

## *Comparing Multiplication and Non-Multiplication Church Cultures*

There are no pure multiplication cultures in church life – every regional and denominational culture has aspects of both columns below. To the degree that the culture aligns more with the characteristics in the left column, we can say that there exists a “culture of multiplication” within that system. Here are **30 points of comparison**.

### Multiplication

1. Extremely **simple local church organization** and focus (often worship, small group and outreach).
2. **Minimum of centralized activity**. Groups lead, initiate new things.
3. **Trust of leaders** at every level; Sacraments are given to the people.
4. **No one seems harried** or rushed.
5. **Theology is indigenous** to the culture so that unattached laity can easily jump onboard.
6. There is a **high view of Bible** and it is used easily and freely in every type of gathering. Laity trusted.
7. Within the shared theological Context, **pastor’s major role** is to **teach Bible** in large venue worship times and to pastor the leaders.
8. **Pastors** are gifted as strong **communicators** and visionaries.
9. **Anyone can lead** a small group, and the group works well enough to nurture a dozen other folks. Groups regularly recognize when a group member is ready to be leading out on their own.
10. **To belong is to serve**. Everyone pitches in.

### Non-Multiplication

1. **Lots of committees** and complicated decision making. Church involved in major issues and projects beyond the minimum core of focus.
2. **Most ministry is staff-led** or planned by a central committee.
3. High value for uniformity, **managing down** and central control.
4. **Staff are over-worked** and exhausted, at capacity.
5. **Theology: a priestly task** with seminary education required for any perceived competency.
6. The **Bible is problematic** and tricky. Most are illiterate – with many hostile, others protective.
7. **Pastor**: CEO, theologian in residence, shepherd for as many people as s/he can manage. **Doing too much**.
8. **Pastors** responsible for a wide array of concerns. They may be **weak in the most critical areas**.
9. **Training is required**. Possibly uniform curriculum. Anxiety about theology being propagated in the group. Few are deemed trustworthy to lead.
10. Church is service that **we pay others to do for us**.

## Multiplication

11. Pastors come together to lead. Prayer/deliberation lead to consensus. **No one ever votes.**
12. Church may often choose to avoid position statements on sticky issues, leave it to conscience of diverse membership. Pastors will still teach a position, but **social statements are downplayed.**
13. No creed, no membership.
14. Theological agreement on a short list of principles by pastors and staff, but a **very simple process of pastoral certification.**
15. Plain, functional (often leased) meeting space. Not expensive.
16. **Evangelization** is about **finding the next leaders**, the people who have the gifts and or passion. It is **everyone's concern.**
17. They pray about everything. **Prayer is the main strategy.** Prayer is central.
18. Widespread consensus on the relationship between the gospel and God's plan for human beings. **Common, simple theological language and framework.**
19. Sometimes a franchise framework for like groups who wish to hop on board the network.
20. Sweet spot between **grace** and order. A lot of leaders fit here because there is grace to give them a chance here (without seminary, after divorce, after jail, etc.).
21. Small groups can feel like a marriage improvement cult. Groups will definitely form around **the agendas of average people.**
22. You pastor those entrusted to you, be it a group or a group of leaders. Very **rare meetings** for administration or fellowship.

## Non-Multiplication

11. **Democratic** process surrounds many decisions at multiple levels of church.
12. **Social principles.** Denomination position papers, politically charged environment.
13. Confirmation, learning information, affirming creed.
14. Cumbersome, **lengthy process of theological formation** with prospective pastors.
15. Elaborate facilities. High overhead costs.
16. **Evangelization** is about **finding paying customers.** Management's problem.
17. **Prayer is perfunctory**, often a ritual performed only by a "professional."
18. **Soteriological confusion.** Disconnect about what difference the gospel makes for the world.
19. Distrust of anything our management team did not initiate.
20. Though we may pride ourselves on grace, there is a culture of **works and control** operative on many levels. Snob factor.
21. Small groups are not given freedom to become marriage cults (or other kinds of special interest groups). **Staff picks the agenda.**
22. **Lots of leader meetings.**

## Multiplication

23. Church on “the cheap.” The value of “**Good Enough.**”
24. **Innovation** at the local level. Pastor held accountable for fruit.
25. **Pastors have no tenure.** They hold each other accountable. They are terminated from within their ranks.
26. New initiatives originate **locally** – churches plant churches.
27. Everybody, every group every church is expected to reproduce. **Multiplication** at all levels.
28. **All shapes and sizes of church affirmed**, the simpler the better.
29. **Reproduction is rapid** and possible within weeks or months.
30. Church health rooted in spiritual depth and outward focus.

## Non-Multiplication

23. Expensive church. The value of “**Excellence in all things.**”
24. **Uniformity** anxiety by the area management. Conference-wide initiatives mandated for all.
25. **Strong clergy union** with no easy exit strategy when effectiveness ceases.
26. Planting is **centralized.**
27. **We add** new members, classes, and churches, one by one.
28. **Churches should be big enough** to have “critical mass” and pay full-time pastor plus denominational dues.
29. **Reproduction takes years.**
30. Church health measured in people in pews and dollars in plates.

As you work to cultivate a culture of multiplication, discuss these indicators with key leaders. You may identify additional points of contrast that reflect your congregational or conference culture. These discussions may offer ideas for strategic planning that address specific concerns.