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**THINGS CHURCHES
DON'T ACTUALLY
NEED**

BY TONY MORGAN

**THE
UNSTUCK
GROUP®**



INTRODUCTION

When The Unstuck Group first began, most churches reached out to us because they wanted to clarify their mission, vision, and values. And in many cases, they were right—there were certainly some gaps in those areas that were contributing to their “stuckness.”

However, we learned that just clarifying mission, vision, and value statements and running an improved version of the same old playbook for reach and spiritual formation strategies did not necessarily help churches get unstuck.

It's possible to have clarity and alignment and still be doing the wrong things to get the results that you want. In other words, alignment isn't the win—more people following Jesus and becoming more like Christ is the win. So **how do we get there?**

In this e-book, I'll try to convince you of four things your church doesn't need to fulfill your God-given mission, and what you need instead. Hopefully, we'll still have a job at the end of it!

— **Tony Morgan**

Founder & Lead Strategist of The Unstuck Group

YOU DON'T NEED A MISSION STATEMENT

This one will probably sting a little—especially after the hours you spent nailing down your mission statement. At the end of the day, there are other more important aspects of your mission that require focus for a church to experience health and to make a greater Kingdom impact.

Let's start with why organizations develop mission statements. Mission statements clarify why we exist and what our purpose is. For churches, this is usually some variation of the Great Commission—go into the world, make disciples, and baptize them.

Back in the day, we would spend hours with churches crafting their mission statements. But as time went on, we came to realize that having a mission statement on the wall or repeated in Sunday services didn't help churches experience health. In other words, it's possible to have a great mission statement, etch it in stone, ensure that everyone in the congregation knows it... and still be stuck.

Many times, the churches we engaged with were stuck, not because their mission wasn't clear, but because of the way they were engaging their mission. How did we know their mission statement wasn't working? Because there were no results. So, through the years, we've shifted the [*Unstuck Process*](#) to focus on the way churches engage their mission. We couldn't find a link between having a great mission statement and becoming a healthy church.

But You Do Need to Know Your Mission Field...

You can be a healthy church without a great mission statement, but you can't be a healthy church without knowing your mission field—and, more specifically, who you're trying to reach within your mission field.

Churches tend to hyper-focus on how they are going to fulfill their mission regardless of who they are trying to reach. They tend to get married to preferences around ministry strategies and then they hope and pray new people connect with the church and faith.

Healthy churches, on the other hand, think about who before how—they think about people before ministry strategy preferences. That's why our current Unstuck Process begins with a deep dive into the mission field by looking at the community around the church, answering the questions:

- Where has God placed your church?
- Who are you trying to reach within that mission field?
- What's important to the person you are trying to reach?
- What questions are they asking about life and faith?

So, how can churches determine if they're winning when it comes to this focus on their mission field? **Measure it.** Ask: What is the current profile of a person who is connecting with your church, and does it match the profile of the person you are trying to reach?

Here are some ways to be sure:

- Ask new people to share their demographic information when they commit to membership or partnership.
- Periodically survey your congregation in a service on a normal Sunday morning.
 - How would your First Impressions/Guest Services teams describe the profile of the new people who are visiting your church for the first time?
 - What does the demographic data from website traffic and social media engagement tell you about who is connecting with your ministry?

It's almost impossible to know every single person who is connecting with your church for the first time either online or in-person, but a combination of these strategies will give you a good sense of who you are reaching.

Once you have the data, here are two key questions to ask:

1. If we are engaging the people we hope to reach in our mission field, what's working?
if you don't know why you're winning, you might unintentionally drift away from the strategies that are helping you fulfill your mission.
2. If we aren't connecting with people we hope to reach in our mission field, how does our ministry strategy need to change? You can't keep using the same ministry strategy and expect different results. Something must change.

YOU DON'T NEED CORE VALUES

Organizations establish core values to:

- Clarify who they are and what's distinctive about the church.
- Shape culture.
- Create alignment on the team.
- Help with decision-making, especially around competing priorities.

As hard as we tried to push churches to identify values that would be distinctive to their mission and the culture they were hoping to create, the list of values was often very similar from church to church (authenticity, teamwork, integrity, etc.)—or simply a restatement of their core doctrine as values statements (worship, serving others, etc.).

Most core value statements just seemed to add another level of “organizational statement clutter” without accomplishing the original purpose for having core values. In other words, it's possible to have clear core values that leaders have memorized...and still be stuck.

But You Do Need a Strong Team Culture...

Having a strong team culture is much more important than having clear core values statements. Or, to put it another way: Your culture, whether it's healthy or toxic or anywhere in between, will do more to impact the fulfillment of your mission than whether you have clearly articulated core values. It's less about what you say and more about how you behave. So how do you shape culture?

It starts with the lead pastor. Your culture will reflect how you behave and, more specifically, how you treat other people. If you lead with good questions, you will foster a culture of curiosity. If you involve others in solving challenges and overcoming obstacles, you will

foster a culture of collaboration.

On the other hand, if you are unable to control your anger, you will foster a culture of fear. If you expect honor, but don't extend honor to others, you will create a culture of control.

Your culture will reflect how your senior leadership team behaves and, more specifically, how they treat other people. If you look at the top five people on your team, whether those are staff leaders or volunteer leaders, those five people in your ministry will shape the culture of the rest of the team and the church. Senior pastors are ultimately responsible for how that team behaves and treats other people—because that will shape how people perceive you and your leadership.

Are we leading out of competence, character and chemistry in a way that is shaping the culture? This begins day one with our recruiting and hiring, and it should also be a factor in the volunteer leadership roles that we're filling. There should be intentionality in the onboarding process.

This also impacts how we approach coaching and development. Many times, our coaching and development conversations with people are all about getting things done. But we also need to be very intentional about the culture that we're trying to create on our teams. There needs to be some intentionality about reviews periodically to make sure that our team is hitting both the performance and the culture development plans that we want for our team. If you are intentional about how you behave and treat other people in those three levels of leadership, then that will shape the culture of your team AND the culture of your church.

Rather than developing a list of core values, list out the specific culture-shaping behaviors that you've already started to model and that you want to be reflected throughout your team and your congregation. Narrow that down to no more than five specific behaviors. Make them action oriented and describe what it looks like when teammates live out these behaviors as they engage with other people on your team.

YOU DON'T NEED A VISION STATEMENT

Clarifying direction for the future is critical to the health of your church, but traditional vision statements are not always helpful—especially in this season. Most churches are already bogged down by enough “organizational statement clutter,” and yet, are still not producing the results they want.

Most vision statements tend to fall short because:

1. They become another version of the mission statement. Many vision statements answer the question, “Why do we exist?” rather than “Where are we going?”
2. They are not concrete enough. Many vision statements tend to be nebulous and flowery about what the church wants to be at some point in the future—but they are so vague that no one knows exactly how the vision will be accomplished.
3. They are not future focused. Many vision statements reflect more of what the church is about today rather than driving future focus and direction.
4. They are too broad and all-encompassing. Many vision statements try to be fair to all the ministries of the church and make sure every voice is represented, but when there are too many components to the vision, it doesn't provide any real direction or focus.

When the vision for the future is too long-term, there's also a tendency for leaders to think, “That's our vision for the future—I have higher priorities to focus on today. We'll get to the future vision at some point in the future when things slow down.” That's why, in this season, we are more interested in helping churches figure out their priorities for the next 12 months.

But You Do Need an Action Plan Around What's Important Right Now...

Instead of a someday focus, we need to sit down and ask the following questions for the next 12 months:

- What will help us move our mission forward—right now?
- What do we need to be focused on—right now?
- What do we invest our leadership, time, and money into—right now?
- What do we need to rally the troops around—right now?

In other words, it doesn't do any good to have a well-crafted vision statement for what you want your church to look like 10 years from now if your team has no idea what you're trying to accomplish in the next 12 months.

To clarify priorities and build action plans around what's most important right now, we need to agree first on the primary problem we're trying to solve. What's the big challenge you're trying to overcome? This is vital because if we don't know the problem we're trying to address, then:

- We don't know what strategies we should be engaging.
- We don't know what the win looks like.
- We don't know what we need to prioritize today.
- We don't know what needs to be changed.
- We don't know what needs to be improved.
- We don't know what needs to be added.

If we don't have clarity around the problem we are trying to solve, it's possible to stay busy doing church things and not do anything to accomplish the Great Commission.

Healthy, thriving churches are crystal clear about the primary problem their ministry is trying to tackle—meaning: Everyone knows the problem and is focused on tackling that problem.

If you were to look at where these churches are investing their leadership, time, money, and prayers, you would see that it's almost entirely focused on overcoming *that* problem. If you looked at their ministry priorities for the next 12 months, they would all clearly address the problem they are hoping to solve. If your church is stuck, come to agreement on the primary problem you are trying to solve before you invest any time in shaping a vision for the future.

(If you need a little extra help identifying your problem and navigating this process, we are here and ready to coach you through the [*Unstuck Process*](#)).

YOU DON'T NEED MORE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

It seems to be an age-old tension within the church: Some churches pride themselves on their focus on evangelism, while others spotlight an emphasis on discipleship. The healthiest churches balance both reach **and** discipleship.

Every church wants to reach people for Jesus and help them take their next steps towards faith. However, in many cases, the strategies that they're using to do so aren't providing the results they want to experience. Churches often take an educational approach, rather than creating opportunities that encourage real life transformation.

The fact is that most of us don't need more knowledge to become more like Jesus. We don't need more teaching and study on what Jesus modeled for us—most of us just need to put into practice the things we have already learned (*Philippians 4:9*).

Yes, there is a place for Bible teaching (and we should be getting that teaching every week at church). Yes, we should also embrace and practice spiritual disciplines like studying God's word, praying, and fasting. However, some churches put far too much of their ministry energy into creating more educational offerings when they should be helping people put what they've already been taught into practice.

But You Do Need to Develop Reach and Spiritual Formation Strategies for Real Life Transformation...

Instead of increasing their efforts around evangelism training and Christian education, churches need to develop reach and spiritual formation strategies that help people experience real life transformation.

Developing a Reach Strategy

A lot of churches assume that they can disciple people, send them out, and they will just naturally lead people to Jesus. But the intentional reach strategies we're seeing that are producing real life transformation are all built around:

- **Creating an invite culture.** 85-90% of people start attending a church because someone invited them. Help your people understand that their missional role is to build relationships—then the church can partner with them to share the good news of Jesus. While some people do lead others to Jesus in a 1:1 setting, this more frequently occurs in a gathering when a person can sit under a gifted teacher, hear and ponder God's word, wrestle with the teaching, and respond.
- **Helping people build intentional relationships.** We need to help our church identify the people that God already has in their life (family members, neighbors, coworkers, or friends who we are already doing life with). Are we leading a life that's pointing them to Jesus?

There are several ways that we can do this:

- Praying for people.
 - Engaging in intentional time and conversation with people.
 - Serving others based on the needs we see in their life.
 - Living lives filled with joy, filled with purpose, filled with hope, and filled with God's love.
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- **Designing content that is helpful to the people we're trying to reach.** Through both our weekend services and our content online, we need to make sure that we're answering the questions that the people that we're trying to reach are asking. Once you identify what the questions are, begin to think about:
 - What are some of the answers we can provide?
 - What are some of the resources we could be creating?
 - How can we start to connect with people that are currently outside the faith and create content that will draw them to the church?

- How do we prepare people for what they're going to experience once they connect with the church?

Developing a Spiritual Formation Strategy

If you started from scratch, how would you design a path that helps people move from where they are to where God wants them to be? How would you best equip someone to do the work God wants them to do? Try this exercise:

1. Forget about your church for a moment. Go back in time to when you began your spiritual journey and think about how God stretched your faith and shaped who you are now. What happened in your life to help you move from someone who was considering the claims of Christ, to becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ?
2. Engage this same discussion with your team. What did God use in their lives? If it worked for the leaders in your church, then it's quite possible those same things will be important to others who connect to your ministry.
3. Use the conversation as a foundation for establishing how the church can come alongside people to experience practical teaching, mentoring relationships, spiritual disciplines, ministry opportunities, and preparation for those pivotal moments in our life where we need to lean on God.

Remember, you can't force spiritual maturity on anyone, but you can create the ministry environments that will foster an opportunity for people to experience the same things God used to grow your own faith. That's what we mean by creating intentional ministry strategies that help people experience transformation: It's less time in classes, and more time developing ways for people to get connected in relationships, discovering their spiritual gifts, and practicing personal disciplines.

ABOUT

For more than a decade, The Unstuck Group has helped churches of all sizes—from under 200 to more than 20,000—clarify the vision (where they believe God's called them to go) and their strategies (how they are going to get there) through our church consulting process. We can help you, too. [Start a conversation today.](#)

To take a deeper dive into the 4 Things Churches Don't Actually Need, listen to the series on The Unstuck Church Podcast:

- [Episode 265: You Don't Need a Mission Statement](#)
- [Episode 266: You Don't Need Core Values](#)
- [Episode 267: You Don't Need a Vision Statement](#)
- [Episode 268: You Don't Need More Christian Education](#)

ABOUT TONY MORGAN



Tony was the Founder and Lead Strategist of The Unstuck Group. Started in 2009, The Unstuck Group has served over 700 churches throughout the United States and several countries around the world. Previously, Tony served on the senior leadership teams of three rapidly growing churches including NewSpring Church in South Carolina. He has five published books, including *The Unstuck Church*, and, with Amy Anderson, he hosted the The Unstuck Church Podcast which has thousands of listeners each month. Tony passed away in 2024, leaving behind a legacy of thought leadership, innovation, and a deep commitment to helping churches thrive.

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