

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Increasing Church Engagement

Episode 106

How to Define Engagement & Know When You're Hitting the Mark

Engagement—It's the buzzword we hear church leaders discussing across the country. What does it really mean and how do you know if you're hitting the mark? Truth be told, we find many pastors are confused about engagement. How do we increase it? Why do people show up, come back, plug in or leave? Recently, Tony, Amy and Sean hosted a live webinar for church leaders on the topic of engagement. In this episode, we're sharing that conversation with you.

2 Types of Engagement Every Church Should Monitor

- **Engaging first-time guests.**
 - Engagement begins before someone is a first-time guest. What's your pre-guest strategy? (Think *intentional relationships + content marketing / shareable social media*).
 - Churches tend to think they have a back-door problem when they have a front-door problem. To grow, your number of first-time guests in a year needs to be at least equal to your average attendance.
- **Movement on your discipleship path.**
 - Movement on your discipleship path is the real win, not just attendance.
 - Try to engage people in relationships as they take next steps, with small groups, Bible Studies, or through serving opportunities. Our data shows that when this happens, churches are healthier and they ended up reaching more people for Jesus (there's also a correlation with attendance growth as well).
 - Rather than trying to measure engagement in groups and serving on a weekly basis (like you do with attendance), measure it quarterly. It's more difficult to measure true engagement here vs. just sign-ups, and looking at trends over time will give you more insight than weekly snapshots can provide.

What the Data Tells Us

- 74% of growing churches had increases in first-time guests compared to only 23% of declining churches.
- The average person attends services more frequently in declining churches—2.5 weeks vs
- 2.3 weeks per month.

- If your church is growing but your volunteer engagement looks low, don't be discouraged. Healthy, growing churches see 40-50% of their attendees serve. If that number gets too high, it can be an indication you aren't reaching many new people. Growing churches have a strong number of new guests. What do new people not do? Serve, give and join groups.
- Our data showed small group participation increased in 74% of growing churches and only 33% of declining churches.
- A best practice for increasing small group participation: Launch new groups. It's easier to launch new groups than it is to add new people to existing groups. Offer on-ramps in the fall and after the holidays. Design group curriculum around what you are teaching on Sundays. Check out the books by Chris Surratt on small group engagement.

The Role of Digital Engagement

- Your digital media are the new "front door;" people check you out online before they ever visit your church.
- You need a content marketing strategy. How are you attracting people to your ministries through relevant, helpful content and adding value in every stage of their spiritual journey? This is an area of engagement where your efforts are particularly measurable.
- There are lots of ways to approach it: blogging, vlogging, podcasting, social media, etc.. Commit to building a strategy and trying something.

How to Know You're Winning

- Make sure that you're tracking *both* types of engagement: what happens *before* someone becomes a guest (increases in content engagement and more first-time guests) **and** the steps they take in discipleship *after* they attend for the first time (taking steps on your discipleship path through group participation and volunteer engagement).
- It's not possible for the church to sustain health if you don't have an intentional strategy and track both types of engagement.

Next Steps

- Download our full [Church Engagement Report 2019](#). It's free.
- Subscribe to [The Unstuck Church Report](#). New editions come out quarterly. (Also free!)
- Listen to Tony's interview with Jeff Brodie, [Increasing First Time Guests - Episode 97](#).
- Could you use a guide through the process of increasing engagement? [Let's talk](#).

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode106.