

Do We Really Need More Churches in America?

Right now there are over 300,000 Protestant churches in America. Just do the division—300,000 divided by 50 states—and that equals 6,000 churches per state. Wow! That's a lot of churches!

Think about it this way: There are just over 10,000 Starbucks stores in America and well over 300,000 churches. So Starbucks can saturate the United States with caffeinated drinks, but almost 30 times more churches can't saturate the United States with the Living Water. Seriously?

According to church growth and discipleship multiplication expert Bill Hull, "It still takes 100 church attendees, a pastor and \$100,000 a year to win a convert. Among evangelicals. ... This is an ugly fact that should grieve us all."

So our solution is planting more and more churches so that we can reach America for Jesus? Is that really the best solution, or is a revitalization of current churches the best solution?

My answer is a resounding yes! We need more churches planted, and we need to revitalize the current ones.

When I was a 23-year-old part-time youth leader at a church in Arvada, Colo., I wanted to revitalize the congregation concerning evangelism and outreach. This very traditional church was solid theologically but not growing steadily with disciples being made and multiplied.

I'll never forget presenting an 11-page document called "Operation Arvada" to the senior pastor and asking him to consider it. In those pages were ideas for infusing relational evangelism into the lifeblood of the church. He said, "Let me

pray about it" (which is a pastor's way of buying time so that he can think of a nice way to say no to your idea). Days turned to weeks and I finally realized that it wasn't going to happen.

It was then that I remembered the words of a former pastor who gave up trying to revitalize that same church to plant a new one. He told me, "It's easier to give birth than to resurrect the dead."

That's when my best friend and I decided to start a church ourselves, Grace Church, in Arvada. Through prayer, tons of mistakes and sheer perseverance, we were blessed to plant a church that grew deep and wide in some powerful ways.

Today, Grace Church is a thriving congregation with over 60 percent of the 3,000 or so who go there having come to Jesus as a result of the church's focused outreach efforts. What about the other church I was involved in? The new pastor and youth pastor are working hard to revitalize it so it can be more effective in the community where it's located.

Yes!

We need already existing churches to drop an evangelistic engine into their church chassis. We need new churches planted that grow primarily through new believers being added (as opposed to transfer growth).

So the real question is not how many churches do we have in North America, but how many *gospel-advancing* churches do we have? We need to revitalize current ones and plant new ones until we reach everyone.

If you are in an established church, work with all your heart to get the people there making and multiplying disciples. Start with those who are willing and build from there. Pray for your church. Challenge your church. Equip your church. By the way, we at Dare 2 Share can help with that. Start by

downloading and using our free evangelism training app.

If you feel led to plant a church, determine to build one that grows primarily through relational evangelism and discipleship multiplication. Make intercessory prayer the engine and not the caboose of your efforts and, over time, you will succeed.

It's time to revitalize current churches and plant new ones that bleed the Good News. Let's give birth and raise the dead!

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