

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# *7 Facts*

***ABOUT CHURCH GROWTH THAT  
WILL MAKE YOU THINK TWICE***

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Have you ever considered why some churches grow while others decline?

What is it that seems to drive some churches to make a difference and reach more people while others struggle to keep the doors open?

This will be a year of incredible breakthroughs in some churches while others will find themselves at the beginning of eventual decline; even more churches across the country will close.

In the coming year, there will be leaders reading this post that will look back and remark at how amazing it was to have reached more people and to have seen them get plugged in, while others will look back and be shocked that their church is in a plateau or decline. My assumption is if you are reading this article that you're a church leader who cares deeply for your church and you want to see it thrive!

Are you investing time, effort, and energy to wrestle through what will help your church to breakthrough to a brand-new level this year? I know that you love your church, but what are you doing to study and grow as a leader regarding church growth?

I want this year to be the year that your church reaches more people than ever before. **For this entire month, we are taking some time to focus on helping your church grow.** To kick things off, here are seven facts about church growth that may cause you to reconsider some of your assumptions.

**94% of all churches are losing ground against the communities they serve.** [\[ref\]](#)

You might have read or heard the more “encouraging” version of this statistic, which states that 80% of churches are in plateau or decline [\[ref\]](#), but it's actually much worse than that! There are churches that are growing, but they're not growing as quickly as the communities they serve. For years, we've focused on churches that grow in thriving suburban communities, and I wonder if that has stunted our growth. Maybe we've fooled ourselves into thinking that those churches are really making an impact when really all they're doing is growing because the community around them is growing. Only a small fraction of churches are growing faster than the communities they serve. We need to reverse this trend!

We need your church to grow faster than the community you serve. If it isn't growing faster than that, the message of Christ is losing ground in our culture. The stakes are very high.

**Only 2% of people in your church will invite a friend to church this year unless you do something about it.** [\[ref\]](#)

If this year is like last year, most people in your church will not invite anyone to come with them to church.

As leaders who care deeply about reaching the community, we need to think long and hard about

this number. **This is an incredibly sad statistic and is reflective of a larger issue of a disengaged community. It's our role to try to encourage our people to become more engaged in the mission by inviting their friends and family to come and be a part of the church.**

While inviting people to church is not the totality of what engagement looks like, it is an incredibly important piece of the puzzle when we think about reaching and impacting our community. Churches that are making an impact are full of people who are inviting friends and family to attend. Increasing your "invite culture" needs to be at the core of your church growth strategy.

**83% of unchurched people will attend a church if a friend invites them.**<sup>[ref]</sup>

Re-read that statistic one more time. That is a significant amount of people.

Our friends are willing to come to church if we invite them. Any strategy for church growth needs to be built around this core idea. **We need to work hard to encourage our people to be inviting their friends.** Our job is to equip the church with tools, resources, and practices to encourage them to reach out to their friends and family, to see those people become a part of the amazing things that are happening in our church.

Any church growth strategy that doesn't have this notion of outreach at its core isn't going to make the kind of impact that we need. People telling other people about your church is what needs to be our focus **as we think about reaching our community with the message of Christ.**



### Small churches can grow.

I recently saw an encouraging statistic from the Presbyterian Church USA that revealed how 40% of their fastest growing churches are under 200 people.<sup>[ref]</sup> **Churches of all sizes can grow.** This is not simply a phenomenon for the churches that are over 2,000 or 3,000 people. Your church, regardless of its size, can be the kind of place where people invite and welcome their friends.

In fact, there's evidence in the culture that people are looking for a smaller, more intimate experience. If your church offers that, you have a strategic advantage over the larger churches in town for attracting people who aren't interested in attending a supersized church.

**71% of clergy from growing churches read the Bible daily.**<sup>[ref]</sup>

This statistic is in contrast to the one that states only 19% of clergy in declining churches reading their Bibles daily. The personal faith journey of a leader within a church is a critical factor for seeing that church grow. **This makes sense; we can only take people to places that we have been before.** I deeply believe that the idea of reaching people with the message of Christ and seeing churches grow comes out of a deep relationship with Jesus. If we don't have that kind of relationship, we're not going to have the drive and passion to want to see more people get connected.



One's failure to take time to focus on one's own personal relationship with Christ will have a negative impact on the drive to see people connect to the church and ultimately to the gospel.

## Growing churches have engaged volunteers.

Some church leaders have been caught in a chicken-and-egg argument around the relationship between engaged volunteers and a growing church. The question goes like this: do growing churches attract more volunteers, or is it that churches that attract more volunteers are growing? As I've journeyed with hundreds of growing churches, there's a lot of evidence that suggests what comes first is an engaged volunteer core and that we need to start doubling down on getting people engaged in the mission of the church. The belief is that those people will be the folks that go out and bring new people to the church.

A good benchmark would be that 30% of your adults need to be serving regularly in the mission of the church. And this only makes sense. The amount of time, effort, energy, and passion that's required to convert a non-engaged person into an engaged person is going to translate. You will see those people become more fired up for the mission, and then invite their friends and family to church as a result. Let this be the year that you examine what it means, and what it takes, to get more volunteers engaged in the life of your church.

## Care and connection are key to church growth.

I know it can be stylish to think that as a church leader your job is to simply preach the message, to cast a vision for the future, and to let the people care for the flock. In fact, there's a lot of church leaders out there that resist the idea of being a shepherding type, preferring to carry the mantle of business leader or CEO. **What we see in growing churches, however, is a combination of compelling vision and excellent communication with a deep sense of care and connection to the community.**

Growing churches have a robust system for not only getting people connected to the church but also caring for people while they're with the church. Your church may see flash-in-the-pan growth, but you won't be able to sustain that long-term without investing a certain amount of care. If you reach people with a wide variety of needs, you'll need to build a system to figure out how to care for and love those people. **The church is a body caring for each other, not merely an entertaining show or a large non-profit organization.**



## NEED HELP FOR YOUR CHURCH TO GROW MORE THIS YEAR?

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Is your church not growing as quickly as you'd like? **Are you wondering how to grow your church without compromising the message?** Would you like to see your church impact as many people as possible?

I'm launching a **FREE** three part video series on Church Growth designed to help your church reach more people this year than you did last year. **The lessons in this series have helped other churches reach new levels of impact and they can help your church too!**

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