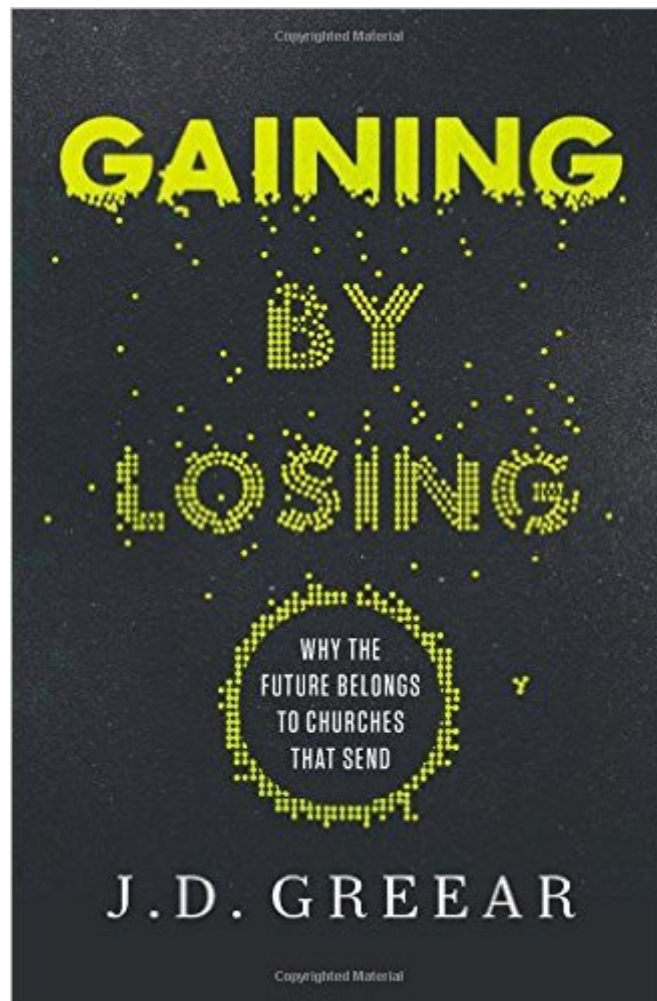


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# Gaining By Losing: Why The Future Belongs To Churches That Send



## Synopsis

People are leaving the church. J.D. Greear pastors. Big givers. Key volunteers. Some of his best leaders and friends. And that's exactly how he wants it to be. When Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission, he revealed that the key for reaching the world with the gospel is found in sending, not gathering. Though many churches focus time and energy on attracting people and counting numbers, the real mission of the church isn't how many people you can gather. It's about training up disciples and then sending them out. The true measure of success for a church should be its sending capacity, not its seating capacity. But there is a cost to this. To see ministry multiply, we must release the seeds God has placed in our hands. And to do that, we must ask ourselves whether we are concerned more with building our kingdom or God's. In *Gaining By Losing*, J.D. Greear unpacks ten plumb lines that you can use to reorient your church's priorities around God's mission to reach a lost world. The good news is that you don't need to choose between gathering or sending. Effective churches can, and must, do both.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Working in ministry, especially church planting, can be a very difficult process. One of the hardest parts about church planting is that while planting a church always seems like doing things to "gain" and "establish" a church, the reality is that oftentimes the church's real growth starts taking place when it sends, and thus loses, some of its key people and resources for the sake of the spread of the gospel. That's the premise of J.D. Greear's book. The book is split into two

parts; part one is about why we send, and the difficulties in sending. Part two lists out ten keys, or "plumb lines" to becoming a sending church. Greear spends a lot of time talking about the importance of mission. More important than the principles of how to send people as a church is the principles of why we send those people. Greear sums up his position on the importance of mission with a quote from Charles Spurgeon in part one: "Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor" (34). He then, using Scripture, anecdotes, and illustration, paints the picture of how a church can learn to send effectively using his ten plumb lines, the bulk of the book. I'll spend a few moments highlighting the things I took away and liked, and other things I didn't. What I Liked Gospel-Centered. Greear started off his plumb lines in the most important way. "The gospel is not just the diving board; it is the pool." If a church doesn't start here, the entire course of mission is thrown off, like a broken compass leading us the wrong way. "Believing the gospel," Greear writes, "leads to becoming like the gospel" (66). There are implications for this line of thinking.

One of the newer church planting/missions book on the market is J. D. Greear's *Gaining by Losing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015). The book doesn't give the details of church planting, but it does tell established churches some basic principles for and motivations to plant churches. There are two main parts to this 253 page book: first, a sort of introduction; second, Greear's ten "plumb lines" for sending/planting. There are also two appendices that give more detail about missions and church planting.

**The Good:** There are a some strengths to this book. First, it is clearly gospel centered. The main point of the book is that the gospel is central in the Christian life and in church planting/missions. It was also a good reminder for Christians and churches to be outward focused; Greear clearly stated over and over that churches must be evangelizing at home and abroad. We can never forget that!

**The Not-So-Good:** There were some weaknesses to the book as well. In my opinion, there was too much humor (some cheesy, some seemingly forced) and too many stories about Greear and the church he pastors. I realize these critiques are small and subjective, but for me they did detract from the book. I do have some bigger and less subjective concerns about the book as well. First, Greear started the book with a sort of building block of his methodology based on a debatable interpretation of John 12:24. Typically that verse has been understood to be referring to Jesus' death and the fruit that it brings (the salvation of his people). Greear, however, says that verse is about taking our "hands off of what little portion [God has] given to us, and putting it into our control of it, and plant it into the world" (p. 16).

When you ask a pastor about their church, his answer will tell you a lot about what he thinks a church is and what defines a successful one. A lot of pastors, for one reason or another, will mention the size of their church. Size is often a barometer for success but the numbers do not tell you the health of that success. Size can indicate that a church has been successful at bringing people in (attraction) but it does not indicate how successful you have been growing them once in (discipleship). There are many books on ecclesiology that address why the size of a church does not tell you the health of a church. These books will rightly focus on discipleship development as a more biblical way to assess church health. There are many characteristics of a health church. Its focus on missions is one of those. In *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*, pastor and author J. D. Greear focuses on the sending aspect of a church as a means of measuring its success in building healthy disciples of Christ. In this book Greear uses the example of his church and ministry lessons as a vehicle for helping churches see that the future growth of the church is found in a local church's focus on sending its disciples out to plant more churches. As the subtitle indicates, Greear believes that churches which send their resources and people out of their midst are the ones that are contributing the most to the growth of the church. We believe that churches that give away both their people and their resources are the churches that will expand the kingdom of God into the future.

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