

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Best of 2022: Is This The New Normal for Giving and Attendance? (Replay) - Episode 276

Our Best Episodes of 2022

Great leaders ask great questions—and we get plenty of great questions from our listeners and clients every week. In this episode, Tony and Amy answer a common question we've received in the last few months: **Is this the new normal for attendance and giving?** After all, leaders like to win, and giving and attendance are two of the easiest metrics to measure and determine whether or not we're winning as churches.

So, is this the new normal for attendance and giving?

Yes. The legitimate excuses we had for people not showing up to church in 2020 and 2021 no longer exist in 2022, and the people who haven't come back to church yet are most likely not coming back at all.

In regards to giving, we should anticipate that giving will decline further in the near future. Inflation has impacted households and personal investments have taken a hit. Churches are starting to experience declined giving after 1-2 years of not reaching new people, and they often haven't adjusted their expenditures accordingly (primarily staffing) because they're still waiting for attendance and giving to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Giving: Where do we go from here?

The days of us expecting people to give to the church because they're members of the church are behind us. Here are some practical next steps for increasing giving:

- **Talk about it and teach about it.** Lots of new people are coming in this season, which means they may also be new to the faith and Jesus' teachings on money. We shouldn't shy away from offerings and invitations to give, and we should teach often on what the Bible says about money.

- **Connect giving to the mission.** Tell stories often of the lives that are being impacted through your church. If your ministry isn't producing transformation for people, why would you expect people to invest in your mission?
- **Reduce expenses to create margin.** This might look like...
 - Right-sizing your staff team.
 - Revisiting your actual building/facility needs.
 - Revisiting your recurring ministry expenses. (*Are we doing this because we've always done this? Is this really helping us accomplish our mission?*)

Attendance: Where do we go from here?

If this is the new normal, then the only way we're going to see attendance numbers increase is by reaching new people again. Here are some practical next steps for increasing attendance:

- **Develop a reach strategy *and* a spiritual formation strategy.** Do you have both? Are you measuring them and tracking the trends to know whether or not they are working?
- **Stop trying to count online viewers in your attendance... and stop using multipliers to inflate those numbers.** Equating online to physical attendance is not helping churches make better decisions, and inflating attendance numbers only delays the important conversations we need to be having about how to get more people in the building to connect with and serve other people.
- **Stop blaming the lower attendance on people attending services less frequently.** Instead of blaming people, focus on getting people to show up and then on providing an experience that is so helpful that they are compelled to return *and* invite their friends.

Final Thoughts

Sometimes we're guilty of using the data to make excuses and avoid the tough decisions that we need to be making. Instead, we need to look at the data as a push to encourage the right questions about the changes that we need to be making—not only to reach people, but to continue to help people take their next steps towards Jesus.

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