

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

How Large Churches Are Encouraging Engagement Beyond Sunday - Episode 282

What's Working in Large Churches Now (Pt. 2)

In our current series, we're unpacking key learnings from our conversations with four large, growing churches - [Christ Fellowship](#) in Miami, [Transformation Church](#) near Charlotte, [Sun Valley Community Church](#) in Phoenix, and [North Point Community Church](#) in Atlanta:

1. They are intentional about widening the front door and inviting people to follow Jesus.
2. **They are encouraging people to engage next steps and connect with other people beyond Sunday morning.**
3. They are leveraging multisite strategy as a reaction to growth that enables more growth.
4. They are focused on shaping a strong culture on their team that leads to a healthy culture in their church.

[In our last episode](#), we focused on the first theme: intentionally widening the front door and inviting people to follow Jesus. And while it's true that many churches are seeing new faces on the weekend, those same churches often struggle to then engage those new people beyond Sunday morning. That's why this week, we'll continue our series with stories and strategies for helping people take a next step beyond Sunday morning.

Reach and Discipleship Strategies

Many churches we worked with have strategies to reach new people *or* disciple believers, but not both. It's more common to see a defined spiritual formation/discipleship strategy, but rare to see a defined reach strategy. When we engage with churches in the Unstuck process, we strive to help them answer:

- How do we connect with and engage people who are outside the faith and church (reach) **AND** how do we help people take their next steps towards Christ and follow Jesus (spiritual formation)?

After all, how do you help someone become like Jesus if they are only concerned about their own spiritual formation? It's impossible to be like Jesus without a heart for reaching others. Likewise,

how do you help someone become like Jesus if you only help them *believe* in Jesus but you don't help them to *follow* Jesus?

Through our conversations, we found that churches who are winning in both of these areas:

1. Try to actively engage people with intentional next steps beyond Sunday services.
2. Help people develop relationships with other people to connect them to the church and encourage spiritual formation.

Key Thought: Churches need intentional strategies for both reaching new people *and* helping everyone take a next step on their spiritual journey.

Teach, Model, Make It Easy

The key to success is that these next steps aren't just taught in messages on Sunday morning—they are also modeled by the leadership and these churches are making these next steps as easy as possible. **Teach it. Model it. Make it easy.** Here's an example:

- **Teach it.** Christ Fellowship shared that they are experiencing a healthy influx into groups that meet in people's homes throughout the week. These groups are their primary way of encouraging spiritual growth beyond Sundays—and it's also a key strategy for encouraging people to connect relationally with others.
- **Model it.** Why are they seeing this momentum with group connections in this season? One of the reasons is the way this is modeled from the top down. Their Lead Pastor, Executive Pastor and everyone on their senior leadership team are leading small groups—which gives the pastors credibility when they preach about the importance of community on Sunday mornings. (By the way, when they teach about community, there's always a strong encouragement to take a next step by joining a small group.)
- **Make it easy.** CF offers an experience called "Group Connect" where folks can meet a variety of small group leaders and join a group immediately. In other words, they are not only communicating the importance of groups and modeling the importance of groups, they are making the next step of joining a group as easy as possible.

It's all too common for us to make this more complicated than it needs to be. That's why we encourage churches to focus on a [discipleship path](#)—rather than promoting dozens of ministry programs and events, encourage everyone to take 3-4 specific next steps. For example:

- Transformation Church uses the idea of "Worship + 4." Pastor Derwin Gray explained, "We use the word 'Transformer' to describe disciples of Jesus and work to intentionally develop five characteristics that help us grow: Worship, Connect, Serve, Give, and Invite."

- At TC, every event that happens with the church building is designed as an on-ramp into serving and small groups. The win isn't how many people show up to the event. The win is how many people connect into a serving and small groups.

Key Thought: If you want people to take a next step, you have to teach it, model it and make it easy to take that step.

Measurable Next Steps

When it comes to encouraging people to engage in next steps and connect with other people beyond Sunday, we need strategies that are both **intentional** and **measurable**. For example:

- Over the last couple of years, North Point Community Church has been striving to increase the number of active adults engaged in the life of the church across all their locations. Their engagement strategy is intentional and measurable because:
 - They still measure attendance and giving, but they've also added a focus on the number of "active adults" engaged in the life of the church.
 - NP is tracking every point of engagement that they can: Serving, giving, group participation, checking in a kid on Sunday mornings, etc.
- NP set this goal to increase their number of active adults and made every ministry responsible for hitting that goal. **Every ministry is invested in the same win.** Why? Because the leaders at North Point indicated that "active adults" are the rising tide that lifts all ships. That's why they are so focused on this area of engagement.

Like Transformation Church, NP is focusing on four areas of engagement beyond attending services on Sunday morning: inviting, serving, giving and connecting in a group. The team at NP has learned that if they can get adults to get involved in **two** of these measurable areas of engagement, those people are far more likely to remain a part of the church. In other words, attending services on Sunday isn't enough. In fact, they've learned the "stickiest" area of engagement is probably serving—it's even better at encouraging people to remain a part of the church than joining a small group.

Key Thought: You won't know if your spiritual formation strategy is working unless you measure it and track your results.

Final Thoughts

Your church may not have both a defined reach strategy and a defined spiritual formation strategy. If that's you, [we would love to help](#) your ministry clarify these strategies so that you can teach it, model it and make it easy for people to take their next steps towards Christ.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode282.

Free Webinar: What's Working in Large Churches Now

Are you a pastor pursuing greater health and growth for your church in 2023? At this free webinar on February 23, Tony Morgan and Amy Anderson are sitting down with senior leaders Chris Hodges (Church of the Highlands), Omar Giritli (Christ Fellowship Church in Miami), and Miles McPherson (Rock Church) to discuss what's actually working in their large churches now to reach new people and engage people in the life of the church a few years post-pandemic. [Register now to join us.](#)

Special Thanks to Our Sponsor for This Episode:



The Church Lawyers' Client Member program was created for organizations just like yours. Their team of Christian legal professionals are personally called to empower and protect churches, ministries, and their leaders to fulfill their mission by providing biblically informed and ministry-focused legal solutions.

Whether governance, employment, litigation, or other matters, let The Church Lawyers walk alongside you as you navigate legal issues facing your ministry. Sign up for the The Church Lawyers' Client Member program today at thechurchlawyers.com.