



# BALANCING LIFE WHILE PLANTING A NEW CHURCH

By Glenn Smith

One of the biggest challenges every church planter faces is maintaining a healthy balance while engaging in the demands of starting a new church. Unfortunately many church planters do not pay attention to their hearts or their lifestyle while planting. As a result, their families, their physical health, and even their spiritual health suffer unnecessarily.

I do not believe that God calls anyone to sacrifice their family or their personal health while starting a new church in the U.S. Let me remind us all of Paul's words to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, "*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.*"

As church planters we need to make sure we live and model a healthy lifestyle. This is not only important for us, but it is also important for the leaders around us as well as the disciples we're making. Let me offer 3 suggestions to help us as we engage in this demanding endeavor.

**First, keep "clutter" at a minimum.** I describe "clutter" as all the low-value, low-priority stuff that seems to fill our minds, our desks, our thoughts, and our lives. Over time, we tend to become consumed by non-essential stuff (clutter). We get overwhelmed and distracted by details and low-value activities.

When this happens we waste our time and talents on the "wrong" type of work. We get so "busy being busy" that we lose sight of what is most important to us in our ministry and our personal lives. As a result, our lives become complex, cloudy, confusing and stressful. We start to lose focus, miss opportunities, adopt bad habits, get in ruts, and then make excuses. Clutter and lack of clarity reduce our effectiveness, productivity, ministry effectiveness, and joy.

I want to encourage you to stop right now and do this: Identify at least 3 types of "clutter" or "messes" in your life right now. Make a commitment to yourself in the next 30 days to complete, eliminate or delegate the responsibility to someone else to rid yourself of this distraction and drain on your energy.

**Second, learn to differentiate between the "urgent" and the "important."** Steven Covey has helped us understand these two drivers in our lives. Much of the time church planters are driven by the "tyranny of the urgent." However, those things that are "urgent" are not always the most important things. Sometimes the clutter creates an unhealthy sense of urgency in our lives. Sometimes the expectations of others create that urgency. Still other times it is our own bad thinking patterns or personal disorganization that creates a sense of crisis.

Learn to say "no" to those things that are not important. Learn to delegate EVERYTHING you can! Look at everyday and make sure you address the important

things first. Most of us need a good coach to help us with this when we're in the middle of a demanding endeavor like church planting.

**Finally, always keep *margin* in your life.** Make sure you always keep room for those important relationships, for reflection, for creativity, and for the unexpected. In modern society most people live with little or no margin. Many church planters live this way and suffer greatly for it. If you struggle with this, I highly recommend Dr. Richard Swenson's book *Margin*.

Church planting is demanding but there is no reason why you should live a stressed out, burnt-out life. You need the resources of being fresh, spiritually vital, and relationally present. You need to be able to think clearly, strategically, and effectively. You will not be able to do this unless you maintain a healthy balance in your life.

Enlist a coach or a good friend to hold you accountable to yourself. Take a monthly one-day retreat to refocus and refuel. "Keep a close watch on yourself." Model the kind of lifestyle that Jesus taught us so that you can produce healthy leaders and disciples around you.