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INTRO: [00:20](#) [INTRO]

Austin Savage: [00:34](#) Welcome to episode 8 of The 95 Podcast. My name's Austin Savage and I'm here with Dale Sellers and we are your hosts. Dale, I can't believe we're on our eighth episode. The past two months of doing this have just flown by.

Dale Sellers: [00:46](#) They have, and it's been really exciting to interview some of the folks we've been able to talk to. I was worried when we first started doing the podcast that it was just gonna be you and me all the time. And I'm sure, and I'm sure we come up with a lot to say, but, uh, but just being able to talk with, especially our strategic partners. I love our strategic partners. Uh, they're very, they're very solid ministries who have a real passion to help churches. Uh, and so anytime we have a chance to do that is great. And so, uh, uh, yeah, I'm, I'm kind of amazed, you know, you had this idea and here we are.

Austin Savage: [01:16](#) I know we didn't quit so, so we'll see what happens going from here. But it's been awesome. So, uh, I also just want to thank our listeners because you guys are the reason that we can continue to do this podcast and we don't usually make this a part of our introduction, but if you have been impacted by this podcast or by our ministry, uh, here at 95Network, would you consider supporting us? We exist to connect small and mid sized churches to, to big resources, uh, and as a nonprofit organization, uh, that means that we give away a lot and rarely turn a profit on the resources that we create. And so, uh, if you have been impacted by this ministry, we just want to ask that you consider helping us continue to support pastors and churches all across the country by giving at 95network.org/support.

Dale Sellers: [02:03](#) Hey, that's good to know. I didn't know we'd ever turned a profit so that you said we rarely do. So that's awesome. We're headed in the right direction.

Austin Savage: [02:16](#) We have an awesome conversation lined up with our friend Chris Hughes. He is one of the cofounders over at The Ministry Mechanics. Uh, we'll be talking about avoiding complexity in our church and as always, if you would like to access the bonus

conversation with Chris, which you do, on caring for the people that you work with, you can do so by becoming a 95Network member.

- Dale Sellers: [02:37](#) And how do they do that? Right quick.
- Austin Savage: [02:39](#) Well Dale, how they do that is they go to 95network.org/membership. Super easy, very affordable, great resources. Highly recommend it. Anyways, without any more hesitation. Chris, it is so great to have you on the podcast, man. How are you?
- Chris Hughes: [02:55](#) I'm doing great. Thank you guys for having me.
- Austin Savage: [02:58](#) Absolutely. Absolutely. So Chris, how's ministry? You guys recently came out with a new book, is that right?
- Chris Hughes: [03:04](#) We did, yeah. In June, around the end of June, we launched the ministry mechanics book, which has been a really exciting process. Took us about a year and a half to complete and it's really exciting to get it out there and connect with the churches and leaders. We've probably given away more than we've sold. And we are really excited about that actually though because what we're, our hope is that we can equip pastors and leaders with just some practical, applicable tips on how they can just do ministry more efficiently and better in that that was the goal behind it was just to get a tool in the hands of people just like the pastors in the 95Network.
- Austin Savage: [03:39](#) Yeah, absolutely. And Dale's favorite part of the book is that his face is on the back of it. So.
- Dale Sellers: [03:44](#) I was going to say my favorite part is the back cover,
- Chris Hughes: [03:48](#) When we made that move, we sold dozens more copies.
- Dale Sellers: [03:53](#) I'm sure you did. Yeah, I told my family to all buy them.
- Austin Savage: [04:02](#) I love it. I love it. So Chris, tell us just a little bit, uh, for, for our listeners, tell us kind of about yourself real quick, your experience and just about about the ministry mechanics.
- Chris Hughes: [04:12](#) Yeah, so the ministry mechanics started about three and a half years ago, but we've been doing church consulting, our team for over, you know, 10 20 years between the two. And we just love the local church. We're, we're big fans of ministry because our lives are impacted by pastors and the church when we were

young men. And we both surrendered to the call to ministry, my friend Jeremy and had been doing ministry a long time together. We came together three years ago and started this just as a way for us to work with the church instead of a church. And I'm telling Ya, I do more ministry now than I've ever done in my 20 years. 22 years of serving in the church. I'm blown away at the need out there, especially for churches in that 50 to a thousand range that need some help on how to get from where they are to where God wants them to be in that, that's really what we feel our role is, is to help churches take that next step, whatever it looks like.

Chris Hughes:

[05:07](#)

And uh, and really that's what we do. But I grew up in east Tennessee. Yeah. Gave my life to the Lord when I was 17 years old and kind of surrendered to a call and ministry when I was 18 and I've been working in churches pretty much ever since I graduated high school. I was an intern in Birmingham, Alabama and student ministry and I've done everything from leading worship to lead pastor to student pastor. I've done everything except watch kids and count money and you don't want me doing either of those. So, that's pretty much what I've done. So which gives us a good, I think a good balance on how we can help churches with lots of different things. You know, really with church planters and smaller churches, you need to be a generalist and not so much a specialist and you're going to do a lot of different things in order to continue to push and break boundaries. And so it really, that's, that's what God's kind of gifted us with is sort of that generalist mentality and how we can do a lot of things and do them well to grow an organization and hopefully give those things away to other people.

Austin Savage:

[06:02](#)

Yeah. One of the things I love about your ministry Chris is that you kind of, your motto is "whatever it takes." And so it's really just encouraging because every week I see, you know, new things on social media or you know, something like that of just like the craziest stuff that you're doing to help churches, but it's awesome. And so I love that that is your guys' heart.

Dale Sellers:

[06:22](#)

Now before we dive into this, I want to make sure that you guys are okay because I know Jeremy's been having a really hard time lately with his football team and I just wanted to make sure that it, he would, he was okay. Is he, is he okay?

Chris Hughes:

[06:34](#)

He's actually tucked away at a facility for the next 30 days. No, I mean, listen, we're Tennessee football fans and it's been a rough 10 years. Dale, I'm not going to lie, but we've always been a basketball school and so that's fine. Uh, you know, we're, we're basketball fans now and so with, with the Deacon Rick

Barnes at the helm of the Tennessee program, things are fine. You know, so whatever football is.

Dale Sellers: [07:03](#) Yeah. Well, well we were glad from here in Clemson to send you our best coach ever. So you have him now. So, so we just want to make sure that all that stuff was out of the way cause I knew it might be weighing heavy on your heart before we get into the meat of the podcast,

Austin Savage: [07:19](#) That's awesome. Well, yeah, on that note, let's jump into this conversation here. Uh, so Chris, we wanted to talk about avoiding complexity and we actually took a lot of this conversation from a chapter in your new book and the Chapter Title, uh, was It Ain't Rocket Surgery: Avoiding Complexity. So two questions. First question is rocket surgery? What is that? And then second question is, what does it look like for ministries to become complex and why does that happen?

Chris Hughes: [07:45](#) I love how you said it ain't rocket surgery. Austin. I mean, that is perfect the way that you said it. Uh, not at all is southern in any way, shape, form, or fashion. I think to really appreciate it. Dale should probably be the one to introduce that chapter.

Dale Sellers: [07:57](#) Yeah, it ain't rocket surgery!

Chris Hughes: [07:59](#) Now we're talking. Okay. That was it. No, I mean for us, we, we found ourselves working in a circumstance one time we were like just pounding our heads against the wall, trying to get the simplest thing done. And I just remember, we were talking and we're like, yeah, why is this so difficult? This ain't rocket surgery. And so that became sort of this mantra that you know for, for a long time. And so anytime we see some kind of difficult situation that shouldn't be, we're like, we have made this rocket surgery and it ain't rocket surgery. Ministry is one of those things that sometimes be becomes complicated even when it shouldn't be. And a lot of times we put in layers of complication that aren't necessary.

Chris Hughes: [08:49](#) And I'm really a minimalist when it comes to programming and strategies and people in the conversation because sometimes you just need a few people to help them make decisions instead of loads. And I think I learned that the first church that I worked at, and maybe this describes a lot of the churches that you haven't listening to, the podcast where you know, we went to our first committee meeting and there were like 700 people at the committee meeting. And I remember the first meeting I went to, we were literally talking about carpet colors in the building. We had swatches of carpet and 7 million people in the

room to decide what color carpet was going to go into this church building. We talked about it for hours and hours and hours. I thought, this is what my life is going to look like. The rest of my ministry years is going to be this. I'm going to be talking and talking about carpet colors.

- Chris Hughes: [09:46](#) And I just thought there's gotta be a better way. And so then I started to realize, oh, they're actually churches with leadership structures that are different. Maybe it's good to have a few leaders making those minimal decisions that really don't impact everyday life like carpet colors. Maybe someone who has an eye for design, just let them pick it, you know? And then go with it. Then on the bigger things like maybe accountability or you know, budgetary direction, maybe a programming that's going to affect everybody well then maybe you need to involve some more people. But for the little things, we don't really have to involve so many people just make a decision and move. And I think, I think a lot of churches and a lot of pastors are frozen or stuck when it comes to making decisions because their organizations have become so complex. Obviously, you know, we read in good to great that organizations tend to gravitate towards the complexity and not simplicity.
- Chris Hughes: [10:37](#) And our job as pastors is to continue to keep things simple within our organization so that that is really the heartbeat behind it ain't rocket surgery, you want to stay away from complexity and avoid that at all costs. Keeping simple, keep things about the main thing. That's why vision, mission and values are so important because if we can't articulate what we're working for, everything will become our vision, mission, and values. And so knowing who we are, what God's created us to do and where we're going and why we're doing it. Being able to answer those questions will allow you to say no to the things that are going to compete with your mission and vision.
- Austin Savage: [11:13](#) Yeah, having a giant committees vote on the carpet colors is something that we see quite often. Uh, Dale, I think that you'd agree with that.
- Dale Sellers: [11:20](#) You, you wouldn't believe, yeah, you wouldn't believe some, I mean, I, I've been to churches that we've heard war stories about this, but I've been to churches to have split because they moved the organ and the piano, you know. Either swap sides or in one case they moved the organ over next to the piano because they'd added a band and this just split the church.
- Chris Hughes: [11:40](#) It's true. And you know, these pastors, have had to learn to be these politicians in these little circumstances over things that

are just not essential. I heard Jentezen Franklin tell a story one time it cracked me up, was brand new in ministry and he said, Dad, I just want to move the piano from the left side of the stage to the right without splitting my church in half. What do I need to do? And Jentezen's dad said, son, I know exactly what you're talking about. I've been there and here's how you're going to do it. Every week you're going to move that piano three inches and in two years you'll have that piano just where you want it. I don't want to work in the church like that.

Chris Hughes:

[12:14](#)

I don't want to lead an organization where I have to think about doing things that I know will make a difference in ministry. And sometimes you just need to be able to make decisions to let people know that you can make decisions and that's okay. Establish yourself as the leader. So you know, it is true that a lot of pastors struggle with that. And leading strong we find is one of the, the most important and valuable assets that any church can have is a strong, confident leader. That's really the simplicity of it is it's not really hard. Ministry is going to be challenging. It's going to be difficult, but the, the choices really are not complicated. It's just that the hard part is the courage and the leading strong and doing it with conviction.

Dale Sellers:

[12:57](#)

And we want the pastors to understand the reason we talk, excuse me, the reason we talk about this is because we realized how difficult it is. You know, if you go in a situation like a church that's voting over the carpet, if you come in and say this is how it's going to be in the first week, you're going to be finding a new job. And so we are, as we do our podcast, we are always sensitive to the situation that you're in. But we also have got to encourage you. You can't keep staying there, pastor. You can't keep up. You can't allow your church to keep doing what it's been doing because it's going to die. And we have thousands of churches every year in America to point to that are dying and they're dying in most cases from a lack of leadership. And so we want you to understand, we, we understand what you're dealing with. We value that. We understand that sometimes those decisions are beyond your ability at the, at the moment, but you still need to find the balance between what Jentezen's dad told him. Uh, but you've got to begin to move things toward leading. If you don't, it's just not going to make it. So we're glad you brought that up as we establish this.

Chris Hughes:

[13:59](#)

Yeah. And we're not saying take the credit card out and just go wild this week. That does not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is the things like, you know, the things that really don't matter in the grand scheme of things, decisions that really don't need to be made by a team. And so this for us, this

looks like organization and creating a strategy for leadership and determining what inside your organization, maybe this is something that you could do as a leadership team is determine what are the decisions that really not everybody needs to be in and what are the decisions that we need to involve more and more people in. And kind of striking a balance between what's necessary and what's unnecessary is really important. And that will help you actually gain some leadership experience and gain some credibility within your leadership team.

Chris Hughes: [14:47](#) And that's one of the great things about things like 95Network or maybe even the ministry mechanics. We can come alongside you to help say those same things to your organization to kind of see in some life and some best practices to your committees or maybe your leadership team and kind of go, hey listen, maybe the carpet color doesn't matter. Budget, absolutely, carpet color, let somebody pick it. You know? So that's, that's the best advice I could give.

Dale Sellers: [15:11](#) Okay. So let me ask you this question then in line with your chapter and your book. So what does it look like for ministries to become complex and then follow that up with why does this happen?

Chris Hughes: [15:20](#) Well, I think, I think what happens is we are very used to pleasing people when someone has a request. We love to please them. We don't ever want to let anybody down. And I think we get so used to this kind of codependent relationship with people in our churches. And I think we're quick to just appease people. And for me, I, I remember, uh, we had this program at a church that I was working at where we did these things called micro missions and, and it started as a really good thing. But as our church grew and grew and grew, it became difficult all to do because we had this over-complex process that that kind of crept in. And maybe you can relate to this. So at first it was just, hey, we're going to have a ministry. We're going to partner with 10 people are going to go and serve, which is fine when you had 10 people. But when we got to a hundred, 200, 300 people, then transportation became an issue.

Chris Hughes: [16:12](#) Do we rent buses? What do we do? And, and then we were like, how do we manage this? And, and then our, our HR department says, oh, people can't drive. It has to be church buses that take people there. So now we've got an insurance problem and then, and then you get to the place, you're just like, I don't even wanna do this anymore. I don't even want to do micro missions. Okay. So that's what happens a lot of times in our ministries is we have these programs and processes that become

complicated as our churches grow. So finding processes and strategies that are simple, simple and easy to scale is really important when it comes to church growth. And so for us, what we, one of the things we did in that particular program was just eliminated the way we had been doing it. And what we tried to encourage people to do was start serving when they see a need.

Chris Hughes: [16:56](#)

So if you find a need in your community or your neighborhood or maybe a ministry, see a need and meet it. And we did something called 50 states of summer where we asked people to give a little bit of their vacation when they traveled. We had people serve in all 50 states, we had people serve in 13 countries and we had 700 more people serving in our missions program by the end of the summer. Cause we took the lid off of this program that we were running, which was very difficult and cumbersome and hard to manage. And we ended up saving thousands and thousands of dollars because we weren't paying to transport people to and from these local mission projects, we would just post the mission opportunities and say go do it. And people were doing it. And that really started for us from a conversation that I had with a person in our church.

Chris Hughes: [17:39](#)

It was when talking on a Sunday morning said, hey, I have a great idea for this micro mission project. I think it's going to be amazing. And they said, I've got this neighbor and their, their yard is way overgrown like it is just the grass is tall. Something's going on. And I would love to set up a micro mission where we sent a team to cut the grass. At first I was like writing all this stuff down. Okay. micro mission. neighborhood. And then like the Lord Zapped me and said do not let them off the hook. I finally asked him, I said, hey, do you guys own a lawn mower? And he goes, well sure. Own a lawn mower. And I said, well, I think maybe more than he's calling us to do a micro mission.

Chris Hughes: [18:24](#)

I think God is asking you to cut your neighbor's grass. And he kinda got a smile on his face and, and I realized two things. One, we had programmed the idea of serving to be this event that we go to instead of way of living. And so we, we took that lid off and put it back on people to go if you see a need meet it. And so that that was really big. The second thing I saw was the story that came back to me and I loved it. So this guy goes back, cuts the neighbor's grass, finds out that there was a death in the family, I guess the spouse had died and so they, they set up a deal where they were going to cut the grass of the neighbor for the foreseeable future. He came back and told me the story.

Chris Hughes: [19:04](#)

I said, hey, good on you man. That is amazing. What a win. That's great. And then I realized that I want to just encourage

people to grab the lawnmower and start serving, find a need and need it. So for us in missions, that was a big change, a big shift. Organizationally, we had this big complex program that we were running, we just didn't even need at all. And we just encourage people by now posting, Hey, here are the mission opportunities available. We'd love for you to check in. We need somebody to get that. Okay, you got that, alright you've got that one? Okay, perfect mission needs done. Life Group, you're going to do this and great handle. Okay, awesome. So that was really a big, a big change in thinking for us as we wanted to kind of the program and take out some of the things, and maybe you can relate to it, a church website, like at a smaller church, I don't know if you've ever seen this, but I can't tell you how many times I'll go on a church website of a church that I know is like a hundred to 200 people and look at like their ministries and I swear to goodness there are 700 different serving opportunities at the church of 150 people.

Chris Hughes:

[20:03](#)

And I'm like, there's no way you guys are doing all these things well. It's just impossible. And I think what happens is when a person comes with a need or an idea, we just say, yeah, absolutely. That's a ministry. We're going to do that. I want to encourage you pastors to know who it is that you are and go, you know what? Quilting ministry, not for me. That's not my jam. I'm not going to have that. Handbell choir, not My thing. And it's okay that that's not your thing. And even if it is your thing, that's okay, but be the best at handbell choir you can be if that's your thing. Yeah. Be the best at quilting ministry you can be. So I think a lot of churches say yes to a lot of people that come by cause they don't want to hurt their feelings. But let me, let me give you a tool that you can use to put back on people.

Chris Hughes:

[20:46](#)

Just like what I did, the guy that wanted us to cut the grass when someone comes with a ministry opportunity, your job is to evaluate is this a good thing or a God thing? Because there are loads of good things that people need to be doing. There are tons of them in the community. But if it's not for you, then maybe it's just a good thing that you need to let them do. If it's a god thing, maybe you and your staff and your leadership needed to pray about, hey, this is something we're gonna do. We're gonna make this a program. But if not, let them do it. And here's one of the cool things that happens when you say to a person that comes up with an idea. For example, I had a guy that showed up at my church one time. He said, hey, I want to start a hunting ministry, Chris.

Chris Hughes: [21:23](#) I don't hunt at all. I don't own a firearm. I'm not even into hunting. Not My thing. I don't have anything against it, but why on earth would I be good at managing a hunting ministry, I'd be terrible. So I just said, man, that's a great idea. How can I help you that? That's great. I'd love to see you get that started. Now what he was really saying to me was not, I want to start a hunting ministry. He was saying, I want you to start a hunting ministry, Chris. I don't want to do a hunting ministry. It's not my passion, but if you're really passionate about it, then roll with it, then go for it. Hunting ministry never happened because he wasn't really passionate about it. Now I did have a guy one time come in and say that he wanted to start a thrift store for special needs.

Chris Hughes: [22:04](#) That benefits special needs parents in our community and employees special needs people in our community. So he was really passionate. Then I said, hey, that's great. Tell me how it goes. So he goes out, starts it, and they do this community garden and then they create a restaurant where special needs people work. And then they became one of our strategic partners at our church. We served with them and made them a destination for people to serve. So that's an example of how maybe somebody has an idea that could blossom into something that could become a program in your church cause they're passionate about it and dedicated to it. So again, it comes back to know what it is that you're about, what it is you're not for you. And you'll know it if it's not something you want to do. You've got to be good at really releasing the ownership and giving it away to people that need to own it other than you.

Dale Sellers: [22:49](#) So with that in mind. And so, um, and I was so glad you finished that, that thought the way you did because when I was pastoring a small church, I would have people come up and tell me, uh, we think we need to do this. And I would go, great. You go do it. And, and very few people followed through because basically what they were saying as you said was, pastor, we think you need to do this. And I'm, you know, I got plenty going on here, you know, so, uh, following that up then. So how can you tell if your church is over programmed?

Chris Hughes: [23:15](#) Well, I think number one, if you can look at your list and go, there's no way that we could have all of these programs be done effectively. And I think this is one of those things where you just know it when you see it, when you look at the list and go, we just can't do all of this. That's a good starting place to say, we just got to kind of blow this up and do it again. And then I would, I would encourage every church to, to regularly, not

just once in a lifetime, but maybe annually, maybe twice a year, evaluate everything that you are doing, look at the, the scope of programs and go, is this really helping us accomplish our goals? And I, I've seen a lot of churches evaluate recently some very sacred programs when it comes to ministry. For example, one that I am seeing that is, there's a major shift happening is vacation Bible school.

Chris Hughes: [24:05](#)

If you had told me 15 years ago that churches would, with doing vacation Bible school, I would have said, you're crazy. This thing is in for life. It's not going anywhere. But I'll tell you, a lot of churches are not doing vacation Bible school, especially where we live in a very suburban, maybe a little more affluent area. Because what happens is vacation Bible schools in the summertime where we live become giant baby sitting clubs for all of the Christians. That that's what they become. And so what happens is, and, and listen, I've been guilty of it because I worked at a church that didn't have VBS and we'd take our kids over to the other church and do it because it was awesome. It was amazing. And our kids love going. But we stopped doing VBS at our church because we found that the only people that were coming were the Christians from other churches dropping their kids off and never coming back.

Chris Hughes: [24:51](#)

And we looked at it as a team and said, is this really what we're about is just babysitting kids? Cause it's really not. That's not our focus. So we eliminated the program now were people upset about it. Absolutely. But here, here's what we know is that we, our church continued to grow. We had loads of people still coming by and we diverted those resources to another place to say, this is something we're a little bit more passionate about, which was the Sunday morning experience making that better weekend and week out. And we just left vacation Bible school up to the churches that were really, really, really good at it, really passionate about it. And we said, you guys are going to do it better than we ever would anyway. So let's partner with you guys and you go do it. So that, that's what I would do is look at the list of programs.

Chris Hughes: [25:34](#)

Regularly check-in, is this helping us reach the goal? Is this helping us accomplish our vision? Is this a program that is pushing our organization forward and helping us to become who it is that God has called us to be? And my suggestion is if the answer is no, then stop it. Don't do it anymore. Find a way to end the program. And you can usually look for the signs of a program that's dying as attendance or participation in that program may have been dwindling for years or for months. If it has, then it's probably a good time to take a hard look at if not

eliminating it. Maybe, uh, you know, rebirthing that in a new way that's fresh and relevant. But yeah, you can look at attendance trends and that gives you a lot of good information or giving to that, that particular thing.

Chris Hughes: [26:20](#) And those will give you some good indications. And then also look around at what other churches are doing. That's the beauty of, of networks now, like the 95Network, you've got this huge network of, of other pastors and you might hear somebody go, hey, this is something is really clicking at our church. Let's give it a shot. Let's give it a try and see what happens. And then you can kind of find the thing that works for you and try it. I would also look at your community and let tha] help you determine what's important. Your, your community will give you a really good idea of what or what things are important when it comes to ministry. I know for us, when I was a lead pastor in North Carolina, poverty was a real big problems. So we really tried to, every school year give away things that were important, like backpacks, school supplies, shoes, things like that to kids that needed them.

Chris Hughes: [27:04](#) And so your community will help determine what your programming needs to be and maybe even the people in your church will help determine that program. I mean, for example, if you've got 60 homeschool kids come into your church, well guess what? You need to have some kind of ministry that relates to homeschooling because that's a big part of who you are as a church family. Maybe you have, uh, a fairly large population of special needs people in your church. Well, have you thought about making room for special needs kids within your ministry because maybe God is, you know, putting those people on your path for the right reasons. So I think those are all the indicators in ways that I would evaluate what my program,

Austin Savage: [27:44](#) Chris, isn't it better for our church to be doing lots of different things? Doesn't that mean we're doing more ministry?

Chris Hughes: [27:47](#) Well, I mean, that's certainly the defense that I hear a lot of times. Uh, you know, I, I am a big fan of quality over quantity though. I think there's something to be said about doing things with excellence and I think there's something to be said about doing things, there's like this threshold, like this minimum standard that you have to be able to hit. And if you can't hit that with the program, then you probably shouldn't be doing it. And what happens is when you have hundreds and hundreds of programs, it divides your attention and your, your budget and your focus into these little tiny slivers instead of taking maybe

eight things and doing them really, really well, you're trying to do 60 things with the slivers of budgets. And then what happens is I see churches that have tons of programs and I look inside their listing guides.

Chris Hughes: [28:41](#) And here's one of the indicators for me that I know a church is over programmed. When I look in the listing guide and I see all of the things that you are offering on a week to week basis. And here's what I look for. There's usually a price tag connected to that thing. \$15, \$18, \$26 to do these programs. And if I see dollar signs connected to them, then I know that we've probably got too much going on because we're, we're having to divert resources and put that back on our people. Not that it's uh, you know, not that you shouldn't charge for the curriculum and a Bible study or something like that. But if you begin to charge for every little thing, and it tells me that your resources are spread a little too thin organizationally.

Dale Sellers: [29:22](#) Yeah. But my great, my great aunt, you know, she, you know, she started this Bible study in 1930. Oh No. Jesus told her to start that. How are we gonna stop it?

Chris Hughes: [29:31](#) Well, this is a really good one, Dale. And it's very hard. And that's the, that's a very tough statement to lead strong through, isn't it? I mean, cause it sounds like you're going to be the bad guy. Well, I'm here to tell you, if you want to be the good guy all the time, you better start selling ice cream instead of pastoring churches

Chris Hughes: [29:50](#) Ministry is not for the faint of heart. This is a dangerous calling. How many of the 12 apostles made it to that ripe old age, how many of them made it, none of them made it. That's how many. This is hard work, God has placed you as the leader to make hard decisions and that's why you're there. I will say this though, there are ways that you can win in those hard conversations. For us, we had merged with a church at one of the churches that I work with and yeah, well we took over this, this church, it was the oldest church in Miami Dade County down in south Florida. And uh, when we came together we were okay starting with two services because you know, the church is merging and there was a lot of hesitation around that and God gifted us like this beautiful picture of why we needed to do it.

Chris Hughes: [30:36](#) When we started looking at it, there was a lady that had been serving in children's ministry for 40 consecutive years, had been serving in children's ministry for 40 years. And so what we did is on our first Sunday, it was her first Sunday to ever be able to sit

in a service in 40 years. She had been that faithful. So we had a celebration of that moment and we honored her and we gave her a gift just to say thank you. And it was just a beautiful moment. And so my encouragement is if you have one of those sacred cow programs that somebody started, yeah, 30 years ago, don't, don't just destroy the past, you know, honor it because it's a part of your legacy. If you're a good leader, you're going to figure out how you can honor the past so that you can move forward in the future.

Chris Hughes: [31:20](#) And for things like that, you know, we, when somebody maybe leaves a community or when that program dies, maybe you can have a video that explains the story behind it, why it was generationally having an impact and how now we're going to take that legacy, we're going to build on it and we're going to do this next thing in the next chapter. There's a big difference between, you know, what, we're not doing that anymore and how to take the history and celebrate it and then move forward. So having that ability to, to communicate vision that way is really important I think.

Austin Savage: [31:51](#) Yeah. You've communicated a lot of this already, Chris, but I want to kind of, uh, just reiterate it. Um, I think that this idea, it's kind of funny, this topic, Dale, has come up like a ton in all of our podcasts, we just keep talking about it. So I think that there's a reason that that's happening, but, um, I think a lot of leaders understand that this is a step that they need to take in a direction that they need to head in their ministry. But, but it's scary, like you were saying. It is, it's hard. It's hard work. And so practically, how can churches really start to cut back on that complexity? Uh, and you mentioned, you know, mission, vision, strategy. How can they really identify those things and utilize them, uh, to focus their efforts as a church?

Chris Hughes: [32:35](#) Well, I think you're right, Austin. It does start with mission, vision and values. If you've not defined those, you need to stop everything else and do that today. And that's, that's what a lot of what we do with organizations. We do something called a weekend service evaluation and we have something called virtual executive pastor where we walk churches through that. And I know you all do a lot of that with churches as well. That is such an important step because it's hard to know who you're not if you don't know who you are. And I think it's really important that that first step of mission, vision and values is really, really clearly defined. Uh, what's that old country song. You got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything. Right? Austin doesn't know that song. Speaking life into ministry.

Chris Hughes: [33:21](#) But it's true. If you don't know who you are and don't know what you're going towards, you'll do anything. And so we got to know who, who we are. We do that by defining our mission, vision and values. I think from there, uh, the way that we can make the shift is by changing the culture. And I think culture eats strategy and programming for breakfast every time. I think culture is winning. I think culture matters so much when it comes to building an organization and that comes before your staff, that comes from your volunteers, your leadership, your church as a whole. Your culture really matters. And do you have a culture that says we're going to take risks, a culture that says we're going to make changes, culture that you want and it's going to be really important. And I think one of the key steps that you've got to take is creating a feedback culture.

Chris Hughes: [34:14](#) And I think there's this little trick that happens, pastor. If you are good at receiving feedback, then your people will be really good at receiving feedback. If you can take a negative comment or constructive criticism gracefully and guess what your people are going to learn from your example. So be good at receiving feedback. Don't take it personally, it's not personal to you. It's just feedback. That's all it is. And learn how to take that the right way because if you can process feedback the right way and you're going to build the credibility and get the trust when it comes to sharing feedback with other people about programming and ministry. So I think that's really important. The, the number one question we get when we walk into a church is can you give us the three things that are gonna help our church explode. Guys, that doesn't exist.

Chris Hughes: [35:04](#) That doesn't exist. We, ministry mechanics is not 30 days of something. It's not 40 days of this. It's not 12 steps. Those things are fake. They don't work. It doesn't exist. The only thing that really makes change in churches happen is steady, consistent leadership that is fearless and ready to do whatever it takes. And then beyond that, it's 10,000 little decisions that move the organization towards the mission, vision and values. My encouragement is today. Maybe find one thing that you can do that that will help you move towards the vision and eliminate one thing that's keeping you from moving forward and I think we all find over the course of time. If you do that enough, if you get that discipline involved in your organization and your culture that we're going to lean into the things that God created us for and we're going to avoid the things that are not for us.

Chris Hughes: [35:58](#) I think if you hit that rhythm and that discipline down, you'll find that a lot big changes will take place organizationally, and this comes back to me to one thing, and I'll kind of close with this

part of it with the podcast, but when we were doing a weekend service evacuation, whenever we do those we are always looking for just little things that stand out to us. That maybe the eyes in the church have just totally passed over. And this stuck out to us because we had heard about a consultant that did this at a church and he walked in and he saw this orange extension cord running from one end of the building to the other. Like they didn't have power, the source where they needed it. So they had to run a giant orange extension cord.

Chris Hughes: [36:36](#) And so he asked the question of the staff, listen, great service today. Everything went well. But tell me about this orange extension cord. And nobody knew what he was talking. Nobody had any idea. Okay. They had become, you know, blind to the orange extension cord because it had been there for so long. And so by having an outside set of eyes come in and look at it might help you find those orange extension cords within your organization that will help you, you know, begin to eliminate some of the things that you don't need. So, for example, in that, that circumstance, if you are needing to run an orange extension cord, 80 feet down a hallway, you know, to plug in iPads for children's check in. If it's really important to you, maybe you need to call an electrician this week, come out and put plugs exactly where you need them because this is how you're going to do ministry, right?

Chris Hughes: [37:22](#) So that's what can happen is when you start to evaluate your organization, there might be this program that we need to eliminate. Or maybe this person that's in leadership that we need to maybe put in a different spot in our organization. Or maybe there's this staff member that we need to bring on. Or maybe there's this tweak we need to make to our vision, mission and values. So whatever those things might be, um, you know, that's what we've got to look for in our organization is ways that we can get better and stronger. And it's really not about one thing or three things. It's 10,000 little things.

Austin Savage: [37:51](#) Yeah. Well, Chris, this has been a really, really practical conversation, so thank you for taking some time today to just share some wisdom with us, um, as it relates to complexity. So last question for you is how can pastors get connected to you guys if they are interested in learning more about your ministry?

Chris Hughes: [38:08](#) Yeah, that'd be great. Well, there's, there's few ways. One is, um, you can learn a little bit more about all the things that we've talked about today in our book, the ministry mechanics. It's available on Amazon and you can pick that up there. There's

Dale, he's got his copy, but you can pick yours up on Amazon and uh, we would love to get this in the hands of people. You can also get at our website, theministrymechanics.com you can learn about all the things that we do at our website. Everything from weekend service evaluations to virtual executive pastor to church staffing. We've got a lot of different things that we do to help you. Smaller churches especially go from where they are to where God wants them to be and we'd love to get connected. And I'll tell you the third way is this.

Chris Hughes:

[38:46](#)

I'm going to give my cell phone number out over this podcast right now. I know that's risky, but we want you to know that you can call us anytime. So talk to us about what's going on in your church. My cell phone number is (832) 993-5570. It's not some fake thing where you're going to get sent to an answering service. That's legit my cell phone. Yep. Call me and let's talk today and let's figure out what we can do to help get your church going. Because I'm telling you, life is too short and our mission is to urgent for us not to be working together to do everything that we can to make a difference in our communities. And I'm driven enough to give my cell phone out on this podcast so we can help pastors. That's what it's about.

Speaker 6:

[39:24](#)

Hey, well thanks for listening to episode 8 of The 95 Podcast. We had such a great conversation with Chris Hughes from the ministry mechanics and he gave out his cell phone number. So if you were intrigued by this conversation and would be interested in talking with him, be sure to utilize that. Um, he would love to connect with you and hear your church's story. Beyond that, if you did enjoy this conversation, don't forget to subscribe so you never miss a future episode of this podcast. Next week we'll be talking with Kem Meyer, founder of less chaos, less noise about what a brand is and why a small church needs one. I think it's going to be a really interesting conversation. So thank you for listening. Don't forget to check out the bonus episode with Chris if you'd like to learn more from him and we hope that we will see you back next week.