

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Over-Programmed Church

Episode 85

Busy Church People Aren't Necessarily Becoming Disciples

Almost every week, we talk with churches about how they can become more effective helping people take spiritual next steps. It seems to be a struggle for many pastors and leaders. What we see most often is that churches' discipleship strategies have been focused on keeping people busy—which doesn't work and isn't really the goal. How have we gotten so off track?

The Data

- 500,000 people and thousands of churches have participated in the Reveal survey, which gives us a picture of how people take steps with Christ.
- The results revealed that more involvement in programs doesn't equal becoming more Christ-like. Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson wrote about their findings in the book [*Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*](#):

"Unfortunately, churches often make things harder by obscuring the goal—to become more like Christ—with a complicated assortment of activities... 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."

The research confirms our experience working with churches: Program-based churches often have no intentional discipleship strategy.

A Program-Based Ministry Strategy Creates Challenges...

- Competition between ministries for people's time and attention.
- A consumer mindset, where the church promotes programs and events for people to attend rather than equipping people to do God's work.
- Complexity for churches as they continue to add programs and events.
- When there are too many options people, especially those newer to the church, get overwhelmed and are unclear on their next step.
- A shortage of volunteers as we stretch across people across lots of different events and ministry programs.

The solution is to move from a bunch of *programs* to a simple *path*. The path may be different from church to church, but the win needs to shift from attendance at programs to movement on a path.

Next Steps

- Reflect back to when you were taking your first steps with Christ. Invite some other leaders into this conversation:
 - How did God stretch your faith and begin to shape you into who you are now?
 - What happened to move you from considering Christ to fully devoted follower?
- Identify the core steps that will help people take their next steps towards becoming more like Christ. Keep it to no more than 4 or 5.
 - How can you create focused environments to help people take similar steps?
 - How can we keep it simple so it's easy to communicate, especially to people who are newer to your church?
- For more on this topic, check out the [Leading an Unstuck Church Course](#). Lesson 3 is all about how to help you “close the back door” by moving from programs to a path.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode85.