



Why plant churches?

By Clint Clifton

The majority of Christians I meet like the idea of church planting conceptually, but would never give serious consideration toward planting one themselves. One reason many Christians do not more readily consider planting churches is that they can't pinpoint a biblical basis for church planting. They simply do not know that the Bible *commands* Christians to start new churches.

Church planting is important because the Church is important

Farming matters because food matters. Hospitals matter because people matter. Church planting matters because the Church matters. Not everyone sees it that way, though. Even some professing Christians don't think the Church is really very important at all.

Many in our society consider churches to be irrelevant, corrupt, antiquated and contentious—which, sadly, is partially true. Civic and governmental authorities often consider churches to be special interest groups that hinder municipal progress and profit.

Does this make the church irrelevant? No. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Jesus' Church is the most important institution in the history of the world, because Jesus is the most important figure in human history. When all the world's books are closed and time yields to eternity, the Church will be celebrated as the most significant institution of all time.

Church planting in the Bible

Just because you can't find the term "church planting" in the Bible doesn't mean church planting is not a biblical idea. If you're looking for it, you'll see church planting all over the New Testament.

- **Jesus was a church planter.**

Jesus, the hero of the Bible, established the universal Church and declared the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). He also led a small congregation of disciples, teaching them the Word of God, sharing communion with them and commissioning them to plant more churches.

- **Paul was a church planter.**

His commissioning by the church at Antioch (Acts 13) marks the beginning of an incredible church-planting streak by the great apostle. Over the course of 13 years, Paul embarked on three missionary journeys, during which he traveled more than 7,000 miles and planted at least 14 new churches.

- **The apostles were church planters.**

The apostles themselves were church planters, and the book of Acts is an account of their church planting ministry. They planted churches with little support from other churches and against great political and religious opposition. Ultimately, their obedience to the Great Commission cost them their lives.

- **The Great Commission is a call to plant churches.**

Jesus' "Great Commission," recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, essentially is a call to plant new churches. We can say this because, throughout the rest of the New Testament, baptizing, teaching and making disciples are exactly what churches are commanded to do! Additionally, the dozen men who originally heard Jesus



say the words “baptize, teach and make disciples” responded by spending the rest of their lives planting new churches.

We think the Great Commission is a call to a two-week mission trip. The disciples thought it was a call to start new churches.

Who misunderstood the Great Commission?

Virtually every evangelical church in North America would agree that the Great Commission applies to all churches, and all churches and all Christians should endeavor to fulfill the Great Commission. Yet, far fewer are able to accept that every church and every Christian should be *involved* in church planting. This perspective contradicts Scripture. It is important to realize the Great Commission is fulfilled by church planting, and the Great Commission cannot be properly fulfilled without planting churches.

Consider how the great preacher Charles Spurgeon urged his congregation, in a sermon titled “The Waterer Watered,” on Sunday, April 23, 1865:

“We encourage our members to leave us to found other Churches; nay, we seek to persuade them to do it. We ask them to scatter throughout the land to become the goodly seed, which God shall bless. I believe that so long as we do this we shall prosper.”