

Project #4 Who Am I?

Are *You* Called to Plant?

Acts 13 and 14 make it clear that Paul and Barnabas were to birth baby churches. However – everyone is NOT called to plant. Do not become a planter if God has not called you to do so.

Titus pastored at Crete – but there is no evidence Titus ever planted a church.

Timothy pastored in Ephesus – but there is no evidence Timothy ever planted a church.

One of the first questions to ask is, “Has the Lord called me to plant a church?” If God has called you . . . no difficulty will stop you. If God has not called you, then you are choosing a very hard road.

Birthing a church is more than following a manual. A miracle of God births a baby church. It takes more than talk, education, human reasoning and strong motivation. Four important steps should be taken before you get far into this.

1. In prayer, get God’s answer to two primary questions:
 - a. Lord, *do* you want me to plant a church?
 - b. *Where* do you want me to plant? (The “where” may come to you in several different ways)
2. Gain insight from Godly advisors. Proverbs speaks of the wisdom of counsel. Get input from people who will speak truth to you. Some of these observations should come from veteran church planters who know you. Involve your spouse in this process. Invite these people to be brutally honest with you. Ask questions like:
 - a. What do you see in me that would be a strength in planting a church?
 - b. What do you see in me that would be a weakness in planting a church?
 - c. Does our family have what it takes to plant a new church?
3. Pray and fast. In a season of prayer and fasting, “Wait on the Lord.” Prayer and fasting is a time to marinate in the Holy Ghost. Don’t rush this part of the process.
4. Seek inner peace. If the Lord calls you to plant the church, a deep sense of settled peace is vital.

With these things in place, and all signs bring “go,” you now need to think of some challenges you will need to overcome. Virtually every church planter has to overcome them.

Challenges to Those Who Birth a Baby Church

Under-evaluation of those who birth baby churches

For some, a North American Missionary does not stand high on the spiritual or social register. The mental image conjured up by the phrase *Church Planter* may be anything but flattering. While this reasoning is short sighted, it does exist.

Suggestion – Don't birth a church to stroke your ego!

Being misunderstood

Some suggest one starts a church because they could not make the grade elsewhere! Others see a church planter as a novice preacher cutting his teeth by planting a church. Some imagine every church planter is taking advantage of church trouble somewhere nearby. (On occasion, this does happen, but this is not a good reason to plant a church.) How wrong those misconceptions are. Church planters are the cream of the crop. If you don't believe me, just return to the missionaries listed earlier.

Remedy – Understand church planting is birthing something far new for God. You are in the birthing room, bringing something new to life.

Peer recognition comes too late to be worth much

A baby church is esteemed **when** the church is the fastest growing or has a nice building. Those two things do not always happen! You will be admired by some of your friends and family (others...even some of your friends and family...will think you have lost your mind). Recognition will come later rather than sooner.

Remedy – Be fulfilled by your call and the work of sowing seed in your field.

Effective missionaries are super-spiritual

There are spiritual giants among our North American Missionaries, but the *average* missionary is well . . . pretty average. They are not a super saint; they have doubts and fears. There are limits to a church planter's endurance. Unfortunately, some have

cracked-up physically, mentally, morally and spiritually.¹ Most Missionaries are not five talent people.

It is wrong for a two talent missionary to feel like a failure because he does not have the impact of a five talent man. It is also wrong to bury even one talent.

Remedy – Be what God equipped you to be. He has not called you to be “outstanding” but to be faithful.

Unrealistic expectations

Come to missions work starry-eyed and you will be disappointed. This is hard work with little romance. It is real-world work with real-world challenges.

Remedy – Approach birthing a church with a balanced long-term perspective.

Foundation for Effectiveness

To apply the remedies outlined above, you must be aware of *whose* you are. Such awareness gives you a secure identity. A secure identity defines *who* you are. Defining who you are allows you to be comfortable and fulfilled with *what* you do. These three things stack one above the last:

1. Whose you are.
2. Who you are.
3. What your calling is.

When these blocks are in place, **influence** is birthed. Influence results in **making impact with other people**. A baby church must make an impact. Many people want to be influential and make an impact but have not yet figured out: whose they are, who they are, or what their calling is. To attempt to make an impact or influence people without having answered these questions does not work. So what is the process by which this foundation for ministerial effectiveness is developed?

1. Intimacy with God leads to knowing *whose* you are.
2. Being intimate with God, allows you to be comfortable with how God made you. This comfort results in knowing who you are and what you are called to do. It is being comfortable in your own skin.

¹ Kane, J. Herbert, *The Making of a Missionary* (Deerfield: Baker Book House, 1987), 7.

3. *Instruction* equips you to do what God has called you to do.

Pre-natal instruction and in instruction in caring for a growing baby church improves the chances of health. What you are doing here is not a waste of time. Birthing a church is a process. Certain things must be in your life. Not having specific things (noted on the next few pages) makes birthing a healthy church impossible.

Objectives

This section is designed to help you:

1. Recognize that God has prepared you as a church planter.
2. Accept the calling and contribution you can make. Understand how your background affects the way you see and do ministry.

Biblical Foundations

Read the statements below. Look up the scriptures and respond to the questions.

1. Effective ministry flows from what we are, not just what we do. Who we are flows from our relationship with Jesus Christ and requires a true commitment to faithfully do God's work in God's way. Read John 5:19-20, 15:1-16. Describe how principles found in the passages apply to who you are.

2. No experience is wasted. God uses our past to shape our future. Read 1 Samuel 17:32-40. Describe how the principles found apply to your past experiences and your work with a baby church.

6. In what ways has God done something similar in your life?

- Describe how events, people, circumstances, situations, gifting, temperament, successes, failures, etc. were factors in David, John Mark and Simon Peter's preparation for God's work. Record a list of your observations.

- Draw it together by reflecting in the same way on your life. How many similar factors prepared your life for this calling? Record your observations.

- How will your life-experiences affect the church you plant?

Your Story

Life's experiences and our response make us who we are. Your story is influenced by:

- Your life circumstances and situations
- Your experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ
- Unforgettable people . . . both positive and negative . . . through life's journey.

Exercise

- How have critical events and circumstances influenced your life? (For example, being firstborn, a surprise baby, being reared by grandparents, an only child, a single parent, having moved often, being abused, overly sheltered, being first generation Apostolic, etc.)

- Describe your salvation experience. Tell of significant encounters you've had with God that brought you to where you are spiritually.

- Identify the three people who have most influenced you, positively or negatively. Describe what you learned or gained from each person.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- Put all of the things from above into a personal testimony. Describe how God has shaped you. Do so while considering the following:
 - a) What part of this represents changes for you and in you?
 - b) What convictions do you hold as a result of your experiences?
 - c) What values have been shaped in you?

Write your testimony here:

Your Relationships

Relationships, both positive and negative, shape one's view of things. Reviewing past and present relationships will help show you how God has prepared you.

(If you are single, please move to the next page and continue working.)

Role of your spouse

Describe how you and your spouse have grown in relationship with one another during marriage.

Describe how your roles in your marriage affect the way you serve.

What does your spouse have to say about planting a church?

What do your children have to say?

Just a Note:

It might be cruel and unusual punishment to move to a new city if your children are in middle school or high school. Making a new set of friends at that time in life can be emotionally devastating. Consider this carefully. If you make the decision, how will you compensate to give them the opportunity to be part of a youth group? We recommend that every church planter have a church home at which they worship one specific time each week. For this to work the pastor of that church must be secure and you must be ethical. You cannot recruit your core from the host church.

The role of friends

Healthy friendships give us acceptance and accountability. Your friends will give you the network of support described earlier. Proverbs mentions at least five important things a friend provides. Read the following Proverbs and describe – in your own words – what a friend brings:

- Proverbs 27:9

- Proverbs 27:5-6
- Proverbs 27:17
- Proverbs 27:2
- Proverbs 11:13

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is low; 10 is high).

- ___ I have had friendships where there was a listening ear, understanding and just the right words were spoken to me.
- ___ I have received correction from a friend that proved helpful and constructive.
- ___ I have friends who inspire me to press beyond my natural limits.
- ___ I have friends who find ways to recognize my accomplishments and quickly encourage me.
- ___ I have a friend with whom I can trust my deepest secrets

Education, Work and Recreation

The following will help you think about how God has prepared you to birth a church through your educational background, work experience and recreational activities.

Exercise

Think about and record answers to the following:

- As you think about your education (whether formal or informal) what subjects did you enjoy? How do those possibly fit into your mission of planting a church?

- Review your previous work experiences; what activities did you enjoy? (For example: organizing, specific tasks and timelines, meetings, break room chats, etc). How do these work experiences relate to your call to parent a baby church?

- What sports, hobbies and leisure activities are you drawn to? How do you think this will fit into your ministry as a church planter?

