13 Essential Characteristics of a Church Planter

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1. Visioning capacity
   - being a person who projects into the future beyond the present
   - developing a theme which highlights the vision and philosophy of ministry
   - persuasively selling the vision to the people
   - approaching challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles
   - coping effectively with non-visioning elements
   - not erecting artificial walls or limits either overtly or subconsciously
   - establishing a clear church identity related to the theme and vision
   - believing in God's capacity to do great things

2. Intrinsically motivated
   - having a desire to do well and a commitment to excellence
   - stick-to-itiveness and persistence
   - having initiative and aggressiveness without the negative connotations
   - having a willingness to work long and hard
   - being a self-starter with a willingness to build from nothing
   - having a high energy and vitality level; physical stamina

3. Creates ownership of ministry
   - helping people to "buy in" and feel responsible for the growth and success of the church
   - gaining commitment of the people to the vision
   - establishing a congregational identity
   - avoiding stereotyping of congregation by imposing unrealistic goals for which it cannot claim ownership

4. Relates to the unchurched
   - communicating in style that is understood by the unchurched
   - understanding the "psychology" or mentality of the unchurched
   - moving and functioning in the "personal space" of the unchurched without fear
   - quickly getting to know the unchurched on a personal level
   - breaking through the barriers erected by the unchurched
   - handling crises faced by the unchurched
5. **Spousal cooperation**
   - having an explicit agreement regarding each partner's respective role and involvement in ministry
   - having explicit rules regarding the use of home as an office
   - evaluating the consequences of ministry demands upon the children
   - functioning as a team through individual and collective action
   - having a strategy for dealing with strangers
   - modeling wholesome family life before church and community
   - agreeing upon and sharing the ministry vision
   - deliberately planning and protecting private family life

6. **Effectively builds relationships**
   - responding with urgency to expressed needs and concerns of people
   - displaying Godly love and compassion to people
   - getting to know people on a personal basis
   - making others feel secure and comfortable in one's presence
   - not responding judgmentally or prejudicially to new people
   - appreciating and accepting a variety of persons
   - spending quality time with present parishioners without overstepping them for new people

7. **Committed to church growth**
   - believing in church growth as a theological principle
   - appreciating steady and consistent growth without preoccupation with the quick success factor
   - committing to numerical growth within the context of spiritual and relational growth (more and better disciples)
   - recognizing that non-growth is threatening and self-defeating
   - establishing the goal of becoming a financially self-supporting church within a specific period of time
   - not prematurely falling into a ministry of maintenance
   - seeing the church project within the larger context of God's kingdom

8. **Responsive to community**
   - understanding the culture of the community
   - identifying and assessing community needs
   - responding to community needs on a priority basis such that resources are most efficiently used
   - determining successes and failures of other organized religious attempts to respond to community needs
• not confusing what the community needs with what the church wants to offer
• acquiring and understanding of the character and "pulse" of the community
• adapting the philosophy of ministry to the character of the community

9. **Utilizes giftedness of others**
• releasing and equipping people to do the task of ministry
• discerning of spiritual gifts in others
• matching the gifts of people with ministry needs and opportunities
• delegating effectively in areas of personal limitation
• avoiding personal overload by delegating effectively
• not prematurely assigning ministry assignments before people are adequately equipped
• not placing unwarranted restrictions on other's spiritual giftedness

10. **Flexible and adaptable**
• coping effectively with ambiguity
• coping effectively with constant and abrupt change
• adapting oneself and one's methods to the uniqueness of the particular church planting project
• shifting priorities and emphasis during various stages of church growth
• doing "whatever" is necessary "whenever" necessary

11. **Builds group cohesiveness**
• developing a nucleus group or groups as a foundation
• quickly incorporating newcomers into a network of relationships
• engaging others in meaningful church activity
• monitoring the morale of people
• utilizing groups effectively
• dealing with conflict assertively, constructively and tactfully

12. **Resilience**
• experiencing setbacks without defeat
• riding the ups and downs (i.e. attendance)
• expecting the unexpected
• rebounding from loss, disappointments and failure

13. **Exercises faith**
• possessing a conviction regarding one's call to church planting ministry
• believing in God's action
• having expectation and hope
• having a willingness to wait for answers to specific prayer requests