

THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Greg: Hey friends, I'm Greg Nettle and I serve as president of stadia church planting, where our desire is to help you start thriving, growing, multiplying churches for the next generation. I'm really excited about this episode of the church planting podcast. We have Jared and Ann Roth as our guests and Jared and Ann have led church planting efforts since they planted a church at 23, they've planted multiple churches, but when you hear the story, it's absolutely incredible. Each has served as the national director of church planting for a major denomination. They've been consulted nationally and internationally for various denominations and associations, but I love what they're doing in the future. They're looking at. Digital planting and micro planting and researching it and have so much to share. So let's jump right into the church planting podcast. Well, just so delighted to have Jared Ann Roth on the church planting podcast. This episode. Welcome my friends.

Ann: Thank you.

Jared: Hey, it's fun to be here.

Greg: Yeah. Oh, okay. So you, we were talking before this episode and, and you all just recently retired and it just cracked me up because you retired and three days later, you were mountain climbing, trucking through the Alps over in Europe. And I, I love you. I love that about you guys. Do you have a great time?

Ann: We did have a wonderful time. Yeah, it was. Well, first of all, our church gave us an amazing send. And that was a lot of fun. It, it sent us off with such joy and gratitude to them for the years we got to be with them. But we enjoyed our Trek through the AVEs, through the three countries, France, Italy, and Switzerland. And on top of that, we met 12 wonderful people that we got to know. And most of those. That we know. And some very blatantly told us they have not experienced any faith in their story yet. And so we had a really good time. Listening to people's stories. And as we tracked, you know, nothing like a good, hard hike to get pulled open up.

Jared: Yeah. 12 days of sweating and eating with people, you know, really is a bond.

Greg: Yeah, it does. It does. And I could, we could talk about tracking and climbing all, all, all day on the episode, but I wanna jump in because, okay, so you just, you, you actually retired from a church that you all planted

Jared: Actually this church was an existing church. At age 23, we got married in six months later, we planted a church and our life has been a story of church planting. The, the funny twist for the last 13 years, we've been pastoring, an established church. Each of those 13 years we've sent out a church planter or a pastor or an international missionary, one per year off of our, off of our staff. So we considered ourselves like a minor league baseball team. And we, we were like the Barnabas that went to find the, the SOS of Tarus and brought them in and said here's the deal. If you're successful, you will leave. And if you hit three home runs in a row you're out of here they'll call you up to the big leagues. And so we own the fact that we retired, we own that, but the church had no context for sending anyone to retirement. They only have a context of sending people off to their next a. And so they sent us off. They just happened to send us off to the tour de LAN in, in the Alps and to a great adventure at our next.

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Greg: OK. Here's just, there's so much, I wanna unpack with the two of you, you're such a role model. Okay. So you, you, you, in your younger years, you were church planters in the purest sense of, of the word, but see, I would contend yeah. That you were even probably more effective church planters in your later years. And you're sending, raising up, as you'd said, the minor league team, let's go back to your younger years. We have lots of younger church planters listening and joining us on this, watching this, this podcast. Any lessons that you'd say, man, we know this now. I wish we would've known that then.

Ann: Oh, that's interesting. Because six years into the plant we went to fuller theological seminaries. First, how to plant a. Seminar. We wanted to hear the, what they had to say. Yeah. And when we went, what we saw was the faithfulness of God to speak to us. So I guess what it reaffirmed for us is, and we were sent out with this understanding your relationship with Jesus is everything, and you need to listen to him and go to him and, you know, follow his leadership in here. And he led us to do a lot of. Smart things, but they weren't our smarts. They were his smarts, even though there cuz there were not a lot of books at that time on church multiplication or church planting or any of that. But we were part of a, an apostolic network where 60 churches were sent out in 12 years and we were like the fifth of those 60 churches. And anyway, so I. I know, it sounds like too simplistic, but I think the biggest lesson is you need to listen and only don't do anything just because you've seen it done by somebody else. This was our instruction. Mm-hmm make sure listen to Jesus. What is he telling you to do? What does this community need? And so that's. that would be our biggest advice.

Greg: You know, that that's fascinating. And before we go on, because I think that's applicable to every church leader, whether you are, you know, planting right now, or, you know, like I was a senior pastor for 25 years and I wish I wouldn't have done many times what I saw other people doing. And would've more purely listened to what Jesus was telling us for our community of believers and community of faith. So I think that's timeless advice, right? Anybody in church leadership. I think that's, mm-hmm yeah. So helpful. Yeah.

Jared: Yeah. And you know, this is kind, it, it, it would sound ironic. It's not at all, but this, this next phase of our life that we're giving ourselves to research is in part to find successful models in digital and metaverse church plants finding a model. Sounds like you're finding some kind of a blueprint for someone else to. and that is true, but here's the point it's nice to learn from other people's successes and failures. And to let that experience factor into the context that you're in to avoid some pitfalls that may be common, but not to let the model become let's use the Bible story. Saul's armor for David because God will do a fresh thing. And that fresh thing cannot be bound to a. That might be informed, but it cannot be bound.

Greg: I wanna move in. I, and we're gonna talk about digital and meta and where you're headed, but I still wanna, I, this idea of the minor league team. So you're a lead pastor of an existing church and, you know, we it was years before stadia before I got involved in church planting with stadia while I was still a senior pastor. And part of it, Jared was because I was kind of building my own kingdom there. If you. And God had to wreck my heart about building his kingdom, not mine. And you know, that's exactly what the mindset that you've taken is that you're building God's kingdom, not just that one, you know, community of believers there. Can you talk a little bit about how you led the church to become that kind of sending entity and, and how you intent? I mean, one a year is incredible.

Ann: So one of the first things we did after we arrived, you was that we had a friend that we were coaching that was gonna plant a church on the east side of our city. And we engaged the church in sending them, we, we ask, would you like us to pray for your team? So they brought. Team of 11

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people on the stage and AJ spoke. And we prayed for 'em and we took an offering and we're able to give them a, a big gift right at the start. And it was a way to seed this idea that we're going to be ascending church and that sending is a positive. So when we did that, that was just a first step and we knew then three months later, we sent our church planter to Uganda. So this was in our first year, but when we came, the church was financially in difficulty, which isn't unusual, right. Or those kinds of things. So we, but we know that what you do when you have less is very important. Do you live out your values all the way through? So we needed to start it, but our teaching on it, of course came. We're an Antioch church. We always identify the church as an Antioch church. And that sending is a, we made it a party and we called them boomerang. And everybody got a wood boomerang saying here's when they were sent from us, they were engraved. They were made in Lavia. Yes. And then they received that. And then every summer we had a boomerang series where we brought people back from all over the place and they shared with the church, what God was doing in their part of Work.

Greg: And so then built in this positive energy for multiplication into your church.

Ann: Yes. And we always sent with gifts gifts for the kids. If the kids needed bikes, if they'd just outgrown what they had, then, you know, it just depended on what that family was. If they needed a new computer, they got a new computer. If they were planting, of course we did money as well as other resources, but the family, the whole family is sent not. The lead pastor.

Greg: So, Okay. So, and I, I want to come back and unpack this just a little bit because you made a statement. What, so, you know, it feels like in ministry, you know, there's never enough money and especially, you know, in lots of churches are going through difficult times, but you made the statement, what you do when you have less is so important. Can you talk about, I mean, did you, did you spend. You know, sometimes I hear irresponsible generosity. I've heard that term, you know? How did you approach that? I mean, I, if you don't have money, what, what did you do?

Jared: Yeah, well, one of the things that we're aware of and part of our life has been significant international travel and you know, that backdrop has really shaped us. And so as, as difficult as the financial situation was of the church that we came. And in the, the first four weeks we were there, we reorganized and laid off over half of the staff. We came as volunteers and we were not paid. This is a fairly large church. So our, but the backdrop is we have brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who will always have significantly less than that. And they're called to be Antioch churches. so we had better be able to live out our values at our deepest point of financial need. Knowing that relatively we are in an overwhelming financial blessing, you have to live out the values. And so you act in ways that are consistent with the values and then you budget to live within your means. But your means are determined, not by just needs, but they're determined by the investment of your values. Those come first, then you figure out what the cash is and you figure out how to live within your means.

Greg: So you're giving generously Which is one thing and that's hard enough, but I actually think Jared, sometimes the harder thing is when you're giving personnel away, like you were, yes, it is.

Greg: Where, where do these people come from? First of all, you're sending out a person a year. Where are they coming from? Yeah. .

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Ann: Yeah. The people came from our staff, but we brought some of them to send them. In other words, you know, we had a couple, we chased them down. The parking lot. They came to visit, found out their dream was to plan a church and said, we'll send you if you wanna come be part of evergreen. When it's time. And they were with us for two years and he was junior high pastor. And then we sent Hey and his wife Marda off to plant a church. So. Some of them were already on our team. We sent out several of the pastors that we inherited and loved and kept of course, but we sent them out eventually as well. So it was just, everybody knew it's a matter of time. If, if we want, if that's in our vision for their life and it was so some of them weren't ready right away and some of them were.

Jared: When you establish a brand that's unusual your reputation, procedures, you, and part of our brand was that we sent out pastors after investing in them, part of our brand was we had a teaching team so that everybody got speaking reps. so that if you were going to be sent out, you were a part of the teaching team, which usually averaged five, which meant part of the sacrifice that Anne and I made, by the way, both of us could easily teach 52 weeks a year. There's no problem here. It's much harder to listen to someone else's bad sermon three times in a row than to breach your own, right? Yeah. So but they knew that they would get preaching reps. They knew that they would get to participate in every part of the life of the church. They knew they would've invested in on the way out. They knew that the relationship would be sustained. They knew that we Copa and that, that was legit and real. So that couples who felt called to Copa were attracted to us. Yeah. And they also knew that we would send out women to lead pastor. And all of that brand. In addition to that our biggest passion was children and youth, and they always got the most in the best of everything. Yes. Leadership budget, time celebration. So that brand that we established was attractive and and people came and wanted to be a part of that.

Greg: Yeah, go ahead,

Ann: Anne. I just wanted to say that's one of the things we love about stadia is a church for every child. That's so significant and that resonated with our very fundamental from the very beginning kids and youth, the St yeah, providing a church that was for them. They weren't the leftovers and they weren't the second class citizen. They were right in the forefront.

Greg: Yeah. Well, as you, as you guys know, I mean, one of the phrases we're using around stadia a lot these days is just simply today's church is not enough. And we don't mean anything negative by that, but it's just not, we don't, there's not enough churches and it's not enough for the next generation. And so if we're not starting new churches for the next generation, we're gonna fail. So let, let me come back to, I'm still, I, I want to unpack even more of this because this is just fascinat. Stuff to me when you talk about investing in this stuff and the brand idea, I don't think I've ever, ever heard that from anyone else. I, I I've talked with this idea. You know, when we talk about brand, we're usually talk about marketing strategies and so forth. You are talking about this godly vision of brand, of developing leaders specifically to send them out. I just, I don't think we can emphasize that enough for church leaders today to to think through. what do I want to be known as, as a church and church leader for my next 10 years here at church. I mean, is that what you're getting to?

Jared: Well, yes. And, and I wanna say both of us, you know, strength Rangers, 2.0. Most of our strengths overlap, which means that we're horrible. Right? I mean, we are. A fire hose exponential. Right? So we get that. So the strategic piece is not difficult for us, but the humility piece demands that you never start with presuppositions. So in God's again, you know, his irony, these church planning, entrepreneurial startup people are assigned for 13 years to a church that was 95 years old. When we. It 95. Yeah. And so when we came when we met with the council, as we were being selected, they

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said if, if God calls you to come, what will your vision be? And we just laughed and said, wouldn't we be the last in the room to know? I mean, you're all here. Why would we tell you what God's vision is for this church? We're not even here yet, but if God calls us here, we will discover together what his fresh vision is for the next season. And we felt led to teach through the first 15 chapters of acts. Yeah. And we said, God is going to, during this time, let a set of values emerge. that define this season. We called it chapter 31. We were the 31st duly appointed pastors of that church in his history. Okay. Yeah. Chapter 31. And so as we taught out of acts, these values emerged and that defined who we were and that defined the brand. And, and so intentional diversity was the first value that emerged it's value. Number one, still on the website. And we have stories about that. We're sure we do. White, white congregation extraordinary generosity emerged out of that value. You get to the Antioch church, you have to intentionally go find people, some of whom are damaged or have their stories and baggage to come fully in power. And those people like Paul May supersede. Like Barnabas. And we, we left in our wake a couple that we have absolutely full confidence in chapter 32 will far exceed us in every expression of ministry. I,

Greg: so I just, I, I wanna go to the website and look at, you know, Evergreen's website and see all these values because I love the, just the first two, you mentioned extraordinary generosity. I wrote that. Because it's such a great value. All right. Because I wanna spend some time, I want us to jump into your, your next chapter, if you will. And let's talk about sprout and let's talk about digital and meta and just, okay. What's what is sprout? What are you doing now?

Ann: well, sprout digital is a nonprofit that we formed to do research on what we consider and what many consider the new front. Kind of the, the current migration, if you will. Since most great moves of God happened around a migration and new migration, this is the new migration of people to the web, right. To the metaverse. And so thinking of that Howard, Dr. Howard Hendricks is one of my early mentors from his reading and writing and his speaking. And one of the things he liked to say. Experience is not the best teacher evaluated experience is the best teacher. So if you don't take time, whether it's our experience or others to evaluate it. And so to us research, instead of thinking this heady inaccessible irrelevant, I mean, cuz some people have those words associated with the idea of research instead thinking of it. No, this is a way we can evaluate the experience. Of these pioneers in this new frontier. And then we can learn lessons that can inform the next wave, the people who are the early adopters and and they can not make those, they'll make some of their own mistakes as we all do, but whatever way we can help them. And we want to give that research away. So keep everything open. and not charge for anything. And then hopefully those who want to develop materials or want to do something with it, they can do that. They can take that and do that. They can translate it. They can. So that's, and we're all of our research is around this one question. I'm gonna let Jared tell you about that.

Jared: Yeah. So, The question that we're asking and we we hope we can answer in five years, we're two years in now. We're just finishing the second research project of the. We're gonna have the results in a month. And we're excited about those, but the research question is: Given a digital or metaverse church planter's platform and target, what models has God already demonstrated He's effectively using across the whole discipleship pathway...

Greg: Wow. Okay. So I can't wait to hear those results. I'm absolutely. One of the things that I'm loving is that you all are continually learning. In this next phase of life. And I happen to completely agree with you that digital meta and I would, I would add virtual reality into that world as well. Of course, I know. We have it's imperative for the church to be moving in that direction. So jar, let me ask you this. For all of our listeners. I mean, if they want to get access to all these research results if they

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wanna be involved in your studies, if they're already doing digital stuff, things like that, how can they get in touch with you in contact with you?

Jared: Excellent. The website is, and this is tricky. The website is sproutdigital.info. Okay. Dot info, sproutdigital.info. You'll find us there. If you go to other other websites, you'll find a whole variety of sprout digital things. But sprout digital.info is how to connect with us. And we are happy to give the research report are summaries of the research. To invite people to participate in future projects. Everything we have is free. We've been blessed. We we started the nonprofit so we could fund it. We have outside funding. We have been blessed. To be able to conduct the research, which as you can imagine, international research across many languages and cultures doing it at an academically robust level is expensive. We're able to do that research and give the results to anyone who's interested for free.

Greg: And so just because I I've already been to your site and I, you know, I've, I've, I've looked at it and stuff. You're already, you have some challenges out there that for digital planters, I mean, you're, there's already stuff available on your site for people that wanna learn more about digital and meta to go check out right now, correct? That's correct.

Jared: Yeah. Yeah. So we also, what would you

Greg: say, what would you say? Let's talk about digital for just a couple moments. I, if I'm thinking about digital planting, which by the way, this opens the doors for a whole new generation of church planters, right? I think that's, what's so exciting, very different, maybe gift set you know, and different opportunities. Tell me, tell some of the things you're most excited about already with the digital world.

Ann: Yeah. Well, one of the things is that we've been doing emotional intelligence profiles or assessments on all of the subjects on all of the participants in the research. And a part of that was to glean a little bit of a profile. Granted, it's just one piece of it cuz emotional intelligence, but it is an important piece. And in this in first study what we discovered is. The profile the profiles emerging and emotional intelligence for online are much different than the in person. And the reason that's exciting to us is because it tells us that God has equipped some people in some other ways that are going to be very effective online, and that we as pastors need to be aware. The where's Waldo question. This is how you recruit. You need to know what you're looking for. And so we hope to do continue that and delve a little deeper into that element of what does who is really effective in these various platforms, because in the research. Just the first study, 23 platforms were identified as being used and most digital planters and metaverse planters are using multiple platforms, not just a single one. And so this helps us. And that's one of the things we're excited about is in order to recruit, cuz a lot of pastors are saying, I can't. Yes, you can't, but you have people sitting out there in your church that could be the next digital planter for you. And so you need to know what to look for. Jared,

Jared: we have a baseline to compare the L profile. We've done the research for highly effective pastors that God has used in the, in the physical space. And so we have a baseline and those pastors fit a very specific profile. And, and they happen to these, this was north American pastors, specifically Canada and the us, but very specific profile, which has been useful because organizations can recruit, train and coach around that profile. And it is another form of optimizing a person's abilities. So as Anne mentioned, however, , we have to laugh, right. There are people who are highly effective leading literally hundred. And in some cases, thousands of people in online communities that we would call a church that probably could not stand on a stage and give an announcement. Yep. Yep.

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And what comes to mind is that first Corinthians passage where those that have less honor get more in the digital space, people who have had less honor in terms of their leadership abilities and the use of their gifts in the. Are some of the most effective and prolific pioneers in this space.

Greg: I, I am so excited about this and I couldn't agree more. I can't wait for stadia to continue working with you and the growth of our friendship. Jared Ann, thank you so much for your time. And I, I look forward to having you on again, and we'll discuss your research in the near future. We'd love that. Thank you.

Jared: Thank you.

Ann: Thanks Greg.