

7 REASONS WHY SMALL CHURCHES GET STUCK

BY TONY MORGAN

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For the purposes of this conversation, we will include churches of 200 or less. More than the number, the key factor that drives the small-church mindset is the value that everyone should know everyone. That value impacts just about everything the church does. The good news is that this value can also be leveraged to produce both health and growth in a way that larger churches can't really reproduce.

There some challenges, though, that seem to be common in small churches:

1) They maintain an insider-focus.

Everything they do is designed with the person who already attends the church in mind. They use insider language. It's reflected in the design of the worship and teaching. The ministry programming is for insiders. Guests in any of the church's ministry environments really aren't expected.

As you might imagine, the perception that church is for people who already attend church really limits the incentive to invite someone new. You can't fix that with evangelism programs and training.

2) The senior pastor does all the ministry.

This is a key distinction between small and mid-size churches. When a church is small, the senior pastor can greet every person, know everyone's name, attend every family celebration, pray for every meal, make every hospital visit and teach every Bible study. The pastor is expected to do everything.

To grow beyond the small-church mindset, the pastor has to take the lead in equipping God's people to do the work of God. The senior pastor must learn how to give ministry away to others.

3) They value busyness over relationships.

Even small churches can quickly become over-programmed with Bible studies, men's or women's gatherings, services on Sunday and Wednesday, all-church events, etc. The challenge in small churches is the expectation that everyone will attend every event. That can quickly become overwhelming. All that activity also limits the amount of time people have to build relationships outside the church.

4) Everyone has a vote.

That's the way decisions tend to get made in small churches. Even with decisions that don't actually involve a vote, everyone still has a voice. In instances where there are dissenting voices, even if they're the minority, that's enough to veto and stop a decision. Why? Because there's an expectation that you need consensus from everyone for change to be implemented.

Unfortunately, getting consensus often prevents good ideas from moving forward.

5) They're unwilling to move to two services.

This is a tough one, but it's probably one of the keys to moving beyond 200 people. You can't do this too soon because you'll lose critical mass. Getting to two services, though, will help with several of the key attributes of healthy churches.

First, it gives people options. This is important particularly for guests. You also open up opportunities for people to both attend a service and volunteer. Additionally, you begin to move beyond the limiting mindset that everyone needs to be in every gathering together.

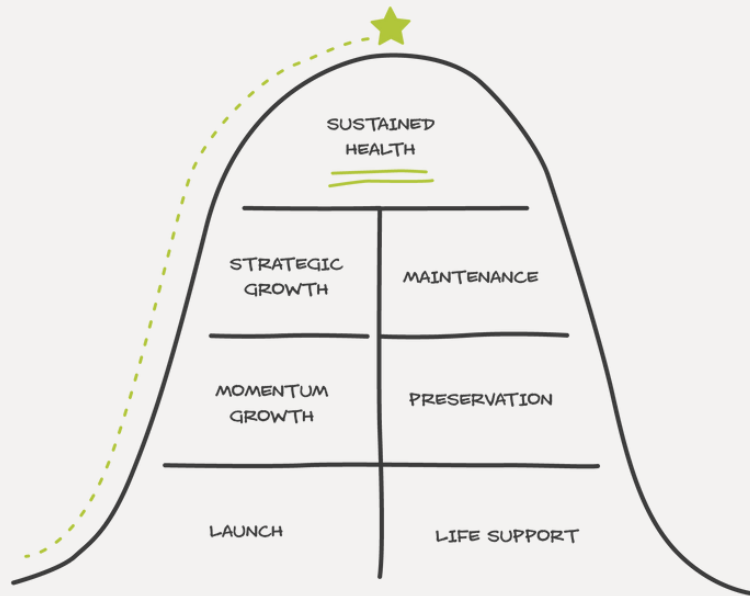
6) The teaching doesn't provide life application.

It's purely focused on imparting biblical truth. I'm a fan of biblical truth, but it needs to also lead to practical next steps. The challenge is that teaching that offers life application is harder than teaching just to increase knowledge. I can give you facts all day long, but helping you put that knowledge into action so it leads to transformation is completely different.

The good news is you don't have to get consensus to change the way you teach. You can begin this Sunday.

7) They want different results without any change.

That's not going to happen. I could give you all kinds of biblical references to new wine in old wineskins here, but that probably won't help either. At some point, the pain of staying the same needs to be greater than the pain of change. Let's pray it doesn't take a crisis to get to that point. When the right group of people in the church feel that type of pain, though, there's hope.



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ABOUT TONY MORGAN:



Tony is the Founder and Lead Strategist of The Unstuck Group. Started in 2009, The Unstuck Group has served 500 churches throughout the United States and several countries around the world. Previously, Tony served on the senior leadership teams of three rapidly growing churches including NewSpring Church in South Carolina. He has five published books including, *The Unstuck Church*, and, with Amy Anderson, he hosts the The Unstuck Church Podcast which has thousands of listeners each month.