

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Multisite Warning Signs

## Episode 99

### *Is It REALLY One Church in Multiple Locations?*

Many multisite churches describe themselves as “one church in multiple locations.” But in our experience? They are rarely one, unified church meeting in multiple locations. Instead, what we find is that many multisite churches are connected through one leadership structure, but beyond that, they are splintered in their ministry strategy. They are really multiple churches *trying* to operate as one church.

### *Multisite Does Work*

- Churches doing multisite wrong can make it easy for people on the outside to dismiss the strategy all together: *“See, that church is closing campuses or spinning off independent churches. That proves multisite strategy doesn’t work!”*
- But that’s not true at all. When multisite is done right, it’s helping healthy churches reproduce more disciples of Jesus.

### *Warning Sign 1: The Wrong “Why”*

- Multisite is not a **growth** strategy. If your current location is not reaching new people, a new location won’t fix that.
- Multisite is not a **change** strategy. If your current location is stuck in the past and you aren’t reaching younger adults, as an example, a new location isn’t going to fix that.
- Multisite is not a **succession** strategy. If you are trying to give younger pastors leadership and preaching experience at a new location to prepare them to succeed the current pastor, you are trying to address succession the wrong way.
- Multisite is not a **diversity** strategy. If your current location doesn’t reflect the community you are hoping to reach, launching a new location will not fix that. Church planting is the best way to reach a completely different demographic.

**Multisite is an evangelism strategy.** The multisite movement was the response of healthy, growing churches that ran out of space but wanted to continue reaching more people. Churches went multisite because their existing ministry strategy was working well. So, when they opened a second location, they used the *same* ministry strategy in that new location.

## *Warning Sign 2: Preacher Preferences*

- If you hear people communicating a preference for hearing the campus pastor teach rather than senior pastor, you are not one church in multiple locations.
- We've learned it's very challenging for churches to maintain unity over time if each congregation is hearing from distinctly different teachers on a regular basis. That's why we have a strong bias toward multisite churches using team-based teaching through video. It's the best way of keeping all the locations aligned and unified.
- If you have a young pastor that wants to become a campus pastor because they want the freedom to teach their own messages, you don't have a campus pastor. Instead, you have a future senior pastor or church planter. And, if you let them teach on a regular basis at that new campus, you should assume that location will eventually become an independent church and you've just appointed their future senior pastor. You thought you were starting a multisite campus. Instead, you've planted a new church.

## *Warning Sign 3: Different Worship Styles*

- If you sense you need a different style of worship to reach people in a different community, you really shouldn't be using a multisite strategy. Instead, you should plant a new church.
- Multisite churches should have the same experience at every location.

## *Next Steps*

- We couldn't cover all of the warning signs in this one episode—there are many more! But we do go deep into all of them in our new [Multisite Unstuck Course](#). The online course hits topics like:
  - **Clarifying decision rights, choosing locations, and building volunteer strength** for campus launches.
  - Developing a plan to **reduce the tension** that tends to develop between central ministry and campus leaders.
  - Offering a process to **right-size staff and volunteer teams** based on the size of your multisite campuses.
  - Providing tools for evaluating the **campus pastor role** and setting campus pastors up for success.
- Check it out at [theunstuckgroup.com](http://theunstuckgroup.com), and try out a module on [Clarifying Decision Rights](#) for free!

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode99](http://theunstuckgroup.com/episode99).