



*Apostolic Church Planting:  
Birthing New Churches from  
New Believers*

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“argues that churches are to be birthed from disciples made in the harvest fields, that the priority should be on unengaged-unreached (and just unengaged) people groups (yes, in North America, too), and that pastors for those new churches should come from the people themselves,” says J. D. Payne.

## A Two-Thousand Year Tradition of Church Planting

One day I met with a seasoned church-planting strategist at a local coffee shop. This wonderful brother had been involved in church planting for many years. Early in our conversation he asked me about my approach to church planting and what our church was doing in the area. I began by defining church planting as evangelism that results in new churches. Then, for the next several minutes, I reflected on some passages of Scripture (such as Acts 13–14; 20; 1 Tim 3; Tit 1), different stages of church planting, planned role changes for the church-planting team and the priority of unreached people groups. After sharing, I waited for his response.

There was a pause as he stared at me. Then, with a look of surprise, he burst out, “Wow! That’s amazing!”

He was shocked.

Like anyone else, I love to be commended on a job well done, and I especially enjoy it when someone compliments my innovative idea, action, book or so on. But his response was not encouraging to me. Even though his surprise revealed that he thought I was creative and innovative, I was troubled.

I had described to him nothing more than what we read about in Scripture. It was at that moment that I concluded: *when the Church is shocked at a biblical model, it reveals just how far away from the Scriptures we have moved in our missionary practices.*

Once, speaking at a church-planting conference, I gave a presentation similar to what I had shared in the coffee shop that day. Afterward a church-planting leader for his denomination came up to me immediately, declaring, “That’s exactly what we are doing! Evangelism that results in new churches!”

“Keep up the great work,” I replied. However, his declaration did not match what I knew to be true of the church planters he oversaw.

At another speaking engagement addressing the topic of church planting, I had a church-planting strategist approach me and say the same thing: “That’s exactly what we’re doing! Evangelism that results in new churches!”

“Keep up the great work,” I replied again. But again, his statement did not reflect his reality. This time, I was even more familiar with the area he was overseeing.



**J. D. Payne** (PhD, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is a writer, speaker, church planter and currently serves as the pastor of church multiplication with The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama. He previously served with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and as an associate professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he directed the Center for North American Missions and Church Planting. J. D. has written extensively in the areas of missions, evangelism and church growth and he speaks frequently for churches, networks, conferences and mission agencies. He is the author of many books, including *Strangers Next Door*.

It is one thing to be sincere and to want something good; it is another matter to act on those emotions.

What I will describe in this book is nothing new. Yes, I have obviously crafted this book according to my own convictions. But apostolic church planting has been with the Church for two thousand years. It is my desire that churches, networks, denominations and mission agencies recognize this matter and respond appropriately. Many western evangelical structures, organizations, training paradigms and support systems will have to change significantly in order to embrace an apostolic approach to church planting.

Many think they have already embraced this approach; reality shouts otherwise.

Change is never easy. It is not my purpose in this book to address such necessary changes. However, evangelicals must begin to make necessary adjustments as we continue into the twenty-first century. Over six thousand people groups remain unreached (including three thousand unengaged-unreached). More of the same is not sufficient. While great things have been accomplished for the kingdom in the realm of church planting, we must build on them and venture into new waters with an ancient approach.

Apostolic church planting provides a path to the nations. If it surprises us, we should ask, "Why?"

If what kingdom stewards should expect excites us, we should reevaluate our convictions, methods, strategies, systems and structures.

If our present realities do not match such expectations, something must change.

A day is coming when disciple-making and church-planting efforts will cease to exist. Until that time, we are called to be wise stewards with what we have received – laboring for the completion of the multiethnic multitude gathered around the throne (Rev 7:9). Will you join in this divine task with Jesus, building his church? Will you embrace apostolic church planting as a means for making disciples of all peoples – across the street and around the world?