

Natural Church Development is a way of measuring the health or quality of a church. By using a carefully prepared questionnaire with 30 members of a church, the survey will determine the health of your church in 8 critical areas.

These Quality Characteristics are universally used in building healthy churches!

- Empowering Leadership
- Gift-oriented Ministry
- Passionate Spirituality
- Functional Structures
- Inspiring Worship Services
- Holistic Small Groups
- Need-oriented Evangelism
- Loving Relationships

The key in each of these Quality Characteristics is the **adjective**, which can be considered a summary of the six Biotic Principles (see below) as they apply to that characteristic: empowering, gift-oriented, passionate, functional, etc. Every church has some sort of leadership or worship or structure. Not all emphasize the adjectives at the front of each of these Quality Characteristics.

No Quality Characteristic Can Be Missing. Three things can be said with a high degree of certainty:

1. These are universally valid qualities
2. They can be transferred to our own situation
3. Each of these has a positive relationship with both the quality and the quantitative growth of the church

No one single factor leads to growth in churches; it is the interplay of the eight elements as they relate to the Biotic Principles.

The Minimum Factor



Imagine a barrel with eight staves, each representing the eight Quality Characteristics. The staves in the barrel represent the score of the 8 Quality Characteristics. With this analogy, you can only fill the barrel to the level of the lowest stave. So to increase the capacity of the barrel, we must increase the height of the lowest stave.

Now focussing on the Minimum Factor does not mean that we don't pay attention to the other seven areas. As stated before, all eight characteristics are vitally important to healthy growing churches. Focusing on the Minimum Factors helps us to set timely priorities. Since all eight areas can't be worked on with the same amount of energy and concentration, we need to find areas, which will yield the greatest long-range return on our investments. Remember, Minimum Factors can change quickly—especially when there is a conscious attempt to improve on this one area.

[Minimum Factor]

The “All-by-Itself-Principle”

The secret of growing churches does not consist in pushing or pulling the church in human strength and efforts—but in releasing and developing the potential God himself uses to build his church. Then growth occurs all by itself!

This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts, and grows; though he does not know how. *All by itself* the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, and then full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come. – Mark 4:26-29

The church is designed by God to grow, so growth happens automatically if we remove the obstacles that prevent growth. Growing churches use this growth principle.

Biotic Principles

The principles behind all the Quality Characteristics are the six Biotic Principles. The survey assesses each of the eight Quality Characteristic by measuring the degree to which each is lived out in a ‘biotic’ way. Any plans to improve your Minimum Factor **must** take into account these six Biotic Principles.

- *Interdependence* — Individual units are connected to each other in a larger system. Changes in one ministry will affect other ministries in the church and community. Synonym: Connecting
- *Multiplication* — Healthy organisms do not grow endlessly, but reproduce themselves. Synonym: Reproducing
- *Energy transformation* — Momentum or energy already flowing, whether positive or negative, can be redirected to accomplish God’s purposes. Synonym: Harnessing
- *Multi-usage* — Resources used should increase the capacity for on-going growth and development, as well as serve multiple purposes. Synonym: Sustaining
- *Symbiosis* — Different ministries can cultivate cooperative relationships so the mutual benefit is greater than operating separately. Synonym: Cooperating
- *Functionality* — Each ministry needs to produce discernible results in line with its intended purpose. Synonym: Evaluating

NCD Process

We have developed a change process which will help you address your Minimum Factor. The NCD Process will assist you in developing relevant goals and a plan to see the health of your church increase.

Step 1 – Prepare – Prepare your church to engage in the total NCD Process. Getting leadership buy-in, mobilizing intercessors and choosing a Church Health Team are all a part of this step.

Step 2 – Diagnose– Diagnose the health of your church. This step begins with taking the survey followed by an in-depth analysis of your Minimum Factor. It concludes with identifying 3-5 key issues to address.

Step 3 – Plan – Plan to address your Minimum Factor. In this step the Church Health Team will develop a strategic plan to address your 3-5 key issues identified in Step 2.

Step 4 – Implement– Implement the strategic plan developed in Step 3. Staying focused on carrying out the plan and overcoming obstacles along the way will be the task of the Church Health Team.

Step 5 – Evaluate – Evaluate the process you used and the results of your effort. Use the Biotic Principles to determine increased health in you Minimum Factor then plan to re-take the survey.