

Planting Churches Study Guide

Chapter 1

1. How much do you know about the recent history of church planting in your country? Would it be worth your while finding out more? If so, how would you go about this?
2. Is the language of “church planting” worth retaining? If not, what language would you suggest instead? How do you respond to the definition of church planting quoted from the *Mission-shaped Church* report?
3. How would you respond to those who argue that evangelism should be the priority for church planters and that other aspects of mission must wait until a church is formed?
4. If you are involved in church planting, what does “success” mean to you? What do you think it means to those who support, fund, or pray for you?
5. In what contexts do you think you would or would not thrive as a church planter? How should you weigh your preferred mission context against the strategic priorities?
6. Which of the following features of the wider cultural context do you regard as the most significant for church planters: consumerism, secularization, individualism, a surveillance society, the therapeutic culture, the culture of violence, tribalism, alternative spiritualities, post-Christendom, the communications revolution, interfaith relations, post-commitment culture, spectatorism, globalization, urbanization or postmodernity? Or what would your own list contain?

Chapter 2

1. As you consider these many different motives for planting churches, which inspire you and which leave you cold?
2. Do you regard any of these reasons for church planting as illegitimate? If so, why?
3. Have you come across or can you think of any other reasons for planting churches?
4. If most churches are planted by other local churches, rather than by denominations or mission agencies, what reasons are likely to be dominant? Does this matter?
5. How would you decide whether God was calling you to become involved in church planting?

Chapter 3

1. Is it helpful to think in terms of distinct models? How much overlap is there between them? How easy are these different models to identify in a real-life situation?
2. Try to find a recently planted church in your area (preferably one that is between two and four years old), and interview those who planted it. What church-planting model did they use, and why?
3. What are the key criteria for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the various church-planting models? What factors might encourage you to adopt one (or more) of these models? What is the role of prayer in this discernment process?

4. Are there any biblical examples of the models of church planting we have examined or the motives that inspire them? You might look at Acts 8:1-4; 11:19-26; 13:1-3; 15:36-40; 16:6-10; 18:1-5.
5. Which of the models are more or less likely to result in attractional churches and which in more incarnational forms of mission?

Chapter 4

1. To which of the five kinds of spaces identified in this chapter as contexts for church planting are you drawn, and why? Are there any other options?
2. How can a planting agency ensure that neither a feasibility study nor a discernment process swamps the other element?
3. Does it matter in which order church planters address the questions “Where?” “How?” and “Why?” as they embark on church planting?
4. How would you adapt the community research process described in this chapter if you were planting a church into a network rather than a neighborhood?
5. Should church planters always sense a call to a particular community, or can you be called to be a church planter and be willing to go wherever an opportunity arises?

Chapter 5

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of mission agencies rather than churches planting churches?
2. Can we do too much preparation before planting a new church?

3. How can churches emerge relationally and organically if the planting process is very carefully planned and organized?
4. What are the essential elements that must be in place before any community can be designated a church? Who decides this?
5. If you were responsible for planting a church, would you hold a launch event?

Chapter 6

1. Reviewing again the twelve church-planting models (described in chapter 3), how does the chosen model affect the balance between the various stakeholders interested in what kind of church emerges?
2. What do *you* regard as the nonnegotiable elements of church? Are there other aspects of your own church or the church you want to plant that you regard as essential in your own context?
3. Which temptation will you find harder to resist—devoting so much time to creating a new church that you marginalize mission, or rushing ahead without thinking through the ecclesial issues and ending up with a clone?
4. Do you agree that it is worth spending time on a mission statement and a summary of core values? Or are such documents likely simply to gather dust on a shelf?
5. Are there any practical issues missing from this chapter that you regard as important for church planters to consider?

Chapter 7

1. How many church planters have you met? What characteristics, if any, do they have in common?
2. Do you have what it takes to be involved in church planting? If you sensed God might be calling you into church planting, how would you check this out?
3. What kind of church planters are likely to be effective in adoption planting? What skills would they need that might not be associated with planters using other models?
4. What elements are missing from the training curriculum outlined in this chapter?
5. If you were planting a church, what spiritual and relational resources would you need to sustain you? How would you go about finding or developing these?