

Church Planting Matters: For the Lost, For the World, For the Church
By Bob Young

May I be frank? Many mission efforts are unproductive! Too few people are being reached and brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ through the contemporary mission efforts of the church. May the church become as wise as those in the world (Luke 16:1-13)! We must use resources wisely; we must stay focused on the purpose; we must fully commit to what matters to God.

I recently read a report from France. The writer (not of my religious tribe) was in France training church planters. He observed that in Europe there is a great need for new churches, given that less than 10% of the population have a relationship with Christ. He also reported that the number of believers is growing rapidly. He said that according to the secular news station France 24, in 1950 there were 50,000 evangelical churchgoers; today there are nearly 650,000. The writer attributed the growth to church planting. The lost people in our world need the presence of the church.

Whether the author is right about the situation in France and Europe, there is little doubt that church planting is one of the most effective forms of evangelism—perhaps THE most effective. Regardless of where you live, the way to bring more people to Christ is to start new churches. New churches attract people. New churches have room for newcomers to find a place. In mission work, it is much easier to establish 10 churches of 50 members (I am thinking of a mountainous site in eastern Guatemala) than it is to establish one church of 500 members. In rural areas—but also in some cities with severe transportation challenges—multiple church sites are essential to give people access to the churches. Further, it is difficult to grow a church past 200, and the price that is paid for additional growth is usually the exchange of church for institution, the loss of family connections for the sake of the crowd. When the personal connection is lost, the world struggles to find identity and help in the churches.

There is another reason to start churches—starting daughter churches is important to the health of the mother church. A healthy organism reproduces. A healthy church will multiply. When a church is filled with disciples who love Jesus and their community, disciples who are growing and maturing spiritually, they will want to reproduce new churches to reach more people. If rising leaders do not have an outlet for service in new churches, they will either be stymied in their desire to serve or they will stagnate from being too internally-focused. Some may become restless and critical because they are not being used.

The conclusion is this: starting new churches is vital for the existing church, for a broken world, and for the lost souls that will be reached.