

# rePLANTING a Missional Church

BIRTH

DEATH

By Scott Thomas  
Acts 29 Director

Pastor of Global Church Missions ~ Mars Hill Church

## Replanting

Dictionary.com defines replanting: “To plant (something) again or in a new place...” In a church replant, a church avoids permanent death by recognizing it will no longer flourish unless conditions are drastically changed to facilitate growth. A “transition church” on the other hand, starts with a healthy organism and applies biblical principles to foster new growth.

We can actually glorify Jesus by *intentionally* bringing death to a comatose body so that it could become the seed planted in nutrient-rich soil that gives life to a *new* body – not a stuffed carcass. Jesus said that unless a seed dies, it cannot give life (John 12:23-25). Jesus Himself was the first fruits sacrificially planted in the ground (tomb) as an offering to His Father and by doing so, made life possible for others.

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8).

Instead of holding on with inordinate pride to the past, a replanted church dies to its former glory, its methods, its structure, and its practices and strategically plants its resources (body, budget, board and buildings) into the spiritual ground. The result is a virile replanted church with a God-renewed mission to give life to the spiritually dead community in which it ministers.

I believe Jesus is glorified significantly when this happens. It can be a corporate example of the spiritual renewal many individuals need. Is your church ready to live by dying?

## A Biblical Solution

Jesus said that we live by dying (John 12:23-26). This is true in the natural, agronomic world, in the spiritual world, for our own spiritual lives and is true for churches.

If we are to glorify Jesus (John 12:23), we have to die daily to see a bountiful harvest (John 12:24). Jesus said that a grain of wheat can fall on the ground and still be alone or the Greek word *monos* – single. It infers that it is non-reproductive. Many people who come to church and look like Christians can actually just be *monos* – non-reproductive. Many people who claim they are spiritual may only be a non-reproductive seed on the ground.

It is only when we die that we release life. A kernel of corn has a hard shell that is protecting the life-giving germ inside of it. When it is put into the ground, the outer shell decomposes in the earth and releases the germ to draw its nutrients from the ground where it is buried. As the embryo grows, it eventually produces a plant

that will reproduce that one seed thousands of times. Jesus said we would produce much grain; Gr., πολυς; abundant fruit.

Jesus had to die to give life. He couldn't just be beaten (fall to the ground). He had to die so that He could live and produce much fruit. We are the fruit of that firstfruit in Jesus if we have accepted the call of God.

If we try to hold on to what we have, we will lose everything. If we hand it over to Jesus to use, we reap an eternal multiplicity of rewards for God's glory (John 12:25). If we have affection for our lives here – our temporal life – we bring destruction to our life. We don't just lose it as we do something valuable. We destroy it. John Calvin said if we love our own life we actually *devote it to destruction*. This passage has a strange play on words, meanings and nuances. It is essentially saying that if we try to live our life here, we will destroy our lives. However, if we destroy our lives, we will live.

We either serve ourselves by following our own dreams, dollars and desires or we serve God by following His plan to save the lost world – no matter what it costs, including our own lives (John 12:26). We serve Jesus by His words and by His works. We learn diligently about Him and we fulfill His work to seek and to save that which is lost (Luke 19:10).

Here's the plan from Jesus: die to self, hate your lives here, follow me to Calvary where you will experience death and become My servant. Is there anybody signing up?

However, wait, there's more. In exchange for all of this, He offers to bear much fruit through our lives, to give us an eternal life, to join Jesus in glory and to be honored by God. Now, is there anyone signing up?

### **A Personal Decision**

Every church and every believer needs to decide what they are going to do with the seed of life God has given them: keep it for their own purposes or allow it to die in the hands of God, trusting that He will produce much fruit.