



The Institute for
**Natural Church
Development**

has completed:

- **12 years of research** in
- **70 countries** including
- **56,500 churches** with over
- **1,500,000 participants** providing more than
- **136,000,000 answers** about their churches

*Inside are three helpful
suggestions from what
we have learned:*

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Helping Churches improve their Health!

ChurchSmart
RESOURCES
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**In the
next
twelve
months
will your
church:**

- **STOP GROWING?**
- **PROCEED WITH CAUTION?**
- **START SOMETHING NEW?**

**Natural Church Development
offers three suggestions:**



ASSESS THE HEALTH OF YOUR CHURCH SO YOU HAVE THE FACTS!

Most pastors and church leaders want to lead their churches to be healthy and vibrant and impact their community but often they do not know where to begin. Ministry presents many challenges and opportunities so how does a leader make the best choice to advance the health of their church?

Many leaders rely on their intuition. They believe they have a *sense* of how well their church is doing. They often arrive at this conclusion by listening to the comments they receive after each worship service when people depart the church, shake hands with the pastor at the door and offer words of praise about the music, the sermon or the overall worship experience that day. However, this can lead to faulty conclusions about the health of the church because people try to be *nice* at those moments but they are not always *truthful* about how they really feel about the church.

The NCD Research has identified eight measurable quality characteristics that are essential for the health of every church. These are principles that hold true regardless of denomination, country, culture or worship style.

The eight quality characteristics are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Empowering leadership | 5. Inspiring worship service |
| 2. Gift-based ministry | 6. Holistic small groups |
| 3. Passionate spirituality | 7. Need-oriented evangelism |
| 4. Effective structures | 8. Loving relationships |

The NCD Survey was developed to help churches measure the strength or weakness of each of these qualities in the life of the church. We call the most developed quality the *maximum factor* and the least developed quality the *minimum factor*.

Our research shows that when given this limited list of eight qualities, over 70% of pastors cannot identify their church's minimum factor correctly! That means most leaders only have a 30% chance of being right and a 70% chance of being wrong on what the church should focus its attention on to improve its health.

However, a church could achieve nearly 100% accuracy in identifying their strengths and weaknesses by completing 30 anonymous, objective, statistically reliable surveys designed to assess the health of the church.

The NCD Survey identifies the church's strengths and weaknesses and points to those areas that need attention. Resource tools are available to help churches take corrective action and over 6,000 NCD Coaches in more than 60 denominations have been trained to help churches walk through this process in the USA.

- ▶ **Is it time for your church to assess its health and complete an NCD Survey?** The cost is just \$175.00 for a church health assessment and the information provided could help your leaders make better informed decisions in the year ahead.



IMPROVE THE QUALITY CHARACTERISTIC IDENTIFIED AS YOUR *MINIMUM FACTOR*!

Our research has shown that the minimum factor is an obstacle that stands in the way of the church improving its health. However, when the minimum factor is intentionally addressed and improved it increases the overall health in the church.

Some of you are probably thinking, "But why should we focus on our weakness? I think I read somewhere that a church should focus on its strengths."

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*"When (one) is weak (acknowledges his minimum factor)
 he can draw upon God's strength and God's grace."*

NCD helps a church do both. We also identify the *maximum factor* of the church and encourage the church to leverage that strength to address the minimum factor. Let me share two reasons why I believe this *minimum factor strategy* has proven to be so effective in helping churches improve their health:

A. It's a biblical concept: In II Corinthians 12:7-10 the apostle Paul shares that he has been given "a thorn in the flesh" — something that has impeded his ministry and made life more difficult. In NCD language he identified his minimum factor. So what was God's solution? **Verse 9 says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore, Paul concludes in verse 10 that when he is weak (acknowledges his minimum factor) he can draw upon God's strength and God's grace (his maximum factor). Our minimum factors drive us to our knees and cause us to seek the heart of God in every situation. That is the spiritual power behind this principle.

B. It has practical application: If you had a severe pain in your stomach (minimum factor) and went to a doctor to have it diagnosed they would probably run a number of tests to assess what was going on inside your body. They would discover many things about you: your temperature, your blood pressure, your weight, your cholesterol level and how various organs were functioning such as your heart, lungs, kidneys, or liver.

If the doctor came back to you and said, "I know your stomach is bothering you but we discovered you have a very strong heart so we think you should focus on that," how would you respond? Would you simply accept this diagnosis and focus on your strength? I think it is more likely that you would insist that something — anything — be done to relieve the severe pain in your stomach. **You can't ignore a minimum factor. It might be something that could kill you if left untreated!**

- ▶ **Natural Church Development** is designed to assist you in addressing your church's minimum factor by drawing upon the resources God has made available. Don't let another year go by without addressing your minimum factor.



FIND A GOOD *COACH* TO WALK WITH YOU ON THIS JOURNEY TO HEALTH!

Every study we have done shows that church leaders will do a better job leading their church to health if they have a coach who comes alongside to encourage them, ask questions, offer resources and hold them accountable.

Many of you reading this have advanced degrees such as an MDiv or DMin and are confident you could implement this process on your own. The truth is, you could! But you'll be even better with a coach. When Michael Jordan played on the Chicago Bulls years ago he was the best offensive and defensive player on the team. He won many individual awards and everyone would agree he knew how to play basketball with excellence. However, he played for six years without winning a championship. It wasn't until he got the right coach and trusted his teammates that he won an NBA Championship, and then he went on to win five more!

We want to see more church leaders experience championship ministry.

Whether peer-to-peer coaching, triads with other churches in your community or denomination or contracting with a coach-for-hire . . . you will benefit from the experience by having a sounding board, objective eyes and ears and a different perspective from the pressures that surround you on a daily basis.

We have seen that church leaders who work with a coach experience positive results that are twice as good as those who go-it-alone in improving the health of their church. Also, churches that have completed three or more surveys have experienced an 85% success rate in improving their church health worldwide.

If you are dissatisfied with the status quo in your church, take a risk!

I invite you to come join this amazing NCD Movement that has helped thousands of churches around the world. To investigate the NCD Process more thoroughly here are several ways to begin your journey to health:

- ▶ a. **Visit www.ncd-international.org** and learn all about this international movement.
- ▶ b. **Visit www.churchsmart.com** and review the NCD Resources and Training events that are available from ChurchSmart Resources — the USA Partner.
- ▶ c. **Purchase the book: *Color Your World with Natural Church Development*** by Christian Schwarz and read about these principles in depth. This book is four-color throughout and generally retails for \$20.00. **You can now order one copy at a special introductory price on the ChurchSmart website/homepage for just \$10.00 plus \$3.00 shipping. Or, call us toll-free at: 1-800-253-4276 to order the book or ask for more information about how your church can take its first step toward health!**