

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

You Don't Need Core Values - Episode 266

Four things churches don't need, and what they really need instead (Part 2)

In episode one of our series, we outlined how it's possible to have clarity and alignment around your mission statement and still be doing the wrong things to get the results you want.

After years of serving churches, we came to realize that *just* clarifying mission, vision, and value statements and running an improved version of the same old playbook for reach and spiritual formation strategies did not necessarily help churches get unstuck.

In this episode, we'll talk about our experience with core values statements—and what we've learned is a much more critical foundation for creating healthy, thriving churches.

Why You Don't Need Core Values

Organizations establish core values to:

- Clarify who they are (What's distinctive about the church?)
- Shape culture
- Create alignment on the team
- Help with decision-making, especially around competing priorities

As hard as we tried to push churches to identify values that would be distinctive to their mission and the culture they were hoping to create, the list of values was more often than not very similar from church to church (authenticity, teamwork, integrity, etc.)—or simply a restatement of their core doctrine as values statements (worship, serving others, etc.)

Most core value statements just seemed to add another level of “organizational statement clutter” without actually accomplishing the original purpose for having core values. In other words, **it's possible to have clear core values that leaders have memorized... and still be stuck.**

What You Need Instead

Having a strong team culture is much more important than having clear core values statements. Or, to put it another way: Your culture, whether it's healthy or toxic or anyplace in between, will do more to impact the fulfillment of your mission than whether or not you have clearly articulated core values.

It's less about what you say and more about how you behave. So how do you shape culture?

- 1. It starts with the lead pastor. Your culture will reflect how you behave and, more specifically, how you treat other people.**

For example: If you lead with good questions, you will foster a culture of curiosity. If you involve others in solving challenges and overcoming obstacles, you will foster a culture of collaboration. On the other hand, if you are unable to control your anger, you will foster a culture of fear. If you expect honor, but don't extend honor to others, you will create a culture of control.

- 2. Your culture will reflect how your senior leadership team behaves and, more specifically, how they treat other people.**

If you look at the top five people on your team, whether those are staff leaders or volunteer leaders, those five people in your ministry will shape the culture of the rest of the team and the church as a whole. Senior pastors are ultimately responsible for how that team behaves and treats other people—because that will shape how people perceive you and your leadership.

- 3. Your culture will reflect how your staff and lay leadership team behave and, more specifically, how they treat other people.**

Are we leading out of competence, character and chemistry in a way that is shaping the culture? This begins at day one with our recruiting and hiring, and it should also be a factor in the volunteer leadership roles that we're filling as well. It also needs to be reflected in the intentionality of the onboarding process.

This also impacts how we approach coaching and development. Many times our coaching and development conversations with people are all about getting things done. But we also need to be very intentional about the culture that we're trying to create on our teams. There needs to be some intentionality about reviews periodically to make sure that our team is hitting both the performance and the culture development plans that we want for our team.

If you are intentional about how you behave and treat other people in those three levels of leadership, then that will shape the culture of your team AND the culture of your church.

Next Steps

Rather than developing a list of core values, list out the specific culture-shaping behaviors that you've already started to model and that you want to be reflected throughout your team and your congregation. Narrow that down to no more than five specific behaviors. Make them action-oriented and describe what it looks like when teammates live out these behaviors as they engage with other people on your team.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode266.

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