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**THE IMPACT OF CHURCH PLANTING
ON THE PLANTER AND HIS FAMILY**

By

H. HARRISON SPITLER

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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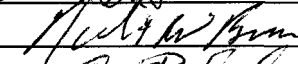

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter, his marriage and family. Some of those pastors have lost their marriages and families. On the other hand, there are pastors who have thrived at church planting. Their churches have grown, their families are intact, and their ministry grew deeper and stronger.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with eight pastors in the Presbyterian Church in America. Where possible, the spouses of the church planters were also present. The review of literature examined scripture, Christian literature and secular literature regarding pastoring an established church, planting a new church, the condition of marriage in America and the unique circumstances affecting marriages in ministry. The interviews of the participants and analysis of the eight interviews focused on the impact of church planting on the planter, on the planter's spouse and on their marriage.

Regarding the impact of church planting on the planter, the findings of this study revealed that they experienced significant loneliness, emotional pain, fatigue and some also missed significant time with their families. The findings also revealed that they grew stronger in their relationship with God and usually with their wife.

Regarding the spouse of the church planter, the findings reveal that the spouse will likely experience loneliness, emotional pain, anger and significant boundary ambiguity. The spouse's relationship with the planter will likely grow stronger although it will likely be strained during the process of church planting.

This study concluded that church planting is a difficult endeavor. Many people will join but many will also leave during the process of planting a church. Few of those, if any, will ever be considered close friends of the church planter or his family. Some might even turn out to be enemies of the church, the planter, or his family. People will say hurtful things, but other people will encourage the planter and his family in the work of the planting. Throughout all of the interviews, there was a cry for safe fellowship. Planting a church is a lonely endeavor. The planter and his wife need people they can trust, and they rarely find those people inside their church plant.

As difficult as church planting can be, it can also be a very rewarding time for the spiritual life and marriage of the church planter and his wife. The rewards are many, and they include the privilege of taking part in the building of God's kingdom. The planter and his family get to watch lives being transformed as they are impacted by the gospel proclaimed in the new church. The husband and wife can work side by side in many different aspects of the ministry. There are many ways that the family can take part in the church planting process together. If a place is provided for safe fellowship, and if strong boundaries are in place, then the church planting process can be a rich time for the entire planting family.

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To Al Jackson, Frank Barker and Tom Cheely who pointed the way, thank you.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Church Planting is a challenging endeavor. The impact on the men who plant and on their families varies but the impact is there and can be significant. Some planters and their families look back on their church planting experiences with fond memories. Others cringe. For example, one planter interviewed for this study spoke of the positive impact the planting process had on his children. The wife of another planter said her children grew cynical and they were thankful (yet surprised) that all of their children remained involved in churches as adults.

As a pastor and church planter in the Presbyterian Church in America, I have the opportunity to be in contact with many church planters. In the fifteen years I have been in the PCA, many churches have been planted. During that time I have been in contact with thirty six of those church planters, through friendship with the planter, in my work with a presbytery committee on Mission to North America (MNA), or because we work in the same presbytery. Of the thirty-six churches started by these pastors, at least 6 are no longer in existence. Of the thirty six planters, twelve are now out of the ministry and at least 9 are divorced.

Many of these men I have known personally. Some have been good friends. For example, Jack had been an assistant pastor and was sure he was ready for church planting. He had the passion to take the gospel to the people in a tough demographic in a growing western city. He had some experience preaching. He had some experience in leadership positions. However, the MNA assessment center said he wasn't ready. Jack argued that there must be some mistake. The church where Jack had been an Assistant

Pastor disagreed with the assessment center and called him to plant a new church. The new church began strong but Jack soon discovered that church planting is a lonely endeavor. His wife also became lonely and then frustrated with her husband. Two years later, Jack was out of the ministry. Even worse, he lost his family through the experience. His wife divorced him and he is alienated from his children.

The experience of Mike was different. The assessment center concluded that Mike and his wife were ready to plant a new church and so was his family. The new church plant grew quickly. Mike was working hard and the hours he dedicated to the plant began to add up. There were few hours remaining for Mike to give to his family. Mike did not notice the damage he was doing to his family because of the many accolades he received from the congregation and from one woman in particular. He developed an improper relationship with the woman. Mike soon lost his wife and his children and his ministry. Mike remained with her. Today he sells real estate.

Tim came into planting with a record of brokenness and ministry failures behind him. Tim began his plant with a core group and worked through normal leadership struggles associated with the first few years of planting. He gave a lot of time and passion to the plant. However, he also kept a promise that he made to God, his wife and his children. Tim's promise was that his relationship with God and his family would always come before the church plant. Ten years after it began, this church plant is strong and preparing to birth a second daughter church. Tim's marriage and family are thriving.

What is the difference in the experience of church planting for Tim, Mike and Jack? Why do some church planters leave the ministry altogether, some move on to other ministries, while others continue in successful ministry?

Although the exact number of pastors leaving ministry is in question, general observation would cause one to assume that number is high. Neil Wiseman and H.D. London have stated that eighty percent of pastors in America believe that the pastoral ministry has a negative impact on their families. They also cited that thirty-three percent of pastors say being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family.¹ While it is impossible to validate these statistics, they would still indicate that the pastoral ministry is difficult, and that the impact on the pastor can be significant, often more negative than positive. As stated, the work of pastoral ministry can be hazardous. What about hazards for church planters? Is it any different for them? My anecdotal experience would lead me to the initial conclusion that church planting can be more difficult than pastoring an established church. Further, my observation is that the impact of church planting on the planter and his marriage and family can be disastrous.

In a Doctor of Ministry class on Grace Centered Leadership at Covenant Theological Seminary, Dr. Phil Douglass compared church planters to soldiers on the front line of a war.² Just as a soldier on the front lines runs a high risk of being injured, so church planters face a higher risk of facing painful difficulties. While all pastors face significant challenges, Rev. Mark Upton, Pastor and Planter of Hope Community Church in Charlotte, NC, said at a recent gathering that church planters are *perishing*.³ Perhaps they are “perishing” because they are not aware of the dangers inherent in church planting. Perhaps they think they will be impervious to these dangers. Perhaps they are

¹ Wiseman, Neil B. and H.B.London, Jr.; *Pastors at Greater Risk*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993. 20

² Phillip Douglass, “Grace Centered Leadership,” class lecture, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 3 June 2005

³ Meeting of MNA Subcommittee of Charlotte PCA Church planters, Hope Community Church, 6 March 2007

“perishing” because the work of building God’s kingdom can result in deep suffering and sacrifice.

In their book “Pastors at Greater Risk,” Neil Wiseman and H.B. London affirm that pastors face such difficult struggles:

“...the risks in ministry are greater than ever. Pastors are working harder in a world that’s more corrupt. They wonder why their parishioners expect them to squander energy on trivial matters when evil threatens to wreck the human race. Fatigue shows in the eyes of pastors. Worry slows their stride. Vagueness dulls their preaching....This struggle takes a terrible toll, as pastors wrestle with crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starved intimacy and shriveled purpose.”⁴

Pastoring an established church is quite difficult. However, the church planter faces many unique additional burdens. In addition to the normal responsibilities of the pastorate, the church planter must develop, teach and defend the new churches, values, philosophy of ministry and vision. He must train the leaders that will eventually take over much of the administration, teaching, and shepherding of the congregation. The church planter and his wife will begin many of the churches early ministries such as bible studies, ministries to children, youth, women and men, in the beginning stages of the new church, the church planter will also be responsible for setting up banking, budgets and financial policies. The planter, his marriage, and his family cannot remain unaffected by these challenges.

⁴ Wiseman, 15

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

The pastorate is a vocation that is challenging to marriage. God has called some pastors to plant new churches. Yet a casual glance at a sample of the men who have planted churches reveals many who are now out of the pastoral ministry. Some of those men have lost their marriages and families. On the other hand, there are pastors who have thrived at church planting. Their churches have grown, their families are intact, and their ministry grew deeper and stronger. The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter and his marriage and family.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to discover the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter and his marriage, this study has sought to answer three questions:

1. What is the impact of church planting on the planter?
2. What is the impact of church planting on the pastor's wife?
3. What is the impact of church planting on their marriage?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has significance for everyone involved in church planting and also for the greater kingdom of God. It is significant for the planter, for his wife and children, for the church planted, for the mentors and coaches of church planters and their wives, and for the churches and presbyteries who plan to plant churches.

First, there is very little written regarding the impact of church planting on the planter, his marriage and his family. The impact of pastoring an established church is significant. Fred Lehr says, "Clergy are described as being in the "holy crossfire," as the clergyperson and his/her family attempt to juggle the expectations of self, family,

congregation, denomination and God.”⁵ The task of planting a new church carries extra stressors, and the impact of these stresses on the marriage and family is important to understand. This study should provide more data regarding this significant impact.

Second, it must be acknowledged that church planting is difficult. It is not surprising that veteran planters rarely have a desire to plant another church even though they are experienced and the most qualified to take on such a task. The pressures are unique. This study identifies some of those difficult pressures and reveals the ways in which they impact the planter and his family.

Third, a part of the vision of Mission to North America is “That God, by His Grace and for His own glory, will transform the PCA into a grassroots church planting culture that is: exponentially reproducing a growing number of biblically healthy churches...” MNA has therefore developed an office of Church Planter Development to locate and equip men who are called, gifted and willing to plant new churches. Yet we are losing these men at an alarming rate. Not only is the church losing church planters, but families are severely impacted: spouses are losing their marriages, and children are losing their parents. This study helps us understand why we are losing these men and why their families suffer. Once we understand why we lose them, it is possible that we may find solutions to better equip them, protect them and come alongside them. The study is of use to church planters and their wives as well as those who train and mentor them.

Fourth, this study is of assistance to churches and presbyteries by helping them to recognize and deal with the impact of church planting on the planter, his wife and family. Not all pastors are called to plant. Not every pastor’s family is able to weather the impact

⁵ Lehr, J. Fred. *Clergy Burnout* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2006), 5.

of church planting. Although much data is available for assessing church planters, this study adds significant data and better equips presbyteries and churches as they seek to plant churches.

Fifth, this study provides data for church planters and their wives as they seek to plant a church while building a strong marriage and family. It assists them in putting boundaries around their marriage and family. Further, this study helps the planter and his wife recognize danger signs and take action to insure that their marriage, family and ministry all thrive.

Finally, I did this study for my own benefit. It is painful to watch fellow planters, their wives, and their families suffer in the process of planting. My hope is that I will be able to use the results of this study to support these men and their families as they give of themselves to build the kingdom of God.

It is possible that some pastors enter into the church planting process expecting their plant to fail. But the vast majority of pastors enter into the experience expecting that it will succeed, that their families will thrive, and that their ministries will grow stronger. It is my hope that this study will be of use in decreasing the hazardous impact of planting and increasing the potential for health and maturity.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study the following terms are defined.

Assessment Center - The MNA Assessment Center is a four-day event used to help evaluate interested pastors in the specific competencies for church planting.

Church Plant – A church plant is a new church development. The study will be limited to *new* churches planted in the United States and Canada by the Presbyterian Church in America. The Plant could be a daughter church, a parachute plant or a scratch plant.

Church Planter – The Church Planter is the Ordained Pastor called by a collection of churches or a single church to be the primary leader in the plant. He is ordained in the PCA.

Church Planting Assessment Center – This is a week-long evaluation program that consists of a series of individual and group evaluations designed to assess the readiness of a pastor and his wife to plant a church.

Core Group – a core group is a group in place at the beginning of a church planting endeavor. The core group could have come from a mother church, could have been gathered by the planter, could be a local bible study or a combination of all of those.

Daughter plant – a daughter church occurs when a core group of people leave a “mother church” and join with the church planter to plant a new church

Launch – This term refers to the process of taking the church plant public.

Mission to North America (MNA) – The domestic church planting arm of the Presbyterian Church in America.

MNA Committee of Presbytery – This is the committee in a PCA presbytery typically responsible to engender the planting of new churches.

Mother church – When a single church sponsors a church plant with finances and a core group, this single church is the mother church.

Parachute plant – A Parachute plant occurs when a planter moves to a geographical area where he knows no one and has no core group.

Pastor – In the PCA, a Pastor is a man responsible for the spiritual care of the members of a church. He is ordained by and under the oversight of a presbytery.

Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) – A Presbyterian denomination based in North America made up of 75 presbyteries and approximately 1,450 churches in the United States.

Presbytery – a collection of PCA churches within a geographical boundary. As of this date, there are 75 Presbyteries in the PCA.

Scratch plant – a scratch plant is different from a parachute plant in that while the planter does not have a core group, he is familiar with the area and might have some contacts.

Thrive – for the purpose of this study, a church plant is thriving when it has signs of health such as a vibrant congregation that is steadily growing in size.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF SELECTED STUDIES

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter and his marriage. The following research questions were the focus of the study:

1. What is the impact of church planting on the planter?
2. What is the impact of church planting on the pastor's wife?
3. What is the impact of church planting on their marriage?

While Christian literature has explored the impact of pastoring established churches on a pastor's marriage and family, very little has been written concerning the impact of church planting on the church planter and his marriage. I will examine Scripture and other literature regarding the pastoral ministry and the pastor's marriage and family, particularly as it relates to church planting.

I will examine scripture in order to gain a biblical perspective on the relationship between church planting and marriage and the family. I will also study literature from Christian and secular sources to discover what authors have to say about pastoral ministry, church planting, marriage and the family in ministry, and their relationship to each other.

SCRIPTURE

Scripture has much to say regarding the pastoral ministry, church planting, marriage and the family. This section reveals some of the impact the ministry of a pastor or planter has on the pastor/planter as well as on their marriage and family.

Church Planting

In the Bible there are numerous passages that address starting new churches through evangelism and missions. In this section a number of key passages will be examined that reveal the authority behind the missional activity. In Luke 10:1-16, Jesus sent out the seventy to call people to repentance and to announce the good news that the kingdom of God was near. Those that he sent were given a clear mission. Jesus revealed the urgency of that mission by instructing them not to greet anyone along the road and to remain awhile once they arrived at their destination. The work that the seventy were sent to do was difficult. Jesus said he was sending them out “like lambs among wolves.” This could be seen as a type of pre-planting or preparation for a future body of believers in those towns and villages. Since the work is difficult, it is important to know that God is the one who sends church planters to start new churches.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission. The Great Commission in verses 19-20 is preceded by a great claim in verse 18. The claim is that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” In his commentary on the book of Matthew, William Hendriksen notes that this claim was given here “so that when he now commissions his apostles to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, they may know that moment by moment, day by day, they can lean on him.”⁶ The disciples knew that as they went forth into all the world, they did not go on their own. They went in the authority of the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth. The word “therefore” connects the claim and the commission.

⁶ Hendriksen, William, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973, July 2002), 998.

The commission instructed the disciples to go to all nations and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them the gospel. The language points toward an intentional mission that would send believers to nations and cultures, requiring them to remain until the great commission was fulfilled. The work would be difficult and hazardous, but they would go forth in the authority of God. The fact that some baptisms would take place, as evidenced by the command to baptize, reveals that the mission would result in new believers. Obedience to the Great Commission resulted in the establishment of groups of new believers where none had existed before.

The authority from God and the worldwide scope of the Great Commission was reinforced in Acts 1:8 when Jesus told the disciples that they would “receive power when the Holy spirit comes on you; you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church at Antioch and sent off for the work of spreading the gospel and planting churches. Verse 2 makes clear that Paul and Barnabas were called by the Holy Spirit and that they were called to a specific work. The content of this commission is not specifically stated, but the implication is that these two were to travel from Antioch to the other towns, speaking the good news of Jesus Christ and establishing the church. The two traveled from Antioch and remained for a while in each town, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. Wherever they went, a group of new believers was usually left behind. At times these groups might be disorganized and undernourished spiritually. Nevertheless, they constituted a church.

These passages reveal that God is the authority behind the missional work of starting new churches. The work is at times difficult; nevertheless the work usually resulted in a new church. Since church planting is a God ordained activity, the church must be engaged in this missional activity.

Struggles in Marriage

Just as the missional activity of church planting is a God ordained activity, so is marriage is a God ordained institution. In this section a number of passages will be examined that reveal the covenant nature of marriage and how the covenant nature of marriage is impacted by the sin inherent in men and women.

Genesis 2:18 records God declaring that “it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” God then created woman out of man. Woman was designed by God as a perfect compliment for man. Adam declared Eve to be “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.” Marriage did not end with Adam and Eve but continues as an institution ordained by God. Verse twenty-four teaches of the ongoing nature of God ordained marriage when it says, “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.” Leaving his first earthly identity as a son of his parents, man will then be united to his wife as a new family. As a couple united they are no longer independent of each other.

In I Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul reveals the dependant nature of man and woman upon each other. He reminds the Corinthians that the woman was formed out of man and that man was born from woman. In Ephesians 5:20, Paul encourages the husband and wife to live as followers of Christ, submitting one to another. There is a general sense in which the husband is to submit to his wife by having a servant’s heart of

humility toward her and by putting her needs before his own.⁷ In Ephesians 5:22, the wife is commanded to submit to her husband as to the Lord. As she would submit to the Lord then, the wife is also to submit to the husband. This call to the wife has the effect of calling her to be more concerned about her husband than about herself.

Likewise, the husband has a responsibility to minister to his wife's needs before his own. Verse twenty-five instructs the husband to love his wife "just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." The command for sacrificial love from the husband to the wife has the impact of the husband putting aside his own desires for the needs of his wife. Husband and wife are seen in this passage to be truly united and dependent upon each other. This type of other-person focus is complicated by the fall but nevertheless the commands remain in place. There is a unity that is found in marriage that is not found in any other relationship between two humans. Because of this oneness, anything that impacts one person in the marriage will in some way impact the other.

The Bible reveals the oneness that should be present in marriage. In Genesis 2, God created the most basic of communities, the married couple, indicating that the man and woman are no longer two but one. It is God's design that these two remain together throughout life. God's high view of marriage is seen in the assertion that God hates divorce.⁸ In a conversation with Pharisees, Jesus acknowledged that Moses did permit divorce but only because their hearts were hard. He reminded them that "it was not this way from the beginning."⁹ Jesus went on to say that the only grounds for divorce is

⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, (Dallas: Word, 1990), 366.

⁸ Malachi 2:16

⁹ Matthew 19:3-8

marital unfaithfulness.¹⁰ Then the Apostle Paul, in his teaching on marriage in I Corinthians 7, instructed the church that divorce is also allowable if an unbelieving spouse deserts a believing spouse.¹¹ Scripture upholds marriage as an unbreakable covenant between one man and one woman except in the two situations mentioned above. The fact that struggles exist in marriage does not negate the covenant nature and unity of marriage.

This covenant relationship is an intimate one that is created and upheld by God. Isaiah 62 and Matthew 25 portray marriage as an illustration of Jesus' relationship with the church, referring to Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as the bride of Christ. God's relationship with his church is a covenant relationship – a relationship of promise and faithfulness. The marriage relationship should resemble God's covenant relationship with his church.

While marriage is a God ordained relationship, marriage is also a relationship between two fallen individuals. Genesis 3 recounts the fall of man and the curse given to the serpent, the woman and the man. A part of that curse for the woman is that there will be frustration in her relationships within her family. With childbearing comes pain and with her marriage, she will seek to dominate her husband even though God has put her under the authority of her husband. A part of the curse given to the man is that his work will be more difficult. The work includes his vocation and his work as a husband and father. In this way the curse for the man negatively impacts his relationship with his wife and children.

¹⁰ Matthew 19:9

¹¹ I Corinthians 7:15

Scripture reveals that marriage is to be a covenant made between two and that when they enter into that covenant, they become one and are to be inseparable. Whatever affects the one also affects the other and the children as well.

Struggles in the Pastoral Ministry

Throughout the scripture there are passages that address pastoral ministry. In this section I will examine scripture that reveals some of the struggles experienced by those in pastoral ministry as well as the source of the source of those struggles.

Jesus experienced significant struggles as he proclaimed the gospel. In John 15:20, Jesus reminds his disciples that “no servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” As Jesus was persecuted and his early disciples were persecuted when they declared the gospel, there is reason to believe that modern pastors who declare the gospel will also be persecuted.

The persecution will often come from outside the church but at times will come from within the church as well. In Acts 20, Paul met with the elders from the church in Ephesus and gave them this warning: “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” In II Timothy 2, Paul encourages young Timothy to endure in the pastoral ministry. He uses words such as “hardship” and “suffering” to describe Timothy’s role, comparing it to that of a soldier. The pastor will experience opposition but is able to endure through dependence on Christ. The role of the pastor requires endurance,

vigilance and a willingness to suffer. The modern pastor is no different and should expect to have struggles and face persecution.

In this section we have seen that the pastoral ministry will bring struggles from outside and inside the church. The pastor is encouraged to endure the struggles.

Marriage and the Pastoral Ministry

The study has earlier shown that the marriage is a union of two that become one and that what impacts one spouse will therefore impact the other. The study has also shown that struggles are inherent in pastoral ministry. In this section, I will examine passages that reveal the connection between struggles in pastoral ministry and their impact upon marriage.

Paul provides general warnings for Christians concerning their effectiveness as ministers when they are married as opposed to unmarried. In 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Paul wrote,

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs-- how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world-- how he can please his wife-- and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world-- how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Paul did not prohibit marriage for those in ministry but he did note that being married can divide ones' attention whereas singleness allows undivided attention to ministry.

In the Old Testament Moses was married and in a pastoral type role.¹² In the New Testament it states that Peter was also married.¹³ However, beyond these references very

¹² Exodus 2:21, 3:10

¹³ Luke 4:38

little is known regarding the marital status of men with pastoral type roles in the Scriptures. However, Paul does address those who are married and in pastoral ministry, holding a high standard for their relationship with their spouse and their family. I Timothy 3:4 directs that the overseer must be a man who manages his family well. He must keep his life priorities in order so that his wife and family are not ignored. The overseer must also be the husband of one wife.¹⁴ Hendriksen and Kistemaker interpret this as meaning that the overseer “must be a man of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife; one who, being married, does not, in pagan fashion, enter into an immoral relationship with another woman.”¹⁵

These passages reveal that pastors are allowed to marry. They also confirm that being in the pastoral ministry can affect the pastor’s marriage and that being married will impact the pastor’s ministry.

Struggles in Church Planting

Biblical examples of pastoral ministry and church planting indicate that a man called to be pastor or church planter should expect struggles and persecution. While the ministry will hopefully have a positive impact on the pastor or planter, there will inevitably be some negative impact as well.

An example of the positive and negative impact of church planting can be seen in Acts 16:16-24. This passage reveals how Paul and Silas experienced the impact of church planting in Philippi. On the positive side, as they proclaimed the gospel, the message strongly moved the people throwing the entire city into an uproar. This could be seen as a

¹⁴ I Timothy 3:2

¹⁵ William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, the Pastorals and Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 121.

positive impact because the people were being transformed by the gospel to such a strong degree and in such large numbers that they were in conflict the evil in the city. At the same time, Paul and Silas experienced negative consequences in Philippi as well. They were stripped, beaten and thrown into prison for proclaiming the gospel and creating this disruption. Surely this brutal treatment had quite an impact upon the ministry of Paul and Silas! In Philippians 1:12-14 and 19-26, Paul told the church that “what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance” and “...has served to advance the gospel.” While he acknowledged that church planting could be painful, he lived with the expectation that the results would be good.

In Acts 18, Paul and Silas continued to plant churches even after experiencing such pain. As the two men ministered in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, they encountered difficulties. Yet these church plants were fraught with tension not only from the people in the area but also from people within the young churches.

In this section we have seen that scripture reveals a pattern of conflict that was experienced by the men God sent out to plant new churches. The struggles are to be expected from outside and inside the church.

Marriage and Church Planting

The Bible also speaks to the concern of how leading a church planting initiative will impact the pastor’s marriage. It states that two married persons are no longer just two individuals but one and therefore the struggles he experiences in ministry will also impact his wife and their marriage.

The pastor’s marriage will be impacted by church planting because the marriage relationship is not immune to the difficulties of ministry. Two married persons are no

longer just two individuals. As has already been noted, Genesis 2:24 states that when two are married they are no longer two but “become one flesh.” Ephesians 5:31 teaches that a man is “united to his wife.” The import of these passages is simple but profound: What happens to the husband impacts his wife; and what happens to the wife impacts her husband. Further, their children are also affected. What happens in the life of the father or mother has an impact upon the children as individuals and upon the family as a community.

In this section I examined scripture in order to gain a biblical perspective on the relationship between church planting and marriage and the family. Scripture revealed that the role of a pastor and a church planter are ordained by God. We also saw that marriage is God ordained. Further, the fall of man has a negative impact on his wife, his marriage and his vocation, including ministry. Jesus promises persecution for those in ministry and since the married couple is no longer two but one, the spouse will face struggles as well.

The next section will reveal more about some of the struggles faced by pastors, planters and their families.

LITERATURE

Much has been written regarding the pastoral ministry and church planting and marriage but very little has been written regarding the relationship between the three areas. In order to understand that relationship better, I will examine the three different areas with a particular focus on struggles in ministry that impact the pastor or planter, their spouse and their family. The first part examines literature regarding church planting.

Church Planting

“As seen above, it is important for us to review literature on church planting in order that we might understand how it addresses the impact planting can have on the minister’s marriage. And there is much literature available that addresses church planting including reasons for planting new churches, how to plant new churches and some of the struggles associated with planting new churches.

There is much literature available regarding church planting. Many books and articles are published that provide instruction on how to plant a church. These studies usually begin by helping a pastor discern his calling to be a church planter. Instruction then continues through such technical topics such as incorporation and non-profit status as well as finding a location to meet and how to design the first worship service.

Ralph Moore is an author and a church planting veteran who has been involved in more than two hundred church plants. Moore is the author of *Starting a New Church: The Church Planter’s Guide to Success*.¹⁶ Moore notes that the church in America is declining amongst existing churches but quotes one denomination that claims eighty percent of new believers are coming to Christ through their church plants.¹⁷ Excited by the fruit of new church evangelism, Moore’s response is to plant more churches that will then plant more churches.

Church Planter Ed Stetzer agrees and claims that “church planting is the most effective way to reach those outside the faith.”¹⁸ Peter Wagner also pushes for more church planting as a means of evangelism in his book *Church Planting for a Greater*

¹⁶ Ralph Moore, *Starting A New Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002).

¹⁷ Moore 23

¹⁸ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 15

Harvest.¹⁹ Wagner believes that “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”²⁰ Aubrey Malphurs also encourages church planting but gives more reasons. He notes that new churches evangelize better, grow faster, and reach the next generation more effectively. He states that eighty to eighty-five percent of churches in America are either plateaued or dying. Of the fifteen percent of established churches that are growing, ninety-three percent of this growth is a result of members transferring from one church to another. He concludes, explaining that with about three hundred and fifty thousand churches in America, only about three thousand five hundred are growing as a result of people coming to Christ for the first time.²¹

According to statistics available from the Stated Clerks office of the Presbyterian Church in America, the PCA had a net increase of thirty churches in 2003, of twenty in 2004, of thirty-one in 2005 and of twenty-six in 2006.²² While some churches closed their doors or consolidated with other churches, the net result was a positive growth in the number of churches. However, the broader church in America is not faring so well. Statistics make it clear that the number of churches existing in the United States per ten thousand persons has continued to decrease. In 1900, there were twenty-seven churches for every ten thousand Americans. This declined to seventeen churches in 1950. By 1996, only eleven churches existed for every ten thousand Americans.²³

Stetzer believes that a “parish mentality” is a primary reason the church-to-population ration is declining. “Churches often die because people move out of rural area

¹⁹ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990)

²⁰ Wagner 11

²¹ Malphurs 32

²² Statistics available at <http://www.pcaac.org/Statistics.htm>

²³ Tom Clegg and Tim Bird, *Lost in America: How you and Your church Can Impact the World Next Door* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2001),30.

to urban and suburban settings. Yet new churches are not often started in the new urban and suburban areas because they are too close to other established churches of the same denominations.”²⁴

The PCA has been active in planting new churches since her inception in 1973. Mission to North America (MNA) is the arm of the PCA primarily concerned with the planting and health of PCA churches in North America. MNA “serves PCA churches and presbyteries as they advance God's Kingdom in North America by planting, growing, and multiplying biblically healthy churches through the development of intentional evangelism and outreach ministries.”²⁵

Much is written about the task of church planting. Much is also written about the need to plant new churches. On the negative side, literature reveals that existing churches are dying at an alarming rate. But on the positive side, literature also reveals new churches are perhaps the most effective method of reaching unbelievers with the gospel and that the PCA is committed to helping in that endeavor.

Marriage

Church planting doesn't occur in a vacuum but occurs in the context of a culture. And that culture will impact the planter and his family. Therefore, we need to understand the condition of marriage in the culture so that we might know the broader environment where the planter is trying to sustain a healthy marriage. In this section I will examine literature that reveals the condition of marriage in the culture today.

²⁴ Stetzer 7

²⁵ www.pca-mna.org

The available literature reveals growing disharmony in marriage in America. In spite of God's passion for faithful marriages which has been seen in the Biblical section of this chapter, Barbara Whitehead and David Popenoe reveal that marital harmony in the United States is at an all-time low. In their paper The State of Our Unions, Whitehead and Popenoe describe how marriages are breaking up at alarming and increasing rates. 2006 statistics predict that about fifty percent of all marriages will eventually end in divorce. This number has been fairly steady since the 1980's but the issue is complicated by the fact that fewer people are choosing to get married. Nearly fifty percent fewer women chose to get married in 2004 compared with 1979. Those that are married are not as happy as previous generations. The percentage of men and women who claim they are 'very happy' in their marriage has declined over the last twenty-five years. Many are choosing to live together outside of marriage rather than marrying.²⁶ Biblical oneness in America is giving way to co-habitation and divorce. In addition, the rate of divorce is actually increasing among those that would identify themselves as "born again Christians." Even in the church marriage is not held in the same high regard that it once was. A recent study by the Barna Group revealed that fifty-two percent of Christians believe that divorce is not sin even when adultery is not present.²⁷

In his book, *The Diamond Marriage*, Simon Vibert writes that "marriage is very frustrating: in the first year of marriage the man speaks and the wife listens; in the second year the woman speaks and the husband listens; in the third year they both speak and the neighbors listen! Marriage is a three ring circus: engagement ring, wedding ring

²⁶Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe and David Popenoe. *The State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America 2005*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University, 2005, 15-16

²⁷ Barna, George, *The Barna Update*, 2004

and suffering!”²⁸ While Vibert’s statement is humorous, it reveals the condition of marriage in today’s society. Marriage can be wonderful, but it can also be difficult and frustrating. Vibert continues, saying that “part of the reason for such cynical reactions to marriage is the sheer difficulty of merging two personalities into one flesh! When you add to this the multiple roles of husband, father, lover, provider, and wife, housekeeper, mother and lover, to mention but a few, we feel very stretched.”²⁹

Psychologist Dan Allender and Biblical scholar Tremper Longman agree that marriage can be frustrating. In their book *Intimate Allies* they note, “Marriages are under assault. Some suffer the tragedy of affairs, abuse, and divorce. Others endure the tedious of a relationship that is an institution and not a romance. Most of us who are husbands and wives feel an exhaustion that comes from the frenetic pace required to honor the competing loyalties of family, work, church, community, parents, friends, neighbors, and more.”³⁰

In American culture, marriages are under assault and that assault can cause problems and disharmony in marriage. In his book *Love and Respect*, Emerson Eggerichs claims to provide the answer to these struggles. Eggerichs points the reader back to Ephesians 5, where a husband is taught to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.³¹ In turn, the wife is taught to respect her husband. The absence of those two actions of love and respect brings on marital disharmony in the form of what Eggerichs calls the crazy cycle. The crazy cycle takes place because the husband doesn’t

²⁸ Simon Vibert. *The Diamond Marriage*. (Ross Shires, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 57.

²⁹ Ibid 57

³⁰ Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, III, *Intimate Allies*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995), xv.

³¹ Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 14-15.

love his wife. The reason he doesn't love her is because he feels she doesn't respect him. But the reason she doesn't respect him is because he doesn't love her.³² And the cycle continues, each blaming the other for the marital problems. Eggerichs claims that the husband and wife must get out of the crazy cycle in order to fix their problems. But that will require that one or both sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of the other.

Bryan Chapell, President of Covenant Theological Seminary, claims that such self sacrifice is necessary and must be performed daily in order for a marriage to grow in harmony.³³ In his book, *Each For The Other – Marriage as it's Meant To Be*, Chapell writes that "in a Christian marriage each individual's actions have an *other* focus."³⁴ So a Christian marriage is to include sacrifice in a culture where sacrifice is not encouraged. Chapell points to the grace of God that is essential for a husband and wife to love each other sacrificially. He writes, "We (Dr. Chapell and his wife, Kathy) know too much about our own weaknesses to credit ourselves for this grace. We simply praise God that when we are weak, he is strong. He continues to teach us of our Savior's love – despite our brokenness – to teach us how we should love one another."³⁵

This section revealed that marriage in American culture is difficult. The culture does not encourage sacrifice but God directs a husband and wife to love each other sacrificially. Marriage in America is under assault and pastors are not immune to the struggles.

³² Ibid 16

³³ Bryan Chapell, *Each For The Other: Marriage As Its Meant To Be*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 192.

³⁴ Ibid 192

³⁵ Ibid, 202-203

Pastoral Ministry

Several months after I became a Christian at the age of eighteen, I joined a thriving church in a college town. The pastor was engaging, and his zeal for evangelism and God was infectious. After a couple of years in that church, I began to feel a call to the pastoral ministry. I talked with this pastor about that call. I still remember the warning he gave me that day. He said that the job of a pastor is *the loneliest job on earth*.

Dan Allender agrees that the role of a leader is a lonely calling. In his book *Leading with a Limp*, Allender notes that “the data are fairly clear about those at the top of the organizational chart. The higher you are, the more rarefied are your friendships. The ones that last over countless crises and conflicts are forged in iron. And those friendships, like true soul mates, are as rare as oxygen at thirty thousand feet. Therefore, one price of formal leadership is being alone.”³⁶ Because all pastors are leaders, loneliness comes with the role.

Allender mentions another issue that often leaves pastors isolated and in danger. Because leaders are required to lead, they can find themselves advocating a single rigid and narrow system. According to Allender, leaders could then find themselves looking at others who have differing opinions and view them as enemies. By doing so, they can give into fear and narcissism. The more they hide from others that would come alongside them, the more isolated they become. He notes that most isolated leaders “give themselves over to some process, substance, or person who eases their pain and props up their illusion that they are in control.”³⁷

³⁶ Allender, Dan B., *Leading with a Limp*. (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2006), .33.

³⁷ Allender 43,44

Still there are other factors that increase the isolation of pastors. Fred Lehr, author of *Clergy Burnout*, reports on a study conducted by Fuller Theological Seminary in the late 1980's. The study discovered that seventy percent of pastors do not have someone they would consider a close friend, forty percent reported at least one serious conflict with at least one parishioner at least once a month, seventy-five percent have reported a significant crisis due to stress at least once in their ministry and seventy percent have a lower self-image after they have been in pastoral ministry than when they started.³⁸

Consider the impact these statistics indicate on the lives of pastors. The combination of a conflict with someone the pastor is called to shepherd –which may produce a stress induced crisis – together with a resultant decrease in self esteem, can create a significant combination of difficult factors for pastor to deal with. Any one of those factors could be trying to a pastor's soul. When going through such trials, it would be helpful for the pastor to have someone to talk with. But since seventy percent of pastors have no one they would consider a close friend, the isolation and loneliness could become palpable. However, the pressures and responsibilities of leading a church does not slow down so that the pastor can build friendships. Instead, other factors continue to build the isolation of the pastor.

One of those factors that create isolation for pastors is consumerism. Teaching Pastor Skye Jethani believes that religious consumerism has the effect of putting churches in competition with other churches and pastors in competition with other pastors.³⁹ Instead of pastors coming together and building one another up, they become even more

³⁸ Arch Hart, Fuller Theological Seminary, at Glen Eyrie Conference Center, Colorado Springs, Co. November 7-10, 1991.

³⁹ Skye Jethani, "All We Like Sheep," *Leadership* 27, 3 (2006).

isolated. The churches and their pastors must undergo the pressure of constant evaluation from outside the church as well as from their own members. Pastors and their churches then tend to focus on meeting the latest needs and wants of the average consuming Christian. The pastor feels the pressure, even in a church plant, to add Sunday Schools, youth groups, coffee bars, choirs, and the best worship music in town.

A 1994 article entitled “The Influence of Work-Related Stressors on Clergy Husbands and Their Wives” gives some of the other factors that add to the pressure of the pastorate. The article notes that clergy rank in the top ten percent of the population in terms of education, but rank 325th out of 432 occupations in terms of salary. The article further states that clergy families lack adequate quality time together, thus eroding family identity and cohesion. A third finding was that boundary ambiguity by the clergy family system produces problematic concerns regarding privacy and triangulation. Finally, the author described clergy as being in the “holy crossfire,” as the clergyperson and his/her family attempt to juggle the expectations of self, family, congregation, denomination, and God.⁴⁰

Kent Hughes, pastor and author, calls the act of giving in to such pressure “giving in to the *success syndrome*.” In his book, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*, Hughes uses a biblical framework to define success.⁴¹ He describes success as faithfulness, serving, loving, believing, praying, and supporting. But he also notes that the world might consider a focus on these characteristics as mediocrity rather than success.⁴²

⁴⁰ Fred Lehr *Clergy Burnout* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 5.

⁴¹ Kent and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1987).

⁴² *Ibid*, 111

Pastors are under pressure to work long hours in order to bring about the “perfect church.” But in his book *A Scandalous Freedom*, Steve Brown says, “perfectionism robs you of freedom.”⁴³ He notes that “letting go is difficult but the freedom of having let go is intoxicating.”⁴⁴ The drive for perfection not only isolates the pastor by putting him in competition with other pastors but the pressure also robs him of his freedom.

The pressure that is on the pastor often leads him to treat the church and his ministry as a profession rather than a passion. John Piper, author of *Brothers We Are Not Professionals*, says that such professionalism is killing pastors.⁴⁵ H.B. London and Neil Wiseman, authors of *Pastors at Greater Risk*, agree with that analysis. Further, they claim that when the pastor’s faith becomes professional, his marriage is robbed of the attention he is responsible to give to it.⁴⁶

In this section, the literature studied revealed that the pastoral ministry can be a lonely, stressful occupation. The pastor is under unique levels of pressure from the church and from within his own soul. Since so little is written regarding struggles in church planting, particularly struggles relating to the planters personal life, it is important to understand more of the struggles of a pastor in a traditional setting. The next section evaluates literature regarding the impact of pastoral ministry upon the marriage and family of the pastor.

Marriage, Family, and the Pastoral Ministry

The tension of the pastorate as a profession can destroy the pastor’s marriage and family. Fighting to produce and then to control a “perfect” church can rob the pastoral

⁴³ Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 2004). 63

⁴⁴ Ibid 63

⁴⁵ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002). 1

⁴⁶ Wiseman 137

marriage and family of intimacy. Wiseman and London catalog the pressure that is put on the pastor's wife. She feels pressure to compete with God and with her husband's "mistress" -- the church -- for the affection of her husband.⁴⁷

At the same time, pastoral marriages and families are not doomed to failure. Gail McDonald, the wife of veteran pastor and author Gordon McDonald, says that "most marriages of couples in ministry are strong and healthy. You just don't hear about them because good marriages don't make for particularly interesting conversation."⁴⁸ But she also notes that the pastor-husband must be reminded of the potential problems that come with pastoral counseling and the common tendency for pastor's to overwork.⁴⁹ While pastoral marriages can be good, they must be protected.

According to London and Wiseman, one of the myths of ministry is that it can cheat a pastor's family by robbing them financially and adequate time for strong family relationships. But the reality is that ministry can actually enrich the family. The church can be an extended and multi-generational family for the parents and the children.⁵⁰

Another myth is that marriage and ministry must be in competition with each other. Wiseman notes that his wife knew that when he was fulfilled in ministry he would be better able to give himself completely to her and their sons at home. She made sure he had the time to focus on his work while he was at work. Together they set boundaries around how much time that would be.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Wiseman. 132

⁴⁸ Wiseman 87

⁴⁹ Ibid 87

⁵⁰ London and Wiseman, *Married to a Pastor*. (Ventura, CA; Regal, 1999), 179-180.

⁵¹ Ibid, 243.

London and Wiseman believe that unrealistic expectations on the wife of a pastor are a “gigantic problem”. They explain:

Horror stories abound about wives with too much to do, too many people to please and too many burdens to bear. A civil war of the spirit seems to be waged concerning the rights and responsibilities of women married to ministers. Some suggest these loads become easier for those who passively comply with what is expected. Others argue that a compliant pastor’s wife is likely to feel a passive inner rage that gets displaced into her marriage, parenting, and relationships at church or at her secular workplace.⁵²

The pressures felt by the spouse of a pastor are significant and will impact her relationship with her husband and children.

Diane Langberg, the author of *Counsel for Pastor’s Wives*, writes that “even in the best of pastoral marriages there may be recurring problems or patterns commonly shared by others in ministry.”⁵³ She also writes of the tension between ministry and family, asserting that the couple must learn to live with a job that is never done. She states:

All clergy marriages must deal with tension between ministry and family. Ministry couples must also learn to live with a job that is never done; no matter what is accomplished, new needs arise and must be met. They struggle with living up to others’ expectations, with having the church determine their income, and with having their house belong to others and used as an extension of the church.”⁵⁴

Because of all of these factors, ministry in even the best situation is difficult on the marriage. The pressure to do ministry well is a pressure felt by the entire family.

There is pressure to live up to unrealistic expectations but the pressure does not always come from others. Sometime that pressure comes from the pastor and his wife. In *Going the Distance*, Peter Brain writes “we pastors often have unrealistic expectations of

⁵² Ibid, 117.

⁵³ Langberg, Diane. *Counsel for Pastors’ Wives*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988).13

⁵⁴ Ibid 14

ourselves and of our families. When our spouses share these, the pressure on our families can become intolerable.”⁵⁵

In many churches, the pressure is high for the pastor and his family to pretend to be something they are not. Sally Morgenthaler, author and leadership consultant, says that “Religious culture has a hard time with pastors and pastor’s families who have flaws. Thousands of pastors serve congregations that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, expect their leaders to maintain (at least for public viewing) near-perfect marriages, near-perfect families, and near-perfect lives.”⁵⁶ She believes the results are disastrous. Morgenthaler concludes that “image building is a dangerous game. And it is at the core of addictive behavior.”⁵⁷

Much has been written about the struggles encountered by pastors and their families. The literature doesn’t describe a positive picture, but it does present an accurate one. Langberg notes that “these issues all contribute to the strain on pastoral marriages and result in frightening divorce statistics. More men are leaving the ministry due to discouragement, and more ministry couples are divorcing than ever before.”⁵⁸ That’s not good news.

Struggles in Church Planting

Many authors of books and articles on church planting give only a page or two of instruction or warning regarding the marriage or family of the church planter. There is however much written about the impact of pastoring an established church upon the

⁵⁵ Brain, Peter. *Going The Distance: How To Stay Fit For A Lifetime Of Ministry*. (Kingsford NSW Australia: Matthias Media, 2006), 109.

⁵⁶ Sally Morgenthaler, "Does Ministry Fuel Addictive Behavior?," *Leadership* 27, 1 (2006).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Langberg 14

pastor and his family. In many ways the information on clergy families in an established church can be applied to the church planting situation. Shari Thomas notes that “in both clergy spouse research as well as the findings in the current research, the husband deeply affects the wife. The trend seems to be that the marital issues in traditional pastoral ministry are even more intensified in church planting.”⁵⁹

Malphurs believes that church planting is more exhausting than pastoring an established church for several reasons. First, Malphurs notes that church planters are initiators, not maintainers. Many pastors of established churches are not maintainers either and many are also initiators but the planter must be an initiator or the plant will certainly fail. A second reason Malphurs gives is that church planting is hard work. Pastoring an established church is also hard work but Malphurs notes that there is a difference. The planter is in the field with people more and the planter is criticized more than the pastor of the established church.⁶⁰

According to London and Wiseman, churchgoers expect their pastor to juggle an average of sixteen major tasks.⁶¹ That’s for the typical established church. With a church plant, there are no functional structures set up, so the number of major tasks to be accomplished by the church planter only increases. Veteran church planter and professor of church planting at Covenant Theological Seminary, Dr. Phil Douglass notes that beginning church planters are isolated from other pastors. Douglass says that “the participants in the new church often expect the novice pastor to perform the same tasks at an equal level of quality as the veteran pastors the members may have known in the past.

⁵⁹ Thomas 22

⁶⁰ Malphurs 22

⁶¹ Wiseman 62

Fully responsible for the church planting effort from his first working day, the beginning planter performs the same tasks as the five year veteran. Moreover, the beginner church planter must learn while performing the full array of pastoral duties. Therefore, it is impossible to add gradually such tasks as: discerning the nature of problems, considering alternative solutions, making selections and, after acting, assessing the outcome.”⁶²

The planter starts the church from scratch and therefore must either do everything or equip people to do the things he cannot or should not do. London and Wiseman believe that the result of this situation is that Christ gets crowded out of the pastor’s life.⁶³ When Christ is crowded out, the plant suffers, the planter suffers, and the planter’s marriage can become a casualty. One minister’s wife said that “unrealistic expectations from our church members pull my husband and me away from each other and many times hinder our walk with God.”⁶⁴

Richard Swenson, M.D., the author of *Margin* and *The Overload Syndrome* agrees with that analysis. He notes that “a nearly universal psychological truth in American society, and one that has mainstream acceptance, is to obtain our identity and esteem by our work. Ultimately our identity comes from God and is not contingent on our job description or how many hours we work.”⁶⁵ Church planters are included in Swenson’s analysis and are therefore also guilty of getting their identity and esteem from their work. They experience what Swenson calls “overload” and the stress of this overload impacts not only the planter but also his wife.

⁶² Phil Douglass, “The Effect of Leadership Behaviors and Mentoring Styles Upon Presbyterian Church Planters in America” (St. Louis University, 1995). 21

⁶³ Wiseman. 63

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Richard Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1998). 183

Such unrealistic expectations and overload can be disastrous. Douglass believes that “If the realities of beginning church planting are not dealt with in helpful ways, and if beginning pastors are not appropriately nourished, guided and encouraged when they are most vulnerable, then the most promising new church planters will leave the ministry.”⁶⁶

All of these unique challenges are laid in the hands of the church planter at a time when he is often isolated. Stressed, weary and isolated, the planter would seem to be a prime target for the enemy. David Ellis, Pastor of Astoria Community Church in Astoria, Queens, said, “I suspect that the devil opposes the planting of new churches more than any other activity we could do. If he can cripple church planters with discouragement; if he can bring division into our homes; if he can seduce us with some temptation; if he can limit the size of our faith; if he can get us too busy to pray ... then he probably has very little to fear from the founding of our new church.”⁶⁷

This section revealed that church planting is hard work and often carries unrealistic expectations. These expectations can cause unique levels of stress and burnout in the planter. This section also reminds us that what impacts the planter also impacts his wife and his marriage. The next section examines literature that deals with the impact of church planting upon marriage.

Marriage and Church Planting

Sadly, there is not much written that addresses the impact of planting on the planter and his family with the exception of a recent study done by Shari Thomas that

⁶⁶ Douglass. 22

⁶⁷ David Ellis, “The Spiritual Life of a Church Planter,” in *The Movement - Redeemer Urban Church Planting Center e-newsletter* (2004).

examines the impact of church planting on the wives of the planter.⁶⁸ Thomas notes that “in both clergy spouse research as well as the findings in the current research, the husband deeply affects the wife. The trend seems to be that the marital issues in traditional pastoral ministry are even more intensified in church planting.”⁶⁹

There is a biblical imperative to plant churches. Much has been written on how to plant a church, but very little is written regarding the impact of church planting on marriage. However, Shari Thomas notes that there is an impact. In her paper, “A Study of PCA Church Planter Spouse Stress and Satisfaction Levels,” Thomas concludes that “church planting can engender an environment which could lead to the mistreatment of the church planter’s spouse and family.”⁷⁰ The cost of this mistreatment can be high and long lasting. Thomas states that:

If emotional or spiritual mistreatment could be epidemic in clergy marriages, this begs the questions as to what is happening in church planter marriages. Although church planting has a definite beginning with the excitement of starting, the concern is that it does not have definite end. Once the church is organized, and the church planter assumes the role of pastor, there are still years of training and development to bring the adolescent church to maturity. The concern is for spouses who may continue indefinitely in an exhausting lifestyle and not feel free to make healthy changes. As many spouse mentioned, “we can put other areas of our lives on hold for a while, but not indefinitely.” The concern is that the church planting years have established poor patterns for the marriage and the family and that these patterns continue.⁷¹

Much of the impact of church planting upon the planter and his wife can continue for years to come. Thomas believes that the planter and his wife need guidance for their marriage and family as well as on handling the stresses of the ministry.⁷²

⁶⁸ Shari Thomas, A Study of Church Planter Spouse Stress and Satisfaction Levels." In *Mission to North America, Presbyterian Church in America*. Atlanta, GA, 2005.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 31.

⁷¹ Ibid, 31.

⁷² Ibid, 31.

Ambiguity in The Context of Marriage and Church Planting

According to Thomas, much of the stress of church planting involves a lack of understanding and training around the marriage, little support for the spouse of the planter, and a high level of ambiguity. Thomas gives us a warning about the ambiguity the spouse faces. “Ambiguity is endemic to ministry. For the spouse this ambiguity takes on three major forms which I term role ambiguity, emotional ambiguity, and physical ambiguity.”⁷³

Role ambiguity refers to question in the mind of the spouse about which roles to fill in the new church plant and how long to fill those before turning them over to someone else. The spouse can be highly involved in many aspects of planting the church. For example, she often begins the children’s ministry, likewise, she might also start the women’s ministry; she may even assist in setting up and taking down equipment, chairs, and tables in a rental facility. Thomas notes that “regardless of a woman’s involvement level, it must be noted that the excessive stress comes from the *ambiguity* rather than her *level of involvement*.”⁷⁴

Emotional ambiguity refers to the questions the spouse wrestles with regarding at least four areas. First, there is the hurt her husband is experiencing; second, there is the pain that comes when people leave the plant; third, there are resentments that can build up; and finally, she wrestles with to encourage her husband when there is no one else who can or will do it.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid.25

⁷⁴ Ibid. 25

⁷⁵ Ibid 26

For the church planter and his family, physical ambiguity involves the use of their home and the improper use of their time.⁷⁶ The home of a church planter can often become the office, meeting house, nursery, and worship center. The pastor, his wife, and their children can all lose their privacy. Physical ambiguity involves the question of the personal time and personal space of the family being encroached upon by the church. Regarding physical exhaustion that results from this ambiguity, Thomas says that:

The very nature of church planting is one that requires hard work, perseverance, sacrifice, and high commitment. This is not being questioned. However, the reality of living with a lack of boundaries, constant physical exhaustion, and lack of rejuvenating activity is of serious concern.

The dilemma for the church planter is that the nature of his job keeps him “on call” twenty four hours a day, seven days a week—at least until reliable staff or elders are trained. Regular restorative time is hard to find. Parenting young children carries similar requirements and often the planter is out on weekends and evenings when mothers would receive support and aid from fathers.⁷⁷

The planter and his family are often physically exhausted as a result of the constant hard work. But since they are the only ones present in the early days of the plant, there is little opportunity for rejuvenation. The physical exhaustion adds to the stress created by boundary ambiguity. Thomas notes that “while boundary ambiguity is a concern repeatedly raised for clergy spouses in previous research, it seems this factor is causing a higher level of stress for church planter spouses that even this study reveals.”⁷⁸

Thomas’s work focuses mainly on the spouse of the church planter. Since the husband and wife are one in Christ, whatever impacts one spouse will in some way impact the other spouse, as well as the family as a whole. Thomas shows that physical and emotional ambiguity adds stress to the clergy’s family, and this stress is magnified in

⁷⁶ Ibid. 27

⁷⁷ Ibid 33

⁷⁸ Ibid 34

the church planting family. She reveals that the boundaries between work and family, church and family, and home and office are blurred, and the ambiguity contributes to the burnout experienced by many planters and their families. Research conducted by psychology faculty at Wheaton College under the direction of Dr. Mark McMinn agrees with Thomas regarding damage that occurs from a lack of boundaries in ministry.

McMinn notes that:

Given the difficulty clergy and clergy spouses have in developing close friendships outside marriage, it seems likely that marriage takes on a special significance. The marriage relationships are often the sole refuge where deep emotions can be expressed, struggles at work disclosed, and ambivalence about the pastoral role discussed. Yet the demands of the work and the boundary intrusions clergy families experience often inhibit close marriage relationships.⁷⁹

This inhibition, which results largely from boundary ambiguity, is exacerbated in the church planting context because of the lack of any church building to take some of the church activities away from the home of the planter. With many plants, there is no central office, so the pastor works out of the home, meetings take place in the home, and counseling often takes place in the home. There is no church building where functions and committee meetings take place, so the planter's home becomes the default meeting location. There is a sense in which the church body "moves into" the planter's home. The planter's home becomes even more of a fish bowl than an established pastor's home. Since a church plant is, by nature, always being evaluated, the planter's home and all of those who live in it are also under constant evaluation. The stress of this evaluation impacts the family, the marriage and the planter.

While Thomas focuses on the spouse of the planter, one of her conclusions connects the impact that church planting has on the spouse to the impact felt by the entire

⁷⁹ Mark R McMinn, "Care for Pastors: Learning from Clergy and Their Spouses," (Wheaton, IL: 2004).20

family. Thomas says, “while the nature of church planting will not change, I do believe we can take significant strides forward in first recognizing the need, and then in directing resources and training to address this need that is so critical for the health of church planter spouses. This in turn will affect the church planter and eventually the churches that are being established.”⁸⁰

Malphurs is more specific in his instructions regarding the place of the family relative to the church plant.

An important, essential ingredient to any ministry is the family. This of course applies to church planters who are married or married with children. If church planters don't have the backing of their families, especially their wives, their ministries will suffer. Without the support of their families, church planters are doomed to failure. While the family may not necessarily be directly involved in the ministry, it must at least be supportive of the ministry. In fact, the church planter's family must come before the ministry. If the family isn't behind the vision, then God is telling prospective church planters that the time isn't right.⁸¹ Church planting can negatively impact the family. Among the disadvantages is

that planters may not have enough time for the wife and family. They have the some freedom to manage to their own schedules, planters also feel the pressure to handle the endless tasks associated with planting. Malphurs agrees with Thomas that the plant can create some extra problems for the wife and family that are not experienced in an established church. The spouse might find herself serving as the “permanent hostess” and feeling the pressure to always have the house immaculate for the many meetings that take place in her home. Malphurs also notes that the risk of planting might be too much for some wives to handle.⁸² It's hard to ascertain how much risk is too much until the couple is in the midst of the plant.

⁸⁰ Thomas 34

⁸¹ Malphurs 111

⁸² Malphurs 113

Idolatry in the Context of Marriage and Church Planting

Often the struggles that the planter and his family experience come from within the church planter. Church planting doesn't necessarily create new idols but it is sure to bring to the surface any idols that lurk inside the planter's heart. An idol is anything, idea, passion or person that a person loves more than they love God. John Calvin said, "...man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols."⁸³ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr. are the authors of *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership*. As the title implies, the authors believe there is a dark side to leadership, and they assert that leadership brings out the dark side in all men. "Be they well-intentioned leaders or dictators driven by sinister motives, their dark side, like oil in a body of water, will always find its way to the surface and create a mess if it is not acknowledged and redeemed."⁸⁴

Church Planter and author Ralph Moore's book *Starting a New Church: The Church Planter's Guide to Success* is an example of the imbalance and lack of attention given to the crucial area of the planter's marriage or family. The 262 page book claims to be a "beginning to end" manual for planting a church. Yet the volume dedicates only one page to the marriage of the planter.⁸⁵ While Moore fails to address the personal life of the planter in any depth, he does note that planting a church is a risky and challenging endeavor that will stress the marriage. Specifically he warns that "if you are married, both

⁸³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:108

⁸⁴ Gary L. and Samuel D. Rima McIntosh, Sr, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 36.

⁸⁵ A thorough reading of 4 books on church planting revealed an average of 1 page per book dedicated to the family or marriage of the church planter. Stetzer, *Planting New Churches* gives the family or marriage ¼ page out of 336. Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, gives 4 pages out of 406. Moore, *Starting a New Church*, gives 1 page out of 262. Murray, *Church Planting; Laying Foundations*, gives 0 pages out of 260.

of you had better be ready to embrace church planting, or you should never move into the risks and challenges to your faith that you will face.”⁸⁶

The church planter can be driven by his own passions, which may include successful professional ministry, pressure to build the kingdom, desire to build the budget, and even a desire for the church to buy land and a building. Being driven is not necessarily a bad thing. The planter can be gospel driven and that is a good thing. But when the drive comes from unholy sources, he can be driven to the point of not seeing danger signs in his marriage and family. In his dissertation, “Church Planting Apprenticeships: Developing Laborers for the Harvest,” Ted Powers notes that “...church planters tend to be a driven, highly motivated, capable breed and thus there is an inherent danger of them being unbalanced in their lives (i.e. focusing on accomplishing the tasks of church planting and not their spiritual or family lives) and of trusting in their human capacities in getting the ministry done and done well.”⁸⁷ Not only is the church planter driven, but the expectations of the new congregation can be overwhelming.

Church planting can bring some negative impact to the family of the planter. But there are advantages for the church planting family as well. Church planter Victor Fry involved his children in planting the church by passing out fliers in the neighborhood. Planter Kaye Pattison allowed all of his daughters to teach Sunday School, something they continue to do now that they are adults.⁸⁸ Just as planting can take time away from the family it can also give time back to the family. Since the planter is able to manage his own schedule he has the freedom to adjust it to fit many of the activities of his family

⁸⁶ Moore 47

⁸⁷ Ted Powers, “Church Planting Apprenticeships: Developing Laborers for the Harvest” (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000), 75.

⁸⁸ Ibid 113

life. Pattison believes that planting can be easier on the spouse if she is able to resist the established expectations of a pastor's wife in an established church. In a plant, expectations are easier to deal with whereas in an established church, expectations might be held up and immovable due to years of tradition.⁸⁹

In concluding this section on marriage and church planting, it is helpful to be reminded of a comment made by veteran pastor and church planter Jack Miller. In his book "The Heart of a Servant Leader" Miller tells a young church planter that he is "especially concerned that you develop your relationship with Lucy [the planter's wife] and with the team as a whole....Your relationship with her is the one that counts most of all. The relationship with his dear bride is the one which always reveals where the pastor really is in his spiritual life and his walk with the Lord"⁹⁰

This section has shown that church planting can have a significant negative impact upon a planter and his family but it can also have a great positive impact. What impacts the husband deeply affects the wife. The marital struggles in pastoral ministry are even more intensified in church planting.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter addresses the literature available regarding church planting, specifically the portion of literature that relates to planter and family. Much is written on the reasons to plant a church and on the detailed mechanics of planting a church. Much is written on pastoring an established church and on the personal life of the pastor. Less is written on the personal life of the spouse of a pastor. Very, very little is written that

⁸⁹ Ibid 114

⁹⁰ C. John Miller, *The Heart of a Servant Leader* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 135,136.

addresses the personal life of the church planter or the impact his work has on his wife and children.

Because the review reveals the impact of pastoring an established church can present great difficulties for the pastor and his family and because the review shows that church planting is more difficult than pastoring an established church, it is reasonable to conclude that church planting will present even greater difficulties for the planter, his marriage and his family. It is important for the planter, his wife and the church to understand more about those struggles experienced by the church planter, his wife and his family. This study will help us to understand that impact.

Chapter three will describe the qualitative methodology used to conduct this study, including the design of the study, the interview participant selection process, the data gathering methods, analysis procedures, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter and his marriage. The study was composed of interviews with eight pastors and their wives who planted churches in the PCA.

The following research questions were the focus of the study:

1. What is the impact of church planting on the planter?
2. What is the impact of church planting on the pastor's wife?
3. What is the impact of church planting on their marriage?

This chapter describes the qualitative methodology used to conduct this study, including the design of the study, the interview participant selection process, the data gathering methods, analysis procedures, and the limitations of the study.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

I used qualitative studies to examine the impact of church planting on the PCA church planter and his marriage. Quantitative research utilizes questionnaires, tests and other inanimate means to gather information aimed at answering such questions as how much and how many. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary means of gathering data. The quantitative study seeks to test a hypothesis, whereas the qualitative study seeks to understand the meaning of situations and to generate hypothesis.⁹¹

In her book, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, Sharon Merriam notes that the first goal of qualitative study is “to raise a question that

⁹¹ Sharon B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998). 9

perplexes or challenges the mind.”⁹² After talking with many planters about this topic, I can say with certainty that the effect of planting on the planter, his family, and his marriage fits the criteria of a perplexing and challenging issue.

According to Merriam, “often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory...there are therefore no hypotheses to be deduced from theory to guide the investigation.”⁹³ The Literature Review (Chapter 2) revealed that there is little information available that might lead to theory regarding the impact of church planting on the planter, his wife, or his family.

Merriam identifies five characteristics of qualitative research:

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.
2. Data are mediated through the human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer.
3. The researcher must go to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe behavior in its natural setting.
4. The study builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than testing existing theory.
5. The product of the study is richly descriptive, using words and pictures rather than numbers.⁹⁴

I used a qualitative study rather than a quantitative study because I believed that this method would provide the best data and understanding for my study purpose. The research questions will be answered according to the participants’ understanding and experience. Even similar church planting situations impact different people in different

⁹² Ibid 7

⁹³ Ibid 7

⁹⁴ Merriam.

ways because each planter is an individual. The qualitative study best fits this research because the impact of church planting is sometimes very painful and personal. This type of study allows the interviewer to explore the painful and personal details of the participant's experience in order to gain a greater understanding of the data.

Merriam notes that qualitative study involves human instruments. The researcher observes the participants in their natural setting, allowing him to understand the impact of church planting more clearly than he would if he used only a quantitative questionnaire. Qualitative study provides the face to face interaction necessary to understand many of the positive and negative effects of church planting on the planter and his family. Qualitative study lends itself well to follow-up questions and open conversation-style interviews. This interview style was helpful as my subjects talked about sensitive and painful experiences.

A further reason for utilizing a qualitative study relates to Merriam's fourth characteristic. A qualitative study is more effective for building theories or concepts, whereas a quantitative study is more effective for testing existing theories or concepts. Since this study sought to discover theory rather than prove theory, the qualitative study was most appropriate.

Finally, since the qualitative study is richly descriptive, it was more effective than a numerical questionnaire in determining and describing the often highly emotional impact of church planting upon the planter, his wife, marriage, and children.

SAMPLING CRITERIA

I interviewed eight pastors who had planted a church in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA).⁹⁵ When possible, I also interviewed their wives. The participants were chosen from among church planters that I know personally as well as from those recommended by three veteran church planting coaches. I used a method that Sharon Merriam calls purposeful sampling, which “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.”⁹⁶

Since the purpose of the study is to examine something very personal -- the impact of church planting on the planter, his wife, his marriage, and his children -- I purposefully chose couples that I thought would be more open and willing to talk about the personal impact of church planting. In order to identify couples who would be willing to talk openly, it was necessary that I know them fairly well or that veteran church planting coaches know them well.

Merriam also notes that whereas the sample for a quantitative study should be large, random, and representative, the sample for a qualitative study should be small, nonrandom, purposeful, and theoretical.⁹⁷ Regarding the number in the sample, Merriam believes that, “what is needed is an adequate number of participants, sites or activities to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study (in the form of the purpose statement).”⁹⁸ The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of church planting on the PCA planter and his marriage. In consultation with my advisor, the sample size was

⁹⁵ See Table of Participants in Appendix D

⁹⁶ Merriam 61

⁹⁷ Merriam 9

⁹⁸ Ibid 64

set at eight church planting couples.⁹⁹ Interviewing eight couples provided insight directly from sixteen individuals and indirectly from their children.

Six of the participating couples planted churches that are still thriving, while two planted churches that have since ceased to thrive. In the six cases involving church plants that are thriving, planters were still ministering as the Senior Pastor or Solo Pastor of the church they planted. In the two cases involving church plants that are not thriving, one of the planters left the pastoral ministry for the business world. The other planted a second church and then transitioned into a role where he consults with pastors. One of the two non-thriving plants has ceased to exist, and the other has been reduced from a high attendance of 140 to meeting as a small group bible study on Sunday afternoons.

I had no difficulty finding six planters from successful church plants that were willing to talk about the impact of church planting. Finding planters whose wives were willing to talk openly (or were willing for their husband to talk openly) was more difficult. The greatest difficulty was finding church planting couples that were willing to talk about their experiences with failed church plants. I found one couple from a non-thriving plant that was willing to talk about that experience. I was also able to locate one planter from a church plant that ceased to exist who was willing to talk about that experience. He is separated from his wife, and she was not willing to join him.

Since the research questions sought to determine the impact of planting on the planter and his family, all of the interview subjects were married with children at the time they started the plant. To ensure that the subjects had ample time for reflection on their church planting experience, I interviewed only those who launched their plant at least

⁹⁹ Robert Burns, PhD is a veteran church planter and the Director for The Center on Ministry Leadership at Covenant Theological Seminary.

five years ago. The church plants varied in size, worship style, and philosophy of ministry. They were planted in different areas, but all of them were in the Southeastern and Western area of the United States. All of the plants studied were located in metropolitan areas of the United States. Seven plants were in suburban areas, and one was on the edge of the downtown area of the city.

The planters came from different parts of the country, and they had a wide variety of backgrounds in ministry. Some of the plants were daughters of other PCA churches, while others were parachute or scratch plants. Not all of the planters attended assessment centers before beginning the planting process.

Church plants that occur due to a contentious split are impacted in a unique way by the issues associated with their origin. Therefore, I limited this study to planters who planted intentionally rather than planting as the result of a contentious church split.

INTERVIEW DESIGN

There are three basic types of research interviews. Merriam notes that the “common way of deciding which type of interview to use is by determining the amount of structure desired.”¹⁰⁰ Merriam uses the following diagram to represent the continuum of interview structures.

Interview Structure Continuum¹⁰¹

Highly Structured	Semi structured	Unstructured
Wording of Questions Is predetermined	Mix of more- and less- structured questions	Open-ended questions
Order of questions predetermined		Flexible, exploratory
Oral form of a survey		More like a conversation

¹⁰⁰ Merriam 72

¹⁰¹ Ibid 73

A semi-structured interview format was used in the interview process for this study. This format allows the interviewer to be flexible as he responds to the participant.

Merriam states that in a semi-structured interview

... either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a highly structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.¹⁰²

I utilized some questions that needed to be answered by all participants, such as their age and how long they had been married at the beginning of the plant. I also used some open-ended questions that allowed me to explore more deeply into other areas.¹⁰³ The primary questions used in the interview are included in Appendix “A.”

The semi-structured interview format allowed me to utilize a list of questions designed to provide specific information and then ask follow-up questions. The participants were free to tell their story in detail, and that freedom brought forth relevant information. I responded to the participants as they answered the questions, exploring unforeseen avenues of information that they revealed. As the interviews progressed, I was able to explore some of their more personal relational dynamics that might not have been revealed under a highly structured interview format.

The interviews were conducted face to face in all cases except one. One interview was conducted via conference call due to conflicting schedules. Merriam notes that a

¹⁰² Ibid 74

¹⁰³ Merriam 74

face to face interview is the best way to collect data for a qualitative study.¹⁰⁴ The face to face interview is also the most common method of collecting data.¹⁰⁵ It allows the interviewer to observe behavior, feelings, and how people interpret the world around them.¹⁰⁶ Therefore I utilized face to face interviews to uncover the personal feelings, behavior, interpretations, and impact of church planting on the planter and his family. All of the interviews were conducted in person with the planter and his wife except with one couple where a face to face interview was not possible due to a scheduling conflict. In this later case I used a phone interview.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The interview was conducted with the husband and wife in seven of the eight interviews. In one situation, the wife of the planter was unwilling to be present. The church planted by that couple has ceased to exist. Interviewing the other couples together made it easier to gather honest data from both parties. Both the husband and wife were encouraged to speak up at any point in the interview process. All interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours.

The interviews were recorded using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder, model DS-2. The participants agreed to the use of the recorder and were assured that neither the recording nor the transcripts of the interview would be made public. Each interview was then transcribed to an electronic document and stored in a computer, with the names of participants, churches, and cities changed to protect confidentiality. At the completion of this study, the transcriptions of the interviews will be destroyed to maintain

¹⁰⁴ Ibid 197

¹⁰⁵ Ibid 71

¹⁰⁶ Ibid 72

confidentiality. I personally transcribed each interview in order ensure that I captured not only the words but also the tone of the participants as they answered the questions. I considered recording the interviews utilizing a digital video recorder but decided against it in an effort to protect the identities of my participants.

All participants were asked to sign an Interview Release Form assuring them that the interviews would be confidential. Each participant was given one copy of the signed document, and I forwarded a second copy to the Doctor of Ministry office at Covenant Theological Seminary. A copy of the Interview Release Form is included as Appendix “B.”

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data gathered.¹⁰⁷ As the data is analyzed, recurring themes are developed from the gathered data. Merriam notes that “devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study’s purpose, the investigator’s orientation and knowledge and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves.”¹⁰⁸

The information gathered in this study was analyzed using the constant comparative method, which is the most common method of analyzing data and forming categories or themes. The constant comparative method was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and since then it has been the primary means of analyzing data in qualitative research.¹⁰⁹ Concerning this method, Merriam notes:

¹⁰⁷ Merriam 192

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 179

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 159

At the heart of this method is the continuous comparison of incidents, respondents' remarks, and so on, with each other."¹¹⁰ "The basic strategy of the method is to do just what its name implies – constantly compare. The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated."¹¹¹

Merriam notes that the constant comparative method groups data in a similar dimension so that patterns are more easily discerned.¹¹² As the data is analyzed, common themes emerge.

The first step was to transcribe the interviews from the recorder to a computer using Microsoft Word. The transcriptions were typed in double space, leaving room for the coding of common themes. The first two interviews were compared with each other. As each subsequent interview was completed, transcribed, and coded, I compared the findings with the growing body of data from the previous interviews. Throughout the study, several constant themes emerged, which are reported on in chapter four.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited in several ways. One limitation of the study is time. The effectual outcome of a person's story might not be known for many years, and it may never be known. The planter and his wife might not fully comprehend the impact that church planting has had on them, their marriage or their children.

The impact of planting on the children brings up a further limitation. The impact on the children impacts the marriage and the planter; however, this study was not able to address that impact because it went beyond the scope and research questions of the study.

¹¹⁰ Ibid 179

¹¹¹ Ibid 159

¹¹² Merriam 18

Another limitation is found in the potential for participants to “look good” or to “put on a happy face.” It is difficult to come to grips with the negative and hard things in life. It is even harder to talk about them. The planter might not be honest in dealing with and discussing the harder parts of the planting process and its impact on his family.

A fourth limitation involves perspectives on life itself. It is difficult to know which of the struggles and joys experienced during the planting process would have been experienced anyway in the setting of an established church.

Another limitation of the study is the impact of personality differences. Even though they can play a large role, it was beyond the scope of this study to explore personality dynamics.

This study also has some areas of bias which must be noted. I am a PCA church planter, and that will lend some bias to the study. My personal experiences in church planting and my loyalty to fellow PCA church planters could possibly skew my interpretation of the data, however I have attempted to be fair throughout the interviews and in my analyses of the collected data.

A second potential bias is that my wife and I participated as interviewees in this study. Before the study, I was aware of much of the impact that church planting has had on myself, my family, my marriage, and my ministry. Nevertheless, the process of conducting the study uncovered additional impact on our marriage and helped us to take appropriate steps to guard against the negative impact and build on the positive impact.

A third bias is that I was acquainted with some of the churches before the interviews were conducted. I knew some of the struggles the churches underwent during the church planting process, and I was involved with three of those plants. I was involved

with one as a church member, one as pulpit supply and a third as the church planter. Furthermore, I was personally acquainted with each of the planters and most of the spouses

SUMMARY

The methodology described in this chapter reveals how the study was conducted. For this study, I utilized a qualitative research approach with a semi-structured interview format. The participants included eight church planters and their wives. In one case, the wife of the church planter was not willing to be present. Six of the churches planted are thriving, while one is struggling and one has ceased to exist. In these interviews, the data was collected face to face in all cases except one. The data was recorded with a hand-held digital voice recorder. I personally transcribed each of the interviews to a computer and then analyzed the data using the constant comparative method. Several common themes emerged and are reported in chapter four. As with any qualitative study, there are limitations and biases to this study. Great care was taken to collect and analyze the information impartially with the goal of answering the four research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study utilized interviews with church planters and their wives from eight different PCA church plants. I chose only churches that were planted a minimum of five years ago in order to give the planter and his wife time to reflect on the impact that planting has had upon their lives. The interviews sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of church planting on the planter?
2. What is the impact of church planting on the pastor's wife?
3. What is the impact of church planting on their marriage?

This chapter will present the findings from the interviews by sharing a synopsis of each interviewee's story. Chapter Five will then present the gathered data that was analyzed utilizing the compare and contrast method.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PLANTERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Eight different church planting couples were interviewed for this study. A synopsis of each of their stories is presented below in order to relate their experiences and the context of their comments.

Jim and Beth

The assessment center gave Jim the green light for church planting. He remembers one of the assessors counseling him on issues pertaining to marriage and the family, but only Jim and the assessor were party to that discussion. Beth never received any such counsel at the assessment center. Jim and Beth were in their late twenties when they moved to the Southeast to plant a PCA church. With one young daughter and

another on the way, life was already busy for Beth. The plant got under way with a small core group of twenty from a large mother church. After the first few weeks of worship, the numbers had gone from twenty to 130 and then leveled off at about eighty-five. Because of this strong start to the church plant, life suddenly became very busy. Jim and Beth really didn't see the need to set any limits on Jim's time away from home. Beth assured him that she would let him know when this pace was too much. Later, Jim wondered if she should have spoken up sooner.

Jim had no formal experience as a pastor, although he had spent a few years in college ministry. With his experience as a single in college ministry as his only paradigm, Jim poured himself into the work. The church was planted in an expanding part of the city. Much of the church's growth was due to people moving into the city. A significant part of the growth was also due to people confessing faith in Christ for the first time. The days were exciting, and the nights were busy. Beth was moderately involved. She managed her time well. Jim supported her in this. Neither Jim nor Beth felt that she had to be the leader of the children's ministry or women's ministry. Since Beth enjoyed entertaining in her home, they used their home for many meetings in the early days of the church.

While Beth had placed boundaries on her time, Jim had not. He said, "I was filled with uncertainties. I was a very fearful, worried man. I moved forward through it all as the church grew, but I was scared to death. How did I deal with it? I squashed the feelings and just pressed on...plugged away. I didn't repent because I didn't know how or that I needed to. I just sucked it up and kept going forward. I preached grace but knew nothing about it."

Over the months, both Jim and Beth began to come to a deeper understanding of the gospel of grace. Jim preached the message of grace strong and often. The immediate result was twofold. On the positive side, many lives were transformed in their church and in other parts of the city. On the negative side, an elder that had come from the mother church declared Jim to be a “heretic and dangerous.” This elder spoke loud and often until he finally returned to the mother church, leading “many back with him.” Jim and the session were devastated. Yet, in the midst of this pain, the church also grew. Beth walked closely with her husband, encouraging him and standing close to him as his greatest fan and advocate.

The difficulties did not end. When the leadership set forth a vision to begin the first phase of the master building plan, the congregation resisted. Meanwhile, leadership struggles were significant and ongoing. Despair set in. At times Jim thought about quitting, but Beth never did. She backed him and encouraged him in all he did. This was *their* call. Jim said “Beth’s backing me was a key for me making it through the struggles of going forward with a vision as a gospel-driven church. My wife told me she would follow me into a rubber room if that was where I ended up.”

Jim believes that his family got left out of his life in the early years of the plant. He said, “I would give anything to go back and roll around on the floor with my toddlers.” Four children later, the family is still busy. They are also a very close family. When asked how they kept the kids from growing cynical or frustrated by the church planting process, Jim responded: “years ago I started asking the kids to rate their experience as a preacher’s kids on a one to ten scale. They have consistently scored this time around eight or nine. Teaching the gospel of grace has had a huge impact in their

lives. We haven't given them any expectations that are different because they are the kids of a preacher. They know God's gracious love and respond in faith."

What else was lost in the church planting effort? "Friends," Jim said. Jim has many friends, but he believes that he has few truly deep friendships due to his experiences with church planting. Planting stretched Jim's faith and developed him as a leader and thinker. Currently, Jim says that he does not want to re-experience the wear and tear of church planting. However, he says that if he had the choice to plant this church again, he "certainly would." Overall, church planting has been a good thing for his entire family. He said, "Planting is a dream because you don't have to mess with everyone else's agenda for the church. You can set the tone before anything else."

Mike and Barb

After fourteen years in ministry as an associate pastor in three southern PCA churches, Mike and Barb responded to the call to plant a new church. The new church was birthed in the late 1990's, and it involved interested members from several different churches and resources from several others. Mike said, "I knew the statistic that eighty percent of a core group leaves within the first five years, but we were certain it wouldn't happen to us! Later we were so glad it did!" Starting small was good for the Johnsons because they felt the need to "get their feet wet" slowly before the church grew.

Mike and Barb were older than most in the core group, but they believed that to be in their favor. They thought they might be steadier in times of stress. Both had experienced difficulties in ministry and through dysfunctional extended families. Both had heard horror stories of church planting, but they felt ready for whatever would come. Barb said, "as the people – the core group – began to leave, we both became discouraged.

We both felt the pain, but for Mike the impact when people left was horrible.” Years later, they recognize that those individuals were “God’s scaffolding” for building the plant in the early days

One such individual came by their home on a Saturday morning. Mike recounts, “He lacerated me for 1½ hours with venom and yelling and screaming. His main issue was that we weren’t using his gifts.” Sometimes Mike and Barb were painfully blindsided by the people that left. It was doubly painful when the people who left were friends or those that they had led to Christ.

When asked how they were able to endure the pain of planting, Mike responded that at one time he had been ready to divorce Barb. “If I wasn’t in ministry,” he said, “I would have. But something had to give. We ended up on a weekend marriage retreat, and the dam began to break. After that we went through a Sonship discipleship time, and I was slain – it was so hard and good. Months of marriage counseling followed until we were strong enough and moved here to begin the plant.” Barb followed up with a description of the breaking time for her. “I was a checklist person. Praying and having a quiet time were just tasks for me. The counselor told me to just stop for a while and learn to enjoy the love songs of Jesus. Neither one of us knew what the gospel was all about until we came to the end of ourselves.” Barb had always had a checklist of sorts and checked everything off on a regular basis. She believes that the church planting system encouraged that checklist mentality. Mike said, “We could not have withstood the planting process if we had not been through the breaking and begun to grasp the gospel.”

As the plant began, Mike worked hard, long hours. Barb grew frustrated. The demands of planting took Mike away from home far too often. Seeing the church plant as

a husband and wife endeavor, Barb also got involved and gave her time freely. The boundaries that protected their time alone as a couple remained strong, but time spent with their children suffered early in the plant. Their older son remarked to them, “Do we always have to have someone over? Can’t we do something alone?” After a short time, they recognized the danger of the time imbalance and gave more time to the family. A younger son felt judged by what Barb called “southern Christians.” Neither parent believed that anyone was scrutinizing the children, but the son was still convinced. The parents responded by heightening their boundaries regarding the use of their home for church purposes. A couple of their church members were offended by those boundaries, but the Johnsons learned to accept the criticism and press on.

Today, Mike and Barb are strong in their love for each other and for Christ. Both of them struggle periodically with loneliness, despite more intimate friendship, Barb more than Mike. They affirm that their children walk with Christ, and that their church is thriving.

Jeff and Kathy

Jeff and Kathy had been married eight years and had one child when they planted a church in a large Southeastern city. Jeff had four years of experience as an associate pastor and three years before that as an intern, but he had no experience as a senior pastor. Still, he was confident in his ability to lead the large core group that came with him from the mother church. In retrospect, he sees that many members of that core group joined his church plant out of frustration with the mother church. He believes his lack of experience in dealing with frustrated church members was one thing that caused him problems in the church plant.

Jeff and Kathy made a joint decision to plant this church. They also agreed on the location and on the core group with whom they would plant. But Jeff reflects, “That’s about where the togetherness ended.” Four years after the launch, they moved back to their hometown in another state, angry at God, hating each other, and ready to divorce. Jeff was disappointed in God, and Kathy was disappointed in Jeff. Jeff was willing to be interviewed for this study. Kathy was not.

Jeff admitted that he was arrogant as they approached the church plant and that both of them were driven by success. The arrogance/success mentality was something Jeff felt was “demanded by the mother church.” He bought into that drive for success because, as Jeff noted, “everything I ever touched in ministry turned to gold, why not the church plant?” Kathy was also highly successful in many ways. She loved the rigors of a more legalistic life. She believed that if you have your quiet time every day at 5:00, read the Bible through every year, sing in the choir, and teach women and children – all of which she did – then God would bring you success. Since God didn’t bring success – despite the fact that Kathy did all these things that she believed she was supposed to do – she laid the blame for the failure of the church entirely on Jeff.

The plant got off to a great start, and their success was applauded. However, Jeff reflects that he neglected to spend “time with God, time with [his] wife, and time with the children.” After such neglect, he continues, “my wife didn’t want time with me anyway – or at least made it very difficult.” As individuals argued over vision, Jeff began to struggle. His confidence sagged when he faced leadership struggles. He didn’t understand why there were problems. “I had taken all of the right steps, built the right teams, and chosen the people to lead them. I preached and led worship at first and then gave the

worship part up to someone else. Leaders began to disagree with each other and with me. Our inability to buy land was the final straw that broke us.” That was in the fourth year.

Jeff noted that as he failed in leadership at the church, Kathy turned on him at home. He said, “Our marriage has never been good. In fact, we have been in counseling almost since day one of our marriage. Kathy grew frustrated as the plant began to trend toward failure and took out her frustration on me.” Frequent physical intimacy had never been a part of their marriage, and at this point it ceased entirely. Kathy began to berate Jeff. For his part, Jeff withdrew from leading at home and in the church. The church folded and the family moved back to their home state..

Jeff attributes some of the struggle to the fact that, while he knew how to preach on grace, he actually did not truly understand how it applied to his own life. He didn’t know how to handle life when failure came. He said, “I was not broken before the plant. I didn’t know what that was. I was the golden boy. Everything I touched in ministry turned to gold. The plant broke me and still is – five years after it ended. My marriage broke me when I woke up and realized how bad it was.” Asked whether Kathy had ever been broken, Jeff responded that, “it sounds crazy, but I think Kathy is in the process of being broken by her inability to make me a picture of the perfect man.”

I asked Jeff why the assessment center did not pick up on the intense marital disharmony. Jeff responded that the assessors *never even met Kathy*. She was sick during his time at the assessment center. He feels certain that if she had been there, they never would have been encouraged to do church planting. Today, Jeff sells cars, and Kathy works for a seminary. Divorce is mentioned regularly in their home, and they continue to sleep in separate rooms with no intimacy, either physical or spiritual. Both are physically

sick and under the care of physicians. Jeff feels that the children are “doing well, all things considered.” I asked Jeff if the plant caused all of the pain he has experienced. He said, “Nah, it just brought it all into the open.”

Bob and Samantha

Bob and Samantha had one child and one on the way when they planted a church in a southern suburb. Dreams were high for the core group coming from the mother church, but Bob was disappointed when some members of the core group failed to live up to his expectations. Before accepting the call to plant, Bob had received three promises from the pastor of the mother church. The first promise was that a core group would be sent out from the mother church to the church plant. The second promise was that the mother church would financially support the church plant. The third promise was that the mother church pastor would act as Bob’s church planting coach. A reduction in giving led the mother church to decrease the financial support and to do away with the core group altogether. These first two broken promises were hard on Bob and Samantha, but they understood the reasons behind them, and they continued with the church plant. However, when the third promise was not kept, Bob was very upset. One of the assessment center recommendations was that Bob have a church planting coach. Bob had agreed, and the mother church pastor had agreed to serve in that capacity. Bob followed the assessment center recommendation and prepared a coaching contract. The pastor did not follow through on the coaching.

The financial support that had been promised was no longer available. The promised core group had been removed. Bob felt concerned and discouraged and needy. When the coach reneged on the coaching, Bob felt isolated and scared. He said, “We felt

very much like an unwanted pregnancy....I felt like a guy in the outback. I briefly turned to pornography. My character was revealed for trying to escape this fear of failure. Sheer escapism. Had nothing to do with love for my wife. I was scared, so I ran.”

I asked Samantha how she reacted through all of this. She said, “We were in this together. It was hard to watch my man in that father-son relationship [with the Senior Pastor] as it went sour. Church planting is consuming enough, but this totally consumed him. He had to leave town to clear his head.”

Bob defined being broken as “coming to the end of yourself and seeing who you are as God see you...being unable to do anything apart from him.” He recalls that he had experienced such brokenness before he planted, but this experience of church planting showed him his weakness again. Both Bob and Samantha remember planting as a very lonely time. They found that memory very interesting because they were both very busy in the plant.

Bob and Samantha actually believe that church planting was good for their marriage. Two elements contributed to the strength of their marriage. First, they spent more time together than they had before starting the church. In church planting, there were many things they could do together. As their children grew, they found it harder to find time together. But they still felt they had great time together starting the church. They recall that they put some firm boundaries around Samantha’s role in the church plant before anything began. But, as the time went by, her natural interests and spiritual gifts led her to become more active in some areas. Still, neither felt that she overextended herself.

The same was not true for Bob. The only boundary they set firmly for him was that he would take one day off every week. In practice, he followed this rule only occasionally. Early in the plant, Bob would spend four and sometimes five nights away from home. But he made sure to spend some time at home during the day. Later, he realized that this wasn't enough time at home, and he limited his nights out to three times a week. This allowed him to be home in the evenings to spend time with his growing family. Samantha notes that Bob currently does a great job of engaging the kids and being home for supper.

Bob and Samantha question the irony of being lonely as they work in ministry. Samantha has only one close friend in their church and none in their community. Bob has no close friends at all. Their friendship with each other, however, is richer than ever.

Billy and Cindy

Billy and Cindy spent four years serving their mother church before they planted a new PCA church. They left the mother church with the best wishes of the majority of the church membership. A large core group of about thirty families committed to starting the church with the young couple. The core group was composed of mature Christians who had healthy giving patterns. Billy felt that he was well on his way to being what he called the "rock star of a mega rockin' adult version of a campus ministry." Everything looked perfect from the outside.

Billy said that, "at some point the wheels began to come off. As an associate pastor in the large mother church, I could hide from my issues. As the lead pastor of a small plant, all my issues were suddenly staring me in the face and doing it in a very public way." Cindy remarked that "these issues were really my issues that Billy didn't

know how to deal with, and, for that matter, didn't want to deal with." Cindy was lonely in her new place as the pastor's wife. She wasn't sure who to trust or how much to trust. She started having doubts about whether she liked church planting and motherhood. Loneliness led to depression, and, as she put it, "my husband was nowhere to be found. He was off taking care of someone else's marriage."

Billy says, "I sucked at being a husband. I was terrible to my wife, put pressure on her to just get it together. I expected her to get on board with the gospel and really was expecting her to market the gospel by being a fake." Along the way, he realized that he was the one that needed to change. The church belonged to God, but Cindy was his wife, and she needed a lifestyle change. Billy said, "I had to come home by scaling back from my five or six nights a week and develop a mercy heart. I didn't like mercy. I didn't like needy people." Cindy chimed in, "but I am needy!"

Billy learned to love Cindy with a heart of mercy. The church planting context contributed to that. In this regard, both felt that the church plant played both a negative and a positive part in their lives. It was negative because the lack of boundaries in Billy's work contributed to Cindy's depression and loneliness. The planting process also fed Billy's idolatry of performance and his desire to be a "rock star." Both of them also noted that they couldn't hide from the issues like they might have in an established church. This was hard for them because of the stress that comes from dealing with personal problems in a public context.

At the same time, the church planting experience was a positive because of their inability to hide from their problems. Billy was forced to come to grips with his wife's depression and loneliness. As he put it, "in a church plant, what goes on at home is

evident from the back row.” He found that he couldn’t hide behind his schedule like he had done in the mother church. As the church planter, he set his own schedule. He could schedule time to be home.

Billy believes that God used the church planting experience to break down his idols so that he became a better husband. Cindy knows it triggered depression and intense loneliness in her life, but it also brought her husband alive to her and the children. While Billy missed a lot of special times with the children in the early days, he makes up for it today.

Jack and Donna

Jack and Donna returned from their very difficult work in overseas missions dependent upon God for all of life. God led their family to plant a church in the western United States. Building from scratch, they saw an average attendance of about 150 after the first two and a half years. Most of the members were new Christians. Two men had known Jack previously and had settled in the same western city. Two other women had grown up in PCA churches. One of them was the daughter of a pastor, and the other had grown up in a very traditional southern PCA church. The two men were fairly strong and believed in the message of grace that Jack preached. However, the women felt they knew how the church was “supposed to be run.” They were familiar with church life, but they did not accept grace message as defined by Jack.

This was not Jack’s first leadership role. He said, “I had been broken and strengthened with leadership struggles before and felt like I could handle the junk this pastor’s daughter was bringing. But she ripped the confidence from our new elders and that tore everything up.” Most of the church was made up of young believers and

members new to reformed theology and the Presbyterian form of church government. The woman's public criticisms were more damaging because she held herself up as an expert and was believed as such. She joined with the other woman who had moved from a PCA church in the south and together they formed a WIC (Women in the Church) group. Jim noted that this resulted in "the church soon loaded with gossip."

Like Jack, Donna had expected normal leadership struggles, but she had not anticipated struggles of this degree. Donna found that criticism of her husband was the hardest thing to take. She wanted to "fight back" on his behalf. Her children felt the stress as well. The family had older children who experienced more of the stress of the vision and leadership struggles. Locating in a small suburb, the plant and the pastor were well known, and the children would hear the gossip at school. Donna said, "It got so bad that we all grew cynical and I feared the children would not go near the church when they grew up."

Jack notes that even with the struggles in the church, "still people were coming to Christ...but they were exotic dancers, divorced people, alcoholics, single moms... the fringe people coming to Jesus. This didn't go over well with the PCA pastor's daughter and the girl from the south!" Both Jack and Donna were able "to laugh at the absurdity of it all. People were coming to Jesus and it was a problem because they weren't the right kind of people!"

The church was shaken further when a well-known leader left to take an interim position preaching at a small local non-reformed church. Fifty disgruntled members left with him. Differences in vision brought the church plant to what Jack called a "fork in the

road.” One group wanted a more evangelistic influence that would continue to reach the unbelievers in the area. The other group wanted something more traditional.

At this time, Jack made a deliberate decision to “do anything to keep it from failing.” Donna felt the weight of that decision. Today, both feel that it was a bad move. Donna later said that “the church had now become Jack’s mistress.” Jack said, “that was when I began to have suicidal thoughts. I had never been that way before, but I had gotten there then. We knew it was time to leave when, about the same time, our oldest child came to me and said that she wanted her daddy back. The church had stolen her daddy, and she had lost him. She wanted me back.”

The couple entered a two-week counseling program for four hours per day. Jack said it was crucial to their survival. Today, the church is reduced to a small group meeting in the building of another church on a Sunday afternoon. Jack and Donna are still in ministry. All four children are now adults, have strong relationships with God, and are involved in their local churches.

Matthew and Jenny

A large church in the Midwest called Matt and Jenny in 2000 to plant a church in a rapidly growing suburb. Having experienced disappointment in revitalization work, Matt was eager to plant a church among people that had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. The mother church provided half of the twenty-family core group and one-fourth of the funds for the first three years. The rest of the core group consisted of new believers and people moving to the area. Matt did not realize that a portion of the core group from the mother church was actually a very tightly knit fellowship group that had met for more than two years. Matt was also surprised to find out that the leader of the fellowship group

planned to leave the business world and eventually work on the staff of the new church plant.

The two men had very different visions, and the fellowship group leader soon became angry and left the church plant. Over the next three years, five other families from that fellowship group left the plant. Matt recalls that he was accused of “preaching too much grace and not enough law – not enough repentance and law.” When those core group members left, he struggled with a fear of failure and a great deal of pain from their rejection. To counter the fear, Matt worked more hours. He also preached more grace.

Jenny saw the pressure her husband was under and the hours he was working and grew angry at the individuals who caused the pressure. “Eighty-five percent of my reaction was anger at the few making his life harder and about fifteen percent was me wanting him to just get over his own imperfections. Of course, if he had no imperfections, he would be in heaven and that’s not what I want!” Jenny continued, “Matt kept his promise not to be gone from the home more than three nights per week, but even when he was home, he was thinking about it all. Early on, the church even came up on our dates. So he had boundaries physically, but still the pressure was there emotionally.” Matt noted that “Jenny is a strong enough woman that she did not hesitate to let me know I had gotten outside of the boundaries with my fear and my emotions.”

Matt believes that God used the conflicts he encountered to show him how to live by grace rather than just preach it. He grew in courage and gentleness. Resisting the temptation to become cynical, he “submitted to God” and learned to love his critics in the midst of the storm. The church continued to grow. After seven years, the church has an attendance of about 450 people. What excites Matt and Jenny is that the congregation is

made up equally of new believers and people who have moved from out of town. As Matt says, many of them “have discovered the freedom and passion and power in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Their four children have thrived in the church planting climate. Jenny noted that when one child was speaking of her dad recently, she said “He knows what brokenness is, and I want to be like him. He is gentle but strong.” Early in the life of the plant, there were no other teens in the church, but the kids looked at that as a mission and began to build a group of other teens. Matt said, “The result is that they have seen friends come to Christ as God has built a youth group of about eighty outward-facing high school kids.”

I asked Jenny whether the plant was solely her husband’s calling, or if it was also her calling. She responded, “It was really a whole family thing. We all worked hard in it...from putting out chairs to teaching and passing out brochures in the neighborhood. But while we all saw ourselves as an integral part of the plant, we still maintained some boundaries...although not always enough, and we treated the church as if it really did belong to God and not us.”

Even though the planting was difficult, Matt and Jenny would want to do this plant again. Both have been lonely at times, and Matt still feels that loneliness. Jenny has developed friendships outside the church. Matt has a couple of men he trusts in the church. It helps that both of those men are elders. Jenny said, “Maybe planting contributed to the loneliness, but I think it was just ministry. Planting was fun at times. It has been refreshing and rewarding.”

Robby and Michelle

In 2002, a small core group of six families in the Southeast called Robby and Michelle to join with another planter and start a new PCA church. It was not their first experience in church planting and they believe their prior experience has helped them tremendously. For the most part, the core group was willing to follow the planters in their vision for the church plant. This was largely due their struggles to find a church planter willing to take on that geographical area and work with that core group. When the group finally found a leader, they declared themselves ready to go.

Robby noted that “The group had read the statistic that claimed eighty percent of the core group is gone in the first five years of the church plant. One man was determined that this one would be different and would stick together. Not surprisingly, he was the first to leave when things didn’t go his way.” They did lose eighty percent of the core group in place at the launch. Robby said, “A lot of the men that left had become leaders, and when things didn’t go their way they bailed rather than work through the conflict. At the time it made me angry, and I had to push away the temptation to go pick up an application from Sonic.”

When people got mad and left, Michelle also experienced anger. Robby said, “Michelle got angry when people got angry with me and said some hurtful things. It is hard for our wives to hear it when people criticize us. And hard for her to see people at church who have treated me with much less than respect.” When asked if he ever kept things from his wife, he responded, “Our communication is great. We don’t withhold info. But in things like this, I am selective in what I share, or at least keep it from bothering me, because if it bothers me, I can’t hide it from her.” Michelle is still impacted

by the struggles her husband experiences. “The most personal way I have been hurt and wounded in those struggles is when someone says something about Robby. It’s kind of the mother hen thing. Robby is my man, and the quickest way to make me angry is to attack my kids or my husband!”

Although both of them have friends in the church plant, neither has close friends there. Michelle noted that they have no confidants in the plant. Robby said that he has to stay one level above totally transparent, even with his friends on the session. Partially due to prior experience and partially due to advice from church planting mentors, Robby and Michelle kept boundaries around their most personal life, around the use of their home, and around Robby’s time away from the home in the evening. They believe that their devotion to each other and to their family has helped them get through the first five years of church planting with a healthy and intimate marriage.

Another thing that both Robby and Michelle talk about is the joy of walking through the journey of life with hurting people. Robby said, “It was necessary that I be broken before this plant. I could have planted, but it would have been in my own energy. We cannot be effective ministers if we are not broken ministers.” When asked if that brokenness helped in dealing with angry members, Robby said, “I can enter into their brokenness without reservations. The only thing I have to offer people are wounds. I have gaping wounds that won’t heal, and you have them too. Let me help you bandage them and let’s walk through this together. I cannot minister to people unless I am acutely aware of my own brokenness.”

Even though both were significantly broken before they entered this planting experience, both claim that the greatest impact of planting this church has been more brokenness. Neither see this as a negative. Rather, both see it as positive because it is there that they find “joy in washing other people’s feet...doing that with my children first. It’s about loving other people.”

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a synopsis of each participant’s story. Eight couples were studied although the wife of one church planter did not participate. The analysis of the interviews will be presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of church planting on the planter and his family. This chapter utilizes the findings from interviews with eight church planting pastors and their wives (when available) to answer three research questions. The first research question deals with the impact of church planting upon the planter.

COMMON THEMES REGARDING THE IMPACT ON THE CHURCH PLANTER

During the interviews with the church planters, several common themes emerged regarding the impact of church planting.

Personal Verbal Attacks

Planters experienced significant personal verbal attacks during the planting process. Jim was labeled a “dangerous heretic” by one leader. Jim said, “It happened after I had begun to be gripped by grace. This created a crisis in this guy. He accused me of heresy with a ten-page paper and even took it to the mother church. Years later, this man still considers me a ‘dangerous man.’” Another planter, Mike, had a church plant member come to his house on a Saturday morning where he “lacerated me for one and a half hours with venom and yelling and screaming... his basic issue was that I was standing in the way of him using his gifts.”

All eight planters spoke of the attacks as having significant impact and causing fear or anxiety. The attacks came from leaders and other members. Matt spoke of a new elder who “felt it was his duty to protect the church from me.” The attacks had the effect

of making the planters grow wary about whom to trust, which then increased their loneliness.

Loneliness

Seven of the eight planters also mentioned loneliness as a significant impact. One planter declared, “I have many friends in the church, but the number of real deep friendships is, I believe, a casualty of church planting. I don’t think there is anyone I have a deep friendship with.”

Another planter agreed, saying “After getting burned a few times, I grew wary. I didn’t trust easily, and I still don’t. I don’t have any real close friends. See, I preach about safety and transparency in the gospel, but I find I still have this wall up...I just don’t know who to trust.”

Speaking for both herself and her spouse, Cindy said, “We have a hard time finding close friends...it is hard to have close friends that we can trust and be ourselves with. A lot of people have a hard time seeing Billy as a regular guy but are intimidated by him. We are both lonely a lot.”

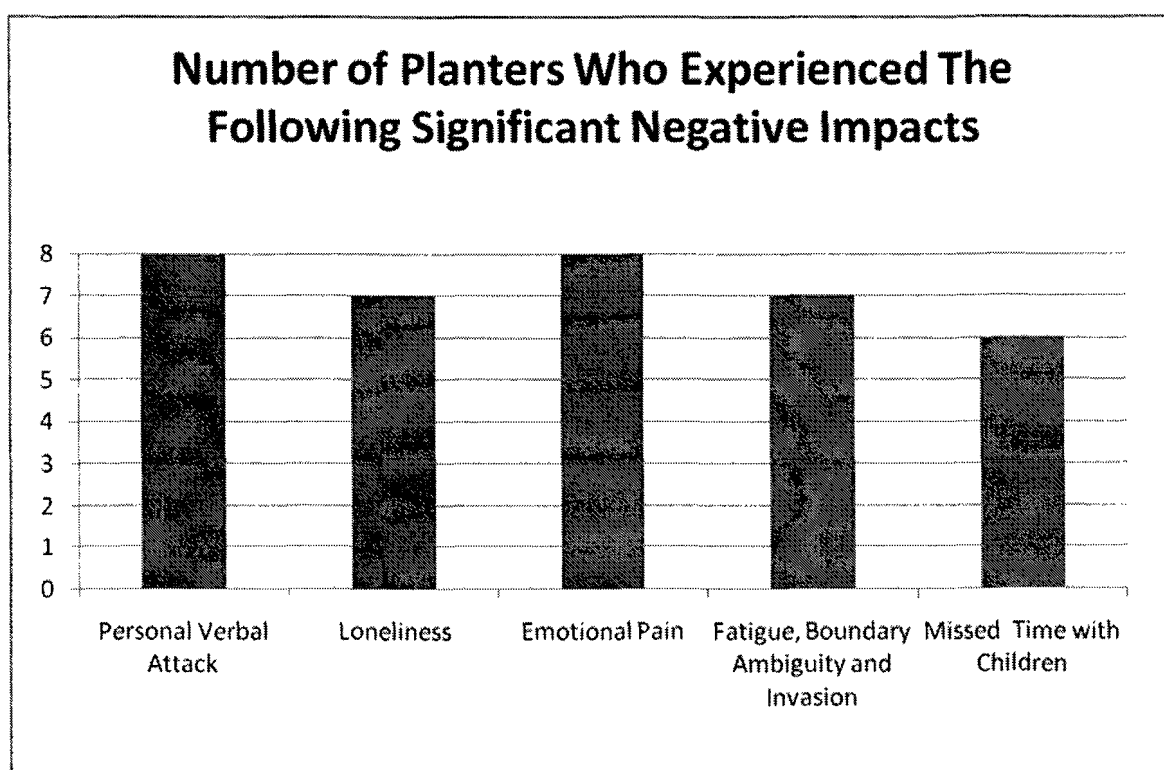
One planter who did not experience loneliness still missed having strong friendships with other men. He said, “I don’t feel lonely, but I don’t know who my best friends would be, if there are any.”

Emotional Pain

All eight planters also spoke of church planting as being painful. The pain typically came from one of two situations. The first was the pain experienced when people left the church. Several noted that there was a difference between when someone leaves who is not a friend verses when someone leaves that is either a friend or in whom

you have invested significant time. The latter caused significantly more pain than the former.

The second type of painful situation developed as a result of leadership struggles. One planter mentioned a feeling of betrayal during some struggles in leadership. He said, "I expect there to be struggles. I did not expect to lose a friend during those struggles." Another noted that it was "painful to have this guy I had trusted disagree *and* turn his back on me."



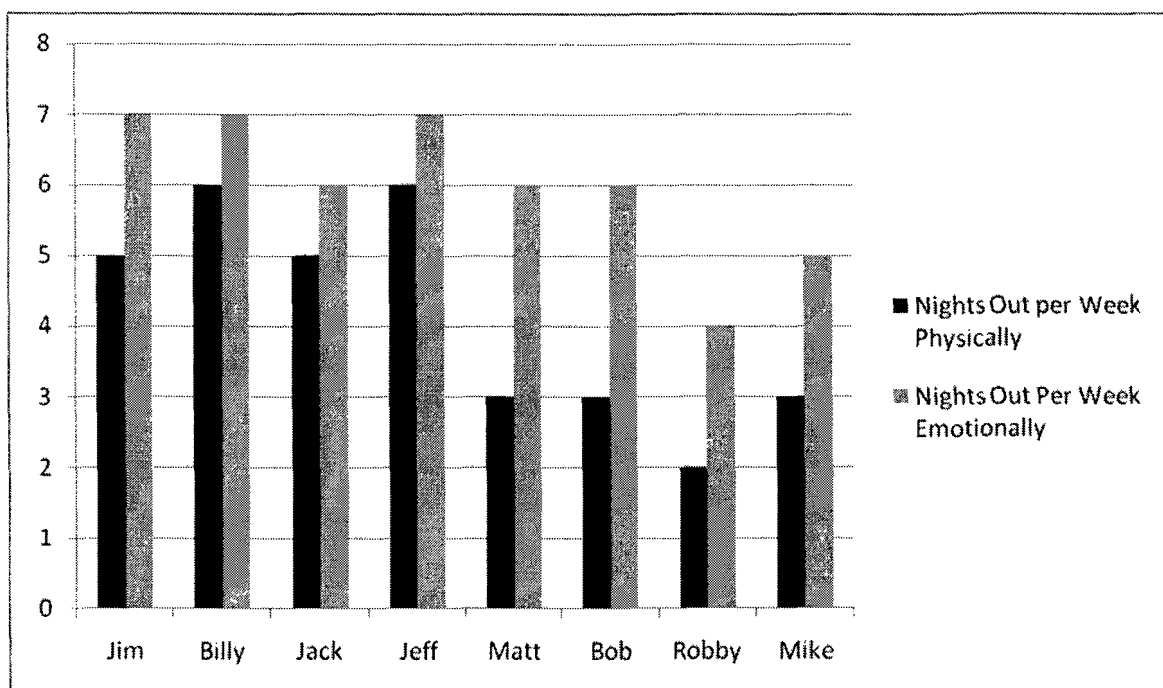
Fatigue, Boundary Ambiguity and Invasion

Ambiguity and invasion of physical and emotional boundaries also significantly impacted the interview subjects. The direct impact upon the planter was fatigue. Indirectly, the impact of boundary ambiguity and invasion was significant upon the spouse, marriage and family.

Half of the planters set boundaries around the evenings they would spend away from home. Except on rare occasions, those four spent only three evenings per week away from home. The other four set no boundaries around their time away from home in the evenings. One of those trusted his wife to let him know when his time away became too much. He said, “She told me she would let me know when it was too much, but I wonder if she waited too long.” He typically would spend as many as six evenings away from home in the early years of the church plant.

A second planter with poor boundaries remarked that he didn’t see the damage until someone other than his wife came to him with the news that his wife was in serious depression. He said, “I had to realize I wasn’t sufficient, and that I needed Jesus. I had gotten wrapped up in the ministry, and I had to see that it had become my mistress. As I began to get what I was preaching – the gospel – I was forced to rest and see my ugliness. I began to love my wife.” She responded, “You loved me anyway, but that’s when you began to show up.”

One theme that emerged was that even though about half of the planters had some boundaries set regarding their time away from the family in the evenings, all eight felt like the church plant had intruded upon the emotional boundaries they might have desired to have. They found themselves thinking about the plant or actually working on something related to the church plant on evenings when they were home and were therefore emotionally abandoning those boundaries. One planter said, “I had fooled myself. I thought I was doing such a good job of being home, but even then I was wrapped up in the work. I wasn’t taking a day off consistently and was growing tired. I wasn’t emotionally home near as much as I thought I was.”



Physical Boundaries vs. Emotional Boundaries

Missed Time with Children

Six of the eight planters expressed a belief that they had missed significant time with their children at some point during the planting process. When confronted with the issue, five of them changed the way they managed their time so that they were able to be home more while their children were awake. For one planter, the lack of family time had such a negative impact on his family that he resigned from his role as the pastor.

Significant Brokenness

It was interesting to note that six of the eight planters experienced some measure of brokenness before they began planting. Asked how he would define brokenness, one planter responded, "Brokenness is coming to the end of myself. I can't make it happen...seeing my weaknesses and sin and self righteousness. It is knowing that without

Christ, life is hopeless and meaningless. One of the benefits of being broken is that I wasn't surprised by the depth of someone else's wickedness." Another said that "being broken for me meant having my idols exposed and in despair to such a point that I had nowhere to turn but to Jesus...and he was there and it was good." All of the planters spoke of being broken as something that does not happen only once, but is instead a regular occurrence.

Of the two who said they were not broken *before* the planting process, both claimed that they were broken by the process of planting. One said, "I didn't even know what brokenness was until I planted. I did everything right." The other said, "Being broken was so good for me. I had to realize I wasn't sufficient, and that I needed Jesus. I had gotten wrapped up in the ministry, and I had to see that it had become my mistress. As I began to get what I was preaching – the gospel – I was forced to rest and see my ugliness."

The two planters who were not broken until the planting process began struggled significantly in their relationships with their wives. Of the six that believed that they had been broken before the planting process, marriage issues remained relatively minor by comparison. These six also noted that they experienced more brokenness while planting.

Although all eight planters spoke of being broken in the planting process, none considered that to be a negative aspect of the process. They viewed the breaking process as painful but *good*. Two reasons why they believed the breaking process to be a good thing emerged. First, the planters all spoke of their sin or idols being exposed and second, they all spoke of the significant spiritual growth they experienced.

Sin/Idolatry Exposed

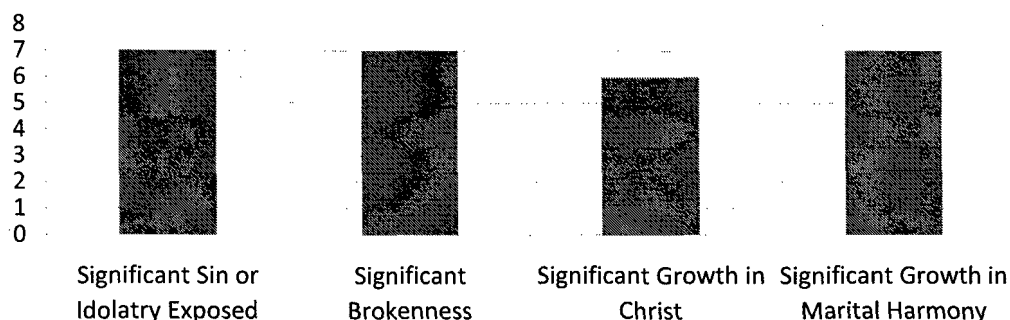
A common theme that emerged was that all eight planters noted the process of planting a church exposed their sin and idols. One planter said, “Planting didn’t create any new sins, but it sure poured miracle grow on the ones that were already there.”

Another planter expressed much the same sentiment when he shared, “Planting put miracle grow on all of my sins.” Matt explained, “I realized fear was controlling me rather than God.” All of the eight considered this exposure of sin to be a positive aspect of church planting. .

Significant Spiritual Growth

All of the planters saw significant spiritual growth during their church planting experiences. Once their sins and idols were exposed, they were led to repentance and experienced anew the joy of relationship with Jesus. One said, “I didn’t even know what repentance was [before planting a church].” Billy agreed, “I had to learn firsthand all about being the chief repenter.” The fruit of sin being exposed was that the planters had to deal with it and the result was spiritual growth.

Number of Planters Who Experienced The Following Positive Impacts



IMPACT ON THE SPOUSE OF THE CHURCH PLANTER

The second research question dealt with the impact of church planting upon the spouse of the church planter. Only seven of the church planters' wives were interviewed. In the other case, the wife was not willing to be present. Their church plant had failed, and the planter and his wife are currently experiencing significant marriage struggles that were magnified during the church planting process. Data gathered regarding the impact of church planting on this spouse is not included in this portion of the study.

Loneliness

Like their husbands, the all seven of the wives felt significant loneliness during the planting process. Jenny qualified her loneliness when she said, "Maybe planting contributed to the loneliness, but I think it was just ministry." Cindy said, "We have a hard time finding close friends that we can trust and be ourselves with...plus I really have no confidence in who I am in Christ. And he was so busy that I was really alone and needy."

Some of the spouses tried hard to have friendships in the church. Barb said, “I have had one or two safe friendships in the church but more outside. I was determined to have some in the church and prove the rule wrong...the rule that a pastor’s wife can’t have close friends in the church. But I discovered that it is very, very hard except for a very few. Sometimes it gets pretty lonely.”

Another contributor to the loneliness the planters’ wives experienced was the conflict that some members had with the church planters. When members disagreed with the church planter over vision, philosophy of ministry, or theology, the wives often felt the pain of rejection. And when people left the church, the church planter’s wife experienced damage and loss in those relationships.

Emotional Pain or Anger

All of the wives interviewed experienced significant pain and anger. Four issues were seen as the cause of the pain and anger. The first cause was friends leaving the church. Sometimes friends left for reasons that felt valid such as move to another city. Sometimes the friends left for reasons that felt invalid such as personal conflict. Whatever their reasons were for leaving the spouse still experienced pain as a result.

When the spouses experienced significant criticism of a personal nature, they also experienced pain and anger. The pain and anger was not limited to attacks they experienced directly. When their husbands experienced emotional pain due to betrayal or people leaving the church plant or when members said hurtful things about their husbands the spouses often experienced even more pain and grew angrier. Michelle spoke of the anger and pain she feels when Robby is hurt by others:

The most personal way I have been hurt and wounded in those struggles is when someone says something about Robby. It’s kind of the mother hen thing. Robby is

my man, and the quickest way to make me angry is to attack my kids or my husband. Often times I bear the weight of that and the anger I feel often is much more, much stronger when Robby has been hurt. I can be hurt, and I can handle that, but when Robby is hurt that is really difficult.

Donna was devastated and became angry. She noted that the conflict “was all directed at Jack, but I was very outspoken when confronted. I wanted to kick people out of the church!”

Boundary Ambiguity and Invasion

All of the wives of the church planters spoke of various boundaries being invaded by the church plant. They described the impact differently, but all described an invasion of boundaries in their marriage, family, and home life. A smaller number also described boundary ambiguity in relation to their role in the church plant. I will discuss the boundary invasion pertaining to marriage in the section that deals with the impact of church planting on the marriage of the church planter.

Three of the spouses felt free to set boundaries around the use of their home, and their husbands affirmed the boundaries that were set. From the beginning of the planting process, these three set boundaries around the use of their home and around their role in the plant. All three of these women felt that the plant was theirs as well as their husband's, but none of them felt the burden or pressure to teach or start ministries. Two of the three did utilize their spiritual gifts of teaching, but they were quick to include other women who were likewise gifted.

Regarding the home, Jenny said, “Matt set boundaries on how many nights he would be out of the home, and he kept those. That gave me a safe feeling. I was safe knowing that he put a limit on how many people came into the home, and he made it clear that I was free to set boundaries on how many people and how often they came in.

When they did come in, we limited where they could go in the house because it's our *home*." Her husband chimed in, "Even then, we had to put a gate at the bottom of the stairs that effectively said 'off limits.'"

Another spouse felt the need to communicate to people that her house was her home, and her family came first. She intentionally left laundry in the living room during a dinner for new members to say "this is my home and the home of my family." Her husband was quick to tell people that she was "first my wife and a mother and doesn't feel pressure to teach anything or work for the church."

Michelle said, "We often feel intrusion in our boundaries. You can draw up boundaries but you have to be constantly evaluating them. For example, his day off is a sacred day. We don't answer the phone. Sometimes we turn the answering machine off so that we aren't emotionally jumping into the next week. Still, last week a call came that he had to answer. Someone had died, and the widow was calling. You have to answer those."

When the church plant began to intrude upon her home past the comfort level of her children, Barb took steps to increase her boundaries. First, they limited the number of nights each week that church events took place in their home. When that was still too much, they limited the events to Sunday afternoon or evening. While this was good for her family, at least one member let Barb know of their displeasure, complaining that Barb and Mike weren't giving them enough time.

Perhaps Jenny said it best. "What makes planting hard is that it is where your worlds collide. You want your friends to be your friends, but they are also the ones that are critiquing your husband. So you keep them at a distance. Church ought to be a safe

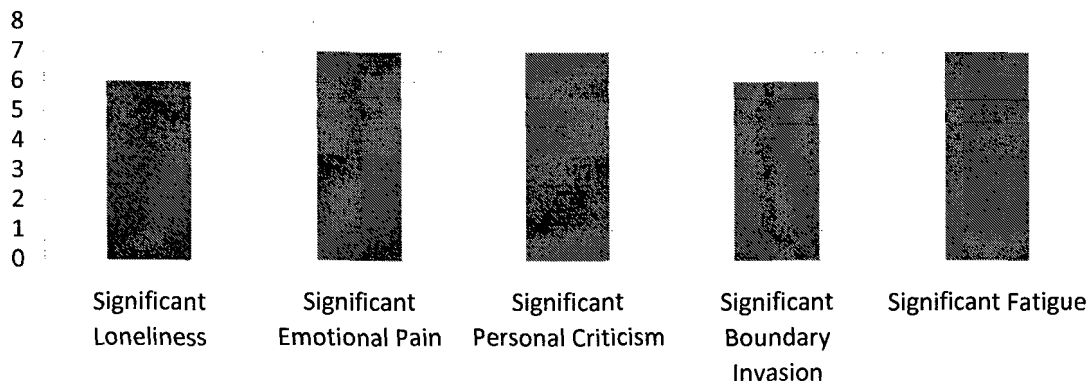
place, but it's not really. God is safe, but church isn't. Friends ought to be safe, but they are at church too. And then the church wants to come into my home? Nope, no way!"

Fatigue

Another impact of church planting that was experienced by the wives of the church planters was significant fatigue. Six of the seven wives interviewed spoke of fatigue. The fatigue was caused by a variety of factors. Because the early stages of church planting can take so much time, the wives were often left raising their children without as much support from their husbands as they would have preferred. While two wives noted that their husbands did great jobs as dads and were home when they were needed, the remaining five indicated that their husbands were absent far too often. This caused physical and emotional fatigue for the wife.

Another factor that caused fatigue was the workload inherent in a church plant. One wife said, "Let's face it. At the beginning it really is just the mom and pop show." The fatigue was exacerbated by emotional weariness experienced as a result of the pain their husbands experienced or pain they felt themselves as a result of conflict or friends leaving the church.

Number of Spouses Who Experienced The Following and Related it to the Church Plant



Brokenness

Five out of the seven wives interviewed experienced significant brokenness during the church planting process. The emotional pain and anger, the fatigue, and the invasion of boundaries contributed to the brokenness. One woman said, “I get mad at others when they get angry at my husband. Then the people leave the church and we get mad at everybody! The result is that we end up feeling worthless, doubting who we are in Christ and just having a great big pity party.”

IMPACT ON THE MARRIAGE

The response of participants regarding the impact of church planting on their marriages varied depending on the couple. Seven of the eight marriages are strong and thriving. One marriage grew steadily weaker and is not thriving at this time.

Time and Attention Devoted by the Husband to the Wife and Marriage

Six of the eight couples expressed a feeling that the planter should have been more attentive to his wife and marriage. They claim that this lack of attention was due to

several factors. First, some of the planters spent too much time and energy on the plant. Billy admitted, “The plant had become my mistress.” Another planter came to a decision with his wife that he would do whatever it took to help the plant succeed. While both agreed to the plan, she was the one that felt the most pain as a result of her husband’s distraction and inattention. That planter also referred to the church plant as having become his “mistress.”

A second factor that contributed to the husband’s lack of attention to his wife and marriage came from the exceptionally high level of emotional energy that the planter expended on the plant. At times, the planter had little emotional energy left for his wife, and their marriage suffered. Even though at least one partner in each of these six marriages believed the husband should have paid closer attention to his marriage, their marriages grew stronger throughout the planting experience. As stated previously, the marriage of the eighth couple is not thriving.

Overall Impact

Three of the couples noted that their marriages struggled early in the planting process, later grew stronger, and were solid at the time of the interview. In those three cases, if the interviews had been conducted three years into the planting process rather than five or more years into the process, the research would have indicated an impact that was largely negative. In these three cases, there were already significant problems in the marriage before the couple planted their church. The planting process simply brought those issues to light. One husband noted that he would have divorced his wife prior to their church plant’s launch if he had not been in ministry. A motivating factor for a second couple in moving toward church planting was that they thought they would get to

spend more time together. Each of those three couples had significant disconnect or disharmony in their marriage prior to their planting experience. All three of those couples revealed that by the end of the first five years, their marriages were thriving.

Four of the couples interviewed believe their marriages grew steadily stronger throughout the church planting process. In these four couples, open and honest communication from the beginning was a common factor. The husbands and wives were very connected to each other prior to the plant. The husbands and wives also revealed a willingness to give ample grace to each other. In addition, the wives were adept at communicating their needs to their husbands, and the husbands were quick to listen.

Impact on the Children

The impact on the children was harder to measure because five of the families had very young children at the time of the launch. None of the children were interviewed, but the parents were asked to share their beliefs about the impact that the church planting experience had upon their children. Although the interviewer was unable to discover any specific impact of church planting on the younger children, the parents in these five families did unanimously indicate that church planting had, in general, a positive impact on their children.

In the three families with older children, the children were better able to discuss their experiences with their parents, and the revealed impact was more varied. The parents with older children revealed that some children expressed frustration with the number of events that were held in the home. Barb said, “My son did not like the people always coming to the house - he asked ‘Do we always have to have someone over? Can’t we do something alone?’” Barb and Mike then drew tighter boundaries around the use of

the home for church events and reported that the family seemed to function much more smoothly.

In the families with older children, the parents revealed that at least one child in each family felt as if they were being scrutinized by people outside the family. Jenny noted that, “When the kids felt like they were being watched; we began to sit on the back row or sometimes in the middle.” Matt added, “We have poured the gospel into them, so they are free to be who they are in Christ. We try to make it clear that they don’t have to be different just because they are pastor’s kids.”

In all three of these families, the children were active in the ministries of the church plant, including different aspects of setting the church up for Sunday morning services. The parents believe that these activities had a positive impact upon the children and the family as a whole.

As far as the interviews were able to determine, church planting had an generally positive impact upon the children, regardless of their age.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter examined the impact of church planting on the church planter, his wife, his marriage, and his children. It began by telling the stories of the eight church planters that were interviewed, with an emphasis on the impact church planting had on the planters and their families.

The second section analyzed the data, utilizing the compare and contrast method, with a goal of answering the four research questions. In chapter six, we will consider how the available literature (chapter two) and the data from the interviews (chapters four and

five) reveal common themes, and the researcher will make recommendations based upon the data.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of church planting on the planter and his family. The specific research questions were:

1. What is the impact of church planting on the planter?
2. What is the impact of church planting on the pastor's wife?
3. What is the impact of church planting on their marriage?

In chapter two, the review of literature shed light on of the manner in which the process of pastoring established churches could impact a pastor, his wife, and his marriage. The literature review focused more on the impact of pastoring established churches because very little has been written on the impact of church planting on the planter and his family. Chapter three described the methodology by which data was gathered, the interviewing process, and the manner by which data was analyzed. The interview questions may be found in Appendix A. Chapter four presented the findings from the interviews by sharing a synopsis of each interviewee's story. Chapter five then reported the findings from the interviews. This chapter will discuss the findings in light of the literature review and make recommendations for further research related to the purpose of this study.

IMPACT OF CHURCH PLANTING ON THE PLANTER

The study provided insight into the impact of church planting on the planter. The literature provided direct insight on the impact of pastoring an established church, but it did not contain much information on church planting.

Significant Personal Verbal Attacks

Both the literature and the interviews revealed that pastors suffer significant personal verbal attacks. London and Wiseman report that “some congregations have individuals or small groups of people who wound pastors and cause horrendous damage in the life of the congregation.”¹¹³ Some pastors refer to the instigators of such attacks as “clergy killers” and note that “psychologists might call them pathological antagonists.”¹¹⁴ These attacks are not limited to the pastors of existing churches. They are experienced by church planters as well. All of the planters interviewed for this study experienced significant verbal attacks that were personal in nature.

Church plants can be fertile ground for those who desire to control a small group. The interviewees all spoke of such individuals. Two of the church plants had experiences with individuals who, after discovering that they were unable to sway the vision of the church plant, publically labeled the planter as “dangerous.” Another planter recalled being “lacerated” by an individual who felt that the planter was not allowing him to use his “teaching gifts.” These attacks had multiple impacts, causing emotional pain, fatigue, and loneliness. The planter experiences greater fatigue as a result of the emotional wear that such attacks have on the soul of the planter. Loneliness also increases because the planter grows wary about whom to trust.

Loneliness

Allender writes that “one price of formal leadership is being alone.”¹¹⁵ Arch Hart reported that seventy percent of pastors do not have someone they would consider a close

¹¹³ London and Wiseman, 57

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 57

¹¹⁵ Allender, 33

friend.¹¹⁶ London and Wiseman call loneliness an “occupational hazard” for pastors.¹¹⁷

The interviews certainly substantiate this. Church planters are often new to the city where they are planting, and they miss the benefit of having wide body of believers with whom they can fellowship. Planters also reported that they can be separated from their congregations because they do not know who in their congregation they can trust.

Jethani notes that an increase in religious consumerism causes churches and pastors to compete with each other.¹¹⁸ Pastors are hesitant to confide in other pastors. Therefore, instead of turning to fellow pastors during the difficult times, planters become even more isolated. These factors increase the loneliness faced by the church planter.

Time Together with Family

An article on the clergy and their wives noted that clerical families do not spend enough quality time together, thus eroding family identify and cohesion.¹¹⁹ Arch Hart speaks of a dangerous push for success in ministry that steals time.¹²⁰ John Piper agrees, asserting that “professionalism robs the pastor of time to a point that it is killing pastors.”¹²¹ The interview data agreed with the literature, and the interviewees reported that the planters and their families did not spend enough time together. Sometimes this problem is a necessary part of the call to ministry. Thomas believes that “the nature of a planter’s job keeps him “on call” twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.”¹²²

¹¹⁶ Arch Hart, Fuller Seminary, at Glen Eyrie Conference Center, Colorado Springs, Co., November 7-10, 1991.

¹¹⁷ London and Wiseman, 52

¹¹⁸ Leadership 2006, 3, 27

¹¹⁹ Lehr, 5

¹²⁰ Hughes, 111

¹²¹ Piper, 1

¹²² Thomas, 33

Malphurs notes that, in many ways, church planting is harder and more time consuming than pastoring an established church.¹²³ In light of that consideration, I believe that a church planter is in even greater danger of ignoring his family than the pastor of the existing church. In each of the three families with older children who participated in the study, the children demanded more of their father's time, sometimes with brutal honesty. One planter noted that his child looked at him one day and said, "I want my daddy back." The other five families, who had only very young children, did not hear such requests. One of the fathers in that group said that he would love to be able to go back and roll on the floor with his kids as toddlers.

This research indicates that an absence of boundaries around the church planter's time and home will harm his marriage and family. On the other hand, because the planter is able to set his own boundaries, he is able to set aside time for his family during hours that can have the greatest positive impact on his wife and children. Several of the interviewees learned to manage their schedules so that they were able to spend quality and quantity time with their children through their younger years and as teenagers.

Significant Emotional Pain

The literature revealed that pastors of existing churches are in a holy crossfire.¹²⁴ Jesus reminded the disciples that they would be persecuted.¹²⁵ Paul tells Timothy to endure hardship and suffering.¹²⁶ Often that persecution comes from within the church, and the church planter is not immune. All of the planters interviewed spoke of the pain of people leaving, verbal attacks, betrayal, and loneliness.

¹²³ Malphurs, 41

¹²⁴ Lehr, 5

¹²⁵ John 15:20

¹²⁶ II Timothy 2

Boundary Ambiguity and Invasion

Thomas notes that ambiguity is endemic to ministry.¹²⁷ For the church planter, this ambiguity is primarily felt in the use of his home, the use of his time, and the misuse of his emotions. The research revealed that planters do not normally set adequate boundaries around the use of their home or their time. Part of this is due to the fact that they often have no church building or office in which to work. Many of the church meetings and much of the church's office work necessarily take place in the home of the planter. The result can be hazardous to the planter and his family. Likewise, this can be hazardous to the congregation because they will not always understand where and when the planter ceases to be their pastor and becomes a husband and father.

In addition, planters do not normally "turn off" their emotions at the end of the day. Instead, they may remain emotionally involved in the lives of individuals in the church. This is a normal struggle for those who work in ministry. However, the problem can be exacerbated in the case of a church planter because he is usually the only staff member in his church, and therefore he never gets a break from the work. In addition, since the planter's office is usually located inside his home, there is some inherent ambiguity about when he should put the work away and focus on his family.

For the interviewees, this ambiguity and invasion of boundaries was largely seasonal. The negative impact associated with boundary problems seemed to decrease either after the first three years or once the planter and his wife set firmer boundaries around his time and the use of their home.

¹²⁷ Thomas, 25

Fatigue

All pastoral ministry involves an element of fatigue. Because it is the pastor's job to care for the spiritual needs of others, it is more difficult for him to limit his work to daylight hours and to leave his work at the office. Indeed, he will often need to work in the evenings and in the homes of church members. His work is not limited to the hours of a normal workday, and he must be flexible. Since the church planter has to create much of the functional structure of the church during the first few years, he participates in more meetings than the pastor of an established church. Later in the life of the church plant, other leaders will have been developed, and the planter's presence and guidance will not be required in many aspects of the church plant.

This study revealed three ways that church planters are positively impacted by the process of planting a church: brokenness, spiritual growth, and growth in their marriage. Growth in the marriage will be discussed in the section regarding the impact of church planting on the church planter's marriage.

Brokenness and Spiritual Growth.

Although the literature did not identify brokenness and spiritual growth as a significant outcome of the church planting process, the church planters interviewed in this study identified both of these as having significant impact in their lives as a result of the church planting process. While most of the planters spoke of being broken to some degree before the plant, all were broken during the planting process. David speaks of being broken in Psalm 51:17, he says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart you will not despise O God.”¹²⁸ The breaking of David’s spirit and heart occurred as he was convicted of his sin against God, Uriah and Bathsheba. The breaking occurred for the planters and their wives as a result of having to struggle with personal sin, marital problems, pain, loneliness, or perhaps a combination of those factors. The result for David in Psalm 51 was a heart of repentance together with a passion to declare God’s praise and to teach others how to follow God.¹²⁹ The result for the planters and their wives was that they found themselves relying on God rather than themselves and experiencing joy in the midst of the struggles inherent in church planting.

Conclusion Regarding the Impact on the Church Planter

God calls men to plant churches. The task of planting a church involves both positive and negative experiences. On the negative side, the planter will experience significant emotional pain, verbal attacks, loneliness, and brokenness. He will miss some time with his wife and children. How much time he will miss is determined by the planter. The planter will struggle with boundary ambiguity and invasion, but the degree of that struggle is also determined by the planter. As a church planter, he has control over his schedule, and therefore he has the ability to set aside times and places that belong to him and to his family.

On the positive side, the planter experiences brokenness. This experience may feel painful, but God will do positive things in the life of the planter through the breaking process. Another positive impact of church planting is that marriages often thrive in the environment of church planting. This is discussed further in a later section dealing more specifically with marriage.

¹²⁸ Psalm 51:17

¹²⁹ Psalm 51:1-17

Of the eight couples interviewed, only one classified his overall church planting experience as negative. It should be noted that the church he planted failed to thrive. His marriage was in danger before the planting experience, and it is close to failure at the time of this writing. The other seven planters consider their overall church planting experience to have had a strong positive impact in their lives and the lives of their families. Although few of them expressed a desire to begin a new church plant, all of them noted they would plant their previous church again without hesitation.

IMPACT OF CHURCH PLANTING ON THE SPOUSE OF THE PLANTER

The study provided insight into the impact of church planting on the planter's wife. While the literature contained information on the impact of pastoring an established church upon the wife of the pastor, little has been written on the wives of church planters. In fact, only one paper was discovered that dealt with impact of church planting on the wife of the church planter.

Loneliness

As was the case with their husbands, the wives of the church planters interviewed experienced significant loneliness. The literature supports this in the case of the wives of pastors in existing churches. Diane Langberg notes that loneliness "is a difficulty you share with many other women in your position."¹³⁰ Finding safe friends in the church proved to be a challenge to the church planter wives. Many of the wives interviewed found that they made their best friends outside of the church. This presents an added struggle for the wife of a church planter, since she is often new to the geographical area where the church is being planted.

¹³⁰ Langberg, 68

Emotional Pain or Anger

The loneliness experienced by the wives contributes to the significant emotional pain that they experience. They also experience emotional pain as a result of the unkind things that people say to (or about) their husband or children. One woman said, “I can be hurt, and I can handle that, but when Robby is hurt that is really difficult.”

Church planting wives also experience significant pain and anger when people say unkind things to (and about) the wives themselves. It comes as little surprise that a couple called by God into pastoral ministry should expect persecution from outside the church. Sadly, they should also be prepared to face such persecution from inside the church as well. Kenneth Haugk notes that there will inevitably be antagonists in the church, and the antagonists will “arouse anger, fear, anxiety, and many other feelings.”¹³¹

Boundary Ambiguity and Invasion

In her paper on the spouses of church planters, Shari Thomas writes about “boundary ambiguity.”¹³² I think a more appropriate terminology might be “boundary invasion.” The excessive use of the planter’s home in some church planting scenarios can feel like an invasion, which can produce feelings of anger and bitterness. At times, the church plant drains the husband of time and energy, leaving little time and energy for his wife and children. This type of boundary ambiguity can also seem like an invasion.

Some of the wives interviewed struggled to understand their role in the church plant. Typically, the wives wavered between being very involved and being uninvolved, depending on the season of the church plant and the fatigue level of the wife. One woman began the planting experience with the intention of doing nothing except caring for her

¹³¹ Haugk, 165

¹³² Thomas 25

husband and children. However, as the plant grew, she realized that God had given her spiritual gifts to be used in the body of Christ. Before long, she realized that she was overcommitted and had to disengage from some areas. Another woman spoke of beginning the women's ministry and the children's ministry but then struggling emotionally to let go of those areas by delegating to someone else. She was convinced that she could do those things better than others in the plant.

Often, the wife of the planter is better equipped to minister than most of the other women in the church plant. As a result, she can experience emotional turmoil due to uncertainty about what boundaries to set on the use of her home and which ministry opportunities she should accept.

Fatigue

The wives of the church planters shared that they were fatigued by the process of church planting. The presence of younger children in the home increased the incidence of fatigue for the spouse. It is natural for a parent with younger children to be more physically fatigued than someone with teenagers. In the case of a church planter's family, the research revealed that the planter was often working several evenings each week, and thus leaving his wife to care for the toddlers and infants alone. This increased her level of fatigue, and, in some cases, her frustration and anger towards her husband.

Conclusions Regarding the Impact on the Spouse of the Church Planter

This study revealed that the impact of church planting is much the same for the wife of the church planter as it is for the church planter himself. The wives experienced many of the same impacts, though the degree of severity is different. For example, a planter may experience less fatigue than that experienced by his wife. Like her husband,

the wife of the planter must take advantage of her freedom to decline many of the opportunities that are placed before her.

Many of the wives interviewed noted that church planting was an overall positive experience for them. None of them said that planting was easy - indeed, they acknowledged that it was very hard. Their struggles were mostly limited to the first three to four years. The seven who were interviewed claim that they grew spiritually and that their marriages grew stronger during the process of planting the church. Like their husbands, the wives said that if they had it to do over again, they would still want to plant their current church.

IMPACT OF CHURCH PLANTING ON THE MARRIAGE OF THE PLANTER

The study provided insight into the impact of church planting on the planter's marriage. The literature provided direct insight into the experience of being married to a pastor, but not much information was available regarding the impact of being married to a church planter.

Gail McDonald notes that "most marriages of couples in ministry are strong and healthy. You just don't hear about them because good marriages don't make for particularly interesting conversation."¹³³ The results of this study agree with McDonald's assessment. While one of the eight marriages is in danger, the remaining seven are thriving. The first three years proved to be difficult for three of the couples, but all three of those couples agree that the difficult times of the first three years actually brought them closer together.

¹³³ Wiseman, 87

The literature revealed that when a pastor spent too much time, energy and emotion on the church, his marriage suffered. Wiseman quotes one minister's wife who said that, "unrealistic expectations from our church members pull my husband and me away from each other and many times hinder our walk with God."¹³⁴ The same is true for a church planter's marriage. The planter that spoke of the plant becoming his mistress also revealed that his marriage suffered. The wives in these cases noted they paid the price for their husband's overzealousness. There were times when the wives of the planters were neglected in favor of their church plants. One spouse said, "He was so busy taking care of other people's marriage that he forgot about his own."

Although pastoral ministry can be difficult, the literature revealed that the marriages of many pastors thrive. As already noted, McDonald says that we don't hear about that because "good marriages don't make for particularly interesting conversation."¹³⁵ Wiseman agrees that "ministry can actually enrich the pastor's family."¹³⁶ Several women interviewed spoke of the time they spent ministering with their husbands as one of the positive aspects of planting a church together.

The literature was largely silent on the issue of the impact of pastoral ministry upon the minister's children. In this study, the interviews revealed that those children can become weary if their home is used too frequently for church events. Interviews also revealed that children can grow frustrated when their father away from home too much.

While ministry can become a mistress that robs the family of their husband and father, ministry can also greatly enrich the family. All but one of the planters interviewed

¹³⁴ Ibid, 63

¹³⁵ Wiseman, 87

¹³⁶ Wiseman, 179

agreed that their family had been positively impacted. They further agreed that they would all plant their current church again. In the plant environment, the family was able to be involved as much as they desired.

CONCLUSIONS

Church Planting is a difficult endeavor. Many people will join but many will also leave during the process of planting a church. Few of those, if any, will ever be considered close friends of the church planter or his family. Some might even turn out to be enemies of the church, the planter, or his family. People will say hurtful things, but other people will encourage the planter and his family in the work of the planting. Throughout all of the interviews, there was a cry for safe fellowship. Planting a church is a lonely endeavor. The planter and his wife need people they can trust, and they rarely find those people inside their church plant.

As difficult as church planting can be, it can also be a very rewarding time for the spiritual life and marriage of the church planter and his wife. The rewards are many, and they include the privilege of taking part in the building of God's kingdom. The planter and his family get to watch lives being transformed as they are impacted by the gospel proclaimed in the new church. The husband and wife can work side by side in many different aspects of the ministry. There are many ways that the family can take part in the church planting process together. If a place is provided for safe fellowship, and if strong boundaries are in place, then the church planting process can be a rich time for the entire planting family.

Several recommendations arise from this study. The first deals with church planter assessment. When assessing the readiness of a would-be planter, the assessors

need to ensure that the wife of the planter is present throughout the entire process. Not only will this will aid them in assessing the readiness of the wife to plant a church, but it will also help them in their assessment of the strength of the marriage

A second area of recommendations deals with the training of church planters. I believe it would be helpful to spend a large amount of time and effort training the planter and his wife in the area of boundaries. They need to understand how to set realistic boundaries regarding time, use of the home, and the role of the wife. They also need to know how to effectively communicate those boundaries to their core group and congregation. In addition, they need to know how to confront each other when those boundaries are being invaded.

A further emphasis for increased training involves the formation and shepherding of the core group. So that the planter is thoroughly equipped to recognize and manage conflict, I recommend he attend a Peacemaker Training Seminar prior to forming the core group. This training would enable them to recognize future antagonists during the formation of their core group and teach them how to deal effectively with those antagonists. It would also teach them how to communicate expectations to the core group and how to deal with conflict within the core group and between the core group and the pastor

Another recommendation for increased training involves the area of marriage and family. More time should be spent helping the planter and his wife understand the necessity of time alone with each other. Many sources are available for this type of training however I recommend an in-depth study of *Love and Respect* by Emerson

Eggerichs or attendance at a Love and Respect Marriage Conference prior to launching the church plant.¹³⁷

The remaining recommendations concern the life of the planter after the planting process has begun. As the planter or the planting authority is preparing a budget for the church plant, I recommend a portion of the church budget to be set aside to pay for an outside party who would counsel the couple together during the first three years of the planting process. Many of the interviewees experienced marital struggles during the first three years of the plant. It would be helpful for the couple to have another couple with planting experience that they could use as a resource for their relationship as husband and wife.

The planting authority should establish groups for church planting couples and families that provide support and safe fellowship. Some groups of this nature already exist for men and some for the women, and these should be expanded for the fellowship and support of both men and women. However, couples and families need other couples and families with whom they can relate and who will understand their unique struggles.

I recommend that the church planting authority strongly encourage proactive mentors for planters and their wives. These mentors must be intentional in contacting the planter and his wife. In the throes of church planting, it could be very easy for the planter or his wife to turn away from God and from the counsel that these mentors and coaches can provide.

The body that plants the church, whether a presbytery or a mother church, must take steps for the spiritual and physical care of the planter and his family. This would

¹³⁷ More information regarding Love and Respect Marriage Conferences and materials is available at www.LoveandRespect.com.

include requiring the church planter and his wife to continue in church planting training at least for the first three years, and preferably for the first five years because the interviewees experienced their greatest marital hardships in the first three years and their greatest leadership struggles between the third and fifth year. The body that plants the church should also require the church planter to take a Sabbath day. On that day, he will need to get away from the office, turn off his cell phone, leave his computer off, and spend time with God and with his family. While all planters desired to take a Sabbath day, none did so faithfully and few did so with any regularity. The fatigue that both the planter and his wife experience would be lessened by an observance of a Sabbath day.

As with the Sabbath day, planters desired to take significant vacation time so they could reconnect as a couple or a family but none took vacation time they hoped to take, therefore another step would be to require church planting couples and families to take the four weeks of vacation every year. They need this time to get away, to reconnect with one another and with God, and to recharge.

Finally, they must insure that the planter and his family are being fed spiritually from sources outside the church plant. While many resources are available, I recommend three specific sources. First I recommend regularly listening to the sermons of other PCA pastors who have also been church planters. I personally benefit from and recommend the sermons of Tim Keller, Randy Pope, Steve Brown, Joe Novenson and Scotty Smith.

Second, I recommend the planter and his wife attend a Sonship Conference prior to launching the church plant. The planters and their wives all spoke of having their idols or their hidden sin exposed. These were idols and sin that they were not acutely aware of

prior to planting. A Sonship conference could help them identify those idols and sin patterns and then help them to deal with these biblically prior to planting.

Third, I recommend that planters engage themselves in a Doctor of Ministry Degree Program. The program continues to feed them spiritually by giving them opportunities to read and interact with mentoring professors and other like-minded pastors in an encouraging environment. I seriously don't know that I, as a pastor/planter would have survived the first five years of church planting without the faithful support, mentoring and brotherhood I experienced in this Doctor of Ministry Program. I was able take issues I was facing in the planting process and bring them to the classroom where the professors and fellow students combined their wisdom for my benefit and the benefit of the church.¹³⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There are several recommendations for further study that arise out of this study. The first is to perform a similar study on families at five year intervals after the launch of a church plant. For example, I believe it would be helpful to discover the differences in impact five years, ten years, fifteen years, and twenty years after the launch of a church plant. The main reason for this is because the effectual outcome of a person's story might not be known for many years. Indeed, it may never be known. The planter and his wife might not fully comprehend the impact that church planting has had on them, their marriage, or their children for many years.

A second study that would be helpful would be to focus on the children of the church planter five years and ten years after the launch of the plant. The children would

¹³⁸ For more on these resources see Appendix C.

need to be divided into age groups and studied separately, since the impact would be much different on a someone who was an infant at the time of launch than it would be on someone who was thirteen years old at time of launch.

A third study that would be helpful would be a study of the impact upon the families of failed church plants. This research found it very difficult to get church planting couples to openly discuss the impact of planting upon their marriage and family. Further, this researcher found it extremely difficult to find couples that had planted a now-defunct church who were willing to talk.

A fourth study that I believe would be helpful concerns the causes of depression among the wives of church planters. Shari Thomas expresses concern for the number of “women without a history of depression who had begun taking anti-depressants to deal with the stress of church planting.”¹³⁹ A few of the wives interviewed for this study also spoke of entering into depression and/or beginning to take anti-depressants. A study directed at understanding the factors surrounding this depression would be helpful.

FINAL WORDS

God calls men to plant churches. The work of planting a new church can be a wonderful time in the life of a planter and his family, but it will also be difficult. Because church planting is difficult, and because marriage is a union of the man and woman, what impacts the husband will also impact his wife. What impacts the marriage will also impact the children. There is a great emphasis in the PCA on planting churches, and that is a good thing. But we must not forget to care for the men, women and families that we send to do the hard work.

¹³⁹ Thomas, 29

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following questions were used for the interviews. Additional questions were added and some omitted as the interviews progressed depending upon themes that rose out of the interview. When both the husband and wife were present, the questions regarding the wife were asked directly to her.

Background

1. What church did you plant, when, and where?
2. How long ago did you launch?
3. What was your age at beginning of the planting process?
4. What was your ministry path before you began the planting process?
5. How long had you been married at the beginning of the plant?
6. Did you have children and if so, how many and how old? Where were they in school?

The Plant, Planter and Marriage

7. Was there a core group in place when you arrived? Parachute plant or daughter church? Tell me about the core group.
8. If the plant was a daughter church, what do think was the feeling of the mother church as a whole towards the church plant and toward you as the church planter? What were your feelings about the mother church?
9. Did you plant alone or did you have a partner? What was the relationship like with the partner, and what was it like between the two families? Was planting with a teammate a positive or negative overall for you, your wife and family?

The Planter

10. Did you go through any church planter readiness assessment before the plant? Tell me about your experience with the assessment center. Did they give you any counsel regarding planting and your marriage/family? What did they tell you? How did you follow that advice?

11. What uncertainties did you experience, and how did that uncertainty impact you as a pastor?

12. Did you have any significant leadership struggles? Tell me about them. How did you respond? Did you talk with your wife about those? What was her reaction?

13. What comes to your mind when you think of being “broken?” Would you have considered yourself broken before you planted? Would your wife have considered you broken? What about now – would you say you have been broken? How did that happen? How did that breaking impact your marriage relationship?

14. Planting can be a very busy time that often requires us to choose between two or more excellent tasks to the exclusion of others. What got left out in your ministry? How has that busyness changed you as a pastor? (to the wife) What do you think?

15. Tell me about friendships – particularly friendships where you feel safe to tell the truth.

16. How do you feel you were impacted personally by the process of planting a church?

17. How often did you think about quitting?

The Marriage

18. How would you rate the strength of your marriage at the time of launching on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being on the rocks and 10 being very strong? How would you rate it today?

19. What counsel did you receive regarding the family dynamic in the context of church planting? How do you think you followed that counsel?

20. During the first three years of the plant, approximately how many evenings did you spend away from your family each week? Tell me how your wife and children felt about the time you spent away.

21. How many hours do you think you worked each week during the first three years? Did that remain constant after the third? What were your wife's feelings about the number of hours you spent on the plant?

22. What were the main points of contention between you and your wife as you prepared to launch, when you launched, and the first three years after you launched? Were any of these ongoing? Had they existed before? How are you doing with those issues today?

23. Tell me about typical activities that you and your wife experienced together and how often? Prayer, dating, vacation, talking in depth, arguing, etc. Did any of that change during the planting process and after?

24. Did your wife meet with mentors or counselors during the planting process? What about friends she could trust? Was there an effective support system? Was that (or do you think it would have been) helpful and if so, how?

25. Were there any parenting struggles that either affected the plant or the marriage?
26. Would your wife say the planting had a positive effect on the marriage and the family or a negative one? What would your children say? What about you?
27. What was your wife's viewpoint – did she see the plant as your work only, or was it also hers?
28. How do you feel your wife was impacted by the process of planting a church?
29. What was the impact on your marriage?
30. What would you have done differently?
31. Looking back, what would you say is the single greatest impact of church planting on your ministry? ...on your marriage? ...on your children?
32. Would you plant again?

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUBJECTS CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Harrison Spitler on "The Impact of Church Planting on The Planter and His Family." I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- 1) The purpose of the research is to: Understand better the impact of church planting on the planter and his family.
- 2) Potential benefits of the research may include: assisting church planters in building and maintaining a strong family during the planting process.
- 3) The research process will include: an interview with Harrison Spitler that will be recorded on a digital audio recorder, an analysis of all interviews to discover trends and then the reporting of the results in the final dissertation. All names, places and any other identifiable characteristics of the interviewees are changed to maintain strict confidentiality.
- 4) Potential discomforts or stresses: none known.
- 5) Potential risks: none known.
- 6) The results of this study are confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the project/dissertation.
- 7) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participants

Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Kristen Sagar; Associate Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Telephone (314) 434-4044

APPENDIX C

Resources for Recommendations from Chapter Six

1. Sermons are often available on the internet. The PCA Pastors mentioned in Chapter six are available at:
 - Tim Keller: <http://sermons/redeemer.com/store>
 - Randy Pope: <http://www.perimeterchurch.org>
 - Steve Brown: <http://www.perimterchurch.org> and <http://keylife.org>
 - Joe Novenson: <http://www.lmpc.org>
 - Scotty Smith: <http://www.christcommunity.org>
2. Information on Sonship Conferences is available through World Harvest Ministries at <http://www.WHM.org> .
3. Further information regarding the Doctor of Ministry Degree at Covenant Theological Seminary is available online at <http://www.covenantseminary.edu> .

APPENDIX D

TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Silver	Johnson	Allen	Walton	Murdock	Eastman	Thames	Keys
Years in Ordained Pastoral Ministry prior to plant	4	10	0	2	5	12	0	0
Years in Min prior to plant	4	10	3	2	6	12	3	0
Age of Plant at time of interview	4 when they left	7	7	6	6	8 when they left	19	7
Age of H/W at start	33 33	40 44	31 29	33 30	41 39	45 40	28 25	37 30
Years Married	7	16	7	4	14	20	4	7
Attended assessment	H – Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes , w/	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# children at Start	1	2	2	2	4	3	1	2
Core group size	24	18	20	0	40	0	28	16
Daughter or scratch plant	D	d/s	D	S	D	S	D	D
Is plant thriving?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Solo or team plant	S	S	T	T	S	S	S	S

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