

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Stupid Church Tricks: Making Anything Louder than the Gospel - Episode 332

Stupid Church Tricks (Part 3)

Most churches start out on fire for their mission: to reach new people for Jesus. But as “new people” turn into “church people,” the voices on the inside of the church often become louder.

In this episode, Tony and Amy discuss the ways churches get off mission and become insider-focused and offer advice and inspiration on how to reverse this trajectory.

Stupid Church Tricks: Making Anything Louder than the Gospel

#1: When anything becomes louder than the Gospel.

This includes anything from politics and cultural issues to even global missions or specific community needs. Our primary mission needs to be about making new disciples of Jesus. We can do good works, and we should, but our primary focus needs to be on our mission.

#2: When what we're against can be louder than what we're for/than the Gospel.

This is typically related to how other churches are engaging their missions—whether it's their teaching approach, worship environments, or discipleship strategies. When we focus so much on what we *aren't* going to do as a church, we lose sight of what we *are* supposed to be about.

#3: When the way we do church becomes more important than why we do it (the Gospel/Great Commission).

In other words, we're so focused on our ministry strategies that we lose sight of the mission that God's called us to. If we aren't willing to change and adapt, we're risking “becoming extinct.”

#4: When defending the Bible becomes louder than making new disciples.

People need to hear the truth from God's word in order to take next steps. But when it comes to non-essential issues, we have to ask ourselves: Do we want to win the theological argument, or do we want to help someone meet and follow Jesus?

#5: When spiritual formation becomes louder than the Gospel.

We can't just focus solely on spiritual formation and then neglect our call to share the good news with people that aren't currently in church or aren't currently Jesus followers. Without action, there is no transformation.

How to Re-Focus on the Mission

When we find that our churches are making political or social causes louder than the gospel and it's causing division in our church, we have a spiritual immaturity challenge to overcome. We need to continue to encourage people to take their next steps toward Christ and experience a heart change that begins to elevate loving God and loving others over preferences and politics.

Secondly, as leaders, we have to constantly remind others of who we are and where we're going. We need to elevate the mission: "This is why we exist as a ministry." And we need to recast the vision: "This is where God's calling us to go in the future."

The only chance of establishing unity is to work hard and often to maintain alignment on the ultimate mission of the church.

If your church is experiencing a more general insider-focus that many churches drift into over time, here are a few steps we recommend:

1. **Be intentional about shaping culture.** Your staff and your congregation need to embrace this fundamental belief: My church is for me, but it's not about me.
2. **Clarify who you are trying to reach.** Your mission field isn't a location; it's a group of people. Then prioritize reaching new people and fight against an insider-focused mentality.
 1. To return to healthy growth, you must address this key question: What are we willing to do to reach people outside the church and outside the faith?
 2. Plan for guests to show up. Your weekend experiences should be planned with newcomers and new believers in mind.
3. **Identify distractions that might be pulling you off-mission.** Just because something is helpful or good doesn't mean it will advance your mission. We call this the complexity creep, and the most common form of complexity we see is over-programming.

Next Steps

[Read the story](#) of Trace Ridge Baptist Church. Then reflect:

- Is our church accomplishing its mission? Do we even know what our mission is?
- Are we inward-focused or outward-focused?
- If our church disappeared tomorrow, would our community notice?
- Is our faith in what God can do bigger than our fear of change?

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