1. The podcast presents church planting as a form of business. Watson Jones was taught how to fundraise, budget, attract donors, and build a business vision. He also received funding from megachurches. This business view of religion brings to mind the rational choice theory proposed by Finke and Stark. Finke and Stark (2005) would argue that church planting naturally arose from the religious marketplace (p. 9). According to Finke and Stark, religious marketplace is a free market regulated by Smith's invisible hand and driven by individual self-interest. Competition leads to pluralism where individuals have more religious choices and hence are able to find the best religion that suits their needs and wants. However, the same competition can pose challenges for emerging churches trying to establish themselves. Church planting facilitates the process by teaching them how to be self-sustainable and tap into the unchurched population. Based on Finke and Stark, people who are unchurched most likely did not find a religious choice they liked. Because of diversity in factors such as race, gender, age, and socioeconomic class, they believed that there are varying needs in the population, some of which may not be addressed by current religious options (p. 10). Church planting approaches the unchurched population in a similar way. By explicitly addressing the needs specific to the unchurched people of certain demographics in a specific geographic location, it seeks to provide an option that they would like. Since church planting exemplifies catering to special interests, which diversifies religious options in the marketplace, Finke and Stark would expect church planting to be successful.

Nonetheless, Watson Jones and his business partner, AJ Smith, were not successful in their attempt to plant a church in the mostly black, low-income side of Philadelphia. One of their key business plans was to make the religious experience relevant to people by engaging in nontraditional, less demanding practices, such as having no building and holding a bible study once-a-week. Iannaccone (1994) would remark that they could have bewen more successful if

they had imposed strict measures in their practice (p. 1187). Watson Jones started with around 150 people on launch Sunday, which went down to less than 60 regular attendees. Watson mentioned that a lot of the people who came the first week were already committed to other churches. Iannaccone would identify them as free-riders (p. 1180). They were only there to socialize with members of the new church and mostly likely did not attach any religious or spiritual meaning to the activity (p. 1182). Iannacone would argue that those free-riders diminished the incentives for others to participate and commit to Watson's church. The free-riders also competed for limited resources, such as the physical space that could not accommodate everyone. Iannacone would state that Watson could have incorporated strict measures that penalized the free-riders. One way of achieving it is by increasing the cost of participating in the alternative activities. Iannacone would state examples of having more demanding religious practices, such as having distinctive diet or social customs, that would stigmatize the members, especially the free-riders (p. 1188). Iannacone would argue that these strict measures could have forced the people who came to Watson's church the first week to contemplate participating fully or not at all. Eventually, with fewer free-riders, the members of Watson's church would have had more access to resources, felt like they are a part of a strong community, and been motivated by each other to commit to the church.

2. Church planning began about 20 to 30 years ago following the decline in church attendance, especially among young adults in their twenties. In order for a church to survive, however, it needs the younger generation. This brings up the issue of secularization. Regarding secularization, Norris and Inglehart (2008) claimed that when there is more existential security, people rely less on religion (pp. 64-65). The neighborhood that Watson approached did not provide people with much sense of security in life. Its population belonged to a low socioeconomic class and was mostly Black, making them one of the vulnerable populations in the United States. According to Norris and Inglehart, the population would rely more on religion than other less-vulnerable populations. Indeed, Watson described Philadelphia as the "city of churches." He was competing with multiple churches on the same block as his. Based on this, Norris and Inglehart would say that while the population Watson targeted would have likely expressed a high need for religion, it was already oversaturated with churches and other religious choices.

Gorski (2008) would continue the discussion on secularization, but would bring up a different point. He would argue that there is no one-size-fits-all secularization theory (p. 74). Church planning reflected some rational choice theory, where it assumed that the unchurched population wanted non-traditional elements in church activities and when given those, they would become involved. However, it made some assumptions that are not generally true. It first assumed that all individuals have a choice. It did not reflect on systemic barriers that exist for the minorities. It also did not take into account the cultural component that could shape one's religious interest. In addition, it neglected the social dimensions of religious participation, focusing solely on individuals rather than on communities or other collective forms of engagement. Watson, however, did not question those assumptions when he decided to plant a

church in the low-income, mostly black neighborhood using the strategies developed by the white people for the white people. Watson made the mistake of assuming that secularization was taking place in the neighborhood just like in suburbs or affluent areas in the cities with a lot of white people. Gorski would remark that people involved in church planning need to acknowledge that secularization is not a simple issue and approach it from multiple dimensions.

In one encounter that Watson had during an outreach, one lady told him that his group was a cult and to call her when they got a church. This again reinforces Gorski's point about how it is important to look at secularization from multiple dimensions, including cultural, historical, and sociological perspectives. While having no building like a church could have worked in a white suburb, it did not work in the mostly black neighborhood. As Watson noted, the black people seemed to mistrust out-of-the-box religious activities. On the other hand, hearing this story, Bruce (2008) would remark on the effect of pluralism in the modern world (p. 59). The lady's response reflects her waryness against avant-garde practices and organizations. Her response may have risen from news coverage of unconventional religious organizations that made her feel uneasy. Bruce would argue that in the neighborhood, traditional practices seem to gain more support as it is more established. It does not draw confusion or suspicion like unconventional religions might do in the current pluralistic religious landscape. While sociologists like Finke and Stark argued that pluralism helps avoid secularization, Bruce would argue that pluralism engenders more skepticism and reservation toward religion in general, as demonstrated by Watson's story.

3. Watson aimed for church planting in a mostly-black, low-income neighborhood in Philadelphia. In response to Watson's story, Ammerman (2014) would talk about her Waldo analogy. She would compare religion to Waldo, a white male character, in that religion has long been studied from a white perspective (p. 192). She would argue that religion needs to be studied amongst diverse populations that were neglected before. In line with that, she would appreciate Watson's effort to practice religion in a different context that was not attempted by other church planters. However, she would also state that Watson should have approached church planting from a less white-centric perspective. Although the church planning strategies Watson learned were designed for white people, he applied them in his practice without reflecting on the difference in race, socioeconomic class, and culture. Ammerman would also explain why studying religion in different contexts is important. She believes that religion is interwoven with people's everyday life and therefore is influenced by various factors including culture and community (p. 196). Therefore, she believes in studying religion wherever conversation happens (p. 189). In that regard, she would have viewed Watson's approach of utilizing non-traditional spaces positively, since it captures the essence of lived religion (p. 193). She believes that religion does not always happen in churches and does not always appear in traditional form such as praying. Rather than approaching people in the streets, however, she would have suggested approaching communities and observing how people engage in religious practices and engaging in them together before trying to identify their religious needs and interests (p. 196). By understanding how religion interacts with social practices, Ammerman would say Watson could have tapped into the unchurched population more effectively and fostered greater connection with his new church members.

Schnabel and Bock (2018) would comment about the decline in religious participation that prompted church planning to rise. They would first agree with the decline in religious participation among young people. One of their research findings was that the proportion of people with strong religious affiliation was the smallest for people under 25 (p. 717). In addition, they would talk about the relationship between religion and politics. Schnabel and Bock (2017) would note how the decline in religion participation among the moderates could have been a reaction against right-wing politics and religion's association (p. 687). In fact, Schnabel and Bock (2018) had found that during the Reagan years when religion and politics aligned, there was a rise in the number of religiously unaffiliated people (p. 717). After hearing Watson's story, they would highlight how church planning seeks to address generational shifts in religion. Since younger generations favor non-traditional approaches to religion, church planning advocated for practices like holding religious meetings at public spaces. Its approach would also be favored by the moderates alienated by the advocates of strict religion and right-wing politics. Although Watson knew about their racial and socioeconomic background, he was not aware of the political affiliation of the unchurched population. Schnable and Bock would note that Watson could have adopted his church planting strategies to better align with the political realities of the community in addition to the interests of younger generations and the non-traditionals.