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7-17-2006

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David B. Earley *Liberty University*, dbearley@liberty.edu

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Recommended Citation

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THE DESPERATE NEED FOR NEW CHURCHES

Dave Earley 07/17/06

1. AMERICA HAS BECOME A HUGE AND IMPORTANT MISSION FIELD

- Recent research states that **there are now 195 million non-churched people in America**, making America one of the top four largest "unchurched" nations in the world.
- "The American church is in the midst of one of the largest mission fields in the world today. Only three other nations—China, India, and Indonesia—have more lost people."
 Justice Anderson
- "Essentially, what was a churched, supposedly Christian culture has become an unchurched, post-Christian culture. People in our culture are not antichurch; they simply view the church as irrelevant to their lives." Aubrey Malphurs
- In spite of the rise of mega-churches, no county in America has a greater church population than it did ten years ago.³ Ron Sylvia
- ➤ During the last ten years, combined communicant membership of all Protestant denominations declined by 9.5 percent (4,498,242), while the national population increased by 11.4 percent (24,153,000).⁴ Tom Clegg

2. AMERICAN HAS MORE PEOPLE, BUT LESS CHURCHES

- Each year 3,500 to 4,000 churches close their doors forever; yet only 1,100 to 1,500 new churches are started. Win Arn
- ➤ Even though America has more people, it has fewer churches per capita than at any time in her history. Although the number of churches in America has increased by 50 percent in the last century, the population has increased 300 percent. There are now nearly 60 percent fewer churches per 10,000 persons than in 1920.- Bill Easum

Table 1. Number of Churches per Americans⁷

1920	27 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.
1950	17 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.
1996	11 churches existed for every 10,00 Americans.

¹Justice Anderson, in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of Word Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 243.

²Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 27.

³Ron Sylvia, *High Definition Church Planting* (Ocala, FL: High Definition Resources, 2004), 26.

⁴Tom Clegg, "How to Plant a Church for the 21st Century," seminar materials, 1997, author's collection, Gahanna, Ohio.

⁵Win Arn, The Pastor's Manual For Effective Ministry (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, 1988), 41.

⁶Bill Easum, "The Easum Report," March 2003; available from http://www.easum.com/church.htm; Internet.

⁷Tom Clegg and Tim Bird, *Lost in America* (Loveland CA: Group Publishing, 2001), 30.

3. New Churches Adopt New Methods and Adapt New Strategies For Reaching People and Ministering To Them More Effectively Than Existing Churches

- As America moves from a Christian to a post-Christian, postmodern culture, it will become increasingly important to plant new churches to present the timeless truths of the gospel in a new and timely manner. We must put new wine in new wineskins. A new army of well trained, effectively taught church planters is essential to win back the North American continent for Christ in the twenty-first century.
- "There is not a congregation that possesses the ability and the financial resources to attract, reach, and respond to the needs of all the residents of the community." Lyle Schaller
- There exists a flawed understanding that the United States and Canada are already evangelized. While there is abundant access to Christian information, many unchurched persons in North America are amazingly untouched by the evangelical subculture because the Christian subculture is largely incapable of providing a culturally relevant gospel witness.⁹ Ed Stezer

4. New Churches are Amazingly More Effective at Reaching Lost People than Existing Churches

- "Today, of the approximately 350,000 churches in America, four out of five are either plateaued or declining Many churches begin a plateau or slow decline about their fifteenth to eighteenth year. 80-85 [percent] of the churches in America are on the down-side of this cycle. Of the 15 percent that are growing, 14 percent are growing from transfer, rather than conversion growth." Win Arn,
- In the average year, half of all existing churches will not add one new member through conversion growth. 11 Ron Sylvia
- One American denomination recently found that 80 percent of its converts came to Christ in churches less than 2 years old. 12 Ralph Moore
- "On a per capita basis, new churches win more people to Christ than established churches." Ed Stezer
- Churches over fifteen years of age win an average of only three people to Christ per year for every one hundred church members. Churches three years to fifteen years old win an average of five people to Christ per year for every one hundred church members, but churches under three years of age win an average of ten people to Christ per year for every one hundred church members.¹⁴ Brian McNichol
- "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches." Peter Wagner

THEREFORE, WE MUST PLANT MORE NEW CHURCHES!

⁸Lyle Schaller, 44 Questions for Church Planters (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 43.

⁹Stetzer, *Planting*, 9.

¹⁰Arn, 41, 43.

¹¹Sylvia, 27.

¹²Ralph Moore, Starting New Churches (Ventura CA: Regal Book, 2002), 3.

¹³Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 6.

¹⁴Brian McNichol, quoted in "Churches Die With Dignity," *Christianity Today*, 14 January 1991, 69.

¹⁵C. Peter Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.