

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

3 Reasons Why Your Church Isn't Producing Spiritual Growth

Episode 102

Manage the Tension Between Growing Your Church & Growing People

Church growth vs. spiritual growth. Churches often operate like the two are mutually exclusive. The truth is, Jesus charged us both with reaching new people and helping them learn to be more like Him. We find unstuck churches are effective on both sides of the equation.

In this episode, Tony and Amy share three reasons why churches are struggling to help people grow spiritually, and some practical next steps you can take as a leader to turn things around:

1) They offer a bunch of programs instead of a simple path.

- Most churches are still trying to program spiritual growth rather than offering a path.
- All of those ministries and programs compete with each other: People don't know how to prioritize the steps they should take.
- We're seeing effective churches prioritize their discipleship pathway over membership.
- Best practice for moving from programs to a path:
 - Designate one leader and one team to lead all the steps in the pathway beyond the weekend services.
 - Everyone pulling together creates movement in the desired direction.

Remember, the win is movement. Non-linear thinkers may jump around, especially if they have been around churches for some time. New people, especially if they're new to church and new to faith, though, need a clear path with clear next steps.

2) They are too focused on keeping people busy.

- Not only do they not have a defined spiritual formation path, most churches are too focused on keeping people busy.
- Keeping people busy doesn't help them become more like Jesus.

- Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson wrote in their book, [Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth](#):

“Unfortunately, churches often make things harder still by obscuring the goal—to become more like Christ—with a complicated assortment of activities. For instance, encouraging people to:

Attend teaching and worship services every week. Meet frequently with small community and Bible study groups (often requiring follow-up communications and homework). Serve the church a couple times a month. Serve those who are under-resourced on a regular basis. Invite friends, coworkers, and family to church, special events, support groups, etc.

When the church incessantly promotes all the things people should do, it’s very easy for them to lose sight of the real goal—which is who they should become.”

If we’re not careful, we might find ourselves repeating the same mistakes the Pharisees made by creating our own burdens and expectations for people to follow in order to be a good Christian. Jesus never said, “My yoke is really difficult and my burden is heavy,” but sometimes our ministry calendars and expectations imply that.

3) *The church has become the spiritual journey.*

- Relationship with Christ is about surrendering our life to Jesus, not the church.
- Spiritual formation happens in our journey through life; not in our engagement with the church. The Holy Spirit convicts, directs and molds, not our programming.
- If we’re not careful, we can mislead people to think spiritual maturity is the church’s responsibility, when it’s not. We can create environments for people to begin to experience and engage in a personal, spiritual journey. At the same time, though, we need to encourage them to become spiritually hungry and begin to take the initiative when it comes to their own faith journey.

Next Steps

- Read Move by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson.
- Listen to [Episode 97](#) of The Unstuck Church Podcast on moving from programs to a path.
- Listen to [Episode 23](#) of The Unstuck Church Podcast on pruning.
- **Need more help engaging this conversation with your team?** [Let’s talk.](#)
We’re helping churches take these steps every week.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode102.