

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Pressing Questions: Listener Q&A

## - Episode 302

### *Pressing Questions for Pastors in 2023 (Part 4)*

We've dedicated a whole series to "Pressing Questions for Pastors in 2023," answering some of the known questions pastors are wondering about in this season. Now, as we wrap up our series, we wanted to **hear from you!**

In this episode, Tony and Amy answer listener-submitted questions on various topics related to ministry leadership.

### *Listener Q&A*

#### **What do you see as the balance between systems and the presence of God?**

**AMY:** When people come to church, they start in the "outer court" which can be noisy and full of distractions. We have to intentionally design a journey that brings them to the inner court and then ultimately to the Holy of Holies. The main challenge is all of the distractions that can get in the way—which is why we recommend having someone off platform to help watch the experience and help get rid of all the distractions.

Ultimately, we need to step back and ask: What's the win for that worship time? And how do we design it in a way that the people that we're leading can actually get to that Holy of Holies?

#### **How do we lead Gen Z in ministry and leadership? It seems like Gen Z church staff have a much different work ethic than previous generations.**

**TONY:** We all have unique personalities and experiences that shape who we are as people and as ministers of the Gospel. Rather than looking at this as a generational challenge, I challenge you to look at it as an individual opportunity for coaching on your staff team and to evaluate your hiring process. Remember: When we were younger, we had people that were mentoring, coaching, and developing us because we needed some maturity to take place in our lives and in our leadership. The younger staff on our team deserve that same opportunity.

**AMY:** Gen Z is known for having an expectation of quick career progress and a desire for feedback. One-on-one coaching is critical for this generation, so we need to have development plans and

mentors that are pulling them up and exposing them to new things. They want to feel like they're learning, growing, and making progress.

### **Where will we find pastors and pastoral staff when not many young people are going into ministry, and there are so many pastors leaving or retiring right now?**

**AMY:** Ultimately I think we have to stop being dependent on external sources for our future pastors and leaders and begin to truly develop them in-house. The “old school way” many people got into ministry is that they started following Jesus, had some great mentors around them, their leadership gifts were discovered, and they moved into a leadership role within the church. So it's not a silver bullet or quick fix, but I think we have to continue to engage people and give ministry away so that people with leadership gifts can emerge and get on a path towards pastoral staff. I know it's harder, but that's my encouragement: Get your leadership pipeline built out and start looking for people to join on that path of moving towards leadership.

### **What are the most effective structures for church governance?**

**TONY:** There's actually an inverse relationship between the size of a church, the church's board, and the number of committees that the church has compared to the overall health and growth of the church. In other words, stuck declining churches tend to have larger church boards and more committees and healthy, thriving churches tend to have smaller church boards and fewer committees.

Complex governance is a reflection of the complexity of leadership, the complexity of defining direction, and the complexity of making decisions. In healthy, thriving churches, they've recognized that in order to create unity, clarify direction, and effectively make better decisions, they have to streamline their governance so that we're empowering the right people to make the right decisions at the right time. Then we're also freeing up more people to actually engage the mission to be involved in ministry. For more on this topic, check out our series on [Effective Church Boards & Governance Models](#).

### **Since we have more tools available than ever to communicate with unbelievers, are you aware of a “best practices” outreach resource for churches?**

**AMY:** I think it's important to realize that drawing people to your church is not usually related to digital or social media—it's your church body who loves your church and wants to invite their friends. So, I think the digital side is about creating things that come alongside and help your people invite people to church. For example: creating content marketing resources that are helpful to people's everyday life. If your church creates that and your people leverage those resources and share them online, they've just created a positive exposure for your church.

You also need to focus on who it is that you're trying to reach, because especially on social media, the different platforms are used by different generations. We need to know who we're trying to

reach before we know what medium to use to reach them. This is also a great place to utilize Gen Z leaders, as they're "native" to digital spaces.

**How is the succession process different for small churches than for a large church? What are the criteria used to evaluate potential candidates?**

**TONY:** The strengths and wiring you're looking for might be different, but the process is going to look the same. Ultimately, I think the answer for both small churches and large churches is you need somebody from the outside to help you through this process.

In most instances, when churches try to find their next senior pastor on their own, it takes years, while the churches that spend the money to hire an outside firm to help them with the succession process get through the process more quickly. Because of that, they're bringing in new fresh leadership more quickly and don't experience as much of the dip as the churches that try to find their next senior pastor just using an internal process. The other key advantage there is that somebody from the outside can bring an unbiased perspective on internal candidates that might have built relational equity but aren't really the right leadership fit.

**I'd love to hear specifics on second-chair leadership. Specifically, how do you lead (from the second chair) if the lead pastor is a high-capacity doer rather than a leader?**

**AMY:** First of all, if the lead pastor is a high capacity doer rather than a leader, that lead pastor is going to be the lid to the church's growth. So if you're a lead pastor and you find that you're regularly jumping over your second chair leader, it's a good thing to step back and try to figure out: why is that happening that way? And if you have an executive pastor, you should be being set up to do [the four things that only you can do](#). Everything else should be delegated to that second chair leadership.

Then, when I think about the executive pastor role, there are four things that an executive pastor has to own:

1. They have to make vision actionable. The lead pastor is responsible for vision, but it's the executive pastor who has to own the responsibility for closing the gap between that vision and the execution of that vision.
2. They have to oversee strategic planning and drive the core initiatives that the church has agreed on.
3. They have to own leadership and create a healthy, high-impact team.
4. They have to keep the team aligned and ensure that every ministry leader understands what success looks like for their team, their role, and how that fits in with the overarching goals of the church.

**How do you move a vision from a vague future concept with no finish line, to something that we can accomplish and impacts our budgeting process and strategies?**

**TONY:** Many times vision statements in churches are really just a restatement of the mission statement. A vision should be a clear picture of where the ministry is going in the future—it reflects the place we want to be, but we're not quite there yet. So our vision needs to be well-defined: we need to know what the win is, what the timing is, and who owns what so that we can move forward on whatever is required to get that vision accomplished.

So if things feel vague, you may need to step back and ask: Have we really clarified our vision? Because if it has been clarified, there are probably only 1-2 bold moves that we're focused on accomplishing in this next season of ministry. Once these bold moves are defined, we have to make sure we have the right leader and the right team in place and clear action plans so that we know exactly what needs to be accomplished **today** in order to see that vision become reality in the **future**, whenever we're intending for that to happen.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode302](https://theunstuckgroup.com/episode302).

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