

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

What Church Growth Requires

Episode 86

How Do We Reach More People?

We all ultimately want to reach more people and help them take steps towards Christ. In [Episode 85](#), we talked about how churches can help people grow as disciples. This week's conversation answers the question, "**How** do we reach more people?"

Why Is Church Attendance Really Decreasing?

- Church attendance in the U.S. is decreasing. There are many cultural factors: There's no sense of guilt for missing church like there used to be. People are increasingly busy. Many church leaders point to the rise of things like youth travel sports.
- But there's one key thing we often overlook in America: Churches have often become inwardly-focused. They've begun to focus more on the people who already have faith in Christ—those inside the church—rather than on the people outside the church who don't yet know Jesus.

Every church is at risk of becoming inwardly focused. It's the natural tendency over time if intentional steps aren't taken to address it. And inwardly-focused churches don't grow.

Becoming Outwardly Focused Again

- Think like a missionary: When we send missionaries overseas, we don't expect them to start an English speaking, Sunday morning worship service identical to what they left back home in America. We encourage them to learn the culture, customs and language where they're serving.
- The same concept applies to us in our local churches. We first have to identify where God has placed our church, and we have to believe He has us there for a reason.
- In light of what you see, identify whom *specifically* you are going to try to reach. This may seem counterintuitive, but in our experience working with churches we've found that the churches who focus specifically on who they're trying to reach do a better job at reaching a larger part of their community than the churches that do not.

- Remember the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

“Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some.

I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.”

- It’s about intentionality, not exclusion.

Next Steps

- Clarify your mission field. Where has God placed your church? You can use census data and other demographic tools like thearda.com to identify what the community around your church is really like.
- Narrow your focus. Whom in your mission field has God uniquely called and equipped you to reach? Identify an age range that represents them well. Identify their current spiritual condition. Determine how to best describe their life stage.
- Decide what needs to change. To experience growth, you’ll have to become a church for your mission field. What needs to change about your physical space, online strategy, kids’ environments, weekend services, etc?
- For more on this topic, check out the [Leading an Unstuck Church Course](#). Lesson 2 is all about reaching more people with an outward focus.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode86.