

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Church Mergers

Episode 89

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Church mergers today can differ from the average scenario of decades past. The data is telling us more than 40% of all multisite campuses today are actually the result of a church merger or the acquisition of a church building. How do you ensure a successful outcome? Jim Tomberlin joins Tony Morgan in this episode to explain what you need to know about church mergers and how you can leverage this strategy for healthy church expansion.

Six Merger Mistakes Churches Make

- 1. Not defining the relationship.**
Every church merger is unique, but they are all like a dance: One church leads and the other follows
- 2. Lacking mission clarity.**
The more clarity the lead church has about mission, vision, and strategy, the easier it is to determine whether a merger is a good idea or not. When one of the two is a struggling church, they're likely not thinking about joining a mission. They're thinking about logistics, like who's going to teach on Sunday mornings now that they can't afford to hire a pastor anymore. You need to be really clear about the mission you're inviting them to join.
- 3. Focusing on the past.**
A lot of declining churches start down this path trying to preserve a tired way of doing church, or to preserve a facility and keep things as they are now. The best mergers embrace a shared vision for the future, rather than focusing on the past.
- 4. Poorly navigating control issues.**
When merger conversations dissolve and the relationship fails to move forward, the vast majority of the time it's because someone influential (the pastor, the board, or a vocal member of the congregation) at the joining church refuses to give up control.
- 5. Mishandling communication.**
Once the decision has been made, both churches have to over-communicate. You will need to consistently cast vision for why you are doing this, how it's going to work, and the benefits of going forward.
- 6. Underestimating the grieving process.**
Even when people at the joining church know the merger is the right course, there will be a sense of loss.

Next Steps

1. Read [*Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*](#) by Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird.
2. [Start a conversation](#) with The Unstuck Group. We help churches get unstuck, and we have extensive experience on our team helping churches navigate mergers.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode89.