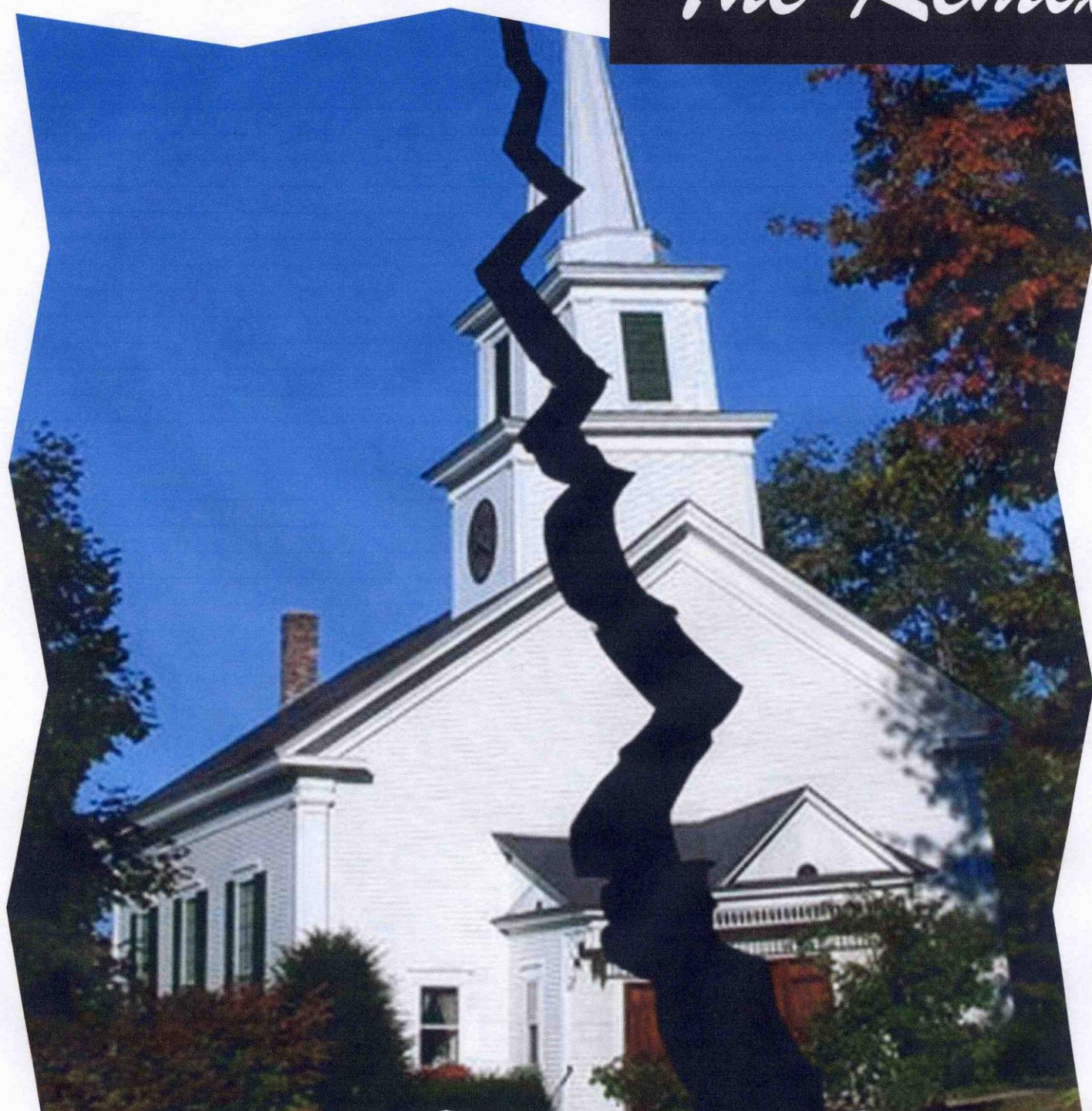


HOW TO

Grow Your Church

WITHOUT KILLING IT

The Remix



How to Grow Your Church Without Killing It!

*A Vision for When
the Next becomes
NOW*

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MAED LTI

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According to recent research, the post-COVID church landscape shows both stabilization and fresh opportunities. Pew Research Center's 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study finds Christian affiliation holding relatively steady in recent years (about 62% of U.S. adults). Hartford Institute's 2025 EPIC survey reports that 38% of current attenders joined their congregation in the past five years and 21% attend more than before the pandemic. Barna (2025) also notes a modest uptick in weekly attendance and that young adults are driving a resurgence—Gen Z and Millennials now attend more frequently than older generations. These shifts suggest a window for growth if congregations intentionally welcome new and returning worshipers.

Is your church ready for BRAC: 10 questions you need to ask yourself as your church prepares for explosive growth?

- (1) Does your church want to grow?
- (2) Do you expect new members to come to your church?
- (3) Can you name 3 reasons a person should choose your church as their church home?
- (4) What impression would someone get after visiting your church?
- (5) Do you Have Children's Church?
- (6) Do you have active ministries besides on Sundays (where would I find this information)?
- (7) How long is your morning service?
- (8) Do you have Bible Study or a 2nd Sunday Service?
- (9) Do you have a web-site?
- (10) If I asked people in the community about your church what would they say about it?

Today a new movement, called the Emergent Church, is becoming highly visible. These newer churches are related in two ways:

- *They are attempting to deconstruct the Protestant Church, as it relates to modernity, and reconstruct is in a new relationship to postmodernity. These emerging churches are moving beyond simplistic adaptations of old models. In fact, they seek to do away with the old models and employ brand-new approaches to ministry.*
- *They are, in some measure, a reaction against the Boomer church (megachurch), seeing it as lacking in authenticity and spirituality. Specifically, they reject the rehearsed slickly presented worship service of the Boomer church. Thus these newer churches seek to employ fresh ideas for spiritual formation that are more organic than those used by Boomer churches.*

From a practical perspective, some of the new emerging churches are known for making creative use of art, quietness, poetry, study room cafes, unrehearsed service, and various forms of community involvement. Their desire for a realistic and honest sense of community leads many of the emerging churches to reject any adaptation of Boomer church practices.

However, not all emerging churches are formed as radical attempts to correct perceived shortcomings in the Boomer church. There is a difference between Gen X/Y churches and true emerging ones. Gen X/Y churches are just attempts to adapt Boomer models for a younger generation. As such, they are not “radical” in their approaches to ministry. These churches often try to adapt the Purpose-Driver or Seeker-Centered model of church to the tastes of a younger audience.

Emerging churches vary in their expressions. The cultural context, traditions, and theological background serve to make each one slightly different in its expression. Thus there is no unified movement that promotes a specific model of Emergent Church. There are, however, certain characteristics that can be seen in many of these churches.

Distinguishing Characteristics

There are ten characteristic views of the Emergent Church. While not all emerging churches will espouse exactly all of the following views, there is enough similarity among them that these provide a good overview of most Emergent Church values.

1. ***They see Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount as central to faith.*** Thus social and ethical concerns are just as important to them as spiritual concerns.
2. ***They see God's fingerprints everywhere.*** Thus there is no secular realm as such, but many, perhaps most, things in the secular realm are considered spiritual.
3. ***They see community as more important than church.*** Thus community happens first, leading to church; rather than church happening first, leading to community.
4. ***They see dialogue as more important than debate.*** Thus they focus on building relationships first by stressing similarities, and work on differences after the relationship has been forged.
5. ***They see hospitality as central to discipleship.*** Thus welcoming others takes place in the secular realm as well as in the church.
6. ***They see worship as an authentic encounter with the living God.*** Thus prefabricated worship services are replaced with individual creative expressions.
7. ***They see shared leadership as the ideal model.*** Thus gifted people are free to lead without constraint in a highly collaborative atmosphere.
8. ***They see culture as organic—fluid, shifting, and dynamic.*** Thus spirituality, community, and faith must be elastic, creating an uncharted journey with unexpected detours, but always progressing.
9. ***They see spiritual life as holistic.*** Thus spiritual growth and expression happen not just in traditional acts of devotion but in all realms and activities of life.
10. ***They see church as missional.*** Thus they see themselves on a mission from God to transform their world.

Many of the characteristics of the younger emerging churches stress the importance of welcoming newcomers in gracious ways. For example, the stress on community, dialogue, hospitality, and mission as noted in the ten characteristics above, leads these new churches to focus quite naturally on caring for those who visit them. They are also drawn to new ways of ministry and connecting new people to the church.

Connecting Guests

Emerging churches are passionately linked to Jesus. They see the mission of Jesus as being carried on in their communities, and they believe the way Jesus interacted with his disciples is the model for how community ought to be formed when they gather together as the church.

There is no secular/sacred divide in the minds of emergent. Holistic living leads them to see unity, rather than divisions, between such concepts as natural and supernatural, individual and community, mind and body, and public and private. In their desire to model Jesus, they embrace historical practices of the church as ways to connect ancient and contemporary spirituality. The true measure of spirituality is life transformation, rather than the number of people gathered in the large auditorium.

These and other concepts point to the fact that the emerging generation, and the church they start, is indeed operating from a different paradigm than that common to the Baby Boom generation.

When it comes to connecting new people to the church, these younger churches dislike mechanistic approaches to welcoming people. Any approach that treats people like items to be processed as an assembly line is rejected. Hence, welcoming people must be organic or natural. The flow of guests into the church takes on a more varied and complex form than in traditional churches. Assimilation, or rather the connecting of guests, takes place through the following means.

Sharing Compelling Stories

Emerging churches reject the use of formulas and simple solutions. The use of simplistic approaches to ministry, such as “The Four Spiritual Laws,” “The Roman Road,” or the newcomers’ class, are not welcomed. Deep sharing of one’s personal story through intimate conversations is the preferred model of salvation as well as assimilation. The key is finding a person with a story to tell, allowing him or her to tell the story to another person who has a story to tell, and then sharing

the story of Jesus. Connection happens naturally as newcomers are drawn into personal stories, the story of Jesus, and the story of the church.

Embracing People into the Community

Approaches that look or feel like they serve the institutional church are deplored. Since the church is a community of faith, the relational is highlighted over the institutional. Normally, traditional churches expect newcomers to commit their lives to Christ and be baptized before they are embraced into the community of faith. Emerging churches often turn this around and accept people into the community before they are believers. Thus guests are allowed to participate in church ministry and activities in the hope that they will embrace Christ in the process.

Doing Life Together

Emerging churches sense that advice given without request is rarely accepted, so answers to life's troubling questions are not immediately dispensed as though from a "Bible answer man." Doing life together, or hanging out 24/7, allows life's questions to arise naturally, and guests can see the truth of God's Word internalized in the lives of real people, as well as exegeted from the pulpit. As guests see God's Word lived out authentically in people, they are drawn to become part of the church.

Engaging the Senses

God's propositional truth is valued, but emergents desire to learn truths through all the senses. They find that art, music, poetry, media, Internet, drama, and lots of stories are powerful ways to engage guests and draw them into God's story and the church's story. Newcomers are allowed to use their gifts to share in the story in appropriate ways. Often these natural connections capture their long-term involvement.

Learning Together

Communities of faith are learning environments where fellow learners gather to discover the truth of God's Word. In such a context pastors and other teachers must approach guests as parent-like mentors who have traveled further, rather than as know-it-all Bible teachers. Newcomers are drawn to connect with churches that treat them as fellow travelers.

Talking Their Talk

All new movements create their own particular language of ministry and faith as a way of developing a unique identity. This is happening in the emerging churches. For example, rather than use words like *assimilate*, *tithe*, and *shepherd*, emerging churches prefer words such as *connect*, *contribute*, and *care*. To these newer churches, building the kingdom of God is more important than growing a church. They speak of a missional community rather than a local congregation.

Although most of the concepts behind the words are the same, the language distinguishes the new from the old, and guests are drawn to newer languages because it tends to communicate emphases and values with which they can relate.

Hitting the Streets

Understanding the basic facts, figures, and outlines of Scripture is not enough in emerging churches. Experiential knowledge that is acquired by seeing God at work in the lives of real people and honest situations is more meaningful. As guests see God's truth evident in people's lives, they are enticed to become part of the church. Thus helping newcomers get involved in the lives of needy people in the larger church community is a powerful way to connect them to the church.

Stressing the Kingdom

No longer do people care only about their particular church or denomination. Today there is a wide concern for the entire church, most often described as the kingdom. Guests join churches that help them catch a vision of, and become involved in, God's total work in the world.

Connecting with History

Simplistic answers to today's tough life questions are out. Depth of theological teaching is back in among emerging churches. Younger guests are connecting with churches that assist them in understanding doctrine and the historical roots of their faith not just their church or denomination.

Challenging the Culture

Emergents resist a blind acceptance of the predominate culture. They are drawn to churches that provide a biblical critique of the culture. Thus churches that seek to redeem the world as well as individuals will find guests connecting with them.

Questions to Ask and Answer

1. What impact do the characteristics of the emerging generation have on your approach to connecting guests to your church?
2. How do these concepts fit with your current church's values and practices?
3. What challenges do these ideas present to your church and ministry?
4. Which of these concepts do you find troubling? Why?
5. How might you address some of these ideas in your own ministry in the coming years?

DESIGN A STRATEGY

REVIEW YOUR STRATEGY FOR WELCOMING GUESTS

	Yes	No
1. Our church has an effective way to welcome people, which does not embarrass them.	☐	☐
2. Our church has entry-level places of service available to new people.	☐	☐
3. Our church has an average of seven small groups for every one hundred adults.	☐	☐
4. Our church has regular social activities, especially to help guests make friends.	☐	☐
5. Our church has a way to help guests discover and use their gifts.	☐	☐
6. Our church has a variety of small groups available.	☐	☐
7. Our people care passionately for those outside the church.	☐	☐
8. Our church offers introductory classes for guests—a get-acquainted class or a membership class.	☐	☐
9. Our church has an effective follow-up plan for guests.	☐	☐
10. Our people feel good about the church and often invite newcomers to attend worship services.	☐	☐

Number of yes answers:

1–3 = Poor—an unbalanced strategy

4–7 = Good—a strategy that is strong in some areas, weak in others

8–10 = Excellent—a balanced strategy

Questions to Ask and Answer

1. How well is your welcoming plan working?
2. What welcoming ministries are in place? What needs to be added?
3. What steps are you going to take to build a better welcoming ministry?

People develop the habits necessary to create the future they want. Another way to put this is, you get what you expect and believe will happen. Most people don't believe what we just said. So they don't try to picture or live into the future. Therefore, they don't have a part in creating the future. But we believe a large part of the future is what we picture it to be. So maybe what you need is a bigger picture of the future.

We are going to share with you the secrets we have learned that will help you to double the size of your church. Keep in mind that areas of the country differ and you need to contextualize everything that we will say in this part.

The Five Basic Keys to Explosive Growth

We're going to make this so simple it's stupid. If you want explosive growth you have to:

- Lead as if your church is twice its size.
- Ask for explosive growth to happen and position yourself for it to happen.
- Bring in lots of new people from outside your church.
- Retain the lion's share of those new people.
- Equip and motivate the new people to invite their networks.

Now let's explore each one of these steps to doubling the size of your church.

Lead as if Your Church Were Twice Its Size

You need to picture your church as if it is twice the size it is and live into that picture. Doing so will help you get a picture of how to spend your time. You'll realize you can't continue doing some of the things you are doing and personally survive. The questions you need to ask are:

What do I need to stop doing now that I've been doing?
What do I have to begin doing that I haven't been doing?

Once you've made these changes, you are well on your way to doubling the size of your church.

Ask for Explosive Growth and be Prepared for it to Happen

When was the last time you challenged your people to pray for reaching your goal of doubling the number of people finding Christ and worshiping him with you every Sunday? Ask them to pray specifically for people they know need

God. Say to those who think you are crazy, “You bet I am, I’m crazy about wanting people to find God!”

Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5 NIV).

But here’s the rub—you can’t ask your people to pray if you are not praying. So again we ask, *When was the last time you prayed for God to double the size of your church?* It is a huge deal, so make it a part of your life.

Don’t Pray for Rain Without First Getting an Umbrella

Lots of people will pray for God to do something. But how many actually prepare for it to happen? Do you think God is going to answer the prayers of a lazy leader? We can hear God say, “How can I do that when you’ve not made room for them?”

It’s no good to ask God to double your attendance without preparing for the inflow of people. You have to expect it and prepare for it.

You have to position yourself to receive from God. If you don’t first step out on faith, God won’t bless what you’re doing!

We constantly hear pastors say that they need more volunteers and servants but can’t find them. If you have a problem finding people who serve, let us ask you a question. If fifty people knocked on your door and said, “I’d love to work in the youth ministry of the children’s ministry,” would you have anything prepared for them to do right then? Or would you have to respond, “Can I get back to you in a week?” If you’re not prepared for people to respond, why are you asking God to provide? You must take those steps of faith by preparing in advance. Don’t pray for rain without holding up an umbrella.

Do you want to prepare for God to double the size of your worship attendance? If you do, you must position yourself to receive from God in at least the following ways:

- **Space**: Do you have enough seating and children’s space?
- **Parking**: Do you have enough parking spaces?
- **Servants**: Do you have enough servants to keep up with the growth?

- **Money:** Do you have the money to support the new services, extra support staff needed, and so on?
- **Appearance of Space:** When you walk into your building, does it rival the quality of a mall or other large venue, such as a theatre? Does the atmosphere of your facility send the right message to visitors. Does it say “God is moving today”; or does it say “God moved here fifty years ago”? This does not mean you have to have something new or expensive, but it does mean you have to capitalize on the facility you are using, to make sure it is visitor-friendly, clean, and has good signage.
- **Preaching:** If your worship services were filled with more non-Christians than Christian, would your preaching need to change? You have to change your preaching style before God will bless you with visitors, and not after, because if you don’t you will blow your first impression and visitors will not return. Train your people to appreciate you’re designing your sermons for the people who aren’t there yet. If you don’t desire your messages for people who aren’t there yet, those one or two visitors who walk through the door aren’t coming back. Are you ready to handle the growth?
- **Personal Appearance:** The Bible tells us to look at someone’s heart, because God knows that his followers have a tendency to look at the outward appearance. Whereas people judge by outward appearance, “the Lord looks at a person’s thoughts and intentions” (1 Samuel 16:7). However, if a believer has a tendency to look at someone’s outward appearance, how much more will a nonbeliever look at the outward appearance? Does your appearance say nonverbally that you are current, or outdated? This does not mean you should change who you are, but it does mean to stay updated in who you are. If you are a conservative dresser, dress country, or urban, just make sure you match who you are. Do you stay current in your speech? I heard a pastor say from a stage one time, “These new fandangled computers....I don’t know how they work, much less cyberspace.” Has anyone used the word cyberspace in the last ten years? He lost the respect and attention of everyone under fifty years old. Leader, remember you don’t attract who you want, you attract who you are.
- How are you positioning your personal life, and your family to receive from God? Have you prayed with your spouse and children about how a growing church will affect them?
- Keep in mind the importance of balancing between ministry and family, and the only way to balance is to unapologetically put family above the church.

- Digital Engagement: Add or strengthen an up-to-date website, active social channels, Google Business Profile, online giving, and a simple plan for livestream + on-demand clips—these are now among the most common first touchpoints for guests.

Bring in Lots of New People from Outside Your Church

If you want a full house you need to set a date and invite your entire community to church at the same time. It's one thing to have visitors come in now and then, but we're talking about going BIG and changing a city. That's the whole point. If God is leading you to do something BIG, the way you do that is not by inviting three or four people at a time. Invite thousands of people at one time!

“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23 NIV).

Galatians 6:7 tells us, “You will always reap what you sow!” That's a principle that will not be violated. You tell us how many people you invited and we'll tell you how many will show up. If you invite five people, don't expect anyone to show up. But if you invite 150,000 people, you have a chance of filling the place up. So how do you invite that many people at once? Let's count the ways.

Word of Mouth

The number one way to invite people is word of mouth. First of all the cost ratio is phenomenal: zero. The biggest influx of people is when your friends bring their friends, who bring their friends. That's when growth goes crazy. That's why some churches can grow a thousand in worship in one week when it took them years just to get to the same number the first time. The larger the church becomes, the more important word of mouth becomes.

Direct Mail

Advertise in direct proportion to how you want to grow. However fast you want to grow is how much advertising you need to do. The best time to do direct mail is to announce a sermon series or to invite people to a special event.

Television and Cable

The larger the church the more important TV advertising becomes if for no other reason that image. Cable is preferred over the networks because the declining networks are still expensive. We're talking about thirty-second spots run numerous times during a short period of time. If you have the right person shop for these ads, you're going to get about half of them free. Don't make the mistake of trying to shop for ad placements yourself. You don't know the questions to ask. You need to get someone who works in cable TV to shop the deals for you.

Ad spots on cable and network TV will vary from locale to locale. So, it's impossible to say how much a church should spend. Sometimes a series of four weeks could cost \$2,500 - \$5,000 the first week, \$1,500 the second week and \$1,000 the third week, then nothing the fourth week. Whatever you do, don't spread out your advertising. Focus it on a couple days so that people see so many of your ads that they wonder if you bought the station!

Web Sites

Web sites are mostly for younger Christians who are shopping for a church. Not many non-Christians are going to look at your Web site. But a good Web site can close the deal. So, at the end of each ad, always say, "Check us out at www.yourchurchname.com." Many first-time guests now check a church's site or social feed before visiting in person.

It is now possible for any church to have a professional-looking Web site for very little cost. You can purchase the template and have someone who knows a little about Web text and design manage the Web site.

Radio

If you don't do drive time, don't do radio. In some areas radio makes more sense than TV due to the difference in costs per ad. The real benefit of radio is that you are able to target a segment of the population that you can't with TV. For example, radio has not worked well in some areas, but the student ministry has found radio to be very successful.

Newspaper

We don't put much stock in newspaper ads, especially the church page. If you are trying to reach the upper crust of some city, they probably do read the paper. If you must use the newspaper, position your ad in the personal columns, entertainment, or sports section.

Handling Problem People

Sooner or later even the best of churches encounter problem people. Problem people come in all shapes and sizes, but they all have one thing in common—they cause a disruption within the body that, if not addressed, greatly diminishes the effectiveness of the church's ministry. An effective leader knows that too much is at stake to let anyone disrupt the mission.

If you are not ticking off someone, your vision is either too broad and too small or nonexistent. In other words, leaders with vision always have their detractors who take issue with them. That is a natural part of leadership. If this reality bothers you, your leadership will be diminished because a good leader gives loyalty to and expects it from everyone in the church.

Never allow problem people to cause you to take your eyes off the priorities God has given you. The greatest danger is not the problem people but how you allow them to affect your leadership. The more they affect your leadership the less your church will help fulfill the Great Commission. When opposition arises, and it will, let it be the catalyst that causes you to focus on your priorities even more. Remember the scripture here—"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself" (Proverbs 26:4 NIV).

Handle Problem People Quickly, Directly, Lovingly, and Firmly

Never allow a problem person to have any room. Once it is apparent they are a liability to your mission, deal with them quickly, directly, lovingly, and firmly. The longer you put it off, the more of a problem they will become. Warn them once and if they don't change ask them to leave. It's that simple. We are encouraged in Titus 3:10, "Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him" (The Message). If they leave, let them, and by all means don't feel as if you have to ask them to return. That's the height of foolishness.

Confront the Bullies

Most struggling churches are held hostage by one or two bullies or controllers who are opposed to the church making any radical change, even if the

change would give the church a chance to thrive once again. These persons set their sense of self-worth by keeping the church so intimidated, either by their actions or their money, that very little can happen without their approval. The sad thing is most of the leaders know that these persons are a stumbling block to the church's future but they won't do anything about it. They don't confront the bully because they think that is the "Christian" thing to do, and in so doing, assist in the stunted growth or death of the congregation.

When confronted with such people our advice is either to convert them, neutralize them, or kick them out. Proverbs 22:10 tell it to us straight: "Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended" (NIV).

The body cannot live with such cancer. Mature Christians care so deeply about advancing the kingdom that they will not do anything, even not being nice, for the sake of the gospel. Remove or convert the few bullies and the church has a change to grow.

Now we can just hear the cries, "*That's not very Christian!*" You think not? We think you have confused being nice with being Christian. Too many church leaders believe that it is more important to be nice than *Christian*, and teach that the essence of Christianity is to be nice. Where do we get such a notion? Certainly not from the actions of Jesus.

Follow the Example of Jesus

One of the hallmarks of Jesus' ministry was his constant attack on the status quo. He challenged it every time he could. He even went out of his way to upset the religious bullies of his time (see, for example, Matthew 12). Jesus loved people too much to allow them to remain such small persons. Being nice has nothing to do with being Christian. Being nice is often nothing more than a lack of compassion for people.

Jesus shows us what to do with people who do not want to grow spiritually. In training his disciples how to spread the word of God's love, he told them to shake off the dust of their feet when they encountered people who did not receive them graciously (Matthew 10:14). Jesus loved people too much to let anything slow down the process of advancement of the kingdom of God.

And who can forget that fateful day when Jesus met the money changers in the temple. Remember what he did? In a holy rage, he entered the temple with a whip and drove them out (Matthew 21:12). We wouldn't call that very nice.

People who would rather be nice than Christian do not love enough. They do not have enough compassion. Instead, they are afraid of hurting someone or of

being hurt. Fear is the opposite of love. Remember, “Perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18 NIV).

If your church isn’t growing, the odds are you have one or two bullies in your midst and before renewal happens you are going to have to deal with them and it won’t be nice. Just make sure your actions are Christ like. And remember, not even Jesus got through the journey with all of his disciples. Why should we expect to?

This does not mean that we should set out to intimidate the bully or to kick people out of the church. But it does mean that we care enough about the future of our church not to allow anyone to stifle its ability to liberate people from bondage or victimization. It means that we care enough about the bully that we will not allow the bully to intimidate the church because we know the spiritual vitality of both the bully and the church is at stake.

Apply Matthew 18 to the Bully

Matthew 18 gives us a formula for dealing with the bully. First, an individual privately confronts the person with what he or she is doing and asks the person to stop. If this doesn’t achieve positive results, two or more people are to confront the person. If this does not resolve the matter, the person is to be brought before the entire church. Listen again to the not-so-nice words of Jesus. “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17 NIV). In other words, withdraw from that person’s presence, or remove that person from office! Never, ever, allow such a person to dictate the direction of the church.

The next time someone in your church attempts to intimidate or bully the church out of taking a positive step forward, go to God in prayer, and then get out the “whip” and drive that person out of the church—of course in love.

Never Take Criticism Personally

You are the spiritual barometer in your church. If you overreact to criticism or blow it out of proportion, so will the church. Don’t get mad if someone comes directly to you and says they were offended or upset about something that was said. Be grateful they came directly to you, and be humble, because they may be right. When they are, apologize sincerely.

Never Get Discouraged over a Loss

Moses didn't get everyone to Canaan and Jesus didn't get through to all the disciples. So why should you be any different? You will lose people along the way. Some of them may even have been your best friends. That's life; get over it for the sake of the gospel.

Common Criticisms

Some of the most common criticisms you will hear from people leaving the church are:

- ***The message isn't deep enough.*** This means "the message is not my style," or it could mean the person is confusing his or her personal quiet time with corporate worship. It would also mean that you have a person who listens to Christian radio all day, or watches Christian television constantly, so they are comparing you with the best of the best preachers in America, which is unfair to anybody.
- ***The pastor is not accountable.*** The first thing you must do with this response is genuinely ask yourself, "Am I accountable? Have my actions merited a checkup with my accountability?" This can be legitimate, but far too often it's not. Have you ever noticed how the person saying you are not accountable, never questioned this issue until you made a decision they personally did not like? Most people who complain about you not being accountable are really saying "you are not giving *me* control." Trust us—let them go. If they desire to stay and cause problems, ask them to leave. But one warning: when they leave, there will two or three families who will go with them, because as one leader said on this issue, "Wolves run in packs."
- ***The church is getting too big.*** If someone is upset over this, tell them they will be miserable in heaven! There's a whole lot of people there! This one is so selfish, you just need to call it what it is—a blatant disregard for the unsaved in your community.

The Advantage of Problem People

If it were not for problem people, you would not be the forged leader you are today. Also, you would probably not pray as fervently, and most important, you might not discover your future team.

When someone is walking out on you, practice this exercise. Ask God to show you who is defending you. Those are your future “go to” impact players. Hire them! Let me say this again: Hire Them! Loyalty is not really known until problem people come along and test it.

The Last Word

The real danger of problem people is when you give them the ability to make you doubt your own leadership. They will make you feel as if you are wrong if you don't do what they want. Don't listen to them. Instead, remember when you were called to start, or go to that church. Did God call you? If so, then remember your calling never included other people's opinions. Trust the leadership God put in you. If your biggest fans question you, then by all means, stop and look at what you are saying, because those people love you.

You may be having a problem with this part. If so, you probably have a high mercy gift. By that we mean you really have trouble with people not liking you or with confronting people concerning their inappropriate behavior. You prefer to avoid conflict and sweep the problem people under a rug hoping they will change. Trust us—such behavior never works and never grows a church, much less explosively grows a church.

Here are three things to ask yourself to see if you have a high mercy gift:

- Do I need people to like me?
- Do I find it next to impossible to fire a staff member or ask a problem person to leave the church?
- Do I avoid dealing with controversy?

If you answer any one of these yes, then you probably have a high mercy gift. If you sense a high mercy gift is standing between you and the growth of the kingdom, then do one of three things: one, work on developing your leadership skills and consciously going out of your way to lessen your drive for mercy. Two, hire a Jethro who can do the hard confrontational stuff for you. Often this is impossible in the small church. Third, find a church staff where your strong mercy skills are needed but don't try to be a lead pastor.

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Suggested Church Growth Reading

Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Essential Church? Reclaim a Generation of Dropouts*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.

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Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How you can work with God to Build a Faithful Church*, Baker Book Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003

Richard L. Reising, *Church Marketing 101: Preparing Your Church for Greater Growth*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

***The Big Book of Job Descriptions for Ministry*, Gospel Light, 2001**

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