

Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting

by J.D. Payne, 2009, Biblica, 458 Pages

J.D. Payne is a missions pastor at a large and influential church in Birmingham, Alabama (The Church at Brook Hills, pastored by David Platt). His background includes service with the Southern Baptist's North American Mission Board.

This book straddles the fence between summarizing basic church planting ideas while attempting to be comprehensive in that summary. The reader will find that Payne mostly succeeds at raising issues faced in church planting without delving too deeply into these topics.



The book is broken into three sections all focused on church planting: the theological foundations, missiology (which Payne roughly describes as the “art and science of mission”) and historical paradigms. One can easily see by the topics that they are treated, by necessity, very briefly. The historical section, for example, focuses on Moravian, Methodist and Baptist efforts. There is little discussion of Pentecostals and the growth of the non-Western church. He does explain paradigms regarding church planting movements as well.

Toward the end of the book there are a host of topics briefly mentioned but not seriously dissected. For example, Payne introduces business as mission, tent-making, family issues faced when living cross-culturally and models of church planting. There is a section that contrasts pastors and missionaries. I couldn't help but think of Payne's Baptist roots when I read this book. This example is one of a couple that flavors the book with a North American perspective. I would not suggest using this text to train non-Westerners.

The book's greatest strength is its weakness. It is an introductory text and can only note the issues: not explore them in detail. To ask for more would not be fair to its intention. This book is a good choice as a text for a basic “introduction to missions” course. Most serious long-term practitioners will find it too basic.

Reviewed by Ted Esler, PhD

Ted Esler is Executive Senior President of Pioneers USA, planted churches for 8 years in the Balkans, and currently is a house church planter in Orlando, FL, USA.