

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Pressing Questions: Succession Planning & Making Bold Moves - Episode 299

Pressing Questions for Pastors in 2023

Our goal for The Unstuck Church Podcast is to answer the most pressing and relevant questions that pastors are asking. When our team sits down to plan our content series, that's where we start—by discussing: **What's on the heart and minds of pastors today?** That's why we're dedicating a whole series to addressing the "Pressing Questions for Pastors in 2023."

According to [our recent data](#), more than one in every four churches is actively planning for pastoral succession. And when that many churches are focused on transition, it can lead to a lack of focus on the vision over time. In this episode, we'll kick off our new series answering some of the most pressing questions we hear from church leaders with a conversation on succession planning and making bold moves.

Question 1: How Do I Retire & Leave My Church as Healthy As Possible?

Pastors *should* be asking "How do we prepare for succession and position the church to be healthier *after* I retire?"

The first question is more about preparing for the actual retirement and preparing the church for a new pastor. The second is more about positioning the church for future health. In a way, this is kind of like the difference of planning an extravagant wedding ceremony rather than more thoughtful and intentional work of preparing for a healthy marriage relationship.

Why are some pastors hesitant to prepare for succession?

1. Many times when church leaders have been in ministry for decades, or the majority of their lives, the title of "pastor" can become their identity.
2. It's just uncomfortable, especially in a highly relational role.

However... “There are only three possible endings to a pastor's tenure: 1) He or she is the pastor when Jesus returns, 2) the pastor that runs the church into the ground and closes it, or 3) the pastor that effectively transitions leadership to another person.”

So, “How do we prepare for succession and position the church to be healthier *after* I retire?”

First of all, start sooner rather than later. The quicker pastors can orient to the idea that we are all “interim” or “acting” pastors, the easier it is to start talking about what happens next. And the earlier you can start planning, the more effective you’ll be at recognizing the right time and being financially prepared to have good options for the future.

5 mantras for a healthy succession:

1. I will approach my position with the understanding that I am the “acting” Senior/Lead Pastor of my church.
2. I will operate with a spirit and attitude of faith, not fear.
3. I will communicate a clear path and plan with a concrete time-frame.
4. I will demonstrate rigorous commitment to and trust in my successor.
5. I will invest relationally and experientially in the life of the incoming successor.

Question 2: How Do We Refresh Vision?

Pastors *should* be asking “**What’s the next bold move God’s calling us to engage?**”

A 3-5 year vision feels too far away in this season, and “vision statements” are oftentimes just a restatement of our mission statement. Instead, you need a one-page document that highlights the “bold moves” you are sensing God has for your church in the future. It's important that you not only describe as clearly as possible what the bold move will look like, but you also address the “why” question: “Why do we believe God wants us to pursue this vision and these specific bold moves?”

Why churches aren’t making bold moves in this season:

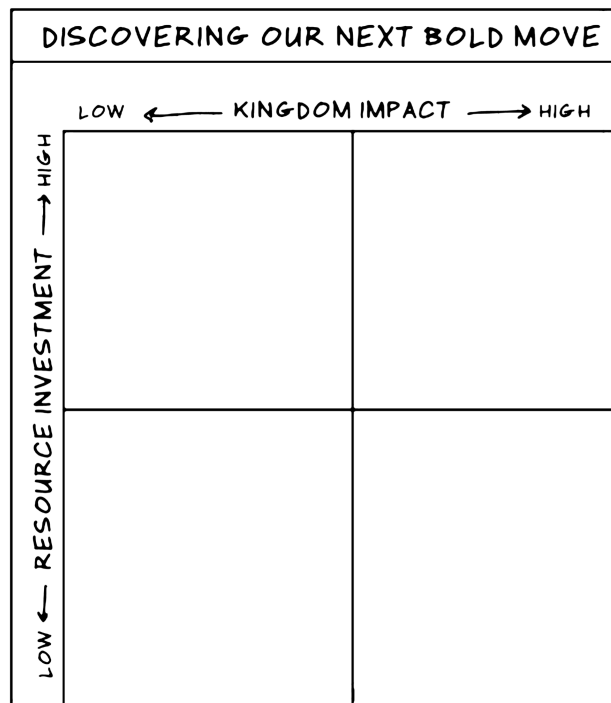
1. We are too busy doing what we’ve always done.
2. We aren’t intentional about who is on the team around us.
3. We are waiting for perfect conditions.
4. We are insecure leaders.

No one is saying that making a bold move is easy, but if our current strategies aren’t working, **we can’t expect different results if we’re unwilling to approach ministry differently.**

How can churches go about determining what their next bold moves are?

When churches are engaging in the [Unstuck Process](#), we encourage them weeks in advance to begin praying, dreaming, and having conversations internally about where they feel God is leading their church. Once we're together onsite, we talk through and continue to dream about all that God might have for the church moving forward, then take all of those great ideas and narrow them down.

We often land on **one or two specific bold moves** that we think the church needs to engage in the coming months in order to move the mission forward. That conversation includes talking through the pros and cons, the resource investment required, some of the risk that might be required, and on the other side of that, the kingdom impact that could happen as well:



Every healthy church needs to have one key bold move in front of them to keep them pressing forward in the mission God's called them to. **Why?** Because if it's a bold move, it's bigger than anything that any one of us could accomplish in our own effort. This will cause us to lean on God more, to be praying specifically, and to be inviting others to join us in that bold move with their prayers, their time, their financial resources, etc. It helps keep the church united in purpose.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode299.

Free Webinar: How to Re-Engage Your Church in the Mission

Your congregation today is not your pre-pandemic congregation. At this one-time live event, Tony Morgan & Amy Anderson will teach you the practical strategies needed to reignite your church's passion and purpose for living on mission in this season. [Register now](#) to join us for the free webinar on June 29.

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