

The Other Wing of the Airplane  
J. D. Payne

Every time I board a plane, I am thankful that there are two wings attached to the craft. In fact, the laws of physics and aerodynamics demand that both wings be in their proper places before the airplane will fly correctly.

One of my concerns in North America today is that the Church is, figuratively speaking, attempting to fly a plane with one wing. When church growth studies began to impact the North America Church in the early 1970s, the focus was on expansion growth (i.e., numerical growth), and to a lesser degree internal growth (i.e., spiritual growth and campus expansion). Little did we know at that time the church growth principles and methods for the North American Church had been primarily codified. Yet, there was a problem, expansion and internal growth was only one wing of the airplane. For the Church to maintain proper health, another wing must be in its proper place.

Ironically, the contemporary Church Growth Movement was birthed out of a missiology that included both wings of the airplane. Donald McGavran, the father of the Movement, noted on more than one occasion that churches were to grow via expansion and internal growth but “today’s paramount task, opportunity, and imperative in missions is to multiply churches in the increasing numbers of receptive peoples of the earth” (*Understanding Church Growth*, 63). Though this was the desire of McGavran’s heart, the North American Church has for the most part removed the church planting wing of the airplane.

WING #1	WING #2
Internal Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spiritual Growth of Members</li> <li>▪ Construction on Church’s Property</li> <li>▪ Enlarging Parking/Classroom Space</li> </ul>	Extension Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evangelistic Church Planting Among the Same People as the Mother Church</li> </ul>
Expansion Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Numerical Growth</li> <li>▪ Biological, Transfer, Conversion Growth</li> </ul>	Bridging Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evangelistic Church Planting Among Different Peoples/Segments as the Mother Church</li> </ul>

McGavran penned his words in 1970, yet they are still relevant today. The biblical, historical, evangelistic, cultural, religious, denominational, and economic evidence all point to the need for the North American Church to significantly multiply Herself among the multiple people groups and population segments on this continent and beyond.

As you consider leading your church to make disciples of all nations, beginning in your Jerusalem, and all of Judea and Samaria, let me suggest the following ways to get started in making sure the other wing of the airplane is in its proper place:

- Expose yourself to resources related to North American missions like podcasts, articles, book reviews, and other links at [www.northamericanmissions.org](http://www.northamericanmissions.org)
- Read the article, “The Mother Church and Church Planting” at <http://northamericanmissions.org/files/Mother-Church-JASCG.pdf>.

- Contact the Church Planting Center at Southern Seminary and allow us to assist you in the journey ([churchplanting@sbts.edu](mailto:churchplanting@sbts.edu)).
- Take your church on a short-term mission trip to work with church planters.
- Lead your church to partner long-term with a church planting team and assist them with the ministry.
- Do a study of the book of Acts specifically noting the church planting activities of the Apostolic Church and ask yourself the question: “Does any of this material apply to my church today?”