3 Things Most Churches Do

THAT HOLD BACK CHURCH GROWTH

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As church leaders, we know that most churches in our country aren't growing, but have you ever asked why? [ref] What are the common factors that inhibit church growth? **What are the things that we all seem to do that slow us down?** What stops us from reaching the people that God wants us to reach? In what ways are we not living up to our full redemptive potential?

Over the last few years, I've spent a tremendous amount of time, effort, and energy trying to understand growing churches. I've watched how they operate and gleaned lessons and principles that we can apply to our own churches in order to reach new people. I've also spent time with churches that aren't growing and have noted some commonalities that are slowing these churches down.

We should examine and model ourselves after the organizations that are seeing the results we want. However, we also need to examine the organizations that aren't achieving desired results to ensure we're not emulating their model.

There are three similar traits that I've seen in churches that aren't growing, and we need to ask ourselves are these things happening in our churches?

How often do we find ourselves caught in these realities?

A Focus on Insiders

Who is your church for? In the grand cosmic sense, we understand that our churches exist to worship the Lord. However, in the day-to-day logistical sense, who are our churches designed for?

Many churches design everything they do for the people who are already there. **Ironically, this is the exact opposite of what the church is supposed to do.** The church is the only organization in the world that exists for people who aren't there yet. As such, each of our churches is supposed to focus on those who are outside of its walls.

How can we connect with those people and see them come to know the message of Christ?

People who are outside the church don't have a voice at the leadership table, so we need to find ways to change that. **Eventually, if all we ever do is listen to the people who are currently present, our churches will atrophy and we will not have the kind of impact we desire.**

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; **make the most of every opportunity.**" – Colossians 4:5 (NIV)
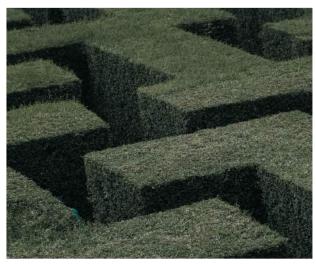
Churches that make a difference try to understand both the communities they serve and the questions the people of those communities are asking. **These churches wrestle with the needs and the concerns of the**

people in their community. We cannot ignore the environment and location where God has placed us; He's placed us there for a reason and we need to focus on that purpose. Our churches need to have a mayoral role in connecting with the people in our towns in order to see those folks get plugged into our churches. If your church has an exclusive focus on insiders, you will not have the kind of kingdom impact you're looking for and it certainly won't help your church grow.

Being Too Complex

Simple things spread while complex things tend to stagnate.

We live in a culture of increasing overcommunication where we are bombarded with massive amounts of information on a regular basis. Our job as leaders is to simplify what we're doing and saying so the message can spread. **Churches that aren't growing have a complex web of programs, systems, and approaches to connect with people, but it's that very complexity that prevents them from making an impact.**

Growing churches have simple, user-friendly tools that make it easy for members to invite their friends. When guests arrive, they can clearly see what their next steps are.

Growing churches have a compelling way of communicating why they exist and have reduced that message to a few words that everyone in the organization can rally around. On the other hand, stagnant churches don't have a clear understanding of the reason why they exist. In fact, if you were to ask ten different people in these types of churches why the church exists, you would get ten different answers.

Don't Have a Plan

Churches that aren't growing think that church growth automatically happens. They're not entirely sure how churches grow, and they have no systematic approach to attracting new visitors. Stagnated churches aren't investing the time and energy to develop a system to reach new people. If you don't have a plan, you won't ever take steps toward seeing new people connect with your church.

The truth is most churches don't have a plan for church growth; so, they don't grow. If your church isn't growing, maybe you simply aren't spending enough time creating a system that could help you achieve growth.

Growing churches emulate the behaviors and actions of other growing churches. Church leaders who are interested in seeing their church grow will go out of their way to model their behavior (and their church's behavior) on other growing churches in their community and across the country. They learn from the systems of other churches and apply those methods to their own church.

How does your church grow?

What processes are you following to help your people invite their friends to see them get connected to your church?

What systems in your church push your organization forward in outreach? How do you evaluate if this plan is working?

How do you benchmark your results against what's going on in other churches? I'd love to hear about what your church is doing to bring in new people, so feel free to comment below.

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