

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

You Don't Need More Christian Education - Episode 268

Four things churches don't need, and what they really need instead (Part 4)

As we conclude our series on the four things churches *don't* need, we'll talk about why most churches don't need more evangelism training and Christian education, but rather, they *do* need an intentional strategy for both reaching new people and spiritual formation.

It seems to be an age-old tension within the church: Some churches pride themselves on their focus on evangelism, while others spotlight an emphasis on discipleship. In this episode, Tony and Amy share how the healthiest churches balance both reach **and** discipleship—and share some practical ideas of how your church can, too.

Why You Don't Need More Christian Education/Training

Every church wants to reach people for Jesus and help them take their next steps towards faith. However, in many cases, the strategies that they're using to do so aren't providing the results they want to experience... Often due to churches taking an educational approach, rather than creating opportunities that encourage real life transformation.

The fact is that most of us don't need more knowledge to become more like Jesus. We don't need more teaching and study on what Jesus modeled for us—most of us just need to put into practice the things we have already learned (Philippians 4:9).

Yes, there is a place for Bible teaching (and we **should** be getting that teaching every week at church). Yes, we **should** also embrace and practice spiritual disciplines like studying God's word, praying, and fasting.

However, some churches put far too much of their ministry energy into creating more educational offerings when they should be helping people put what they've *already* been taught into practice.

What You Need Instead

Instead of increasing their efforts around evangelism training and Christian education, churches need to develop reach and spiritual formation strategies that help people experience real life transformation.

Developing a Reach Strategy

A lot of churches assume that they can disciple people, send them out, and they will just naturally lead people to Jesus. But the intentional reach strategies we're seeing that are producing real life transformation are all built around:

- **Creating an invite culture.** 85-90% of people start attending a church because someone invited them. Help your people understand that their missional role is to build relationships—*then* the church can partner with them to share the good news of Jesus.
 - While some people do lead others to Jesus in a 1:1 setting, this more frequently occurs in a gathering when a person can sit under a gifted teacher, hear and ponder God's word, wrestle with the teaching, and respond.
- **Helping people build intentional relationships.** We need to help our church identify the people that God already has in their life (family members, neighbors, coworkers, or friends who we are already doing life with). Are we leading a life that's pointing **them** to Jesus? There are a number of ways that we can do this:
 - Praying for people. Engaging in intentional time and conversation with people. Serving others based on the needs we see in their life.
 - Out of those relationships, they will see us living a life filled with joy, filled with purpose, filled with hope, and filled with God's love.
- **Designing content that is helpful to the people they're trying to reach.** Through both our weekend services and our content online, we need to make sure that we're answering the questions that the people that we're trying to reach are asking. Once you identify what the questions are, begin to think about:
 - What are some of the answers we can provide? What are some of the resources we could be creating? How can we start to connect with people that are currently outside the faith and create content that will draw them to the church?
 - This is also a great opportunity for our church to share content and prepare their friends for what they're going to experience once they connect with the church.

Developing a Spiritual Formation Strategy

If you started from scratch, how would you design a path that helps people move from where they are to where God wants them to be? How would you best equip someone to do the work God wants them to do? Try this exercise:

1. **Forget about your church for a moment.** Go back in time to when you began your spiritual journey and think about how God stretched your faith and shaped who you are now. What happened in your life to help you move from someone who was considering the claims of Christ, to becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ?
2. **Engage this same discussion with your team.** What did God use in *their* lives? If it worked for the leaders in your church, then it's quite possible those same things will be important to others who connect to your ministry.
3. **Use the conversation as a foundation** for establishing how the church can come alongside people to experience practical teaching, mentoring relationships, spiritual disciplines, ministry opportunities, and preparation for those pivotal moments in our life where we need to lean on God.

Remember, you can't *force* spiritual maturity on anyone, but you can create the ministry environments that will foster an opportunity for people to experience the same things God used to grow your own faith.

That's what we mean by creating intentional ministry strategies that help people experience transformation. It's less time in classes, and more time developing ways for people to get connected in relationships, discovering their spiritual gifts, and practicing personal disciplines.

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