

Ten Qualifications For A Church Planter
Scott Thomas

Ten Qualifications of a Church Planter

Ten Church Planter Essential Qualifications

By Pastor Scott Thomas, Acts 29 Director

This is a longer blog than normal, but these are the notes from my talk at Exponential 2009 in an effort to serve those who attended and wanted to engage dialogically in the conversation live.

The Power Point Handout is found [here](#).

Introduction

Every young man that considers church planting asks the question, Am I a Church Planter? It is the question I asked myself many years ago. It is the question we ask every man who submits himself to our Acts 29 assessment process to be a lead planter in our network. Many times he is depending on our assessment process to confirm his calling.

When we assess church planters in Acts 29, the top five negative conditions identified are in order, Theology, Vision, Family, Calling and Character.

The pushback that I receive about doing assessments is that they are not consistent with Scripture. People become very volatile over this issue. I see the church in Jerusalem and Antioch identifying, equipping and sending men to plant churches.

Acts 11:19-26

- The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch. They didn't send just any schmuck. It is reported of him, "he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." (11:24).
- The first thing Barnabas did was to go get Paul/Saul from Tarsus and take him to Antioch.
- Barnabas spent the year equipping Paul and doing ministry with him.

Acts 13-16

- The local church at Antioch, the first called Christians, sent Baranabas and Saul on the first missionary journey. They took John Mark as a young man to equip.
- The Holy Spirit was central to this process. He called them (13:2), sent them (13:4), filled them (13:9), and directed them (16:6-7)
- Along the way, they preached in many areas, John Mark returned home and then were persecuted by the Jews. Paul was stoned (14:19), encountered many tribulations (14:22), appointed elders (14:23) and preached, taught and encouraged the disciples (14:27). They faced a theological war (15), had a relationship-ending spat between Barnabas and Paul (15:39) and then the church sent Paul and Silas to strengthen the church (15:40) and they took Timothy (16:1) with them before Paul was imprisoned again (16:19 ff.).

A lot of churches do not have a theologically-based vision for church planting and lack insight into what a church planter looks like. Other churches that are interested in church planting have an intuitive sense of a church planter prospect but have not articulated it and thus may not recognize a man that would make a great church planter. Every church leader should be able to spot a church planter and then send him to plant as soon as he is ready. The problem I am seeing is that we are so desperate for good men that we are not sending them into the field. We take warriors and make them into administrative clerks.

While not politically correct, Acts 29 teaches that this office of an elder and pastor is reserved for males. God is a God of order and balance. He has established order within the family (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-21) and the church (1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 11:8-9). Even within the Trinity there is an order; a hierarchy. The Father sent the Son (John 6:38) and both the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26). Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 6:38). It is clear that God is a God of order and structure.

Charles R. Ridley compiled 13 Characteristics of a church planter and this list is the most utilized profile in church planter selection.

1. Visioning Capacity
2. Personal Motivation
3. Creating Ownership of Ministry/Building a Core Team
4. Reaching the Un-churched
5. Spousal Cooperation
6. Relationship Building
7. Commitment to a Healthy Reproducing Church
8. Responsiveness to Community
9. Gift Utilization
10. Flexibility and Adaptability

11. Builds Group Cohesiveness
12. Resilience
13. Exercising Faith

My friend, Allen Thompson, an expert with a PhD in church planter assessment compiled the following list of 18 characteristics of a successful church planter. He divided them into Personal, ministerial and intrapersonal characteristics.

Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church compiled a list of 20 characteristics for a church planter. He divided them into Personal Qualifications (humility, love, integrity and spirituality), and Functional Qualifications (nurture -counseling and discipling, communication, leadership and mission).

Although it seems a little reductionist and arrogant to list the characteristics of a church planter, I offer ten characteristics based on evidence in the Acts 29 Network and a plethora of books and articles associated with church planting. After reading this list, some men will be more discouraged from church planting than will be drawn to it. But the fact is that church planting is tough for the most qualified men. If a man does not have the needed characteristics, he will frustrate himself and everyone around him.

There are lots of other ways you can serve God in an established church or a church plant apart from being the lead planter. Some very good pastors would make bad church plant leaders. That call from God to do church planting might be a call to go join a team led by another man to help plant a church, or it might actually be a call to financially support so others can go. Please pray as you work through this list that God will either confirm your call or show you that you are not meant to lead a church plant after all.

I. Spiritual Vitality (Integrity is the number one value of a church planter).

1. Gives evidence of a personal relationship with Jesus and a transformed life.
 - This seems like an obvious characteristic. However, some men grow up in churches and are led to believe that they placed their faith in Jesus for salvation while they lack a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus said that we must be born again or regenerated by the Spirit of God (John 3:16).
2. Has a vibrant devotional life, prayer, spiritual disciplines
3. Has a deep commitment to Biblical authority
4. Evidence of fruit of Spirit and that the gospel is presently at work in his life
 - The gospel must be evidently at work in every area of a church planter's life: personally, maritally, domestically, sexually, financially, physically, relationally and ministerially. We are sinners who need forgiveness through repentance and confession. We have to practice this daily as examples of the gospel.

5. Evidence of a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led and Spirit-controlled life.

- We are eager to be witnesses, but we have tendencies to lean on our own ideas and abilities apart from the Spirit of God. The church planter needs to be an empowered man. The Spirit needs to be working in and through him and be dripping out. Jesus accomplished work on this earth through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit descended upon Jesus and rested or remained on Him (Matt. 3:16). Luke 4 said that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit, and began His ministry in Galilee in the power of the Spirit and preached with the Spirit of the Lord upon Him. He rejoiced in the Spirit (Luke 10:21) and promised the Spirit to those who asked the father (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit longs to empower us to do our work as a missionary-church planter to the ends of the earth.

6. Confesses the life of an Elder above reproach (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)

II. Theological Clarity

1. Possesses a clear understanding of the doctrines of faith
2. Has a right understanding of the centrality of the gospel
3. Articulate apologist for the faith
4. Commitment to the local church as an expression of a gospel community on mission.
5. Exercises grace toward those who hold to other views of theology
6. Biblical church governance
7. Demonstrates an ability to learn, grasp and communicate theological concepts

III. Clarity and Strength of Calling

1. Communicates a compelling personal call to plant church in this area at this time
2. Spouse shares husband's calling to plant
3. Commitment and sacrifice to obey call to plant a church demonstrated clearly
 - In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter exhorts the elders to "Shepherd the flock of God...not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you." A calling is necessary in a church plant to face the tough times because a hireling leaves when the wolf arrives. But a called shepherd stays with his flock through adversity (John 10:12ff.).
 - The Bible calls a pastor an ox (1 Tim. 5:17-18), a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4), an athlete (2 Tim. 2:5) and a farmer (2 Tim. 2:6). Those are laborious jobs and the Holy Spirit used them to describe the kind of man who is qualified to pastor a church.

4. Has a clear, compelling vision for the church plant that motivates others
5. Has been commended for ministry by sending church (Acts 13)
 - While western culture promotes and encourages the personal call and entrepreneurial spirit of the planter, the New Testament by contrast stresses the corporate initiatives of congregations in selecting suitable people for Gospel ministry. It cannot be justified from the New Testament and the best one can scrape up from the Old Testament is the call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8). The call of an Old Testament prophet should be not regarded as normative for a New Testament church missionary. The prophet was sent TO the people of God while the New Testament planter is sent BY the people of God.
 - When the church in Jerusalem heard of the need in Antioch, together as a congregation they expressed their sense of responsibility and they sent Barnabas (Acts 11:23, 14:22). We should select our best men (Acts 11:24) and send them. Instead of the initiative being left to the individual, churches should deliberately approach their best, most gifted Christian leaders to send them to places of greater need. The individual is still responsible to respond positively to the congregation's approach.
 - The individual's subjective sense of call is confirmed by the objective call of the church body, recognizing his gifts and qualifications. This reinforces the assurance of the Holy Spirit's call upon a man. Typically a man feels called and informs his church and the lead pastor terminates that man from employment rather than recognizing him as a man called and to be sent by that church.

IV. Strong Marriage and Family Life

1. Exhibits a healthy marriage (loving, serving, mutual submission, kindness, communicative, respect)
2. Demonstrates integrity and stewardship in managing finances
 - A church planter who won't provide for the needs of his family is worse than an unbeliever and has denied the faith (1 Tim. 5:8). Church planters often hide behind the cloak of "faith" and "calling" to shield them from taking responsibility with their family. A church planter's children need a father more than the city needs a new church. Money is not the key to success but a lack of money is a huge detriment. It is unbiblical to place our family on the altar of our idol of success.
3. Family members exhibit joy in serving the mission
4. Commitment to raising and providing for family in exemplary way
5. Understands balance of family and ministry
6. Professes healthy sexual relationship and purity.

V. Relationship Building

1. Establishes and maintains healthy relationships
2. Takes initiative to meet new people; is friendly

3. Conversationalist, including listening skills
4. Team builder who equips others for effective ministry
5. Empathetic and compassionate for others
6. Displays patience and sincerity with others

VI. Leadership Abilities

- Emasculated men are the norm. Most young men have brokenness with their fathers. Macho men are typically posers. They are hiding behind their toughness so others will not see their frailty. They hide behind their academia, their success, their busy-ness, their sexual prowess, etc. Emasculated men are not necessarily effeminate, but they are hiding from their own weaknesses.
 - The problem is that only men can build men and too many pastors are broken as well and have their own father issues. That's usually why some go into ministry-to get validated.
 - Anthony Bradley said at an Acts 29 event, "Your church will suck if you do not have strong men."
 - The typical church is made up of 39% men and 61% of women. Most boys raised in church will abandon it as a young man. If a mother comes to faith, the rest of her family follows 17% of the time. 93% of the time it is true with the father coming to faith. (Barna Research).
 - We prefer the men in our church to be mules. A mule does not act like a jackass and they are able to carry larger loads and endure longer than a horse. They are tamer than a jackass but do not seem to want to run like a stallion. I think many pastors prefer a mule to a stallion. Stallions are designed to run and not be penned up in a stable. We are generally afraid of stallions because we are afraid of our own masculinity, our leadership, and our "importance" to the Christian community. We are afraid that the stallion will steal our oats and our affirmation by "our" people. Since our own fathers did not affirm us, this is seen as a threat. We value Steady Eddie instead of Daring Dan. Christianity is a radical following of Jesus. The problem with being a mule is that it is almost always sterile.
 - The Heavenly Father delights in us as His sons and expressing this fact advances the gospel. We are accepted in spite of our sin through the person of Jesus and thus, we are reconciled to our Father. Jesus came to men and called them to follow; to leave their nets and to follow Him. Men are looking for others to lead them into a radical adventure of the gospel. They are attracted to the crazy ideas, not the boring. Most churches invite men to pass out bulletins and mow the grass as the great adventure. That's why they prefer staying home on Sundays watching masculine sports on TV or doing masculine things at home.
 - At every sermon, we must call men to mission, to lead, to repent of their idols. We have to equip men to be good fathers, good husbands, and good men. Those men who are addicted to alcohol or pornography or have anger issues are involved in a redemption group (a recovery group, of sorts) focused on getting back to the image of God.
1. Has a clear and reproducible system for leadership development
 2. Has shown he is able to accomplish tasks with limited resources
 3. Ability to raise up men to become leaders in church, home, business, community

- Even a cursory reading of the Bible reveals that when God wants to get something done He starts by selecting a man to lead that change. Examples include sparing humanity (Noah), founding a nation (Abraham), liberating a nation (Moses), establishing a throne (David), building a Temple (Solomon), preparing hearts (John the Baptizer), and redeeming all of creation (Jesus).
 - Church planting is no different. Simply, before God can build a church plant He must build a church planter who can lead others to follow the mission of Jesus.
4. Portrays resilience under opposition and setbacks
 5. Is adaptable to meet needs, identify barriers and articulate vision
 6. Organizes teams of people to accomplish goals (using time, resources and personnel effectively)
 7. Demonstrates courage to lead others who are not easily following

VII. Emotional Maturity

Most church planters get fatter, fussier, angrier, lonelier, poorer and at odds more with their mate and their Lord during the first two years of a church plant. Don't think that having a church baby will solve your deficiencies any more than a baby will solve the problems of a troubled marriage.

1. Ability to identify own strengths and weaknesses
 - An emotionally mature church planter can receive critique and feedback with grace. He seeks it often from his most trusted friends. According to a study by Leadership Network, only 68% of all church plants are still alive after four years. The odds of survivability increase 250% (2.5 times) when the planter receives some leadership development training. They reported that survival rate has doubled since implementing important systems such as assessment, training, and coaching.
2. Displays confidence without arrogance
3. Ability to accept constructive criticism and input from others
4. Willingness to be accountable to others in community
5. Exhibits flexibility and adaptability to changes and needs
6. Appears to be a problem-solver

VIII. Missional Lifestyle

In our quest to be missionally engaged, hip and cool, I think we have lost the "edge" for a radical, passionate engagement with God. Connecting with culture is overrated; connecting with God is underrated.

James 4:6-10 calls us to draw near to God. We have to make this the primary point of our church plant and then we connect to culture in a way that is understood by them. We don't want to be too hip and too cool that we overshadow the person and work of Jesus.

If you are a church planter, you have to be a missionary. Every pastor needs to see himself as a missionary for the glory of God and the good of the city. Don't be someone who wants to start something because of self-centeredness and pride and my desire to be recognized. It's not about the church planter or personal success. It's about exalting the grace of Jesus.

1. Consistently and effectively shares faith with others in a manner understood by unchurched
2. Commitment and passion to reach unchurched throughout entire city
3. Understands cultural context of proposed church plant (behaviors, attitudes, idols)
4. Leads others in a missional lifestyle
5. Has meaningful relationships and rapport with unchurched people
6. Planter is a cultural fit to the area where the church will be planted

IX. Disciple-Making Skills

A missional community is a committed core of believers who live out the mission together in a specific area or to a particular people group by demonstrating the gospel in tangible forms and declaring the gospel to others-both those who believe it and those who are being exposed to it. This community is led by a team to shepherd, equip and organize a community on mission.

This group is the church throughout the week. They identify, equip and send out new men to lead missional communities. Missional Communities operate unlike a Bible study and more like a family, a missionary team, a band of servants and eager learners.

I was attending a small group years ago and one of the participants mentioned that she was struggling with honoring her father the way the commandments stated because her father had raped her as a child. This was a real issue, a hurdle for her to clear. She felt dirty still after years of abuse and she refused to honor her Dad who abused her as a child. The group leader said, "Okay, we better get through this lesson." He completely missed the point of the community. He thought it was an academic process and not a family issue. No man would just ignore that statement made by his daughter or wife so he could continue his conversation.

These missional communities may come together to form a church. For instance, one group meets that replicates and those two

groups replicate into four groups. A leader is identified among the communities and this person builds into the formation of the leaders. These groups may come together to grow into a church in the future.

As a normal method, these groups come together, they enjoy food together, they pray together, and they learn together. They discuss their mission and the ways they are serving the community.

1. Clear and effective plan for discipleship
2. Preaches with effectiveness
3. Skilled in establishing and multiplying gospel communities (discipleship, missional small groups, learning teams, etc.)
4. Inspires others toward spiritual maturity
5. Models a lifestyle of following Jesus

X. Entrepreneurial Aptitude

What have you started successfully? Some men can't see the vision of what is to come, and some-even if they see the vision-can't find the steps toward accomplishing their vision. If you can't be the architect, then you are in trouble. As an example, some very pastoral people are NOT the best people to start a church, or at least not as the main team leader. Be clear about who you are. If you're a shepherd, counselor, caregiver, and you could be a success doing those things in an established church or as part of a team, then that is where you should be. Someone who is called to plant a church is frustrated if they don't do it. Number two leaders rarely make good number one leaders.

1. Has demonstrated past successes in starting new ventures
2. Is an innovative and strategic visionary
3. Is highly energetic and enthused about starting a new work
4. Shows ability to enlist others in new ventures
5. Evidences of being a self-starter
6. Has a willingness to work intensely for an extended period of time

Church Plant Stoppers

Adapted from: © Copyright 2007, Church Leader Inventory: A PCA Qualitative and Quantitative Study, ICPC J. Allen Thompson, Church Planter Competencies as Perceived by Church Planters and Assessment Center Leaders: a protestant North American

study, Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, 1995.

Church Plant Stoppers: Church leaders must find their identity in Christ's forgiveness and acceptance. When they are overly preoccupied with themselves they show signs of insecurity, pride, love of attention and acclaim and at times irritation and anger. Being eager for quick success they may cut corners and betray trust. The following characteristics may curb a church plant from maturing and reproducing.

Arrogance: displays conceited self-sufficiency.

1. Takes criticisms of ministry programs personally.
2. When under tension is cold and aloof making others feel inferior.
3. Seeks to be the ultimate authority in the ministry.
4. Tends to be abrupt and impatient in manner.
5. Tends to live a parallel life from spouse.

Betraying of trust: breaks confidence placed in him by others.

1. Is a people pleaser and consequently changes mind frequently.
2. Fails to follow through on commitments.
3. Says one thing and means or does another.
4. Betrays trust by sharing confidential information with others.
5. Fails to listen to and understand the needs of spouse.

Unethical Lifestyle: lives on the margins of moral standards and values.

1. Is involved in indiscreet relationships with the opposite sex.
2. Wrestles with an addiction (excessive eating, smoking, drinking, etc.)
3. Operates too close to the margins of appropriate behavior.
4. Tends to cut corners (sacrifice good theology) to reach goals.

Conclusion

Mark Dever has said the local church, in all its glory, makes the audible gospel visible (A Display of God's Glory (9marks: Washington, D.C., 2001). The gospel is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Jesus Christ died and rose again and ascended - people do not see Him. The Church is His Body here on earth. The place where Jesus Christ is made visible is His Body, not just by one individual. When one meets a congregation that is "displaying God's glory" faithfully, one encounters Jesus in one sense. So planting a church is an exercise in making visible the audible gospel of the Blessed God.

What if I am called? What if I am not sure? What do I do?

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:12-16).

<http://www.acts29network.org/mediafiles/ten-qualifications-of-a-church-planter.pdf>

Seventeen Characteristics of a Qualified Church Planter

by Scott Thomas

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[Church Leadership](#), [Church Planting](#)



I fly on airplanes a lot. The most difficult thing about flying is not the small seat with little to no legroom, or the long flights with 287 people sharing one Barbie-sized bathroom. The most difficult thing is keeping up with the TSA rules for "secure" flying. It seems they change the rules daily just to mess people because their own job is so boring. They now have Imaging Technology that can scan a person's body for [exploding underwear](#) (butt bomb?) or [exploding breast implants](#) (seriously).

The qualifications for a pastor have been the same for almost 2,000 years. Don't tell the TSA or they might mess with it. Jesus came as the perfect fulfillment of this list of qualifications. He is the Chief Shepherd of the Church and we are the undershepherds.

Before you run a battery of tests to determine if you have the qualities of a church planter, make sure you are first qualified as an elder. I found 17 distinct qualifications for a church planter in Scripture. All elders are guilty to some degree of violating these qualifications. Examine whether this is a pattern of your behavior to fulfill the “above reproach” category.

Above Reproach (Titus 1:6, 7; 1 Tim 3:2)

This is the overarching, summarizing characteristic. You will find a similar (but not identical) lists in First Timothy and Titus. Living a life above reproach is the first requirement in both lists and Titus repeats it. The other items on the list merely explain what “above reproach” means. If we peruse the two lists, as well as First Peter, we find 17 qualifications of an elder who is above reproach.

1. A Pastor must be devoted to his wife; one-woman man (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2).

The pastor’s marriage illustrates Christ’s love for His church—His bride (Eph. 5:22 ff.). A Pastor must love his wife exclusively with his mind, will and emotions and not just his body.

2. A Pastor’s children must be in submission, though not perfect (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5).

If a man does not know how to manage his own family, he will not know how to take care of God’s church. The first flock for a pastor is his own family as Pastor Dad. A Pastor’s qualification for the church starts in his home management as he leads them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

3. A Pastor is a faithful Steward (Titus 1:7)

Here the term used is overseer (Greek episkopos). It is not another office, but a functional title of the elder. It is what he does. He is a steward, a manager of God’s resources and Jesus’ flock. He takes responsibility, but not ownership.

4. A Pastor must be humble – not arrogant (Titus 1:7)

A pastor must constantly demonstrate the gospel by admitting when he is wrong and assuming responsibility and restoring relationships.

5. A Pastor must be gentle – not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)

No man will be of any use in the kingdom that is quick-tempered. The difference between how Jesus demonstrated anger is that He was angry at the abuse of others in the name of religion and the dishonoring of God. We get angry at how it affects us.

6. A Pastor must be sober – not a drunkard (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)

This is not just overindulgence in alcohol but is idiomatic for any behavior that fuels addictive responses.

7. A Pastor must be peaceful – not violent (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)

A pastor is prone to inflict violence through his words. He is to be a peacemaker.

8. A Pastor must have financial integrity – not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3; 1 Peter 5:3)

A pastor is to be upright in his financial dealings and not accused of pursuing money over the kingdom of God.

9. A pastor must be hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2)

A pastor's home is to be open for others to enjoy. A pastor's home is not a heaven on earth, but rather a place of ministry.

10. A Pastor must be a lover of good (Titus 1:8)

A pastor genuinely loves what is good. He does not just think he should love it.

11. A Pastor must be self-controlled (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2)

Self-control is a characterization of every area of a pastor's life: diet, time, mouth, exercise, relationships, sex, and money.

12. A Pastor must be upright (Titus 1:8)

He has integrity in his relationships and in how he treats others.

13. A Pastor must be holy (Titus 1:8)

His life is devoted wholeheartedly to Jesus externally and internally.

14. A Pastor must be able to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2)

All of the other qualifications are character qualities. This is the only ability-based requirement. He is to be able to teach sound doctrine, not just be able to communicate in an excellent manner. His teaching can be to one or two, to twenty, to a hundred or to a thousand. Most of the churches in Crete were house churches. The elders were to defend the faith once delivered to the saints against the numerous false teachers that arose.

15. A Pastor must be spiritually Mature (1 Tim 3:6)

Positions of authority without spiritual maturity lead to the trap of pride. When pride grows in a man, sin abounds.

16. A Pastor must be respectable (1 Tim 3:7)

That does not mean that everyone must like him or even appreciate him. It means that there is no credible witness to an ongoing sinful behavior.

17. A Pastor must be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3)

Elders are examples of Biblical expressions sexually, time management, marriage, parenting, worship, relationships and any other way. A pastor should be someone your sons could pattern their life after and the kind of man your daughter should marry.

Conclusion

What would you do if an elder violates one of these requirements? 1 Timothy 5:19-20 warns us not to accuse an elder flippantly.

Matthew 18:15-18 gives us the steps: 1) Go to the elder alone, 2) If still unsatisfied, go with another person, 3) If still unsatisfied, let the greater eldership know. If accusations are verified and the elder remains unrepentant, rebuking that elder before all is the next biblical step.

Read more here: [Seventeen Characteristics of a Qualified Church Planter | ChurchPlanting.com](https://ChurchPlanting.com)

Qualifications of a Church Planter

I. Spiritual Characteristics

- A. Committed to Christ, the Church, and to the great commission of Matthew 28:19,20.
- B. Possessing the gifts, callings, and leading to plant and grow a church.
- C. Filled by the Spirit of God to love people who may not be able to benefit you in return.
- D. Having a goal and a plan for planting and growing churches in qualitative and quantitative ways.
- E. A willingness to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus Christ.
- F. Possessing the gifts necessary to evangelize, teach, lead, pray, and preach in ways that you can successfully begin a fellowship of believers.
- G. Have a servant's attitude so that you can enable others to become more Christlike. This involves the willingness to surrender all of your rights to the Lord.

II. Educational Qualifications

A. You need to know the Bible well enough that you can serve as the preacher, teacher, and leader of your new flock until a full time Pastor is called.

B. You need to know enough of the following subjects to be able to demonstrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral competence in these areas:

- 1). Spiritual Life and Discipleship and Disciplemaking
- 2). New Testament and Old Testament Survey
- 3). The Life and Ministry of Christ
- 4). Evangelism and Cross-Cultural Communications
- 5). Interpersonal Relationships
- 6). Small group Bible study leading and dynamics
- 7). African Traditional Religions
- 8). Islam
- 9). Spiritual Warfare
- 10). History of Missions
- 11). The Pastor and His Christian Home
- 12). Leadership and management skills
- 13). Church Growth and Outreach
- 14). Church Planting (Rural and Urban)
- 15). Theological Education
- 16). Organizing the church through Christian Education
- 17). Practical Skills such as building the church and farming if necessary
- 18). Health care and basic missionary medicine
- 19). Literacy training and how to teach adults
- 20). Child evangelism

III. Psychological Qualifications

A. Ability to withstand pressure from relatives, Satan, and cynics

B. Ability to be patient, persevering, and determine despite set-backs.

C. Ability to work across cultures or social stratas

D. Ability to humble yourself and work harmoniously with people who may have different backgrounds

E. Ability to carry through on your commitments to God & your organization

F. Strong prayer life that can take you through hard times

G. Ability to overcome discouragement and frustrations

H. Ability to stay mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy in difficult circumstances and conditions

I. Ability to laugh and praise God regardless of the results

J. Ability to adapt to new situations and effect change

K. Ability to love and accept love from people

L. Ability to lead your household through trials

M. Ability to claim the promises of God and obey their conditions

N. Ability to know and teach God's will regardless of the opposition from Satan

O. Ability to stay balanced when temptations come

P. Ability to stay pure, holy, and above reproach

Qualifications for Participation in a Church-Planting Team

Sovereign Grace Ministries

Introduction

Within Sovereign Grace Ministries, team ministry characterizes the church-planting endeavor. It has been our experience that effective church planting happens when a man called by God to plant a church is surrounded by a team committed to the gospel and eager to support him in that work.

It always amazes us how the hearts of so many believers race with a desire to serve in this courageous task. Christians will make extraordinary sacrifices to participate in something that is evident in Scripture, effective on earth, and rewarding for eternity. There is nothing more worthy of our devotion and sacrifice than the gospel of Jesus Christ. In forming a church-planting team, it can be tempting to try to attract as many people as possible. We have found, however, that this approach leads the church planter to include unqualified team members, who eventually become a strain on the young church, a distraction to the church planter, and even a stumbling block to the people he is trying to reach.

On the other hand, when the right people are on board and committed to faithfully participating through prayer, service, giving, outreach, and the modeling of godly character, the church-planting team becomes a column of pillars that uphold the young church. How does the church planter identify these people?

Qualifications

Those who participate in a church-planting team should have these characteristics:

1. Have a love for Jesus and a passion for the gospel
 - are amazed by the grace God has shown them
 - are committed to living all of life in light of the gospel
 - consistent pursuit of God through spiritual disciplines
2. Are humble
 - have pursued others' input without becoming offended
 - consistently encourage others
 - are accustomed to confessing sin
3. Have a servant's heart
 - have demonstrated commitment to the local church
 - are eager to support the new church

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Qualifications for Participation in a Church-Planting Team

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When we train our church planters, I begin by telling them the number one requirement for being a church planter. They've generally had some level of assessment. They first do an on-line assessment to make sure the gifts, talents, abilities, etc., are all in line. Later there will be a more thorough assessment. But the primary requirement for me isn't always found in an assessment. It's what Paul, Peter, John, and Jesus said – "IMITATE ME." I discovered this in a very profound way early on when I became obsessed with the Sermon on the Mount and the whole concept of the Kingdom of God. It's what was taught and what was expected to come - and there was a lifestyle that went with it. It was also being lived, which definitely required the Holy Spirit.

Until a church planter can rise up a group of disciples and say "imitate me" or stand before a congregation and say "imitate me" they have no business planting a church. In the Scriptures the primary qualification of leadership in a church is integrity and intimacy with Christ. All the other stuff is good and sometimes necessary - but without integrity and intimacy - you will be as one of my mentors told a group of us "a shooting star destined to be a falling star."

I did not say be perfect - no one is. I did not say they won't make mistakes - they will. But do they handle them in a Christ-like and biblical way. I did not say they will not struggle in life, marriage, and work - everyone does. But there must be a consistency of character and integrity that provides a model or pattern for others to see what it looks like for someone to follow Jesus.

What makes church planting so hard is that it's a young man's sport - and the problem is you aren't just starting a church, you're starting a family, a life, even to some degree your "life work" or career if you will - and all of those have challenges, difficulties, etc. I've also discovered that in your 20's, you simply try to get out on your own, and whatever was tough growing up, you ignore it - only to be confronted by those demons once you're on your own. Then in your 30's, when you have the wife, the kids, the church, etc., you can wind up feeling like it was less than you expected it to be - even though your church may be growing.

There is no substitute for integrity and intimacy in following Jesus. The greatest compliment someone can pay you is not for them to say, "Wow he's an incredible preacher." Or, "Man has that guy planted an awesome church." Or, "Look at how you've grown that church." Those things are obviously nice, but the greatest thing someone can say to you is, "I want to know Jesus like that guy does."

Father, I pray for every young pastor and church planter at Exponential this week in Orlando. Among all the hype, stories, and unmastered desires for success, may there be a passion to first know you in a deep and intimate way. May there be a passion for holiness so that they first grow internally so as their church grows externally it will not be short-lived but long term. May they also have a passion not just to start a church, but to multiply the church out of all they do.