

Planned Parenthood

Preparing Your Church for Parenthood

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America has an estimated 200 million lost and unchurched people, more than the entire populations of all but four other nations.¹ Yet today there are far fewer churches per capita than a hundred years ago.² Many missiologists of our day contend that the best way to evangelize and fulfill the Great Commission is by means of church planting.³ Because church planting is “the most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven,”⁴ intentionally parenting a daughter church is one of the best ways to reach the unchurched. Furthermore, it is often far easier to plant a new church than to revitalize a dying one.

Biblical Foundation for Reproduction

The Creation Mandate

From the beginning, the Creator designed all healthy organisms with the capacity and desire to reproduce. God’s purpose for all living creatures was clear: “*Be fruitful and multiply*” (Gen. 1:22, 28). Multiplication was the sign and substance of God’s blessing. Each group was commanded to “*bring forth*” (reproduce) “*after its kind*” and that is exactly what they did (1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). This principle of reproduction marks all of life. Whether cells, plants, animals, or humans, each species has “*seed in itself*” (1:11) to give birth to the next generation. Since the church is a living organism, God’s creative plan requires that it too continually reproduce itself. Thus, *church parenting is natural*.

The Commission of Christ

The Great Commission strategy of Christ is actually a spiritual multiplication mandate. He expects His followers to make and multiply disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). His method for accomplishing this objective: evangelism, baptism, catechism, and congregationalism. Christ’s disciple-making plan is to be carried out through the agency of the local church. Thus to obey His mandate, if there is no congregation in a nearby community, we must start one. That’s the story of the book of Acts: when people were saved they were added to the church (cf. 2:42-47). Christ’s call is for both individual and corporate reproduction. *Thus church parenting is biblical*.

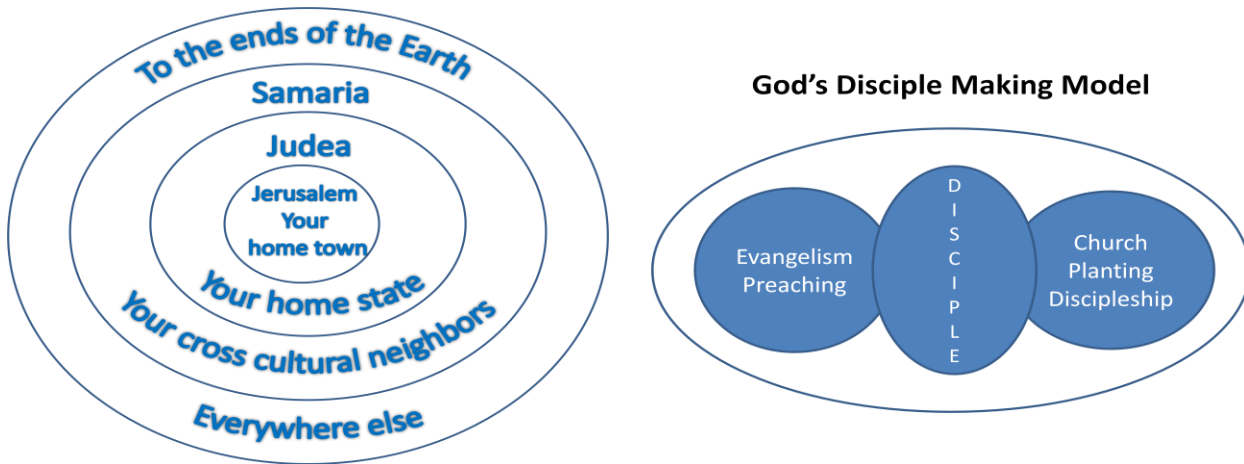
¹ Justice Anderson, *Missiology* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 243.

² Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2001), 30; Lyle Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 15-21.

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⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal Book, 1990), 11.

Christ commissioned the Church -- and every local church -- to proclaim the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and to do so in a geo-centric manner (Acts 1:8). Every church that is concerned about missions must seek to have a continuous outreach to its own Jerusalems, Judeas, and Samarias, while not neglecting global missions. Biblically, the best missions thrust for a congregations is to involve itself directly with evangelistic church planting and be a reproducing church.



The Pattern of the Early Church

The Book of Acts shows *how* the apostles and first Christians carried out the last command of Christ. They reached their world through intentional church multiplication. When God’s people obeyed their marching orders, three things are said to have “multiplied” —the Word of God (Acts 6:7), the number of disciples (6:1) and the number of churches (9:31). Throughout the Acts, the spread of the gospel and the expansion of the church are intertwined. Acts 16:5 summarizes the rapid expansion of the church: “*so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*” They started with one church in Jerusalem; now there were many through multiplication. Thus, in Acts *church parenting is seen as normal*—not the exception.

The Jerusalem church is an example of an *unintentional* mother church. Becoming stagnant, like many established churches today, it refused to engage in any significant outreach beyond its own hometown. To push the church out beyond its comfort zone, God sovereignly sent persecution, scattering the saints. The Lord of harvest moved the Jerusalem church out, and through the means of evangelism and discipleship planted the dynamic multi-ethnic Antioch congregation (Acts 8:1, 4; 11: 19-26). By contrast, the Antioch church is a fine example of an *intentional* mother church. God once again moved, this time prompting the Antioch leadership

team to send out their best, Barnabas and Saul, to do the Great Commission work of evangelistic church planting in pioneer areas, thus spreading the Gospel westward Acts 13:1-3).

Intentional church reproduction (“planned parenthood”) is seen most clearly in the example of the church at Ephesus. Using the school of Tyrannus as his regional training base, Paul evidently mentored about fifteen leaders, sending them out in teams to plant at least six daughter churches in Asia Minor so that the entire region “*heard the word of the Lord*” (Acts 19-20; Rev. 2-3). Epaphras, one of his disciples, started the church at Colossae. Ephesus became the mother church of all the churches of Asia Minor.⁵

The Process of Reproduction

Birth of a daughter church follows certain logical and sequential steps. The following overview provides basic procedures involved in reproducing a daughter church.⁶

Learn about the unchurched through solid research

Find out who the unchurched are in your own community and where they are located. In obedience to Acts 1:8, look beyond your own “Jerusalem” to nearby unreached towns and cities (your “Judea”) as well as to unreached ethnic and immigrant populations (your “Samaria”). Ask the Lord of Harvest to open your eyes to the growing cultural, economic, ethnic and generational diversity in your nearby mission fields. Realize that it will take all kinds of churches to effectively reach all the different kinds of people(s). No one church can realistically disciple everyone.

In most North American communities the large number of unchurched cannot be reached by existing congregations. In order to minister to the various ethnic people groups, churches must multiply. To understand the need and potential for new churches in your area, leaders will need to do a thorough demographic study, using the latest U.S. census data (www.census.gov). Many churches have also benefited by ordering a “Ministry Area Profile” from Percept (www.perceptgroup.com). To discover more about your region’s ethnic, language and immigrant peoples, see www.peoplegroups.info. To begin to grasp the number of lost and unchurched people in your community, check www.thearda.com.

Mobilize Intercessory Prayer

Starting a new church isn’t something to be undertaken without considerable forethought, planning, and prayer. Prayer must permeate the entire process starting with the pastor and leaders, and flowing on down throughout the congregation. Birthing a church is a spiritual

⁵ See Ken Davis, “Mentoring Church Planters,” *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, Fall 2010, Vol. 14, No. 2, 47-61; Robert Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 2006), 21-23.

⁶ Some headings for steps that follow are adapted from Dan Maxton, “Twelve Steps to Parenting a New Church.” http://www.convergeworldwide.org/files/ww/resource/document/12_steps_to_parenting_a_new_church.pdf; others are adapted from Robert E. Logan and Steven L. Ogne, *Churches Planting Churches*. (St Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 1995).

process that requires God's leadership and blessing. Jesus' reminds us that without him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Identify people of prayer in your church body and ask them to intercede for the Lord's direction as to when, where, how, and with whom the new church should be started. Encourage teams of prayer warriors to begin interceding for God to raise up new churches to reach your entire region with the gospel. Furnish these groups with resources that enhance prayer: appropriate scriptures, books and videos on intercession, demographics and testimonies from the front lines. Train your teams to do prayer walking in potential target communities.

Cast parenting vision creatively

Cultivating a corporate parenting vision is best done by the lead pastor. Create a mentality for multiplication and church planting through your public preaching, private conversations, and leadership networking. Expect at least six to twelve months for your people to catch the vision and commit to parenting. Let your passion for the lost be first seen, heard and felt by your people before asking for a response. To build shared vision, leaders must be willing to continually share their personal visions and then ask, "Will you follow me?"

Here are creative ways to generate congregational vision for parenting and church planting:⁷

- *Live out the vision personally* by building relationships with lost people. Regularly share with your people opportunities you have had to share Christ. People will learn what is important by how you invest your time and energy.
- *Use weekend preaching, leadership meetings and newsletters* to cast parenting vision. Do a teaching series on the Great Commission and the biblical basis for planting and parenting.
- *Relate stories of people being reached in new churches.* Look for testimonies that can help you effectively communicate how God uses new churches to disciple lost people to Christ.
- *Interview successful church planters.* Their passion, vision and enthusiasm will stir your people and build desire for parenting.
- *Report on other parenting churches.* Let your people hear what the Lord of harvest is doing among sister churches. Learn from their experiences of launching daughter churches.
- *Host a "local" missions conference.* Focus on your own Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Bring in missionally-minded church planters that are successfully starting reproducing churches in your region.
- *Recruit your artists and media experts* to create videos, Power Points, and other visuals that communicate the need for more churches. Use your church website, Facebook and other social media to create interest in regional planting.
- *Write challenging Bible lessons on church multiplication for your Sunday school classes and/or weekly small groups.*

⁷ Maxton, 2. For other helpful suggestions on cultivating vision, see Logan and Ogne, 6:7-8.

- *Send your adults and teens on short-term mission trips to assist new churches.* Your people can help a nearby church plant by surveying, doing servant evangelism projects, conducting sports camps, distributing fliers or literature, or helping with special music and kids ministry.

Your objective through all this vision casting is to sow the seed for corporate reproduction and to get it down deep into the very DNA (the heart and soul) of your church.

Seek Support of Key Ministry Leaders

You'll need them on board. There is a big difference between compliance and commitment to parenting. Identify the "movers" (those who get things done) and "blockers" (those who stop or slow progress) in your congregation. Create a list of opinion leaders (those to whom people look for direction) and insure that it includes both formal and informal leaders. Then seek to meet with each one and share your passion for planting with them. Anticipate possible responses to the parenting vision and come prepared to address their questions, objections and fears. Be ready with a biblical response for common concerns. Here are potential dialogue questions:

- What are our congregational strengths?
- What church needs should we address in the next two or three years?
- What community needs should we be addressing?
- What issues do we need to address before we begin implementing our church parenting strategy?

It is vital that you listen carefully to your leaders to discern what their core values are. Some values may need to be challenged while others affirmed. Seek to move your leaders from a spirit of fear to faith, from complacency to compassion, and from safety to sacrifice. Realize that with some a values shift may take time. Be patient and prayerful. Be careful to balance advocacy and inquiry. Advocacy is persuasively presenting your position on an issue without really hearing them. Inquiry is asking their perspectives with the intent of better understanding their position. When both the pastor and his leadership are open to examine their assumptions biblically, there will be a greater potential for consensus building.⁸

Cultivate corporate commitment.

Avoid the pitfall of moving ahead with parenting before gaining congregational support and ownership. Expect people to raise concerns about starting a new church. Help people overcome their natural fears by encouraging them to verbalize them. Leaders may fear loss of financial givers and delayed expansion plans. Members may fear losing close friends and valued leaders. Seek to provide helpful and biblically-based answers to honest questions and objections.⁹ Freely acknowledge the challenges that will be encountered. Help people see the advantages

⁸ Logan and Ogne,, 5:5-10.

⁹ For biblical responses to common objections, see Becker, Williams, Carpenter, *The Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook* (Oceanside, CA: Dynamic Church Planting International, 1999), 16-28.

of starting a daughter church, but don't try to force a decision before the people are ready to make it.

Here are five signs the congregation has owned the vision for parenting a daughter church:

- Congregational leaders are on board
- Greater involvement in prayer for the lost and new churches
- Growing excitement and momentum: people are talking about the possibilities
- Deepening compassion for the nearby lost validated by people's actions¹⁰
- People committing to become a part of the new church or launch team.

Determine the best parenting model.

There is more than one way to parent a new church. Here are twelve models the Lord of harvest is using today to encourage church multiplication.¹¹

- **Send a Missionary Planter.** This is the "Pauline" model seen in Acts 13 and adopted by thousands of churches in every generation since. In this "raise up a Timothy" approach, a homegrown leader-with-potential is mentored and equipped within the hothouse of the local church. This approach needs a highly evangelistic and entrepreneurial leader able to start something from scratch.
- **Commission a Launch Team.** A small pioneering team of leaders is sent out from the parent church to reach a different focus group or nearby community. To be successful the team needs those with a unified vision and complimentary gifting.
- **Release a Core Group.** Here a significant group of "seed families" is recruited, prepared and sent out to be a stabilizing core. In this case, 20% or more of the parenting congregation are often released for the branch church.
- **Send Your Pastor.** As in the Antioch church model (Acts 13:1-3), sometimes the Spirit of God leads a healthy church to give up one of its senior pastoral leaders, believing that He will provide a competent replacement. Sometimes seed families are sent to help.
- **Partner with Other Churches.** When financial and people resources are limited, several area churches may be led to work together in order to extend the Gospel to their region. In this cooperative effort, assistance can be provided in many forms: seed families, shared funding, short-term teams, temporary meeting place, use of baptismal tank, office space, leadership mentoring and encouragement. In partnering, a strong

¹⁰ Logan and Ogne, 6:10.

¹¹ For more description of and help with these models, see Roger McNamara and Ken Davis, *The Y-B-H (Yes, But How) Handbook of Church Planting*, Xulon Press, 2005. Also, Stuart Murray, *Planting Churches: A Framework for Practitioners (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2008), 47-80.*

lead planter is needed to resist the tendency for several well meaning “parents” to exert too much control.

- **Go Multi-site.** Some fast growing churches in heavily populated areas are becoming “one church in different locations,” providing on-site worship teams and staffing for each site. There is often no original intention that the satellite or various campuses ever become autonomous. But in the providence of God, some do later become independent bodies.¹²
- **Restart.** A stalled church plant, prematurely launched without proper understanding and planning, is relaunched by a healthy congregation, this time utilizing proven missiological principles. In a restart, a brand-new church is birthed, often with a complete change of leadership, location and direction.¹³
- **Adoption.** Sometimes a declining, dysfunctional, or recently disbanded older church requests help. A nearby healthy congregation comes alongside to rescue, refocus and revitalize the unhealthy body that still has potential. At other times an existing Bible study, prayer or cell group seeks assistance from an established church which supplies the needed leadership, vision, and resources to become a fledging church.
- **Associational Surrogate.** Here a state or regional association of Bible believing churches spearheads the launching of a new church, but asks that one local church provide the “womb” for the new church to develop and grow. Other associational churches may be invited to pool resources and join the effort.
- **Death with Dignity.** A dying or closing congregation sells its property and assets, giving the funds to an association, mission agency or new planting project. The goal is to leave a legacy, passing on to future generations its values and beliefs so that the Great Commission is carried forward by birthing a new church in another community.¹⁴
- **Unplanned Pregnancy.** In the sovereignty of God, two churches survive and thrive out of a heart-breaking church split. This is “accidental parenthood” as opposed to “planned parenthood,” which is far more preferable. While wise church leaders will never promote church division, God is certainly able to bring good out of the sinful wrath of men.

¹² For help with multi-site approaches, see: Geoff Surrantt, Greg Lignon, & Warren Bird, *Multi-Site Road Map* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009); and Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville: B&H, 2009)

¹³ For help with restarts, see the author’s article, “Church Rescue,” (Baptist Bulletin, March/April 2012) and Mike McKinley, *Church Planting is for Wimps* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

¹⁴ See Stephen Gray and Franklin Dumond, *Legacy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 2009).

- **Surprise Pregnancy.** An unexpected opportunity to plant becomes available and church leaders embrace the challenge. This could be a staff member sensing God's call, or group of people in the church feeling a tug to help begin a new work.

Each of these models has its own strengths and weaknesses. The need for investing people from the parenting church varies with each model. The wise parenting church will seek to understand and evaluate these various approaches to prayerfully determine which model, or blending of models, would be most suitable. Which of these models is best suited to your parenting vision and church resources? Which will be more effective in reaching the ministry focus group of the future church?

Identify adequate funding sources

Parenting churches need to make several key funding decisions. *First, to what extent will our parenting church invest financially in this project?* How much you budget and give depends on whether you will cover any or all of these four options: 1) planter support, 2) start-up costs, 3) property and facility expenses, and/or 4) a monthly subsidy for the baby church's ministry expenses. Whatever you decide, short-term financial assistance is recommended. In order not to create dependency on outside subsidy or to weaken the new church's growing stewardship participation, rarely should outside support be extended longer than three years. To avoid confusion and give motivation, put the schedule of decreasing support in writing.

Second, where will the church find the resources? For most potential parents, there are at least five funding options from within the congregation to consider. The most obvious is setting aside a significant percentage of the church's *missions budget* for this three-year planting project. Special church *harvest offerings* may supply surprising funding; these could be collected monthly or periodically at well-promoted special occasions. Some churches have simply elected not to replace a recently departed *staff person*, using the salary funds instead for the planter's support. Churches may have *unused and undesignated funds*, sitting in the bank or invested; sometimes these monies were part of a will or living trust left by a departing member. Finally, some congregations are able to *sell assets* such as property or vehicles. You church leaders may want to brainstorm other creative ways to participate in the financial support of the new church.

Third, are outside sources of funding available? Inquire about support from *state or local associations*; this could be significant. Always check with *other area churches* of like faith which may decide to partner with you. Challenging your planter to raise some proportion of his monthly support from *outside individual donors* is always an option; your parenting church might even consider matching what he can raise. *Christian foundations* can sometimes be identified which will support projects or start-up expenses for new churches. A last resort might be to encourage your church planter to *work bi-vocationally* to supplement his partial support; in some cases a spouse is willing to work outside the home. Explore all options and expect God to wonderfully supply. When He calls He always provides for His work and workers. Encourage the new church to be "of the people."

In God's 'glocal' stewardship plan, all the resources *for* the harvest are normally found *in* the harvest. As the new church grows and disciples are made, she should have increasing people and financial resources to do what God is calling her to do in her target community. Also, if enough giving leaders and seed families have been released from the parenting church, the offerings in the daughter church may be sufficient right from the start to cover the essentials.

Select an appropriate target community and ministry focus group.

Use your previous demographic study to identify and prioritize nearby communities that need a Gospel witness. Is there a new housing development being built a few miles away? Are there economic, ethnic or lifestyle groups you need to reach? What people groups are yet unreached? Is there a nearby town with insufficient Gospel witness? Do you have people coming from one of these areas and willing to help start a new church in their community? Avoid zeroing in on just one community. It may be wiser to allow your church planter to make the final decision from several choices that you provide.

To develop a preliminary profile of the ministry focus group, do on-site field research by walking the streets of potential communities and talking to people. Discern each community's spiritual climate and receptivity to the Gospel. What is God already doing in these places? What kind of church is needed in each setting? It may be wise to start your first daughter church among a familiar group before seeking to parent in a more challenging context.

Recruit people to send and then equip them.

The need for investing people from the parenting church varies with the parenting model chosen. Normally, the more people sent, the stronger the new church is likely to be. Aim for giving twenty-five to fifty people or more, if possible. Are there other churches in the area that would be willing to give or loan two to five families to the new project?

Providing sufficient people resources has greater impact than just pouring money into a planting project. Parent and partner churches should be committed to provide the infant church with: short-term outreach and ministry teams, staff mentoring, counsel and expertise, up-front and ongoing training of the launch team, workers on loan, etc. These can really make a difference in the success or failure of the planting project.

Enlist an entrepreneurial church planter.

Look for someone with a proven track record who can cast vision, gather and motivate people. This may be a staff person or new person brought on board for the express purpose of planting the new church. Because everything rises or falls on the right leader, it's best to consider at least three viable candidates before making your final decision. All potential candidates should be thoroughly investigated. Look at calling, character, competency, and chemistry.

Utilizing a planter assessment center that uses multiple tools and trained observers is best; a behavioral interview process with some online assessment is also recommended.¹⁵ It's wise to develop a written job description outlining expectations, responsibilities, and the accountability structure to share with potential candidates. Seek to closely match the background of your lead planter with your targeted community and primary ministry focus group. Once identified, ask your chosen planter to prepare a written planting proposal before he plants.

Help the planter bond with the parenting church.

Bring the prospective church planter onto your staff for a period of three to six months before launching the new church. This allows him the opportunity to build relationships with the mother church and with those that will be part of his launch team. It also provides time for him to become familiar with and begin working in the target community. Provide him with lots of visibility by scheduling him to preach periodically and to participate in your services. Many parenting pastors give their planter a "fishing license" to freely recruit key leaders and givers for his launch team.

Plan a commissioning and prayer service for the planter and his team before sending them out. Give your planter access to the parenting church's office equipment, previous message files, worship slides, and ministry "systems" (financial, guest follow-up, assimilation, etc). Encourage your planter to borrow and adapt lots of ideas. Ask the new church leadership to generate a list of equipment and supplies needed for start-up. Then consider holding a "baby shower" for the new church and invite your people to give these needed items. This will help create a wonderful bond with the baby church.

Identify a coach for the planter and a mentor for the pastor.

A qualified coach will help your planter succeed by listening, encouraging, giving wise counsel, and celebrating wins. An empowering coach will meet with the planter regularly, often holding him accountable to a prepared checklist. Ideally, he should be a veteran planter; it is best if the parenting pastor not be the planter's coach. The mentor performs a similar service for the pastor of the parent church. The best mentor is usually another pastor whose church has successfully parented before; his experience will be invaluable when questions and concerns arise.¹⁶

Develop a gathering and launching strategy. Determine when, where, and how you are going to start. How will you attract new people? What ministries are you going to offer? What will your first service be like? What materials do you need to prepare in advance? How many sources of advertising will you use? Detailed planning is essential at this point.

¹⁵ Two recommended online assessment tools: ELI's Planter Profiles (www.churchplanterprofiles.com) and LifeWay's "Church Planter Candidate Assessment" (<http://churchplanter.lifeway.com/>)

¹⁶ Maxton 10.

Embrace your changing parenting role.

It is essential church leaders understand four developmental phases in the lifecycle of a new church. Each stage requires the parent church to assume a critical role and focus upon key tasks.¹⁷ During the *reproduction* stage, congregational support is sought, target communities selected, a parenting model chosen, and funding sources identified; the parenting church's primary role is to *cast vision and encourage commitment*. The *conception stage* refers to all that needs to be done before the lead planter moves on site; the parent's chief role is to *assess/select* the best qualified lead planter and then *approve* of his written proposal. The leadership of the parenting church is most needed during these two early stages because it sets the crucial DNA code for the new church. After this, it is important to note that the parenting church's impact and role decreases over time.

During the *prenatal stage*, essential outreach and ministry systems must be developed before the new church can go public; key tasks include developing evangelism and launching strategies, determining small group approach, building a worship team, formulating children's programming, and identifying a meeting location. The parent church's basic role is now to *guide and give*; it must hold the planter accountable and provides the necessary people/financial resources. Finally, the focus shifts to implementing these essential systems during the *birth and growth* stage as public worship begins. The parent's vital role is *get out of the way and release control*. This means letting the daughter church's leaders make their own decisions from this point forward.

Healthy parents don't smother! They don't expect a "clone," i.e., an exact replica, but allow the daughter to be unique and have her own personality (ministry philosophy). Over-control can lead to resentment and dependency upon the parenting church. Allow your offspring the joy of following the Lord's leading without interference. Begin viewing them as an adult sister church rather than as a daughter.

Plan for the release and recovery.

The "cutting of the apron strings" comes much earlier in the church planting process than it does with humans. While you may still require reports and provide some funding for up to two or three years, the tie binding the daughter church to its mother should be cut within three to twelve months after the start of the new church. They will never learn to stand on their own two feet unless they have to stand by themselves. They will never learn to give sacrificially unless they have to give sacrificially to keep their church going. They will never grow strong unless they exert themselves to get through the tough times. You can be there to provide a safety net if things get out of control, but like the Lord Jesus, it is best that you step aside and watch from the shore while your disciples "toil in rowing" (Mark 6:48). You may be pleasantly surprised by how well they do.

After giving birth, parent churches will need to anticipate adequate time for rest and recovery in several key areas. Most churches will need three to six months for restoring finances, regaining attendance, and replacing key leaders. The rate of recovery will largely depend on

¹⁷ Logan and Ogne, 4:5-7.

the health of the church before parenting. If you have effective outreach and assimilation systems, the rebuilding stage may be shortened. Remember that it is impossible to out-give the Lord! Expect Him to bless your obedience, creatively restore your energy and resources, and renew your vision.

When the time is right, your congregation will need a new focus. Be prepared to lead them by pointing them to the harvest and a new God-given vision for church multiplication. Dream about reproducing many children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren to impact your entire region for Christ! Set faith goals to reproduce again and prayerfully make plans for raising a networked family of daughter churches. Don't be satisfied with only one kid.

In the final analysis, it is not "how" you plant but "that" you plant. Intentional parenting is always better than unintentional parenting!