

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Pruning: Introducing the 2023 Unstuck Church Get Healthy Again Challenge - Episode 278

## *Pruning: How to Slim Down Your Ministry in 2023*

The beginning of a new year means new goals, dreams, and resolutions. For many of us, this is a time when we evaluate our goals and habits and think about what we would like to change.

This new year, The Unstuck Group wants to help you get your **church** as healthy as it's ever been, too! In this episode, Tony and Amy are kicking off a new series and a challenge for churches: the “2023 Unstuck Church Get Healthy Again Challenge.”

We want to help you assess your health as a church—and then establish some new year's resolutions to be a healthier version of your church this year. To start, we'll talk about the things that need to be stopped or shed in order to get healthy.

## *4 Steps for Getting Healthy Again*

Before we move forward, it's important to stop and take a look at our “**before**” reality. Take pictures of those things that remind you there are changes that need to be made and get a good read on your church vital signs. Looking at the numbers will help you establish what your goal is for health, and, more importantly, when you've made some changes and improved your health, you can celebrate together with your team.

Every action you take as you lead your church is a vote for the type of church you wish to become. So, if you're ready to get your church healthy again in 2023, you need to...

1. Find an accountability partner.
2. Know your current vital signs (taking the [Vital Signs Survey](#) now will allow you to compare your numbers to our Q1 [Unstuck Church Report](#) released at the end of February).
3. Engage the right exercises to build your core muscles.
4. Embrace pruning.

## Embracing Pruning in 2023

If you continue to add more and more and never prune, you are going to get unhealthy. Stuck churches have more ministries. Stuck churches have more events. Stuck churches have more staff. Stuck churches have more people in meetings rather than engaging the mission. **If we always add but never prune, we will get out of shape and our ministry will not be healthy.** When we don't practice pruning, eventually the briars and the thorns take over (Isaiah 5:6).

So, what's the difference between pruning and unhealthy decline? Biblical pruning (John 15:2) has these three characteristics:

1. **The pruning is intentional.** If you're experiencing decline as a church that is not the result of intentional action you've taken, that's not pruning, that's decline.
2. **Pruning involves both cutting back what's unhealthy *and* what's healthy.** Churches are rarely willing to cut back good ministries that are producing some fruit, even though they could be preventing the church from maximizing its potential health and impact.
3. **Pruning eventually produces *more fruit*.** If your church is plateaued or declining, and that extends from months to years without new fruit and new health—you haven't experienced pruning, you're probably just stuck.

**Why don't churches prune?** Even if the pruning will ultimately help the church produce more fruit in the long-run, in many cases, leaders are unwilling to do it because of the fear of how people will respond. They fear that people will leave the church and that giving will decline.

It's true that having a clear vision will both attract and repel people. However, it's also true that **it's not possible to grow a healthy church and ignore core Biblical principles, including the practice of pruning.** Healthy, thriving churches have learned that periodically you have to prune. And if pastors and church leaders prune using the model we see in Scripture, your ministry will bear more fruit. **Your church will get healthy again.**

## Final Thoughts

Pastors, if you'd like to do something bold through your church, you will have to choose to do something bold. There is no perfect day. There is no right time. For the trajectory to change, there has to be one day when you simply make the choice. Will that day be today?

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode278](https://theunstuckgroup.com/episode278).

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Thankfully, it's much easier to make changes now—before your church is in the headlines—than to try to reestablish those relationships after they've been torpedoed by a costly financial misstep. And that's where our friends at [BELAY](#) can help.

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