LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Sermon Series Planning Episode 105

Learn a Process That Reduces Frustration & Helps You Become More Effective

It's one of the big responsibilities every pastor has—the planning process for message series. Few pastors tell us they have a *great* process. Often, there's either no plan at all, or the plan only goes a few months out. While that might work for the lead pastor's writing rhythm, it rarely serves the rest of the team well. In this episode, Tony and Amy talk best practices for taking the frustration out of sermon series planning for both you and your team.

Best Practices for Sermon Series Planning

- **Schedule a time to make a plan.** Take 2-3 days to get away from the grind. Choose a location that inspires you.
- **Prepare for that retreat in advance.** Pull together a listening session with some of your key leaders in different parts of the ministry to hear their ideas. Pull together samples of what other churches are doing. Invite a few people to join you for the first part of your retreat.
- **Keep your mission field in mind.** Who are the people within your mission field who you are trying to reach? What are the questions they're asking about God and life? Pray through those topics before you start developing your series road map.
- **Pencil in a 12-month roadmap.** Keep it high-level.
    - Identify what types of series you want to do in the next year. NOTE: Series that run in spurts of about 3-6 weeks are most effective. Each new series gives your church an opportunity and a reminder to invite people to the next series.
    - Pencil in a potential order. For example, you might want to do a series about parenting in the fall when school starts, followed by a vision series, followed by book study on James, and then a series leading into Christmas with an easy invite.
    - Next, step back to look at the 12 months big picture. Do you like the flow? Once that is settled, take each series and see if you can break out potential message topics for each week—nothing set in stone.
- **Have trusted colleagues review the roadmap.** Let someone who wasn't in the weeds with you give feedback.

- **Identify your A, B and C series.** All of the series need to be *great*, but you may invest more in some than in others.
    - A - Marketing and investment
    - B - Aligned with core discipleship /ministry initiatives
    - C - Everything else

That last point is critical. You don't want to fall in the trap of trying to make each series and each service bigger than the last. When every Sunday is "the best Sunday ever," every Sunday becomes normal. Your encouragement to invite friends and family will become noise that people will tune out. It's good to create some rhythm and breathing space between outreach-oriented series.

Benefits of This Process

- **It creates alignment.** Each ministry can better integrate in a strategic way with the weekend teaching.
- **It optimizes creativity.** You release other leaders to support and optimize what can be done to enhance the teaching.
- **It still allows for flexibility.** Have a monthly meeting to review the upcoming 3 months, and to confirm the following 3 months. This can serve as the place to pitch creative ideas and for the lead pastor to share updates from his heart related to the upcoming series.

Next Steps

- Listen to **Episode 64 - Why Your Worship Leader Should Lead the Creative Team**.
- Read **4 Questions for Better Sermon Series Planning** and download the free guide.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at **theunstuckgroup.com/episode105**.