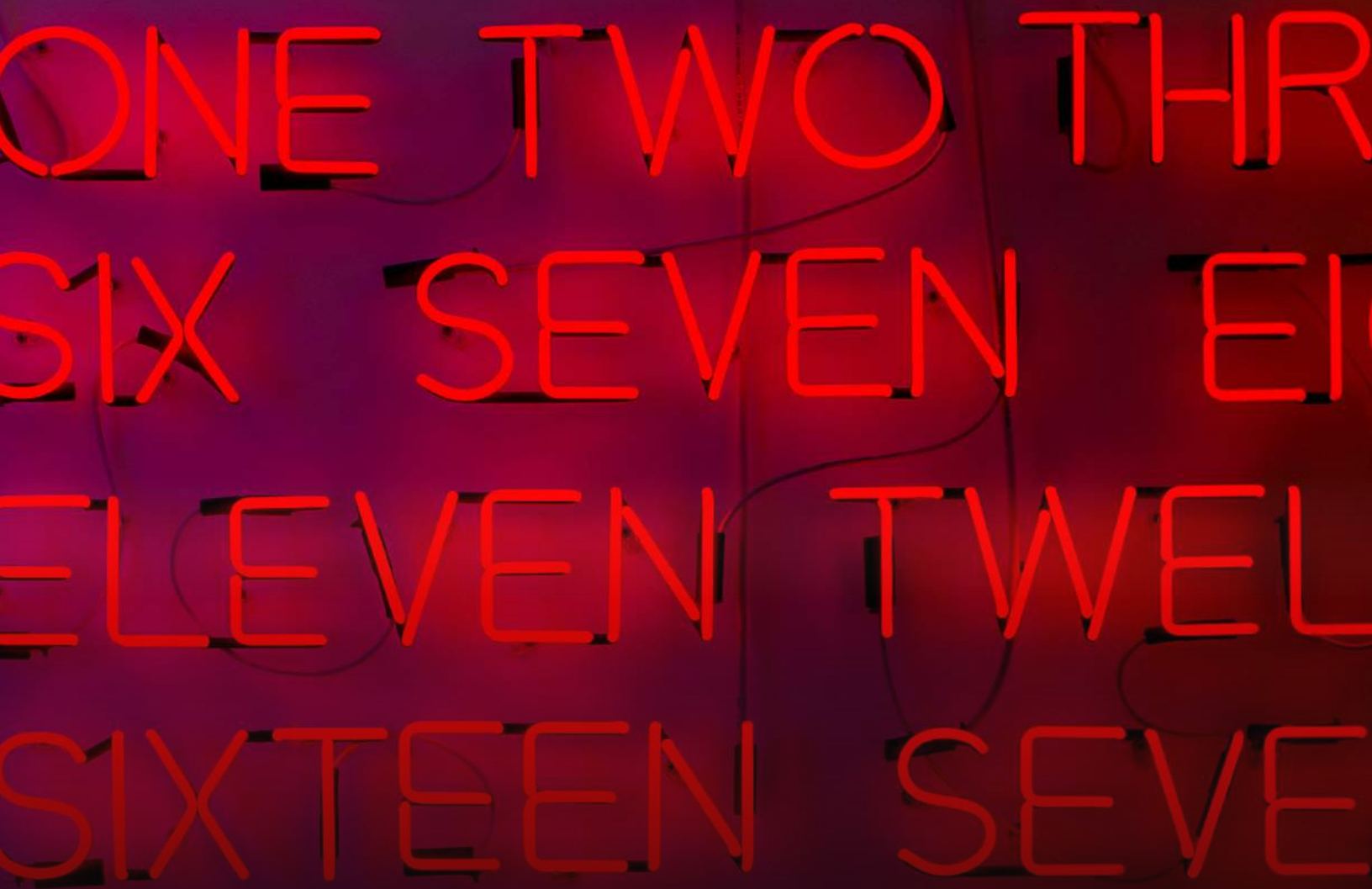


stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Factors

***THAT SHOULD MOVE YOUR CHURCH
TO ADD ANOTHER WEEKEND SERVICE***

RICH BIRCH



Is your church wondering whether to add another service on Sunday mornings?

Are you looking to the future and trying to figure out when you should add a second, third, or even fourth time to meet on a Sunday?

Wrestling with the right timeline to add a new service is an important process for your church as you balance the growth taking place against the amount of work required to service that growth. Many churches encounter different factors that drive them to add another service to their weekend line-up.

I've recognized five such factors that should move your church to begin the process of adding a new service. You don't necessarily have to tick off all five boxes—any one of these may be enough to spur your decision-making process. However, if you do identify with several items on this list, that underlines the urgency for you to move forward.

Churches can stunt their own growth if they simply don't have enough places for guests to sit! If your physical buildings are maxed out, it will discourage people from inviting their friends. When their friends do finally come, they'll have a suboptimal experience which harms your church's ability to grow and impact people. See if any of the following factors speak to your situation to help determine whether you should add another service to your church.

70% Full Service

It's often been said that a church service that is 80% full is functionally maxed out because at that

level most rooms look and feel full. I think this is generally true in most contexts; however, there may be exceptions where you can fit a few more people in before it feels like there isn't any room left. The reason you want to be proactive before you reach 80% is that, in most churches, it takes a tremendous amount of work to carry out that decision and to rally the volunteers needed for an additional service.

If you have at least 70% capacity in any of your services, you need to begin having serious conversations with your team about adding another service. There are probably only a couple of windows a year where you can do this, so starting the conversation now is an important structural decision.

Crazy Kids' Areas

Take a few moments this weekend to watch what happens as families come and go through your space.

Are the experiences around kids' ministry filled with joy, or do they feel chaotic? Is your preschool area too busy and disorganized as parents try to drop off and check-in their kids (and all their stuff) and then repeat the process at check-out?

The reality is that if parents feel like the kids' areas are way too crazy, they won't come back. In fact, it's even more damaging if the experience feels hectic; they'll be less likely to invite their friends because no parents want to invite a friend into something chaotic.

Parking Lot Pressure

A lot of church leaders have no idea what happens in their parking lots on a Sunday morning because they arrive before the first car comes and typically leave after most everyone else has left. My challenge to you is to spend an entire Sunday morning in your parking lot to simply watch what takes place. If you can't do this in person, you could put a small webcam on top of your building and record a few weekends of parking lot activity. A good rule of thumb is to have one parking spot for every two seats in your main auditorium—if your main auditorium seats 200, you're going to need 100 parking spots.



If you don't (or can't) meet that ratio, you will find an incredible amount of pressure on your parking lot on any given Sunday morning, which can discourage people from attending. If people arrive and there's no place for them to park, you'd be amazed to see how many turn around and drive home. People, especially first-time guests, are looking for an excuse not to attend, and an overcrowded parking lot is an easy one.

Count the number of spaces that are available, and work with your parking team to maximize those spaces or find other reasonable solutions. **Like the main auditorium, if you are reaching somewhere around 70% capacity in your parking lot during a service, then you need to start thinking about adding another service.**

Volunteer Stagnation

Think about the quality of your volunteers' experiences as they serve with you.

What has happened recently that adds something new and exciting to their experience? In what ways are you articulating the vision and calling them to a higher standard? **If your volunteer community has stagnated and is not growing, that alone may be a reason to add an additional service.** Why? Well, the challenge of adding another service and engaging a whole new team of volunteers can be a growth catalyst for your church.

If your volunteer community isn't growing and seems disengaged, consider adding an additional service. It may be a stretch for your community, but it could also be just what the doctor ordered. While this factor alone may not be reason enough for adding another service, it could be a contributing factor that pushes you across the decision line.

Growth and Plateau Patterns

Review the last few years of growth statistics at your church.

Do you notice a pattern where your church's weekend attendance numbers grow up to a certain point and then plateau for a while, and then retreat for a while, and then grow up against that plateau again, and then go down again on repeat? **I like to call this "bumping off the ceiling."** If you're seeing this growth and plateau pattern, you're bumping off a growth ceiling that you need to address.

One of the reasons this could be happening is that you simply don't have enough room in your weekend services to invite guests to come and be a part of the community. **This "bumping off the ceiling" pattern can be a sign of the limitations to your church's long-term growth; it feels like you're growing, because new guests are coming all the time, but you're not retaining those people.** Again, look at your data over the last three or four years to give you some clarity around what is happening with these patterns.

Is it time to start working on adding another service?

This is a perfect time of year to start thinking about when in the coming year you could add another service or two to your Sunday mix.

While there are a lot of decisions to be made about timelines and mobilizing team members to make it happen, the first decision that needs to be made is whether this is the time to add another service. If you are experiencing one of the above factors at your church, I think that's enough to move into discussion mode with your team. If you see two or three factors, I would say the time is near. If you have all five, then your church is being held back by not adding another service, and ultimately, you're stunting the redemptive potential of your community.

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