

Bridging the Gap: Training Church Planter Candidates for Ministry Theologically and as Practitioners

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1. Introduction of 13 Ridleys
2. Dilemma = How can we train individuals to plant new churches or practice ministry in a practical manner to pass the Ridley Characteristics and score well in our Discovery Lab?
3. Covid, Digital Learning, and Kairos: Google Classroom

What does it take to be an effective church planter?

Dr. Charles Ridley conducted a study of church planters in the United States and Canada. Based on his research and subsequent field testing, he developed a list of thirteen characteristics that define effective church planters.

For over a decade, these characteristics have been used to select church planters.

Here is his list of characteristics, their definitions as well as an assessment.

Other than yourself have a friend, your supervisor, and a person with whom you work in ministry fill out the following:

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 a 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
- 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