this from? We didn't just come up with it. One day during a brainstorming exercise, we got it from the Great Commission. This is straight out of the Great Commission. And so if there's anything that I want you to get tonight and since, why plant a church? This is the main point that

I want you to take away. If we're going to be a great commission church, we must be a church planting church. If we're going to be a great, great commission church, we must be a church planting church.

So three points, three reasons why we plant a church.

Number one, we plant a church because it's the necessary application of the Great Commission. It is the necessary application of the Great Commission.

Number two, church planting has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to reach the church. The unchurched and the non-Christian. It has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to reach the church, the unchurched, the non-Christian.

And number three, why we plant a church is because it blesses the sending church and really all established church. It blesses.

So let's unpack number one, the necessary application of the Great Commission. Let's turn to our text in Matthew 28. Now, when I'm about to say as I unpack, this text is not new. You have heard this before many times. Hopefully you remember because this isn't my thoughts. These are not my ideas. These are not my four points. This comes from Pastor Reeder and his diligent exegesis of this text to teach us what is the mission God has called the church. God has called us to one particular mission. It comes from the Great Commission. And so this flows out of his teaching and why I'm doing this. And I'm doing this intentionally, because I want you to see that this isn't something that's a new idea or something detached from who we are, but this is who we are. This comes from the Great Commission, and this comes directly from the discipleship of our pastors. And so I'm want to echo his teaching on this and give us a few other reasons why. The plain church. And so Pastor Reeder would say that our calling is to be on mission on message and ministry that flows out of the Great Commission. Let's read the Great Commission. It says this *go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you to the end of the age.* So the principal, the principal command in this text, the mission that we're called to do is to make disciples of all nations. That's the principal command. That's what we're called to do. That's the mission. The message is that we teach them all that Jesus taught. The message is the Word of Christ. And foundationally it's the gospel, the hope of salvation. Paul calls it a first importance. So we preach the gospel as our message, and we preach the whole council of God's Word. That is our message. And then our ministry, which flows out of the Great Commission. There's these four ministries that come out of it. It's the Ministry of Evangelism, the Ministry of Outreach enfolded the Ministry of inReach, equipping the Ministry of Down Reach, and exhausting the Ministry of Up Reach.

And so, the Ministry of Outreach, we're called to make disciples out of nine disciples when he says make disciples. He's not saying make more mature followers of Jesus. That comes in the equipping part. He's calling us to reach people through the gospel proclamation, both word and deed, to be sharing the gospel, trusting that the Holy Spirit would work in someone's heart to make a dead heart into a live heart. That's the Ministry of outreach. The ministry of enrages and folding or to baptize them in the name of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is the entry right into God's covenant people. It's how we identify that we follow Jesus, that we belong to him, and we belong to his people, and we belong to his community.

And once they're involved, once they're baptized, once they become members, we then shepherd them. We care for them. We love them, and we meet their needs. That's the ministry of inReach, the Ministry of Enfolding, and then the Ministry of Equipping, which we call the Ministry of Down Reach. We are to teach them to observe. I like the translation of obey better. We teach them to obey all that Christ commanded and see inside the church. We get to do this in a broad level, in a narrow level, and everywhere in between. I think discipleship best happens in the context of a local church, because in the local church, you get the faithful preaching of God's Word on the Lord's day. In a broad level, the expounding of God's Word to you. And then we have Sunday School, and we meet for Sunday school, and we get more teaching on God's Word, how to apply and apply it, particularly in our context and maybe in our stage of life. Let me go down a little bit further. And you may join a small group if it's inside of your Sunday school community, or maybe a men's study or women's study. We have the men of the covenant, the women of the covenant here at Briarwood, and you go a little bit deeper. You get a little bit more application and then some pull off and do some lifelong life discipleship groups where there's more accountability, there's more equipping of how to share the gospel, how to how to share your faith, how to share testimony, how to better utilize your time, how to kill sin. And then you can go a little bit further and have one on one mentorship. But there may be people that you rub shoulders with here at this church that you say, I want to learn from them. And one of the beauties about Christ Church is that it's made up of a wide section of people age and stage different backgrounds, different professions that you can learn from.

And so there's the Ministry of Down Reach, the ministry of equipping that we grow. And the church is a beautiful place to learn and grow and be equipped. And then there's the ministry of Upreach, which is the ministry of worship. It's the end goal of the Great Commission. The end goal of Great Commission is worship. John Piper, you've heard this before. He says this worship is the goal and fuel emissions missions exist because worship does it. Missions is our way of saying the joy of knowing Christ is not a private or tribal or national or ethnic privilege. It is for all. That's why we go, because we have tasted the joy of worshiping Jesus, and we want all the families of the earth to be included. We have come to know the saving love of our Savior, Jesus. We know him. We've run to him in brokenness and our sin and our guilt. And he has forgiven us, and he has brought us into his family, into his community. He's washed away our sin. He set us on a new course, a new future with a new identity. With a future hope. And we worship him. And that motivates us to tell others about who he is. We have been changed, we have been washed, we have been saved. And so we want others to know. And we see this in revelation chapter seven, because before the throne, we see every tribe, every nation, every peoples, every language is before the lamb worshiping him. The ministry of upreach.

Now, how did the early church, the apostles, understand this great commission? They got this mission from their Savior, their Lord Jesus. They were called to wait until the Holy Spirit descended upon them. And it happens in acts the day of Pentecost. Turn over to acts chapter two. Peter begins to preach the sermon of the day of Pentecost, and it says that 3000 people were added that day. That's just men include women and children. We've got about 10,000 people. And what happens next? Acts two, verse 42, it says, and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship. You have discipleship, equipping in reach, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers, and all came upon every soul.

And many wonders and signs were being done to the apostles, and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings, and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need, and day by day attending the temple together. The ministry of UpReach

together and breaking bread in their homes. They received food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day who was being saved.

The Ministry of Outreach. So they understood. When the gospel was preached, people were converted, people were baptized. The next thing to do was establish a church, a plant, a church. And this in acts two is the planting of the Jerusalem church. And that's the pattern we'll see through the book of acts. The Gospels proclaimed, people believe and are converted, then they're baptized, and then a church is planted. We'll see that time and time again. In acts chapter 11, we have the Church of Antioch planted and after Steven was killed, people were scattered. They moved to Antioch and they started a church. And Acts 3 Antioch has this idea. Hey, this was wonderful. We had all these scattered believers that came. We started a church here. What if we continue to do this? What if we continue to plant churches to reach more people for Christ? Let's call our own. Let's call Barnabas and Paul to go out and share the gospel. And so they do. And Clint Clifton observes, he says this. Over the course of 13 years, Paul embarked on three missionary journeys, during which he traveled more than 7000 miles and planted at least 14 churches and steps. There says this when the apostles and disciples heard the Great Commission, we might consider what they did next.

They did not just evangelize, they Congregationalist. When the disciples heard the Great Commission, they planted churches. So should we. That is the call of the Great Commission. That's how we fulfill being on mission, on message and ministry. We plant churches for the advancement of the gospel. We make disciples of all nations. So why we plant churches is the necessary application of the Great Commission.

Now, number two, church planting is one of the most effective ways to reach the church, the unchurched, the non-Christian. Now, when we say the church, we mean those who attended church at one time, maybe a pretty lengthy amount of time. But for whatever reason, they had stopped going to church. Maybe they moved to a new city. Maybe there's a life event that happened. We've seen a lot of church since Covid. People stopped going to church for whatever reason. As the church, there's a new book out called The Great Church of America that talks about this and talks about the different types of people that did church and how might we reach them. It's very fascinating. What's the church now? Obviously the unchurched, the non-Christian, a little more self-explanatory, but church planting has shown numerous studies over the course of decades, have shown this is the one of the most effective ways to reach people. And 2015, a study by LifeWay Research found that 42% of those. You can hit the next slide. This is a graph. You see the second and third bar graph on the screen. You combine them. You get 42%, on average, 42% of those worshipping at churches launch since 2008, 2008 2015 previously never attended church. I hadn't attended church in many years, by contrast. So if you have church, plants reach about 42% of those not attending church. By contrast, established churches have about 80 to 90% of their new members come by way of transfer from another congregation, so only 20 to 10% of established churches are reaching the church. The unchurched and non-Christian. In 2018, a study by the Southern Baptist Convention reported that church plants baptize more people at a rate of 67%, 67%.

There's a study done by David Argentino. He's a church planter in Columbia, South Carolina. He looked at the statistics of the PCA, and he found out he shared this at our General Assembly this year. He found that only 5% of PCA churches are seeing five or more adult baptisms and a give it a year. Only 1% of churches in the PCA are doing it year after year. And so if we want to reach people, we want to see people coming off, come to the Lord and we need to be about church planting. Now, why are church

plants very effective at reaching the unchurched and the unbeliever? I'll give you a couple reasons. Number one, the church planter himself has a passion for evangelism, right? They're drawn to it. They're excited about it. They have a holy discontent in themselves to want to reach people for Christ. And they know that church planting is one of the most effective ways to reach people. So they go into church planting. And when you have a passion for something, you begin to develop the personalities and the skills to make you effective at it. So they have a passion for it was a church planter that I was talking to in Florida. He was sharing to me about how he planted his church where he's at. He had done 17 years in Montgomery as a pastor there, but he had moved back to his hometown with the hopes that maybe he could plant a church there. But the pandemic happened, some other things happened, and he was contemplating moving back to Montgomery, and he was having a conversation with his neighbor who doesn't know the Lord. And through that conversation, he was about to tell them, or he was telling them they were about to put their house on sale to move back to Montgomery and his neighbor again, who's not a believer says, you cannot do that. He's like, why God's calling you to plant a church here, and we're going to be a part of it. That made them reevaluate everything. Now, who makes a decision based off of one conversation that you have with a nonbeliever? It's somebody that's a heart and a passion for evangelism – they planted the church and they became members. Praise the Lord. They have a passion for it.

Number two, imagination and innovation. Right? Because you're passionate about something, you begin to dream and think about how can you be more effective at reaching people? And so you begin to strategize. You begin to think about how you can do it. And so they come up with new ideas that they execute a couple a couple of illustrations that I as I talk to different church planters that they were doing. One was a back porch ministry that was started and during the pandemic, they called it a comfortable place to have uncomfortable conversations about Jesus. And they did it on somebody's back porch, and anybody could come and ask any question. But there was one catch, one rule if you came and if you're a Christian, you had to bring a nonbeliever, otherwise you weren't invited back. And they said they saw some incredible fruit. That ministry has continued on. They wanted to have a comfortable place to have uncomfortable conversations about Jesus with. The rule is that if you're a believer, you had to bring an unbeliever or you couldn't come back. Another church planter said, well, I don't have a church. He had more pastoral gifts. And so he decided he was going to be the pastor of his community until they told him to stop. So I don't have a church in my home. And so I'm trying to reach this community for Christ. I'm just going to meet people and pastor them. I'll walk up to them and tell them, I think everybody needs a pastor, and I'm going to be yours, and I'm going to pray for you, help you in any way, give me counsel, give you wisdom. But I just want you to know that I'm here. Reach out to me any time, he said. The fruit of that has been amazing how many people have opened up and shared about their lives, and they've had spiritual conversations just because he decided to pastor nonbelievers.

And then we think about in our backyard with Urban Hope in Fairfield. Now this is an established church now, but it's still very much have a church planting mentality and out and Hardy has now partnered with a grocery store. All right. This imagination, this innovation because Fairfield is a food desert, which means there's no grocery store in their city. And so some entrepreneur decided, hey, I want to come put a grocery store to be a witness in this community and out. Hardy and Urban Hope has partnered with them and in a sense, to help share the gospel in both word and deed. They're hoping that by establishing something like a grocery store where there's a huge need, it'll open up opportunities to share the gospel and he said most recent conversation that I had with him, you'd be amazed at the conversations we're

having. See, church plants are innovative, they're imaginative, and they have this motivation. They have a motivation. They have to reach people for Christ. Why? Because they might not exist if they don't, they don't have established believers coming week after week. They have to be motivated to reach people or they may not be around. So this creates a necessity.

I was talking with Randy Pope, and he was telling me the story about how he planted perimeter. He said at the time I supported him, but they gave him a year's salary and said, you got to plant a church in one year and the money runs out and you probably could get away with that back when he planted the PCA doesn't do that now. They give you about 3 or 5 years and maybe even talking about extending that a little bit even further. But when Randy planted perimeter, he had one year. But he talks about how great of a blessing that was because it made him so motivated to get out there, to meet people, to share the gospel, to start Bible studies, to eventually launch his church as motivation.

And then number four, there's comfort for the nonbeliever. See a new church is isn't in some sense, is very it's easier for a nonbeliever to attend because there's not establish relationships because everybody's new, so they can come in and meet new people, and they can be a part of that community, because everybody's new. And church plants often take place in very neutral locations, because there isn't a church building, sometimes in coffee shops, sometimes in schools, sometimes in restaurants. But there are places they used to frequent. They kind of know what the vibe is. They kind of know what the feel is. And so they're a little bit more comfortable about trying it out. And so there's a comfort for the nonbelievers. They come and check it out. It's easy to break in to the community.

Now last point why do we plant a church? Church planting often blesses sending churches. Church planting often blesses sending churches. See how giving church is a living church? A giving church is a living church. And we know that from Jesus because Jesus tells us it's more blessed to give than to receive, right? And that's the way the gospel works, and that's the way the mission that God has called us to do that he says, I'm going to bless you so that you can bless others. I'm going to bless you so that you bless the nations. And that's the pattern. The word follows. A Pastor Reeder used to use his illustration to describe. Then he used the illustration of the Sea of Galilee versus the Dead Sea. And if you're familiar with these two seas, the Sea of Galilee is full of life. There's many fish, many wildlife that surround the sea. There's commerce that takes place. But the Dead Sea is the complete opposite. It's dead now. They both share in common the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan River feeds the Sea of Galilee, but also comes back out of it. And the water from the Sea of Galilee irrigates and supplies kind of in the areas, the land around the Sea of Galilee. So it's a giving sea. It doesn't just hold, but it gives away and it gives life. But the dead sea, which sits, I believe in my notes, says it sits at 1300ft below sea level. And it gives nothing away. There are no tributaries, there's no river that flows from it. It just takes in. It's a sea with enormous resources. But those resources just sit and they give nothing away, and therefore has the highest salt content in the world, ten times that of the ocean. And nothing can survive.

And that's a great illustration for the church. If we're going to be a living church, we're going to be a church on mission. We're going to be a church blessed by God to fulfill his mission. We got to be a church that gives people ministry, money, support, whatever it is, we give it away for the sake of God's kingdom and God blesses it. I think about our church, right? We have a glorious history of this, right? One of my favorite times of the years is our mission conferences, where we get to hear about all the different missionaries that we're supporting and that we send teams to, and that we send our own people to, to

go there. And the excitement that brings and the energy that brings, you can feel it. And one of our conferences, see, when we give away, it creates life in us. It creates passion. It gets buy in to the mission.

There's a church planter in Lakeland, Florida that was having a conversation with and he had a heart when he planted in downtown Lakeland is that he wanted to plant not just one church. He wanted to plant a Presbytery there because there wasn't many churches. And there was a great need for the gospel. And he had this philosophy. He said, he's going to plant his church, but he's going to call others to be apprentices so that they can support and send out to be the next church plant in their county. And he has the philosophy that when he calls one of those church planters, he gives them the job description. And one of the job description is they have to recruit members from his church to go with him. That's a requirement. And when they preach from the pulpit, they have to recruit people to go with him. He said that philosophy has worked really well, so for one time it was really challenged when one planter took with him their largest donor. So it was a moment to trust the Lord. But by God's grace that church is continue to flourish, they continue to thrive. More and more people are coming to his church. And now there's nine churches in that network in that county.

See, giving churches are living churches. It blesses the sending churches. It blesses established churches. We see that with the ministry of Paul as he plants churches, they begin to support one another, begin to rally and help each other. They began to send financial aid and resources to each other to help advance God's kingdom. And then church plants often teach established churches how to do ministry. Tim Keller says this. There is, however, no better way to teach older congregations about new skills and methods for reaching new people groups than by planting new churches. It is new churches that have freedom to be innovative, so they become the research and development department for the whole body in the city.

Often older congregations have been too limited to try a particular approach or absolutely sure it would not work here. But when the new church in town succeeds wildly with the new method, the other churches eventually take notice and gain the courage to try it themselves. So often church plants, because they're innovative, they're imaginative because they have the time, because they have the ability to try new things, because there's no established routines.

They've been the catch all new ways to preach the gospel in an ever changing context. And then the established churches, the ascending churches learn from those and begin to apply. And then inevitably, when a church plants reaches somebody for Christ, they often end up in established churches after several years. Why? Because maybe you reach a young family and they come to Christ and are starting to grow.

But as they're growing, they have bigger, they have different needs. Maybe they have a children's ministry need or a youth ministry need, and that church plant is not at the stage to wish to provide those yet. Instead, they're able to funnel in to other churches that are established to have those types of resources, have those types of ministries.

So as we plant churches, since all churches are blessed now in with this kind of one bonus reason why we plant a church, we plant a church because our Savior is planting his church. We think about with Peter when he says when he answers correctly who Jesus is. He says, You're the Christ, you're the Messiah. You're the Savior. You're the long promised one. And Jesus turns to him and says, on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overthrow. Jesus is building his church. He is calling people to himself. He is redeeming you from sin and death. He has paid for your sin on the cross. He has

given you life abundantly, and he offers life and eternal life to all. And he says, I am building my church. I invite all to be a part of me, to be a part of my family, and to be a part of this mission to reach and rescue sinners from their sin and from the death that awaits them. Join me. What a glorious mission that we're called to. And so our life takeaway is this.

If we desire to be a faithful and if we desire to be faithful to the Great Commission - We must have a commitment and willingness to plant churches at home and abroad. A desire to be faithful to the Great Commission must be seen in the commitment and willingness to plant churches at home and abroad.

Let us pray.

Father, Lord, we praise and thank you for today. We thank you for this opportunity to hear from Your Word, to see how your mission is applied, what you have done throughout the world, what you're doing through church plants.

And we pray, father, you would help equip us to be a sending church. A giving church, father, that's been our legacy. But may we not be complacent. May we continue to press in and maybe continue to press out, maybe continue to proclaim the gospel that new churches are planted. Father, we know that more churches are closing than are starting today.

There is such a need. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few. Send us send teams from our church to plant new churches so that others may know you. We ask all this in your name.

Amen.