

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

The Challenges of Sustained Health - Episode 292

The Challenges of the Church Lifecycle

When a church is in the sustained health phase, they are growing, unified, and bearing good fruit. Churches experiencing sustained health are typically asking one question: “How do we **preserve** what’s working right now so that we can continue to have impact in our ministry?” But they *should* be asking: “What do we need to **change** so that we can begin to multiply?”

The priority focus of churches in sustained health should be multiplying and reproducing at all levels. That’s why the core challenge of churches in sustained health is **Strategy constraints to encourage multiplication in all areas of the ministry**. In this episode, Tony and Amy will break down the four key challenges of churches in sustained health and how to address them.

Challenge 1: Multiplication of Believers.

Helping more people meet and follow Jesus.

A church that is experiencing sustained health didn’t get there by catering to insiders, but by reaching new people and helping them meet and follow Jesus. If we aren’t careful, though, we can lose this focus as our church grows and reaches a point of sustained health.

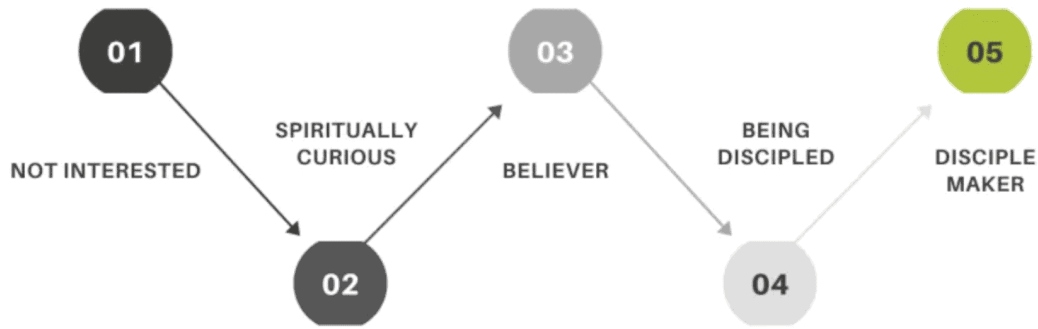
When we feel like our current methods and strategies are working, we can easily become insider-focused and stuck in our ways. That’s why churches in sustained health need to be focused on what needs to **change**—not what needs to stay the same. After all, an insider-focus is one of the key characteristics of a church that is headed toward decline.

Key question: “Are we seeing more people meet and follow Jesus?”

Challenge 2: Multiplication of Disciples.

Creating a clear discipleship path that helps disciples make more disciples.

When we work with churches at The Unstuck Group, we encourage them to form their discipleship path around the 5 steps of the spiritual journey:



Within this spiritual journey, there are few steps that get easily missed, including #5: Not just discipling people, but discipling people to become disciple makers. Whatever you decide your discipleship path is going to be, the final step should lead to influencing and leading others.

Key question: “Are we seeing more people take next steps, specifically in moving from being disciplined to becoming a disciple maker?”

Challenge 3: Multiplication of Leaders.

Developing a culture of leaders who multiply their leadership.

Churches in sustained health need to be intentional about how they are developing and raising up leaders. Churches who want to grow in this area will need to create systems & strategies for:

1. Identifying potential leaders.
2. Training and equipping leaders.
3. Giving the leaders the opportunity to lead (empowering them and releasing them into ministry).

Leadership development isn’t something that starts and ends—it’s a cycle. The church must continually develop the next generation so the mission can move forward. As a starting point for leadership development, have a conversation with your team around these questions:

1. What opportunities are available to engage potential leaders?
2. How can we create relational environments to earn speaking permission in the lives of potential leaders?
3. How can we measure our process? How can we measure our progress? (*See our episode on [How to Find & Measure Leaders In Your Church.](#)*)
4. How do we build high-level volunteer positions into our ministry structure?

Key question: “Are we seeing more people taking on the mantle of discipling others and leading ministry?”

Challenge 4: Multiplication of the Ministry.

Multiplying the ministry beyond the four walls.

This is one of the definitive marks of a church that's reached sustained health: the ministry is mobilized beyond the walls of the church. What that mobilization leading to multiplication looks like will differ, but the end result is that the footprint of the church's mission expands beyond its current territory. That's when the mission becomes a movement.

For some, multiplication may be extending the ministries of the church into the community. For others that may mean opening new campuses through multisite. For others it may mean planting new churches in other parts of the region or the world. Whatever the case, God's design is for the church to expand its territory.

Key question: "Are we seeing our ministry expand beyond the walls of our church?"

Final Thoughts

There's a recurring theme in all four of these areas: If we want to be healthy, we can't be content to stay where we are. We have to continually pursue the "more" that God has for our church.

If your church is in, or desires to be in, a place of sustained health, consider this question: **Are you willing to change to continue multiplying?** If you can honestly say yes, you're probably on the growing side of sustained health and should assess where your church is today through each of the four key questions we just discussed. Which of these four areas are you NOT seeing growth in, and what next step might you take to get there?

If you say no, you may be moving toward maintenance.

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Take the Unstuck Church Assessment

Over time, most organizations start, grow, thrive, decline, and eventually end. But that's not God's plan for the Church. If you're unsure where your church sits on the church lifecycle today, [take the free Unstuck Church Assessment](#).

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