

## **Why Don't More Churches Have Babies?**

**By Bob Young**

It has been a few years (decades) since I witnessed the birth of my sons, but the memories I have still impress me. Human birth is an amazing process! Human cells replicate inside the mother's womb to form a new person—a brand new life that shares the DNA of its parents but is a unique human being with unique fingerprints and retinal scans. Every human being has a unique purpose in God's eternal plan. After the birth of our sons, over the years my wife and I learned that having children involves pain and sacrifice, and is costly.

God set in place this process with his instructions to Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth...” Adam and Eve did not fill the earth by themselves—the process that began long ago continues today, generation after generation. God's plan was that babies grow up and become adults capable of producing another generation. An overwhelming majority of God's human creation participate in this process.

When I think about God's plan for the continuation of physical life, I am reminded that God has a parallel plan for the continuation of spiritual life. The New Testament models of evangelism, spiritual development, mission work, church planting, and healthy church development imitate God's reproductive process. Christians multiply through the birth of new Christians. Churches multiply through the birth of new churches.

In the physical realm, we see the birth process occurring daily. Why do we not see the birth process occurring regularly in the spiritual realm and in the church world? Why do not more Christians give birth to new Christians? Why do not more churches give birth to gatherings that develop into daughter churches? If the “be fruitful and multiply” principle were adopted in the spiritual realm, how long would it take to fill the earth with spiritual life? Can you imagine what would happen if churches had two or three children so that one church became three or four churches?

In evangelism and missions, the idea of every church birthing additional churches is not the only model, but it seems to me to be the model most consistent with the New Testament narrative and also the healthiest model. Why do not more churches have “babies?” Perhaps it has to do with the pain, the sacrifice, and the cost. By the way, how many babies has your church had?

Addendum: When I reflect on the above article and contemplate the parallel between physical birth and spiritual birth, I cannot help but wonder, “What would happen if every church thought of itself as a potential parent?” I believe this attitude would greatly accelerate the spread of the gospel. We could fill the earth with life-giving, hope-producing churches.

One of the goals of Latin American Leadership Development is facilitating the planting of more independent churches around the world. The parent church-new church model is the healthiest and best model I know. Based on my own experience, I can point you to local churches that have adopted this vision in various places across Latin America—Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela. In these places, the gospel is going forth because God's people in a “mission field” have committed themselves to spreading the Good News without the need for a U.S. initiative funded by U.S. dollars. Undoubtedly there are others that I do not know about.

A healthy church is one that can do the work God places before it with a minimum of external help. What I can tell you from my own experience is that only healthy churches have healthy babies. Yes, there are costs, sacrifices, and painful experiences, but these are quickly eclipsed by the joy of new life.

Is the evangelism and mission in your church focused on the need for healthy churches that will duplicate themselves in the birth of additional healthy churches?