

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

The Truth About Multisite - Episode 236

The Future of Multisite (Part 1)

Many multisite churches are struggling with the negative outcomes of the model they've chosen and asking the question: **should we continue forward or un-multisite?** Recent public multisite collapses also have church leaders questioning the viability of the model as a whole.

At The Unstuck Group, we believe that when multisite is done correctly, it can be an effective strategy for carrying out the mission of the Church. So, in Part 1 of our Future of Multisite series, Tony and Amy are breaking down some of the truths and lies about multisite.

Lie #1: Multisite is in decline and churches are learning that the model itself is broken.

In 2006, Leadership Network identified 1,500 multisite churches in their database. By 2018, that number had grown to over 5,000. In 2021, one of every four churches that took our Vital Signs report identified as multisite. And the EFCA reported that 70% of megachurches today are multisite. The data is clear: Multisite is trending upward, not downward. But does that mean it's a healthy ministry model?

A recent survey from Leadership Network and Portable Church found that if multisite churches were a denomination, they would be the largest Protestant denomination in North America by worship attendance. They also found that multisite churches are actually **growing faster and reporting more faith conversions** than new church plants.

Lie #2: The same strategies that lead to a healthy church plant can also be used to launch a healthy multisite campus.

Church planting and multisite are both models for multiplication—and there are *some* similarities in the strategies you might use to launch a new church or a new campus. But there are also many key differences:

Multisite = One church in multiple geographic locations

Church Planting = Multiple churches in multiple geographic locations

Multisite = What do the people who we are trying to reach have in common?

Church Planting = What's distinctive about the people who we are trying to reach?

Multisite = One mission, one vision, one ministry strategy

Church Planting = Same mission, but often with different visions and strategies to reach people in different communities

Multisite = Launch campuses in locations where people are already connected to the church

Church Planting = Launch churches in locations where people are not connected to a church

Multisite = How can we *simplify* systems and focus our effort to leverage economies of scale across multiple locations?

Church Planting = How can we *customize* systems and expand our efforts to reach more people in one location?

Multisite = The campus pastor should be a strong team builder, galvanizer, and missionary

Church Plant = The church planter should be a strong preacher, visionary, and evangelist

Lie #3: Churches in decline should use multisite to combat the decline and experience growth again.

Think of multisite like a marriage:

- In a **healthy** marriage, having a child adds stress to the marriage dynamic, but makes the marriage stronger in the end.
- In an **unhealthy** marriage, adding a child to the already-strained dynamic creates more stress and can ultimately lead to its demise.

It's true that multisite helps healthy churches **grow** faster. But on the flip side, multisite helps unhealthy churches **decline** faster with every location added.

Lie #4: There are many ways to do multisite—and every strategy produces the same results.

We've seen a variety of multisite strategies used throughout the years. While no two multisite churches are exactly the same, common multisite models do have predictable outcomes:

Some models create more complexity by releasing too much autonomy to individual campuses. Some models lead to over-staffing. Some models foster division, rather than unity, among campuses. And some models simply aren't financially sustainable.

We'll dive deeper into specific multisite models in Part 2 of this series.

Free Webinar: “To Multisite or Un-Multisite: Clarify a Path Forward”

Whether you're currently leading a multisite church or simply considering the strategy for the future, join Tony Morgan and the Unstuck team on **March 31** for this [free multisite webinar](#).

We'll walk through the predictable outcomes of popular multisite models, define the role of the campus pastor, share what strategies are working (and aren't) for multisite churches across the country, and more. [Register today to secure your seat.](#)

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode236.