

THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Season 5 | Episode 7: The Urgency and Cost of Discipleship

Greg: Hey everyone. Welcome to the church planting podcast. I'm Greg Nettle. And I have the privilege of serving as president of stadia church planting today. We're excited to have Nanci on this episode with us, Nanci's been a good, good friend for a lot of years. And Nanci leads, one of the largest church planting organizations in Asia. She's the CEO of that church planting organization, that's planted more than 40,000 new churches. She's an incredible female leader. And I say that intentionally, because she has a lot to say about women in leadership as well. Nanci, welcome to this.

Nanci: Oh, thanks, Greg. I'm just thrilled to be here.

Greg: You and I have become friends over the last several years. We've traveled to Asia together with teams to work in church planting, but most recently you've agreed. I'm really excited about this to become part of the stadia advisory board.

Nanci: Yes, I'm honored to be asked and I'm really glad that you're giving a voice to a more diverse group of people. And I'm one of those diverse people in being female.

Greg: Yeah, well in the worldwide experience, right? Seriously, that you bring to it as well, which is so important to stadia. And Nanci and I are going to be headed along with eight others. We're going to be leaving soon to head to Nepal. We're going to be trekking to Everest base camp with the goal of raising more than \$500,000 for church planting. How are you feeling about that?

Nanci: I'm super excited. I really am thrilled. I'm a little bit scared to death because it is a huge challenge and I am the oldest person on the team. But I signed up because I want to challenge and I want to discipline myself and I want to hang out with all of these fantastic leaders and I want to see the culture of Nepal and be in the villages. So I'm just thrilled for the whole experience.

Greg: Yeah, and we're going to meet with some wonderful brothers and sisters of Christ while we're in Nepal as well, which will be a blast. But that's one of the reasons I, you know, I love hanging out with you is just this idea that, okay. Yeah. You're when you say you're the oldest person. Just barely, let me say that. And we'll be right there together. And but you know, it's, I love the fact that you're still saying, yeah, let's go climb a mountain let's plant, you know, tens of thousands of churches. Let's, you know, let's do all this stuff and let's, let's talk about just that leadership principle. How important for you as a leader, is it to kind of keep all of that kind of. Adventure and big kingdom vision.

Nanci: Well, yeah, Greg, that's actually, that's a great question that I've been thinking more and more about, because I did turn 60 this year and a lot of my peers are thinking about retirement. And what does that look like? And do we want a second home? And do we want to be in Florida or Canada? And, and I think it's so important for us to like totally be here until we're not here. Like God has. Here on earth for a reason. And I don't think it's for us to hang out at the beach now, hanging out at the beach is great and I love it.

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Nanci: It's one of my top, most important things to do. I love it, but there's a higher, a more eternal, a deeper meaning and purpose to our existence here. And I don't think that stops when we turn 60 or 70 or 75 or so. I think we just keep pushing until we're not hearing.

Greg: Okay, so this wasn't the topic of the podcast, but I'm going to go here because I know we have a lot of listeners who are, you know, cause I, you hear, I was having a similar conversation with my good friend, Jimmy Mellado out at compassion international recently. Who's the same age as I am. I'm 59. I'll turn 60 this summer. And I was saying, Jimmy, so what's your number? How long do you, how long have you thinking go? And he said, you know, Greg, I think I'm coming into my best decade of leadership. And he said, so as long as the board will have. And I've said the same thing to the stadia board. I really feel like that. So, so let's talk just a little bit about that as we get a little bit older in, you know, hit 60 heading into that next decade. When a lot of people are thinking about going, man, you know, I think I want to go play golf or whatever and Hey, God bless you. If you want to go play golf, that's all good. But, but I'm seeing more and more leaders now talking about how are, how are you keeping yourself? Sure. And and in good leadership style to keep leading an organization of the size that you're part of.

Nanci: Yeah. That's a great question. You know, I think it is a mindset, so you could say, oh, we'll keep going to conferences and listen to these podcasts and read X amount of leadership books a month. And, you know, yes, I do. And I do believe in all of that, but I think more importantly, it's a mindset. So it's, it's, it's really understanding why are you here? Why are you still alive? What is the meaning and purpose for you to exist here on earth? Because truly going to heaven, that's going to be the best thing. Being in heaven is going to be awesome. And as great as Bora Bora is, and sounds in his greatest trekking to Nepal sounds all of that is going to pale in comparison to heaven. And so God has me here on earth for a reason, and he's going to have me here on earth until the very last day that he has me here. And so there, there should not be planned for me to kind of exit my skillset. So that I can hang out on the beach until he takes me to heaven. He would want me to continue with the skillset that he's given me in whatever capacity that looks like. So that doesn't mean that you need to continue leading a large organization.

Greg: Well, let's talk about that. So, Nanci, what is your skillset? I mean, in a nutshell, if you, if you had to say what's, what's, Nanci's.

Nanci: My skill set would be passionate, visionary leading people, motivating people, getting people over the hill. That would be my primary skill set. And I have a passion for a particular area of the world. And I have a knowledge set about a people group that I believe very strongly about, but the primarily, I would say I'm a motivational

Greg: Okay. So, and I would affirm all that. Then I've been around you a good bit and I'm happy to follow you wherever you lead me. And okay. But let's talk about this. Let me go into another area. You're a female leader in a very male dominated world when it comes to a lot of times in Christian organizations and so forth. Speak to that just a little bit about how you've navigated. How you continue to kind of thrive in that and keep moving forward.

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Nanci: Yeah. The way I have navigated it, unfortunately probably is more in a defensive way. It hasn't been like me looking forward and going, oh, I think as a female leader, this would be a good place for me to position myself. God has positioned me where he's positioned me in all the different roles that I've had. And then, you know, I would show up and I'd be like, Female in the room. And so at that point, then you just decide, why am I here? Obviously there's a reason and a purpose for that. I've got a voice, I've got a particular perspective and I need to have that voice be heard. And so what's the best way to go about doing that. And I think for, I would say. Many females in America, in conservative Christian circles are navigating that in a way where they just find themselves in the room and God has called them to a particular position. And again, gifted them with the skillset that they need to express. And it's, it's, we're either accountable, they him or we're accountable demand. So I've always tried to be accountable to God.

Greg: Okay, so talk about God positioning you in the room. Okay. So how much do you need as a female in today's world? How much do you need to there's positioned by God, right? And how much do you need to push? I mean, do you, do you have to push.

Nanci: And that is if we had an hour and a half or two and a half days, I would love to discuss this because I have a theory that has been working in my mind, in my experience over the past few decades of females behavioral response to male leaders. And I in a very primal way, in a very basic way, I kind of categorize it into two different categories. You either have the female that kind of goes into the, maybe a little bit of flirtation female behavior, a soft-spoken trying to woo her way into having influence over the male leadership, or you have the really hardcore. Kind of demanding. This is the way it is. This is my way as they influence a male. And I see both actually work. I wouldn't necessarily say one is better than the other, and I don't think that we need to have either one or the other, but I think females have responded to the male leadership in that way and that they have developed their behavior because they've gotten what they wanted in response in their behavior, if that makes sense.

Greg: It does. But I watched you in, in leadership in rooms now, and I wouldn't look at you in either of those, those categories. So

Nanci: that's because I've been. Looked at these two different ways of behaving and decided I don't want either one of those ways. I want to be more authentic. I want to be who I am. I don't want to demand and argue, and I don't want to use my female Wiles to try and Get my way and whatever female Wiles means, I don't want to trigger anybody, but you know, I just want to be myself and I just want to be who God has created me to be. And I would like to take if possible, the sexualization of females out of that whole category and let us just be humans and come to the table as humans and treat each other as humans.

Greg: Okay. So, Nanci, what I would say then is. As, as, as I'm hearing this for all of our male listeners right now that's what we, as male leaders have to encourage and lift up and support and empower in women is that authentic leadership. And maybe even to the point of, you know in our leadership, when we talk about empowering and mentoring and coming alongside of and saying, We need you to be authentic and we need your gifting.

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Greg: And so we want you to be empowered to do that as men, we have that responsibility. Let me shift gears here now again, because there's so much, I want to want us to learn from. So you lead, we can't even talk who we've talking about. Authenticity. The, the area in the world where we're involved in churches, planting churches together we, we can't use the name of the organization. I can't use your last name. And we can't even say the name of the country because it's too risky for our church planters. Okay. But, but we're over in Asia together. And Nanci, how many churches, since, since you've been involved since your organization has been up and running have been planted in Asia by this organization?

Nanci: So far, we have planted over 40,000 churches and we have trained over 10,000 pastors in about 23 years.

Greg: Yeah, just small numbers, right? 23,000 new churches started. Yeah. And you have a big vision. How many, how many more? Like over the next 10 years? I don't know. What are the numbers that you guys are using?

Nanci: We want to see 60,000 more churches planted over the next 10 years, for sure. Absolutely.

Greg: And so that sounds so pie in the sky, but I we're, we're partnering with you. I, I love the work you're doing and I've seen it firsthand. And I've met, I think when I was there, we were talking with you know, I had the privilege of talking with about a hundred past. About 50 of them men and about 50 women, something like that. And I felt so humbled being on the platform, talking with them because I wanted to just sit with them and learn from them. And, and, and so let's talk about that. The church planters, I mean, I mean, just really some unprecedented church growth in this part of the world of, or anywhere in the world, give us some things. What do you attribute that to?

Nanci: I'm going to say something that's going to make you laugh. But it's in all honesty, the truth, they read the Bible and they believe it. They read the book of acts and they think it's true. And so then they go out and they just do that. They do what they, what they see Jesus and his disciples did. And, and they actually expect same life. So if you look at the book of acts, there's a lot of persecution that happens there. It's not all flowers and roses. And so they are, they're committed. They take a commitment on to death when they graduate from our training centers and they believe it. I was just there and I met with one of our pastors who's been with us for years. He was just beaten. He was just beaten. And he was kind of kidnapped after one of our pastor meetings. And he was beaten, but bones broken left for dead in a gully. And miraculously, he was found taking the hospital. He's healing. His body is healing. His leg is still a little bit hurting. And you can tell the trauma is still a part of his being right now. Cause this is the third time he's been beaten for planting. Third time in his career. And one of our team members asked, you know, is this causing you to question what you're doing? Have you let up, are you scared to go out now? And he just clearly said, there's no turning back. There's no turning back. He believes that it's an honor to have been found worthy, to have been persecuted for the gun. It's an honor.

Greg: Okay. So, I want to come back to something you said, you said when these newly trained church planters, church starters are getting ready to head out, they, they make a commitment unto death talking about what, what, what what's that.

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Nanci: They so there's a whole, it's a long page of commitments that they make, but it is a commitment to take the gospel, even onto death because they know that they're going to go into areas where there is legitimate persecution to the gospel, to them as strangers. And they say, yeah, We don't care. We're ready to go and take the gospel wherever God is calling us. Because if God is calling us and we die, it is an honor to die in his name. If he's God, if God is calling us and we don't die, it's because he's protecting us. So either way, they're willing to do whatever God is calling them to do, because they know.

Greg: So it's it's. I just, I love that. And I actually think that's at the heart of church planting and church planters be it in Asia or the United States, even, you know? Because I, I, I, I think about, you know, our early days of church planting and, and just all the church planners I talked to, and I think we all feel that way. But Nanci, what sustains them talk a little bit about that because you know, we start going through hard times as church planters. Are they, in your case they literally physically get beaten. What sustains them, how do you handle that when something like that happens?

Nanci: Yeah. I, you know, and I don't want to minimize the pain of that because clearly this pastor was still, he was in physical pain. And he was in emotional. You'd been traumatized. And so it's, it's a real cost. It's not like it just, they can gloss over it. And the, you know, the grace and mercy of God makes them just soar through it, that they it's a true cost of sacrificial. Cost. We met this other guy. He does four church services a Sunday, and I know a lot of your church planters might go, oh yeah, I'm doing that too. But it's not that he preaches a sermon drives in the car, preaches another sermon drives in the car, preaches another sermon. He does the worship, the prayer, the sermon, the meal and fellowship afterwards gets on a bicycle, goes to another place. Does the same thing it gets on a bicycle, goes to another place, does the same thing, every single solitary Sunday. In addition to that, he has recruited in the last seven years, 170 people to go to the pastor ship 170 people have gone on to our training to pastor new churches. So it's just this dye in the wool. It's just, it's a strong, here's the thing, Greg. I think church planters, get it here in the United States. In Asia where we're working, they make a commitment to die to themselves. It's, it's not a halfway close your eyes. Nobody's looking, raise your hand. Okay. Jesus is your savior. It is a full-on commitment on raising my hand in front of a whole crowd. I'm going into a territory where they could kill me. I am committing to die to myself. So whatever it looks like to die to myself, that's what they.

Greg: And so this is encouraging, I think, to all of us who are hearing this to live that same kind of committed life and die to self daily. And to know that it's going to be hard, but we keep pressing on. So Nanci, when I was over with you all in I think our team, you know, we taught, I think it was like an eight hour block that day. And then we headed back to our hotel and I, I was exhausted. I mean, I was just exhausted and I remember asking someone on your team. Okay. So what are the, the, those in training do now? And you said, or whoever it was said. Yeah, well, th they're going to pray for several hours together now. And I was like, oh my gosh, that I don't think I could ever, you know. It's so talk about the importance of prayer in the lives of these church planters.

Nanci: Yeah, that's a great point, Greg. Prayer is everything because really they are directed by the spirit of. They clearly have the spirit of God in them. And the spirit of God tells them, go here, go there, speak to this person. Don't speak to that person. Every single solitary minute of the day, they're in tune with what God is telling them. And that is embedded in prayer foundationally. They pray all the time.

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Nanci: All the time we have one pastor, we have a video of him his day. And it like starts at five in the morning and he starts off with like an hour and a half of prayer. And then he goes about his day, which is like fellowshiping with his congregation training, other pastors teaching at a school of pastors meeting with his other congregations meeting with his family. And then he ends with more prayer and it, and it's not. 15 minutes of quiet time. It is like solid war there in the war room when they go in to pray and they are praying nonstop for hours every single day.

Greg: Yeah, I it's an, obviously it's doing amazing. It's how God's power is unleashed just through the prayers of his people. I was just reading here that I actually I believe we have about 8,000 of your church planters who actually pray for stadia and our church planting efforts in the United States on a regular basis. And I'm actually feeling. Video after our podcast today, that will be translated for them. And so they continue. So I'm so grateful for that. And one, one, our church planters in the United States to know that these brothers and sisters in Asia are praying for us as well, and as we are them, which is just incredible. Right. So Nanci, let's talk about, so you talked about the, they believe the Bible, they read the Bible and they believe. There's this multiplication effect. The reason that the 25,000 churches have been planted is this talking about 40, 40,000. Okay. Talk about 40,000 how are they multiplying?

Nanci: Embedded in everybody is multiplication. So if you're a new believer that you multiply to new believers, if you're a leader you multiplied to other leaders, if you are a pastor, you multiply to other pastors. If you're a church, you multiply to other churches. So if you just do the numbers and you know, we want to reach a hundred thousand churches by 2030. Well, we have 40,000 right now, if those 40,000 just double, we've got 80,000 without doing anything else, but we're going to continue to train up pastors because that's what we believe the workers. The workers are few. So we need to focus on those workers. We continue to train up those workers. And as those workers go out, they will continue to multiply because they, if they read through the book of acts on a regular basis, continually reading through the book of acts, as well as other scriptures, but they focus on that book of acts and cause that's their strategy. Their, their marching orders are what Jesus said when he ascended. And so they're going to go after it, just like the disciples. Did. You look at that, that's all about multiplication.

Greg: So I've been reading through the book of Philippians this year, over and over again, trying to commit parts of it to memory. And I'm thinking you just challenged me because it was a church planter. I think the challenge to reread the book of acts over and over is amazing. It sounds so simple, but my gosh, if there's any book we should be in. And that's, that's our strategy, but you said, so we've got 40,000 churches now. And if we just double those it's 80,000, but the reality is, you know, in the United States now, and we've made great progress in this, I mean, less than 10% of the churches in the United States ever multiply. And here you're, you're using numbers, like a hundred percent are expected to multiply. So how do you build. Yeah, but is it just, you just talk about it? Is it, how does, how do you embed?

Nanci: Yeah. It's embedded in the DNA from the minute you accept Jesus from the minute you accept Jesus. You understand that? Why are you here on earth? What is the meaning and purpose of your. Why is it that you exist and are not already in heaven? Just like we were talking about in the beginning. And so for that reason, we're going to continue to multiply. We're going to go out in the day and we're going to look at every opportunity as this is my opportunity to glorify God.

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Nanci: And so when a young church is starting, they start with the understanding that once they have a minimum, a minimum of like 12 baptized believers, they're going to start thinking about multiple. So, so who among these 12 baptized believers can go out and start another church. And so that's why we have this one, man. I just met and he has said 170 other pastors to be trained because you immediately, he was thinking about multiplication. This is the reason that I exist is to recruit more people to go out and be pastors. I believe here in the United States sometimes. Sometimes we make it a little bit too easy to come into the kingdom when really what Christ is calling us to is to die. And I know that's kind of a, that's a hard branding come to our Easter service and tie up, but, but that's really what we're called to. And that's what they understand from the very beginning. They understand they are committing the rest of their life to a movement. That means that they have to die to.

Greg: Okay. So I would, I, I wish I could just send people to your website to learn more. Here's what if you are listening gone, man, I want to learn more. I want to, I want to know about. This church planting movement and Asia, I want a partner in that. Please reach out at, you know, go to stadia church, planting.org, and we can get you directed to disorganization and Asia to Nanci and tell you how you can partner with us as we continue. To plant churches there, my wife and I are committed to, to planting churches. Their state is committed to planting churches there. Nanci, I'm so grateful for your time today. Let me ask this because I'm so. How can we be praying for your church planters in Asia right now?

Nanci: That's great. The most important prayer is that they continue to hear the voice of God and they are strong and courageous and obedient and what he's telling them to do.

Greg: Nanci, thank you. It's always a pleasure. We'll look forward to having you on the church planting podcast, as soon as possible.