



***ARE YOU CALLED
TO BE A CHURCH
PLANTER?***

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THE SUMMIT NETWORK



INTRODUCTION



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CALLED?

A calling to plant is a passionate and persistent desire to take the gospel to those who have never heard it, accompanied by appropriate spiritual gifts, recognized by mature church leadership.

If you're exploring the world of church planting, you've probably realized *calling* is a big deal. Because church planting is difficult, it's important to know that the God of the universe has called you to do it.

But calling can be a tricky business, can't it?

Maybe you know someone with a very dramatic calling story, like your buddy who was walking down the street when lightning struck and spelled out "Brooklyn" on the asphalt. If you have a story like that, praise God!



What about the rest of us? Is it possible to be called to church planting without having a “lightning strike” experience?

We at the Summit Network spend a lot of time helping men discern their calling. By no means is this resource the final word on the subject, but we do hope it will help as you prayerfully consider if God is calling you specifically to the role of lead church planter.

Stop and ask God to give you increasing clarity about how he wants you to leverage your life for his mission, and then read on.

The Summit Network Team

<http://thesummitnetwork.com>



PEOPLE ARE THE MISSION, NOT PLATFORMS

Position: Church Planter

Job requirements: High-capacity leader who can preach with wit, develop leaders, and build the church. Must be visionary risk taker who can lead a global movement of the gospel. Ability to maintain stylish beard preferred.

Benefits: Successful candidate can expect a burgeoning public platform and the opportunity to influence large numbers of people through both speaking and writing engagements. Financial compensation included.

No one ever sent me that job description ...

But after taking in countless blogs, I created it in my head. The challenge and risk got my blood pumping; the potential platform touched on my

pride. Preach at packed conferences, write books, wear flannel — what's not to like?

Now there's nothing wrong with those things, but they're not the foundation of local church ministry. My view of pastoring had more to do with our current cultural climate than it did with the Bible. I needed a reality check.

- My idea was fast-paced and exciting; the reality requires long laborious obedience.
- My idea was glamorous; the reality can be thankless.
- My idea was about charging the hill; the reality is about shepherding people.

It's easy to get discouraged when ministry doesn't match our expectations. But God reminds us the foundation of pastoral ministry isn't conferences or platforms; *it's people*.

“So I exhort the elders among you ... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising

oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock ... Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Peter 5:1a-3,5b ESV)

God called me (and maybe you) to shepherd his people—to love them, pray for them, and lead them. This has to be at the center of your call to church planting. You’ve got to have a burden to glorify God by reaching lost people and growing them up into Christ. Sometimes that includes exciting new initiatives and video-worthy breakthroughs. Other times that includes difficult phone calls and unmet expectations. But through it all we have the privilege of helping people make Jesus the center of their lives. There is no calling more meaningful than that. It may not come with lots of followers, but I can’t really grow a beard anyway.

Are you okay with this reality check?

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A PASSIONATE AND PERSISTENT DESIRE

***“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.”
(1 Timothy 3:1 ESV)***

It may seem self-evident, but a called man must be passionate about church planting; he must aspire to it. Planting must be something he dreams about during his commute, something that makes the hair on his neck stand up and his eyes get big. But there’s a difference between having an aspiration and being called. Think of it as the difference between striking a match and starting a bonfire.

Aspiration is like striking a match. A match will burn brightly for a few seconds and then go out. I’ve experienced it many times. I’ll get excited about something, but then the excitement fades away (New Year’s resolutions anyone?).

Calling, on the other hand, is like a bonfire. A match is essential for a bonfire because it produces the energy necessary to start a chain reaction with preassembled material. As the kindling and wood (or newspaper and lighter fluid) catch fire, they produce a powerful flame. Even in the face of strong winds, a well-built bonfire can burn for hours.

God will often call a man by using the match of a sermon or conference to light a pile of wood that's been assembled over a lifetime. The result is a passion and energy for church planting that isn't squelched by the winds of opposition.

“[A calling is not a] sudden impulse unattended by anxious consideration. It should be the outgrowth of our heart in its best moments, the object of our reverent aspirations, the subject of our most fervent prayers.” –Charles Spurgeon

Is church planting a bonfire for you or a match? Do you see threads of church planting throughout your life story?

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MISSIONAL URGENCY

***“I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation.”
(Romans 15:20 ESV)***

Paul’s great desire in life was to preach the gospel to people who had never heard it. He didn’t degrade the work of men like James who pastored in more reached cities like Jerusalem, but for his part Paul wanted to preach to unreached people in unreached cities. His desire led him to endure hardship and danger to accomplish his “ambition.”

The Summit Network believes men called to church planting will possess an ambition similar to Paul’s. A called man’s burden for the unreached will lead him to leverage his life to make Christ known.

So what does it mean practically to have a burden

for the unreached? Shouldn't all Christians care about lost people?

Absolutely, but called men possess a special concern for the unreached. When they read statistics about the unreached in major cities, it gets them fired up. When they spend time with non-Christians they have a great time, and when they see a new disciple made, they are overjoyed.

Please don't misunderstand. Church planters care deeply for ongoing discipleship, but their natural inclination is often toward evangelism and mission.

“Brethren, if the Lord gives you no zeal for souls, keep to the lapstone or the trowel, but avoid the pulpit as you value your heart’s peace and your future salvation.” –Charles Spurgeon

Does this chapter fire you up? Do you pour over city statistics and long to see revival in neighborhoods and college campuses around North America, to take the gospel to those who have never heard it?

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APPROPRIATE GIFTS

Understanding your gifts can help you understand your calling. Spiritual gifts can function like breadcrumbs you can follow to your calling.

Church planters must possess certain gifts and competencies, which are the qualifications of an elder listed in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5. These qualifications are required of any pastor of the church and thus are necessary for any church planter.

In addition, planters must possess a high level of competency in areas like leadership and preaching.

One of the best ways to discern your calling for church planting is to understand the gifts that God has given you. For example, I'm confident that I'm not called to be a worship pastor (and if you heard me sing you would be, too) because God hasn't

given me the necessary gifts. You might also take an honest look at the ministries you've led to see where you've seen fruit and where you haven't.

Your pastors are in the best position to recognize and affirm your gifts. Chances are they've seen you live and lead for years and have a more thorough understanding of your character and competencies than almost anyone else.

We place a high value on a man's church background and past ministry experience because it helps flesh out spiritual gifts and clarify if someone is called to plant.

Is your calling accompanied by appropriate spiritual gifts and recognized by mature church leadership?

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A CALLED MAN IS A BURDENED MAN

“This [calling] must be a thoughtful one. It must continue with us when tempting offers of wealth and comfort come into conflict with it, and remain as a calm, clear-headed resolve after everything has been estimated at its right figure, and the cost thoroughly counted.” –Charles Spurgeon

We talk to leaders all the time who have a God-honoring desire to make disciples. They long to see the gospel advance and for the Church to fulfill its mission on Earth. Thank God for these leaders.

However, a called man must have more than just a desire to make disciples. He affirms the importance of the established Church and is grateful for the work of seminary professors and para-church ministries, but none of these opportunities captivate him like making disciples through church planting.

If you're called, it won't be an easy thing to shake. You'll feel the burden — some days more than others — but your desire to make disciples through planting will persist through various seasons and continue to grow.

Does your burden for making disciples through church planting outweigh other worthy opportunities? Has the cost been *thoroughly counted*? Are you willing to walk away to pursue a calling as lead church planter?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Every follower of Jesus is called to make disciples, and certain men are called to do that by planting churches. Has this resource helped you work through what God is leading to give your life to?

The Summit Network is a partnership of churches that share one vision of planting 1000 churches in our generation. Through training, coaching, support, and funding, we aim to equip pastors to steward their gifts to plant healthy, thriving churches.

If you sense God is leading you to church planting, the Summit Network would love to connect further. Visit <http://thesummitnetwork.com> to learn about next steps.



#1000churches

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