

# What Does It Mean To Be An A29 International Planter?

**Important Note:** Acts 29 is a training network and not a funding organization. We believe that we are equals in a network for mutual mentoring and training and sharing of ideas and strategy, and we do not desire to create a dependency that has hindered the empowerment of non-western churches for years. As a network of churches however, our churches give regularly to church planting (Both Domestic and International), and are free to direct their money where they see fit. Acts 29 does not direct their money. Therefore, the strength of the network is the relationships that are built in order to foster church planting, which is one of the benefits of full membership with A29. This membership though is a process of relationship that we walk together for a time to determine the character, theology and philosophy of the planters whether they are in the US or outside of the US. Going to a CPF or filling out an application does not guarantee Acts 29 membership, it is the beginning of an assessment process that we are doing with one another (See Next Section).

## How Can I Become An Acts 29i Member?

First, Acts 29 is willing to work with all kinds of ministries and groups of people, but we are particularly interested in training and mentoring church planters who are already leading a movement of men that are planting churches, or at least demonstrate the vision and the capacity to lead such a movement.

Second, you need to enter our assessment process that could take up to 2 years to complete. This is imperative to make sure we are all on the same theological, philosophical and ecclesiological page. Acts 29 is not interested in methodology, and we encourage different cultures to express their gatherings in culturally contextualized methodologies, but we are concerned about biblically, gospel-centered churches (See **The Rings of Relationships** and **Non-Negotiables** below).

Lastly, our process. **Note:** going through the assessment never guarantees financial aid, or membership into Acts 29.

1. Contact Acts 29i via Internet, or other shared relationships
2. Attend a CPF (Church Planting Foundations Conference)<sup>1</sup>
3. Fill out an application (Have your wife, if married, and a reference fill out their part)
4. Go through the interview (Wife present if possible)
5. Answer further questions and do other projects and training as your mentor/coach sees fit
6. Become a member when you and your coach feel that you are on the same page theologically, philosophically, etc.

## Who Can Plant Acts 29i Churches?

While Acts 29 International desires to train up qualified, indigenous men for the ministry, we realize that in many places cross-cultural ministry will be needed, and we do support the idea of cross culturally minded men going to another country for the sake of planting Gospel-Centered churches. We suggest that Americans desiring to plant cross-culturally go through one of our domestic “Boot Camps” and assessment first.

## Can A Non-Indigenous Person Plant A Church Overseas?

Yes! (See Above)

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<sup>1</sup> **What are the cost of the CPF's?** This is relative to the location and the host pastor(s) of the CPF. Acts 29 **DOES NOT** aid with your conference expenses!

## **Can A Planter Be Part of Acts 29i And Another Organization?**

Yes. Acts 29i is a network and not a sending/mission agency. Our goal is to help facilitate healthy, biblical church plants, and are not interested in taking the credit for the particular plant, so we work with many different denominations and church planting agencies

## **Does Acts 29 International Send Relief Money?**

No. Acts 29 International is not a funding organization, and even though we are aware of many good ministries that provide relief, there is no central funding agency that can accommodate the many requests we receive monthly. This does not prevent our many churches from helping those that have become members of Acts 29, but that will always be up to the individual elders of each church plant, and through relationships built.

## **What Are the Benefits of Being A Part of Acts 29 International?**

1. Acts 29 has created a very strong **Assessment Process**, which is very important to fostering healthy churches. 80% of church plants fail, but 85% of church planters who are assessed and coached find success in their planting experience.
2. Acts 29 has developed a solid **Coaching Structure** for ongoing mentoring, and to help planters create vision and make healthy decisions for their churches.
3. Acts 29 provides **Proven Training** in order to ensure well-trained men to pastor churches.
4. Acts 29 also provides **Strategic Thinking** to help planters work more efficiently.
5. Acts 29 has an incredible **Peer-Peer Network**, which allows the planter to talk to real planters and discuss strategies, and issues of church planting that affect all churches.
6. Acts 29 has been able to **Facilitate** church planting, **Not Control** it. A29 provides theological and philosophical foundations to plant healthy, gospel-centered churches, but does not advocate for a particular pragmatic methodology.

## **What Kind of Churches Does Acts 29 International Plant?**

Acts 29 International plants missional, gospel-centered churches that continue to plant more churches and produces disciples for the mission of God in the world. There are no specific methods that Acts 29 endorses, but we are based on clear pastoral/elder qualifications and theological foundations (See **Non-Negotiables**). Subsequently, we believe that every cultural context determines the proper missional methodology to preach the gospel in their context. So we commit to one another doctrinally, but not methodologically. A29i works with many different denominations and non-denominations.

## **Can Someone Be in Relationship w/A29i Without Being a Member?**

Yes! See Below

## **The Rings of Relationships**

A29i is committed to the reforming and planting of Gospel Centered, Missional Churches. Our commitment is expressed through three rings of relationships:

### **1. Gospel Partnerships (Outer Ring)**

- COMMONALITIES: Theology (Gospel Centered) and Mission (Making Disciples/Church Planting)
- ASSESSMENT: Relational
- COMMITMENT: networking, encouragement, occasional conferences and training

## 2. Candidate Phase (Middle Ring)

- COMMONALITIES: Theology, Mission and Ecclesiology (Plurality of Male Elders)
- ASSESSMENT: CPF, Application, DISC Test, Interview. This phase is a continuation of the assessment to make sure we are all on the same page with one another.
- COMMITMENT: coaching, mentoring, and sharing tools and training

## 3. Acts 29 Full Member (Inner Ring)

- COMMONALITIES: Committed to the theology (Doctrinal Statement), philosophy and ecclesiology of Acts 29, as well as being committed to creating churches that plant churches with properly assessed and qualified male elders.
- ASSESSMENT: CPF, Application, DISC Test, Interview, Candidate Phase w/Mentor/Coach
- COMMITMENT: Given a place on the Acts 29 Forum (The City), and the opportunity to network with other planters for ongoing coaching, peer to peer dialogue and resourcing opportunities, as well as ongoing training. Acts 29 does ask its members to be committed to church planting and using their resources for that end.

## What Are the Non-Negotiables for A29i Involvement

### Gospel Message/Theological

1. Reformed Soteriology (must agree with Acts 29 Doctrinal Statement)
2. Christ/Gospel-Centered Preaching, Teaching and Living in all our Equipping (The Gospel is the Power of God – God’s work to save us – Eph. 2:8-9)
3. Free from a psychologizing, moralizing and the prosperity gospel.
4. Plurality of leaders (Elders/Pastors).
5. Complimentarian Understanding of gender roles.
6. Gospel Driven Mission in all of life and ministry (The Gospel Power is for the Purposes of God – Saved for God’s Work and Purposes – Eph 2:10).

### Character

The following are the characteristics of an elder, which is a church planter and therefore the characteristics of an Acts 29 church planter (**Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:17-37**).

*Elder* is another term for *pastor, bishop, overseer or shepherd*. Elders are men above reproach or blameless. These are not sinless men—sinless men do not exist. The elders who would lead the churches had to be men without any outward character flaw. It is a person who others in the church have no obvious reason to accuse him of disqualifying sin. He would have internal evidence against himself because he knows his inclinations toward evil and sin. His lifestyle would need to be exemplary and above Reproach (**Titus 1:6, 7; 1 Tim 3:2**). This is the overarching, summarizing characteristic. You will find a similar (but not identical) list in First Timothy. Being above reproach is the first requirement in both lists and Titus repeats it. The other items on the list explain what above reproach means. If we peruse the two lists, as well as First Peter, we find 17 qualities of an elder who is above reproach.

### 1. Husband devoted to one wife (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2) one-woman man.

This is a major qualification in light of the marriage picturing Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22 ff.). The pastors in the church lead by example. They exhibit Christ’s love for His church—His bride by their love, devotedness and exclusive faithfulness to their wife. This does not disqualify a single man from being an elder...Jesus was single and Paul was single but it is the exception. Here is the rule: do not look and do not touch unless she is your wife—then look and touch often!

### 2. Children in submission (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5) not perfect.

Equally important is the pastor leading his family. 1 Timothy 3:5 explains that **if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church**. The first flock for a pastor is his own family as Pastor Dad. If this flock is not in order, the larger flock will suffer. Paul instructs **fathers not to provoke [their] children to anger, but [to] bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord** (Eph. 6:4).

### **3. Faithful Steward (Titus 1:7)**

Here the term used is overseer (Greek: episkopos). It is not another office, but a functional title of the elder. It is what he does. He is a steward, a manager of God's resources and Jesus' flock. He takes responsibility, but not ownership.

### **4. Humble - not arrogant (Titus 1:7)**

A pastor must constantly demonstrate the gospel by admitting wrong and assuming responsibility and restoring relationships. Arrogance is only concerned with oneself.

### **5. Gentle - not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)**

No man will be of any use in the kingdom that is quick-tempered and lashes out at others. The difference between how Jesus demonstrated anger is that He was angry at the abuse of others and the dishonoring of God. We get angry at how it affects us.

### **6. Moderate - not a drunkard (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)**

This is not just overindulgence in alcohol but is idiomatic for any behavior that fuels addictive responses.

### **7. Peaceful - not violent (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)**

A pastor is prone to inflict violence through his words. He is to be a peacemaker.

### **8. Financial Integrity - not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3; 1 Peter 5:3)**

A pastor is to be upright in his financial dealings and not accused of pursuing money over the kingdom of God.

### **9. Hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2)**

A pastor's home is to be open for others to enjoy. This is a difficult qualification as a pastor's life is stressful enough not to have his home as his one refuge

### **10. Lover of Good (Titus 1:8)**

A pastor genuinely loves what is good. He does not just think he should love it.

### **11. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2)**

Self-control is a characterization of every area of a pastor's life. He is disciplined in his diet, time, mouth, exercise, relationships, sex, and money. He is consistently training in righteousness to be able to run the race set before him.

### **12. Upright (Titus 1:8)**

He is upright in his relationships and in how he treats others.

### **13. Holy (Titus 1:8)**

The opposite is *unholy* and that is not helpful when counseling others –Unholy Reverend. It is a life devoted wholeheartedly to Jesus externally and internally.

### **14. Able to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2)**

All of the other qualifications are character qualities. This is the only ability-based requirement. He is to be able to teach sound doctrine, not just be able to communicate in an excellent manner. His teaching can be to one or two, to twenty, to a hundred or to a thousand. Most of the churches in Crete were house churches. The elders were to defend the faith once delivered to the saints against the numerous false teachers that arose.

### **15. Spiritually Mature (1 Tim 3:6)**

Positions of authority without spiritual maturity lead to the trap of pride. When pride grows in a man sin abounds. 1 Timothy 3:6 says, **“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. A pastor must first be a convert.”**

## **16. Respectable (1 Tim 3:7)**

1 Timothy 3:7 says that **an elder must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.** That does not mean that all will like him or even appreciate him. It means that there is no criminal, moral or ethical offense against him.

## **17. Example to the Flock (1 Peter 5:3)**

We need models in our life to emulate. Elders are examples of Biblical expressions such as sexuality, time management, marriage, parenting, worship, relationships and any other way. A pastor should be someone your sons could pattern their life after and the kind of man your daughter should marry.

**The characterizations of an elder could be divided as follows:**

### **1. Relation to God**

- A man — masculine leader, not a female
- Above reproach — without any unconfessed, ongoing character defects
- Able to teach — knows the word and can use it to defend the truth and teach others
- Not a new convert — mature Christian

### **2. Relation to Family**

- Husband of one wife — one-woman man, sexually pure whether they are single or married
- Has obedient children — children that respect their parents and beliefs
- Manages family well — provides for, leads, organizes, loves

### **3. Relation to Self**

- Temperate — mentally and emotionally stable
- Self-controlled — disciplined life of sound decision-making
- Not given to drunkenness — without addictions
- Not a lover of money — financially content and upright

### **4. Relation to Others**

- Respectable — worth following and imitating
- Hospitable — welcomes strangers, especially non-Christians for evangelism
- Not violent — even-tempered
- Gentle — kind, gracious, loving
- Not contentious — peaceable, not quarrelsome/divisive
- Good reputation with outsiders — respected by non-Christians
- Exemplary lifestyle

## **Lifestyle of an Elder**

The elders in a church set the precedent for what faithful pastoral leadership is in that church. Therefore, elders must not only have character, which qualifies him to lead God's people, but also the competency to accomplish the duties Jesus his Senior Pastor has assigned him. The duties of the elders are many according to Scripture. Elders, deacons, and members share the load.

- Prayer and Scripture study (Acts 6:4)
- Ruling/leading the church (1 Timothy 5:17)
- Managing the church (1 Timothy 3:4–5)
- Caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5:2–5)
- Giving account to God for the church (Hebrews 13:17)
- Living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7)
- Rightly using the authority God has given them (Acts 20:28)
- Teaching the Bible correctly (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2)
- Preaching (1 Timothy 5:17)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:13–15)

- Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- Working hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12)
- Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5:1–3)
- Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17–31)
- Disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18:15–17)

If there any other questions, please feel to contact [info@acts29network.org](mailto:info@acts29network.org)