

BY DR. JIM CARPENTER

Pre-Assessment Profile



DO WE HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE
CHURCH PLANTERS?



for couples thinking about church planting



THE PRE-ASSESSMENT PROFILE

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
HOW TO USE THIS PROFILE	2
CHARACTERISTICS: CHURCH PLANTER	3-7
CHARACTERISTICS: CHURCH PLANTING WIFE	8
WORKSHEET: POTENTIAL CHURCH PLANTER.....	9
WORKSHEET: SPOUSE	10
PRE-ASSESSMENT SCORING	11
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	12-16

INTRODUCTION

This *Profile* was written to help the prospective church planter and his wife¹ begin to explore whether God has called them to start a church. It is no substitute for a formal assessment, but it can be especially useful as an early step toward discerning God's plan for their lives.

Starting new churches is at the heart of God's redemptive mission. The church planting couple, under the Lord's guidance and empowerment, will make an eternal difference in advancing His kingdom.

But while church planting is a great adventure, it is not one to be undertaken lightly. The church planting couple will face unique challenges, will be called upon to make serious sacrifices, and will endure significant stresses.

The couple who are considering church planting will do well to think and pray with discernment before they undertake the adventure of pioneering a new congregation. This *Profile* can help.

Planting a church is a team effort. Unless the spouse is solidly behind the church planter, the effort to establish a viable and growing new congregation will probably fail. This does not mean that the church planter's wife will necessarily be working *full-time* in the project. If they have small children in the home, or if she is working outside the home, her direct involvement may have to be limited.

But it is crucial that she be absolutely committed to her husband's call to this ministry, and to the unique challenges, stresses, and opportunities starting a new church will afford their family

That's why it is so important to consider the characteristics of the couple.

You probably have been asking two important and overlapping questions: "Do I have most of the characteristics of a church planter? Does my wife have what it takes to be a church planter's spouse?" This Profile will help you begin to find the answers...

¹ *This Profile was written for a married couple, with the assumption that the husband would be the church planter. Could a single person be an effective church planter? Absolutely! The Apostle Paul was a world-changing church planter. And is it possible that the wife could be the church planter and her husband the supportive spouse? Yes. But we wrote this in order to help as many people as possible, the vast majority of whom fit this Profile.*

HOW TO USE THIS PROFILE

First, both husband and wife should read through the *Characteristics of a Church Planting Couple* (pp. 3-8). As you read, make notes in the space provided. Jot down questions and comments as they come to mind.

After each of you has completed a careful and prayerful reading of the *Characteristics* section, each should fill out the appropriate worksheet: page 9 for the prospective planter, page 10 for his wife.

You will not be perfect in every category. Don't be discouraged. You may have a mind's eye picture of a perfect *Super Church Planter*, who has all the right stuff. But no one is really like that. While many church planters would score above average on most of the characteristics, it is always good to remember that God sometimes chooses very unlikely people to accomplish His greatest work.

When you've both finished with the worksheets, compile your scores, and combine them for a composite score on page 11.

Finally, using the questions on pages 12-16, have a discussion in which you seek God's will together. Speak the truth in love. What have you learned? Where do you go from here?

Please remember that God has uniquely gifted both of you, and He desires to use those gifts to bring glory to Himself and blessing to others. As Christians, you are a delight to your Heavenly Father whether you end up planting a church or not. Your greatest fulfillment in serving Him will be discovering, developing, and using your unique strengths for whatever ministry He has called you to.

God bless you both as you seek His best calling for your life!

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHURCH PLANTING COUPLE

The first thirteen characteristics are based on work done by Dr. Charles Ridley. The last twelve are from *Dynamic Church Planting, A Complete Handbook*, by Paul Becker.

THE CHURCH PLANTER

1- HAS A VISION CAPACITY

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

2- IS INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED

- a) having a desire to do well and a commitment to excellence
- b) having stick-to-itiveness and persistence
- c) having initiative and aggressiveness without the negative connotations
- d) having a willingness to work long and hard
- e) being a self-starter with a willingness to build from nothing
- E) having a high energy and vitality level; physical stamina

3- CREATES OWNERSHIP OF MINISTRY

- a) helping people to buy in and feel responsible for the growth and success of the church
- b) gaining commitment of the people to the vision
- c) establishing a congregational identity
- d) avoiding stereotyping of congregation by imposing unrealistic goals for which it cannot claim ownership

4- RELATES TO THE UNCHURCHED

- a) communicating in a style that is understood by the unchurched
- b) understanding the *psychology* or mentality of the unchurched
- c) moving and functioning in the *personal space* of the unchurched without fear
- d) quickly getting to know the unchurched on a personal level
- e) breaking through the barriers erected by the unchurched
- f) handling crises faced by the unchurched

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH PLANTER *(continued)*

5- MANAGES FAMILY WELL

- a) having an explicit agreement regarding each partners respective role and involvement in ministry
- b) having explicit rules regarding the use of home as an office
- c) evaluating the consequences of ministry demands upon the children
- d) functioning as a team through individual and collective action
- e) having a strategy for dealing with strangers
- f) modeling wholesome family life before church and community
- g) agreeing upon and sharing the ministry vision
- h) deliberately planning and protecting family life

6- BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS EFFECTIVELY

- a) responding with urgency to expressed needs and concerns of people
- b) displaying Godly love and compassion to people
- c) getting to know people on a personal basis
- d) making others feel secure and comfortable in one's presence
- e) not responding judgmentally or prejudicially to new people
- f) appreciating and accepting a variety of persons
- g) spending quality time with present parishioners without overstepping them for new people

7- IS COMMITTED TO CHURCH GROWTH

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

8- IS RESPONSIVE TO THE COMMUNITY

- a) understanding the culture of the community
- b) identifying and assessing community needs
- c) responding to community needs on a priority basis so that resources are most efficiently used
- d) determining successes and failures of other organized religious attempts to respond to community needs
- e) not confusing community needs with what the church wants to offer
- f) acquiring an understanding of the character and pulse of the community
- g) adapting the philosophy of ministry to the character of the community

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH PLANTER *(continued)*

9- UTILIZES GIFTEDNESS OF OTHERS

- a) releasing and equipping people to do the task of ministry
- b) discerning of spiritual gifts in others
- c) matching the gifts of people with ministry needs and opportunities
- d) delegating effectively in areas of personal limitation
- e) avoiding personal overload by delegating effectively
- f) not prematurely assigning ministry assignments before people are adequately equipped
- g) not placing unwarranted restrictions on other's spiritual giftedness

10- IS FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE

- a) coping effectively with ambiguity
- b) coping effectively with constant and abrupt change
- c) adapting oneself and one's methods to the uniqueness of the particular church planting project
- d) shifting priorities and emphasis during various stages of church growth
- e) doing whatever is necessary whenever necessary

11- BUILDS GROUP COHESIVENESS

- a) developing a nucleus group or groups as a foundation
- b) quickly incorporating newcomers into a network of relationships
- c) engaging others in meaningful church activity
- d) monitoring the morale of people
- e) utilizing groups effectively

10 dealing with conflict assertively, constructively and tactfully

12-IS RESILIENT

- a) experiencing setbacks without defeat
- b) riding the ups and downs (i.e. attendance)
- c) expecting the unexpected
- d) rebounding from loss, disappointments and failure

13-EXERCISES FAITH

- a) possessing a conviction regarding one's call to church planting ministry
- b) believing in God's action
- c) having expectation and hope
- d) having a willingness to wait for answers to specific prayer requests

14- AN ENTREPRENEUR

He sees a need, then finds a way to meet the need and market the solution. Entrepreneurs start businesses. Church planters start churches. Past experience is the best indicator of future performance. Unless a potential church planter has some experience starting viable groups, ministries, or business it is unlikely that he will be able to start a church.

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH PLANTER *(continued)*

15-AN ENCOURAGER

The church planter must maintain a positive, encouraging spirit as he interacts with the nucleus of the new church and with the unchurched. This is not an easy attitude to maintain given the challenges.

16-A PEOPLE GATHERER

Can the potential church planter gather people? One pastor believed he was to plant a new church, but he could not start one ongoing small group in an existing church plant. He was probably not meant to start a new church.

17-A RESOURCE GATHERER

The church planter must not only gather people, he must be able to gather resources. He must be able to raise money. Planting a healthy, growing, new church can be expensive. Where will the money come from? The church planter will have to find it. New churches require buildings, tables, chairs, cribs, and a hundred other items. Where will they come from? He will have to gather these resources. Wisdom and ministry knowledge is a needed resource. He must find the right people and information to organize the church.

18-A MOTIVATIONAL BIBLE TEACHER

It is not enough to teach the Word of God. He must be able to communicate the Bible in an interesting and convicting manner to both the unchurched and the churched. He must have a sense of humor. If you are saying to yourself, "Wow, that sounds like a big job," you are right. If you can't communicate effectively to the unchurched, the church plant will be unable to reach the community. If you can't challenge the churched, then solid Christians will leave your church for another.

19-A MEDIA MARKETER

He must become adept at using the media to reach new people for Christ and the church. Becoming proficient at developing and marketing brochures, direct mail pieces, newspaper ads, signs, radio spots, is an essential skill. Quality and creativity must be emphasized as the media is used to reach the public.

20-A LEADER

The church planter must be a leader. A leader is someone others follow. By definition, a church planter must find others who will follow him or he will not have a church. He must be able to recognize other potential leaders and then recruit, train, and delegate.

21-A PRAYER WARRIOR

The task of planting a new church is often overwhelming and there are so many needs. The church planter must be a powerful prayer warrior. He must have inner confidence that God will answer his prayers and meet the needs of his people and the church.

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH PLANTER *(continued)*

22-AN ORGANIZER

Many highly-catalytic church planters are not adept at organizing. They tend to be more comfortable with the big *picture* than the *details*. Unless a church planter is able to organize the ministries and programs of the church, however, he will not be able to plant a viable church. If the planter is working as part of a team, this task can be shared with an able administrator.

23-A GENERALIST

Usually the church planter does not have the luxury of being responsible for just one or two specific functions like leadership and teaching. Even if he is leading a team, the church planter must be a generalist. He must be able to put on several "hats" and function well. On a given day he may be preacher, worship leader, counselor, copy proofer, evangelist, maintenance man, leader, manager, computer operator, executive secretary, and pastor. As the church grows and develops, he will be able to delegate some of these roles. But in the early days his ministry will be multi-faceted.

24-A PIONEER

Despite all the challenges and inconveniences of establishing a new outpost for the Lord, the church planter would rather be a pioneer than a settler. He loves the adventure and the dynamic of God's working in a new church.

25-A PERSON OF INTEGRITY

One of the leading reasons why church plants fail is a lack of integrity on the part of the planter. A church planter who has integrity is not only honest but also emotionally and spiritually sound. For example, if a boat has structural integrity it will not sink during a storm. The church planter's honesty and

soundness will be put to the test during the storms of starting a new church.

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH PLANTING WIFE

1- A FAITHFUL PARTNER

Usually a church planter will come to his wife with a vision. He asks her to evaluate the project and pray with him concerning God's will for their lives and ministry. Often she will be asked to consider leaving home and moving their children to a new community. She must have faith in the Lord, faith in the vision, and faith in her husband. She must believe with him that God is going to birth a dynamic new church to His Glory Like her husband, she must be a powerful prayer warrior who knows that God will answer.

Starting a new church is unlike going to an existing church. Rarely is a salary guaranteed. The church planter is usually called upon to raise much of his support and the start-up funds for the new church. Most wives are naturally concerned about the financial security of their families. Only if a church planter's wife is sincerely dependent upon God's provision for her family will she be able to experience inner peace during the start-up of the church.

2- A RESILIENT PERSON

Planting a new church is like riding a roller coaster. There are many *ups* and *downs* on the way to establishing a strong, growing church. People are saved. There is conflict in the church.

Marriages are strengthened. Friends leave the church. A church planter's wife must be emotionally tough and resilient. Her personal relationship with the Lord must be strong so that she is able to deal with all the joys and troubles of the new church without losing balance.

3- A COMMITTED WIFE AND MOTHER

With all the pressures of church planting, the church planter's wife must do all she can to keep her marriage relationship and family healthy and happy Money may be tight. Her husband may be gone much of the time and focused primarily on the needs of the church plant. The kids may feel uprooted. She needs to keep a watchful eye on her marriage and family. She must have the courage to make her husband and children aware of family needs.

4- AN ENCOURAGER

Frequently the church planter may become discouraged. In the words of Elmer Towns, he is "an unaided man with limited resources against insurmountable obstacles in unlikely circumstances." He needs constant encouragement, especially from his wife. There will be others in the new church who will look to her for encouragement also.

5- A WISE COUNSELOR

The church planter's wife will often be her husband's "sounding board" for dreams, ideas, concerns, and problems. Other people will look to her for wisdom, as well.

6- AN ORGANIZER

The Lord, in His wisdom, often pairs church planters who can see the big picture with wives who are excellent organizers and administrators.

NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS

THE PRE-ASSESSMENT PROFILE

WORKSHEET: POTENTIAL CHURCH PLANTER

Prayerfully study the 25 characteristics for potential church planters, and the six characteristics for wives of potential church planters. Then use the two grids below to evaluate yourself, and then your wife. Rate on a scale of 1-5, with 5 indicating *strong capacity*, and 1 being *minimal capacity*.

PROSPECTIVE PLANTER

Has a vision capacity	
Is intrinsically motivated	
Creates ownership of ministry	
Relates to the unchurched	
Manages family well	
Builds relationships effectively	
Is committed to church growth	
Is responsive to the community	
Utilizes giftedness of others	
Is flexible and adaptable	
Builds group cohesiveness	
Is resilient	
Exercises faith	
An entrepreneur	
An encourager	
A people gatherer	
A resource gatherer	
A motivational Bible teacher	
A media marketer	
A leader	
A prayer warrior	
An organizer	
A generalist	
A pioneer	
A person of integrity	

SPOUSE

A faithful partner	
A resilient person	
A committed wife and mother	
An encourager	
A wise counselor	
An organizer	

FOR DISCUSSION: Which characteristics seem strongest in your life? Which are not as obvious? Which

ones stand out for your wife? Which don't?

WORKSHEET: SPOUSE

Prayerfully study the six characteristics for wives of potential church planters, and the 25 characteristics for potential church planters. Then use the two grids below to evaluate yourself, and then your husband. Rate on a scale of 1-5, with 5 indicating *strong capacity*, and 1 being *minimal capacity*.

SPOUSE

A faithful partner	
A resilient person	
A committed wife and mother	
An encourager	
A wise counselor	
An organizer	

PROSPECTIVE PLANTER

Has a vision capacity	
Is intrinsically motivated	
Creates ownership of ministry	
Relates to the unchurched	
Manages family well	
Builds relationships effectively	
Is committed to church growth	
Is responsive to the community	
Utilizes giftedness of others	
Is flexible and adaptable	
Builds group cohesiveness	
Is resilient	
Exercises faith	
An entrepreneur	
An encourager	
A people gatherer	
A resource gatherer	
A motivational Bible teacher	
A media marketer	
A leader	
A prayer warrior	
An organizer	
A generalist	
A pioneer	
A person of integrity	

FOR DISCUSSION: Which characteristics seem strongest in your life? Which are not as obvious? Which

THE PRE-ASSESSMENT PROFILE

ones stand out for your wife? Which don't?

PRE-ASSESSMENT SCORING

- 1- The prospective planter and his wife should transfer their scoring from the worksheets on pages 9-10 to the grids below. The planter's scoring goes in the first column, spouse's scoring in the second column.
- 2- Add the two scores horizontally in each column to get a composite score for each characteristic, and place the sum in the third column.
- 3- Determine a total score for all the characteristics by adding (vertically) the third column for both the planter and the spouse.

PROSPECTIVE PLANTER	Planter's Scoring	Spouse's Scoring	TOTAL
Has a vision capacity			
Is intrinsically motivated			
Creates ownership of ministry			
Relates to the unchurched			
Manages family well			
Builds relationships effectively			
Is committed to church growth			
Is responsive to the community			
Utilizes giftedness of others			
Is flexible and adaptable			
Builds group cohesiveness			
Is resilient			
Exercises faith			
An entrepreneur			
An encourager			
A people gatherer			
A resource gatherer			
A motivational Bible teacher			
A media marketer			
A leader			
A prayer warrior			
An organizer			
A generalist			
A pioneer			
A person of integrity			
PLANTER'S TOTAL			

SPOUSE	Planter's Scoring	Spouse's Scoring	TOTAL
A faithful partner			
A resilient person			
A committed wife and mother			
An encourager			
A wise counselor			
An organizer			
SPOUSE'S TOTAL			

POTENTIAL SCORES
<u>Church Planter</u> Low: 50-100 Average: 101-174 High: 175-250
<u>Spouse</u> Low: 12-24 Average: 25-41 High: 42-60

- 4- Note the range of potential scores, from low to average to high. Based on your

evaluations as a couple, how do you assess your church planting characteristics?
Husband? _____ Wife? _____

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

1- PRAYER

Pray together before you begin your time of sharing. Ask God:

- to bring you closer to Him as a couple.
- to help you speak the truth in love together.
- to sharpen your vision for the ministry He has for you.
- to give you wisdom for whatever next steps He might have you take.

2- AFFIRMATION, EVALUATION, DISCERNMENT

a) Each should take a moment and share the church planting characteristics that seem most evident in your life and the life of your spouse. List these below, and then thank God for this evidence of His grace!

b) What church planting characteristics are not so strong?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? *(continued)*

c) Review any notes you might have made during the reading of this booklet. What other questions, observations, or comments do you have about church planting, and your readiness as a couple to undertake it?

d) What have others who know you well said about your potential for church planting?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? *(continued)*

3- TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS:

As you've reviewed the church planting characteristics, and as you've talked and prayed together, what do you sense God may be saying? Which of the following seems to represent your impressions as a couple?

- Probably not.** Church planting is probably not for us. God will continue to use us, but our greatest fruitfulness will likely be in another kind of ministry. (Do you have a sense of what that might be?)
- Not sure.** We're simply not sure about church planting. We don't sense an open door, or a closed door. More of a *wait and see*.
- Maybe someday.** God might call us to plant a church someday, but probably not right away. We need more time to pray, think, and prepare.
- Open door, what next?** We sense an open door, and want to begin to take the next steps.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? *(continued)*

4- NEXT STEPS

If this *Profile* has continued to affirm the possibility of a ministry in church planting, what would your next step be? Here are some of the steps DCPI recommends:

a) ASSESSMENT—

A DCPI Assessment offers a prospective church planter and spouse the benefit of the godly counsel of proven church planting leaders. Gaining this wise and objective evaluation of their readiness for planting a healthy new church is an essential step in discerning their characteristics and call for church planting. Each assessment includes:

- a psychological evaluation by a caring, licensed psychologist who has invested 20 years in assessing missionaries and church planters.
- extensive interaction with an experienced team of church planting leaders.
- a report which specifies areas of strength and weakness, and gives an overall recommendation (or caution) about the couple's readiness for a church planting ministry.

DCPI assessments are thorough and sometimes exhausting, but they are conducted in an atmosphere of compassion, humility, and respect, with a view toward helping the prospective ministry couple clarify God's call on their life.

b) TRAINING-

DCPI's church planter training is personal, intensive, and practical. This four-day event includes:

- how to build a core group with a vision
- where and how to find financial resources
- The Sunday *Experience* - a worship service in a new church with over 500 in attendance, and over 400 converts in 6 years. Q & A with the pastoral staff and lay leaders on Sunday afternoon.
- how to avoid 22 common killers of new churches
- how to avoid burnout and care for your family
- the creation of your own "VPT"-the church planter's preliminary statement of vision, plan, an timeline
- how to stay on track, on time, and on budget

c) SUPPORT RAISING-

DCPI offers training in developing a support team. All of our ministry staff are support raising missionaries, so this unique part of church planting ministry is very familiar to us. Support development is always a challenge, but not an insuperable one. A clear sense of God's call, the right training, and prayerful perseverance are the ingredients that go into the successful development of a support team.

d) MENTORING-

A mentor is someone who has been where you want to go, and is willing to help you get there. We believe every church planter needs and deserves a mentor — a friend, cheerleader, teacher. Someone who will warn them of the dangers, encourage them in their successes, and listen to their problems. That's why we've designed specific training for Mentors in our Mentor Conferences. DCPI can help

church planters who don't have mentors to connect with a DCPI-trained mentor in a three-year agreement that will guarantee twice-a-month contact (more when necessary) by e-mail or phone, and several in-person visits.

e) REPRODUCTION-

DCPI wants to help new churches to be born *pregnant* - already planning to daughter other congregations. Our new *Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Handbook* and *Dynamic Daughter Church Planting Seminars* are designed to set forth the principles and practical steps to reproducing your new church in the lives of daughter churches.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? *(continued)*

5- PARTNERING

Who needs to be part of your next steps? Church planting is definitely a team effort. If God calls you to serve Him in this ministry, who will need to be brought on board? Who do you need to talk to now, for prayer, advice, and encouragement?

List below the names of people who might be part of your *next step* in church planting, and specify what role they might have in your church planting journey:

(Example: Senior Pastor: John Smith—seek his advice and blessing. Ask for recommendation with the Bible Church Home Missions Department.)

- Senior pastor

- Denomination/Association leaders

- College or seminary profs

- Parents, family

- Ministry colleagues

- Friends

- Intercessors

- Employers

- Others: _____

If we at DCPI can be of help to you as you take your next steps, please let us know!
 Contact us at 1-800-255-0431 • E-mail: service@dcpi.org • Website: www.dcpi.org.

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