

What Does a Church Planter Look Like?

Church planters are people with a unique combination of abilities and temperament. The following characteristics are regarded as those which are reflected in the lives of people who have the greatest success as church planters. While these traits may occasionally be found in single individuals, the most successful church plants are started by teams of people whose gifts and traits combine to provide the necessary ministry leadership.

The challenge for camp directors is to be alert to these characteristics becoming manifest in young people in the camp setting. Young people may reflect these characteristics in their interactions with others and camp responsibilities. But they may also exhibit these qualities at home, at school, and in their family life. Camper applications may also provide a good resource for information regarding a camper's potential for future church planting leadership.

Another challenge for camp directors is that these traits may only appear in embryonic form in young people and may not be readily recognized. GCI Church Multiplication Ministries (CMM) suggests that camp directors discuss these traits with each other and with their staff members and develop strategies for recognizing and confirming these characteristics when they are recognized.

Just as importantly, camp leaders can begin 'planting the seeds' of church planting in the minds of these young people. The "calling" of many present church planters began to surface in their teen years as they became more aware of possibilities. This is a great time to inspire them with dreams and challenges of new church leadership. If camp directors are intentional about planting seeds for church planting in the minds of young people they will more likely begin to recognize future leaders of new churches.

If a camp directors suspect that they know a potential future church plant leader, they can provide the young person with a variety of service opportunities in which he/she will be able to demonstrate church plant leadership traits. Camp directors should feel free to consult with a member of the CMM team for tips on what to look for and how to nurture potential church plant leaders.

A few of the traits that are most essential for the primary leader of a church plant are listed below:

Entrepreneurial Traits

Planters need to have entrepreneurial characteristic exhibited by starting new projects, ministries, groups, or businesses from scratch using only faith, vision and limited resources. They need to be creative and have a risk-taking spirit. Planters need to be willing to work long and hard. They need to be self-starters with a high level of energy and physical stamina.

Gathering and Team Building Skills

Planters need to be able to recruit and lead a diverse group of other people to join with them in accomplishing their vision. Planters need to be able to recruit and build leadership teams comprised of people with complementary gifts and abilities. They readily empower others.

Evangelistic Skills

Church plant leaders are able to relate well with non-Christians. They can communicate in a style that is understood by the unchurched. They can break through barriers and function comfortably in the culture of unchurched people. They have no reservations about sharing the gospel with non-Christians in appropriate ways.

Communication Skills

This trait reflects an ability to communicate the Word of God in a relevant and compelling way through preaching or teaching with the result that spiritual fruit and growth are evident.

Flexibility & Adaptability

Church plant leaders need to be able to cope with constant and abrupt change, handle multiple tasks at the same time. They need to be able to deal with setbacks and rebound from disappointment and loss.

Multiplication Skills

Successful church plant leaders are able to train and reproduce ministries and leaders so that more can be accomplished.

Recommended Reading

Planting Missional Churches, Ed Stetzer