

**Purpose:** To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

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## How Are You Wired? Initiator or Nurturer?

“Hi Mike,” I said, as my ministry friend met me at one of our favorite restaurants. My colleague, Jason, had been trying to connect us for more than a month. I initiated the breakfast meeting because I noticed a change in his demeanor recently. Each time we spoke briefly, I could tell: something was troubling him. It became clear: he either didn’t want to tell me, or he wasn’t sure himself. I could tell, this wasn’t going to be a short conversation.

Jason pursued him until he finally agreed to let me buy him breakfast. What transpired at the restaurant is a little known, but very important dynamic among Christians in your church. Yet, I’ve never heard anyone address this issue. You’ll find this very helpful. You likely will discover something about your own Christian life. But first, the back story about Mike.

### From Elder to Church Planter

A few years ago, Mike was an elder at a church I consulted in a mid-sized city in Indiana. The church has a unique “feel” among the churches in that area. It is the issue of what I call philosophy of ministry, or the personality of a church. The city makeup includes a majority of white-collar workers. Most of the churches reach that segment of the population and have a denominational feel. The church Mike attended reaches another segment: more blue-collar people. It is also an independent, charismatic church, a descendent of the Jesus Movement of the last century. This gave it a unique feel in that city.

Kent Hunter is a consultant to churches. “I enjoy being a friend and encourager to pastors and church leaders,” says Kent. Kent is an

entrepreneurial leader, an initiator. Through his profile, God has birthed several ministries, including SEND North America and Church Doctor Ministries. His upcoming book, written with Tracee Swank, is *Who Broke My Church? 7 Strategies that Change Everything in Churches*.

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- ▶ Forward it to staff and leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

One of my recommendations from the consultation was that this church multiply itself by planting a church with their unique personality in a nearby city. I knew that city well also. I have worked with several churches there. From my perspective, that city had many unchurched people who could be reached more effectively by a church that had a personality—a “feel”—like the one Mike attended.

Mike’s church rejected that recommendation, but through the concept, God planted a seed in Mike’s heart. (You never know how God will work!) Several years later, Mike left that church to plant a new church in the neighboring city. It began in a storefront, and God blessed it from the beginning. It became clear that Mike has an anointing by God to reach lost people. Many of those who came to his new church were from blue-collar backgrounds.

Mike’s church became one of the fastest growing congregations in the area. Soon they were out of room. They purchased a grocery store and renovated it. Today, the sanctuary is almost always full for worship, as is the parking lot. The ministry, by God’s grace, is making an impact in the community. They meet the needs of many people with a spiritual heart of generosity. They build ramps for those in wheelchairs, help replace roofs for the poor, and meet other needs. During the process, they build relationships, share Jesus, make disciples, and support mission efforts. So why does Mike seem so troubled?

## The Paul/Apollos Syndrome

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, there is wisdom every Christian should grasp but most have never considered. This is what both Mike and I discussed at breakfast.

“So, how’s it going, Mike?” I led with a general inquiry.

“It’s going well,” he said, with unusual lack of enthusiasm. I recognized this was not the Mike I know.

We talked for a while and God gave me one of those nudges that church consultants get as a gift from God. I pursued the general conversation, without revealing my thoughts. What Mike said next wasn’t the exact description of my “divine hunch,” but it was clear enough.

“You know...I thought that might be it,” I began. “You are a gifted church planter — a starter. Now you’ve grown this church, moved into a building with all the bells and whistles of an established church, and maybe you’re feeling a little let down...like, now what?”

## KEY RESOURCES

- Aulet, William. *Disciplined Entrepreneurship: 24 Steps to a Successful Startup*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
- Ellis, Tania. *The New Pioneers: Sustainable Business Success through Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley, 2010.
- Griffith, Jim, and William M. Easum. *Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008.
- Hunter, Kent R. *Gifted for Growth: An Implementation Guide for Mobilizing the Laity*. Corunna, IN: Church Doctor Ministries, 1985.
- Hunter, Kent R. *Your Church Has Personality: Find Your Focus—Maximize Your Mission*. Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1997.
- Johnson, Kevin D. *The Entrepreneur Mind: 100 Essential Beliefs, Characteristics and Habits of Elite Entrepreneurs*. Atlanta, GA: Johnson Media, 2013.
- Karr, Allan, and Linda Bergquist. *The Wholehearted Church Planter: Leadership from the Inside Out*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2013.

“Yeah, I think maybe,” he said.

I replied, “Mike, you know where Paul says, in the Bible, ‘I planted the seed, but Apollos watered the plant’?”

His face revealed an “aha” moment. We were now moving to a conversation most people in churches never consider: the two very different ways many Christians are wired.

## Initiator or Nurturer?

In the business world, they use words like “entrepreneurs” and “startups.” In the expansion of civilization, they use words like “explorers” and “pioneers.” Yet, these are not the whole story. There are, in business, “managers” and “mature businesses.” In the expansion of civilization there are also “settlers” and “mayors.” Similar roles are found among Christians.

By God’s design, every Christian has unique spiritual gifts. Some are initiator gifts: apostle, missionary, evangelist. Others are nurturing gifts: pastor, teacher, administrator, just to name a few.

## The Healthy Church

Churches become most productive when Christians connect their calling to serve with the spiritual gifts God has given to each of them. Further benefit comes from clarity of discerning whether you are predominantly an initiator or a nurturer.

If you are an initiator serving in a ministry area that is primarily nurturing, you are likely to become bored or frustrated. If you are a nurturer working in an area that is primarily initiating, you may become uncomfortable or stressed.

Some areas of ministry are clearly best served by initiators. Other areas are clearly better served by nurturers. Some areas of God’s work are served by groups comprised of both initiators and nurturers. For example, a balanced staff team or leadership group, such as a church council, would likely be more effective comprised of both initiators and nurturers — as long as everyone clearly knows who’s who!

In staff teams and leadership groups, tension between the two different roles is common. Yet it can be very productive. Obviously, a staff team or church leadership group comprised of nurturers may never launch new initiatives. Some churches are stalled because of this “play it safe” scenario. Likewise, a staff or leadership team consisting entirely of initiators could easily lead a congregation in a direction the people are not ready to travel. Some churches blow apart due to this scenario.

## KEY RESOURCES

Patrick, Darrin. *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Ries, Eric. *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2011.

Schaller, Lyle E. *44 Questions for Church Planters*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Stetzer, Ed, and Warren Bird. *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Thiel, Peter A., and Blake Masters. *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2014.

Wasserman, Noam. *The Founder's Dilemmas: Anticipating and Avoiding the Pitfalls That Can Sink a Startup*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

## The Multiplication Dynamic

So, what about Mike? As an initiator, Mike should never limit his strategy for ministry by placing his dominant profile — his “wiring” — to rise above his calling. His first business with the Lord is to ask, “Where is God calling?” Is it to move on and plant another church, or stay where he is and use his initiator profile in his present congregation?

If God is directing Mike to plant another church, his first strategy should be to pray for and look for (until God provides) a nurturer. Then he should disciple that nurturer in the philosophy of ministry of his church, equipping his disciple to oversee the church. If his disciple does not have the gift of evangelism or missionary, then a second staff person or team of active church members with these gifts should be equipped and in place before the transition. That way, the church continues to grow through the outreach focus Mike’s profile provided.

What if Mike senses God’s call is to stay? Then he should disciple or add a nurturer to administratively serve the church. These church leaders are often called “administrative pastors.” Once an administrative pastor is firmly in place, Mike can use his initiating profile to multiply ministries in *and* beyond his church: focus on developing missions at home and abroad that are connected to his church, and/or start a second location of the same church. This last strategy can lead to a network of churches that eventually operate as a movement.

So who are you, by God’s design? Initiator or nurturer? Remember, the Kingdom of God needs both!



## 10 WAYS TO HELP INITIATORS, NURTURERS, AND YOUR CHURCH

1. Make it a priority: help everyone discover, develop, and use their spiritual gifts.
2. Lead people to learn if they lean toward being an initiator or a nurturer.
3. Help Christians recognize that both types of people are important to the church.
4. Guide Christians into ministries that fit their roles as an initiator or as a nurturer.
5. Recognize that human beings are complex: some are both initiators and nurturers — even though it is rare.
6. Understand that some people are initiators for a season, and then God calls them to be nurturers, even though their spiritual gifts may not change.
7. Teach that sometimes Christians are not aware of their gifts because they have never experimented with them. As they try different ministries, they may learn new discoveries about their gifts. The same is true about their profile: initiator or nurturer.
8. Some areas of church life, such as a staff team or leadership group, are most productive with both initiators and nurturers — as long as they recognize and respect each other’s contributions.
9. Effectively transitioning a church led by a church planter requires the discipling of a nurturer and the development of those with the gifts of evangelism and missionary.
10. When an initiating church planter stays, an administrative pastor should be disciplined into place.

To schedule a phone appointment to discuss this topic further with Kent, call Jason Atkinson at 1-800-626-8515.

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