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Icebreaker question ideas:

- If you could open any kind of restaurant, what would you start?
- What comes to your mind when I say the word missions, or missionary. What about church planter or church planting?

What is church planting?

Church planting: Church planting is the establishing of an organized body of believers in a new location. This can occur cross-culturally or with a culture.

Missions: is following Christ's call: sharing the gospel with the lost world through God's wisdom and strength. This typically refers to cross-cultural ministry and often involves meeting physical needs, Bible translation, and in conjunction with sharing the gospel.

Evangelize: to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone else.

Many of these terms overlap, and all stem from the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20

Statistics on the current state of the church

1. The rise of the "nones"

"The research shows that between about 20% and 25% of U.S. adults are now "nones"... the percentage of Americans who, when queried by survey researchers about their religious identification, say "none." (1. Gallup)

1. Church membership is declining

(2, Gallup)

2. More Churches are closing than new ones opening

"In 2019, approximately 3,000 Protestant churches were started in the U.S., but 4,500 Protestant churches closed." (3. Lifeway)

Reflect: Did this surprise you or not? If your church closed, how would it affect your walk with God?

Why Church planting?

- It is effective

“Newly planted churches are more effective than existing congregations at drawing people who aren’t connected with a church, according to a 2015 Lifeway Research study.” (4. Lifeway)

- It is what Jesus commanded
- It’s what the apostles did

Reflect: Think about a lost person you know. Someone who doesn’t know or believe in God and hasn’t heard the good news of Jesus. Or perhaps someone who once followed Jesus but no longer does. How might they come to Jesus? What are the potential pathways?

What has God told us to do?

- Matthew 28:18-20
- 2 Timothy 4:2-5
- Matthew 24:4-14

Reflect: What is your role or responsibility in God’s kingdom?

What is the biblical example of Church planting?

This is a summary of some of the elements of church planting from the Bible. This doesn’t answer every question about church planting, nor is it an exhaustive coverage of Biblical teaching on church planting. The Bible shares much more about planting churches including using spiritual gifts, preaching the gospel to unbelievers, and funding church planters. Many Christian authors have written good books about church planting.

- Go
 - Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 say “Go”
 - Acts 1:8 “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”
 - Jesus sent the 12 specifically Jewish towns. (Matthew 10:5–8)
 - God calls Paul to plant churches in gentile cities (Acts 14:21–25)
 - *Reflect: How does the command ‘go’ apply to you? Why might someone choose to obey Jesus’ great commission within their own culture vs. a different culture?*
- Preach and teach the gospel
 - Matthew 11:1 - Jesus’ example
 - Mark 16:15 - Jesus’ command

- Acts 5:42 - the apostles example
- 2 Timothy 2:2 - Pauls command to pass it on
- Baptize
 - Mark 16:16 - Jesus' command
 - Acts 2:41–42 - the apostles example
 - Reflect: Have you taken this step of baptism? If so, have you invited or helped anyone you know to take that step?
- Make disciples
 - Disciples obey and follow Jesus - "20 and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt 28:20
 - Disciples make disciples - Matt 4:19
- Appoint elders
 - Acts 14:23
- Endure suffering & strengthening the young churches
 - 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Acts 15:36,41, Acts 14:22

How does church planting typically work in the United States?

- **Split.** Many churches began by splitting off from another church. While this is often painful and divisive, God can use all situations to build his Kingdom and bring people to Jesus.
- **Calling.** Some individuals, families, or even whole churches discover or develop a specific passion or burden for planting a new church. This is usually correlated to a specific region, city, community, or neighborhood. This calling is explored and developed into a strategy for reaching the community. Different expressions of Christ's church look different and have different emphasis. i.e. "Will we focus on reaching middle-class families, immigrant populations, or the homeless community downtown?" A healthy church would need to look a bit different in each of these contexts.

Reflect: How might a church plant look in each of these example contexts?

- **Network or sending church.** In earlier decades, most churches were planted by an existing church who sent out a team of its members to launch the new congregation. Over the last 3 or 4 decades this trend has declined and more churches plants now begin with a leader connecting with a network. Networks like Kairos, MissionAlive, Stadia, and Nexus exist to identify and equip potential leaders, provide training and coaching to church planting teams. Churches with formalized denominational structures often have a church-planting arm of their denomination that is responsible for identifying and training leaders and planting new churches.

- **Raising financial support.** Every church plant is funded differently, but some initial money is almost always necessary. Some churches begin with multiple staff members and significant costs for equipment and leasing a space. Others begin with very small budgets. Some church plants have a single sponsoring church while other plants are funded through hundreds of smaller donations from individuals and churches. Most church plants have a goal of becoming financially independent within a number of years.

- **Develop a launch team.** Church planting is difficult and time consuming work relationally, spiritually, and logistically, and typically requires a launch team of several individuals or families. Some may be full-time planters or staff-members but many may have jobs in the community. This team may plan for months or years, and is often involved in outreach events, connecting with the community, inviting friends, evangelistic ministries, and

- **Growth.** Some churches launch with hundreds in attendance and have thousands of members within just a few years, while other churches never grow beyond a hundred members. While Sunday attendance is often the most notable metric, it may not be the most important way to measure success. Remember Jesus command to 'go and make disciples.' Numerical growth typically happens in two ways:

1. People leave another church to join the church plant because it is more desirable to them. This 'transfer growth' is often much quicker.

2. People join the new church who had previously not believed in Jesus or not attended church. The discipleship and conversion process makes this type of growth much slower.

Reflect: Which type of growth would you focus on as a church planter? Why? What prevents people or churches from planting churches? Lack of experience? Fear? What is our role in planting new churches for new people in new places?

Sources:

1. <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/267920/millennials-religiosity-amidst-rise-nones.aspx>
2. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>
3. <https://religionnews.com/2021/05/26/study-more-churches-closing-than-opening/>
<https://research.lifeway.com/2021/05/25/protestant-church-closures-outpace-openings-in-u-s/>
4. <https://research.lifeway.com/2015/12/08/new-churches-draw-those-who-previously-didnt-attend/>

Book resources:

- The disciple-makers handbook - Bobby Harrington & Josh Patrick
- Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches - Peyton Jones
- The Master Plan of Evangelism - Robert Coleman

Web resources:

<https://missionalive.org/>

<https://www.kairoschurchplanting.org/>

https://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Why_Plant_Churches-Keller.pdf

<https://christianstandard.com/2021/10/noninstrumental-churches-of-christ-facing-uncertain-future>