

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Ways

ANALYSIS PARALYSIS MIGHT BE KILLING YOUR CHURCH

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Are you spending too much time making decisions? Are you and your leaders digging deeper into the reasons why you should or should not do something without actually making a decision?

Analysis paralysis is what happens to leaders when we spend too much time thinking and not enough time acting.

Analysis paralysis can impact any organization, and churches are particularly prone to this sort of non-action because the stakes are so high. **Unlike a business where monetary profit is on the line, we feel the pressure of the eternal consequences that are at stake if we don't take action and fail to lead people to a growing relationship with Jesus.** While we need to be careful and work through our decision making in a deliberate, informed manner, you'll find more churches plagued with inaction than churches making wild, reckless decisions that cause damage.

I'm convinced that analysis paralysis is a widespread epidemic in the local church, and I want to warn you against this harmful approach to leadership. Here are five ways that analysis paralysis might be impacting your church today.

Vision statement over wordsmithing

Have you ever read vision statements from churches? When you look at how churches talk

about what they're called to do, their mission statements all boil down to reaching more people with the message of Jesus and seeing them grow in a relationship with him. Here are a few examples from a quick search around the internet:

- "To love the people of Cincinnati into relationship with Jesus Christ and give away to the world what God has given us."
- "We exist to welcome people to faith; equip people with a faith that works in real life; and send us in service into the world in Jesus' name."
- "We are called to make disciples for Jesus Christ."
- "Helping Others Experience the JOY of Jesus Christ."
- "Transforming individuals into empowered disciples of Christ."
- "To worship God, to make disciples of Jesus, and to serve the world."
- "To make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ."

At the end of the day, we all follow the Great Commission; Matthew 28 lays out what our churches are supposed to do. Going into the world and proclaiming the message of Christ

and then going on to disciple, teach, or mentor the people who have responded to that message is at the core of every church.

However, it is amazing to watch some churches go on an extended quest for clarity that leads down a rabbit hole of self-examination and navel gazing. While it's important to have a clear vision and mission statement that drive the activity of the church, how you carry out that mission and vision through strategy is even more important. Your organization's statement of purpose needs to translate into actions that make a difference on the ground. If your mission statement isn't moving people to action, then maybe it's time to review or change it.

For many, however, **the underlying issue is that the church isn't applying effort to move a large portion of the community to take action in living out the vision.** Your vision statement is simply a starting point. If your community doesn't take action on it, then your church's work to date can be a waste.

Model study and over examination

Sometimes church leaders find themselves caught up in trying to understand the models or strategies of local churches. It can be easy to slip into comparing different approaches of how churches function to the point of confusion. **I've seen church leaders try to mix such a wide variety of approaches together that they spend most of their time studying the model rather than applying the lessons.**

There is no perfect model.



Applying a B-model with A+ execution will end up making the largest difference in your community. Simply "tweaking the process" isn't going to be the magic formula that creates a bigger impact. Instead, take time to apply those lessons to your community.

Team members over hiring

As your church grows and begins to acquire staff, the hiring, training, and motivating of that team becomes one of the greatest responsibilities of the church's leaders. However, analysis paralysis can set in when there are unclear expectations and goals for the area that you're hiring. Whether it's crafting the perfect job description, comparing candidates against one another, selecting personality tests, or interviewing the same candidate again for the twelfth time, these approaches are fraught with the danger of spending too much time focusing on the wrong things.

Some churches spend so much time on the hiring process that they don't have any sense of an on-boarding process to help new team members make a difference in their church. Rather than looking for the perfect candidate or crafting the ideal approach to find such a candidate, ask yourself this: **how are you building a process to ensure that the staff members you acquire are being trained and released for the greatest impact?**

Permission seeking

Too many church leaders are waiting for someone else to grant them permission to take action on a new idea or strategy. Some churches have a multiplicity of people whose role seems to be saying "no" rather than saying "yes". **If your organizational structure is designed in a way that stifles innovation and stamps out progress, then don't be surprised when you don't make any forward movement.**

If you're looking for permission to try something new, this is it. As a leader, you need to have an internal locus of control and recognize that some new ideas may not work. In fact, failure is a part of leadership. By definition, leaders move people from where they are to a new place and that means uncharted territory. The things we try aren't always going to work, but if you're looking for someone to give you permission for something new, you probably won't get it.

Leaders who are willing to take risks on today's hunches seize the future. These leaders are okay with living with the results, whether they are positive or negative, because even a negative response is data that can be incorporated into helping the church achieve a broader reach. **What can you try today that you've been thinking about for a long time?** You don't need permission. *Just move forward.*

Fear

Fear is an interesting companion of leadership. For most of my leadership career, I have spent time worrying about what's going to happen next. To be honest, the line between fear and faith in my life is quite small. [Pastor Tim Lucas](#) once said that faith is spelled “R-I-S-K”. **Leaders are called to take risks and to do new things.** If we get wrapped up in our own fear, we won't take new ground and we won't reach the people that God is hoping we'll impact.

Fear is worrying that what hasn't happened will happen; faith is knowing that what hasn't happened will happen. Until our churches embrace the fear that we have and become comfortable with the idea of failure by living in faith, we simply won't make the impact we hope for.



Silicon Valley is downright obsessed with the idea of failure as an element of the leadership process. If a young leader hasn't failed at least two or three times, it's unlikely that they'll be looked at favorably in Silicon Valley. Mottos like “[Fail fast, fail often](#)” or “Move fast and break stuff” are lauded in that culture in order to move the entire industry forward. Leaders there are looking for folks who have made a difference, who have made mistakes, and who have gotten up and moved on after those failures.

God wants to do something amazing in your church. Don't let your fear of what may or may not happen hold you or your community back. What is a way that you could take a step in a new direction to see something amazing happen?

A few years ago, I released a book called [Unreasonable Churches](#). In this book, I shared ten different stories of churches who tried some unreasonable things. They did things that I don't think your church should

necessarily repeat, but my hope in writing that book was that it would move people to try something new. What is it that you believe that God is calling you to do? Chances are you have all the information you need in order to take action.

Take a risk. Take action. Do something that might not work because you never know, it could be the next thing that will allow your church to reach hundreds, or maybe even thousands, of new people.

Thank you for serving in your local church. I would love to hear more about how you're taking risks in your community.

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