



Church Jumpstart:

A 10-Week Journey Towards Reviving Our Church

Session 4: Look Back

Devotional: The Importance of Looking Back

“Whenever I begin a strategic planning process with a church, I always start by helping the leadership team look to the past. We unpack the history of the church. What was the original vision that shaped the early years? What values did the leadership embrace in the past? How has the leadership and culture shifted through the years? What ministries of the church had the biggest impact? How have the congregation and the community changed through the years?”

Tony Morgan, “The Unstuck Church”, pp.164-165

There are sinful ways, and helpful ways, to look back at the past as a reference point. What might some of these be?

Sinful Ways:

Helpful Ways:

Here are some positive biblical reasons for looking back:

1. Exodus 3:6 – It helps us remember our **identity**.
2. Psalm 77:7-12 – In remembering God’s **faithfulness** in the past, it gives us **encouragement** in the present.
3. Psalm 103:1-5 – It helps us remember why it’s so **amazing** to follow Christ.
4. Romans 15:4 – It teaches us valuable **lessons** for making wise choices now.
5. Revelation 2:5 – It reminds us of the **damage** sin causes and renews our **faith**.

Discussion of *The Unstuck Church*

Chapter 5: *Maintenance – It's Time To Embrace A New Vision*

Last week we began looking at a church in the “maintenance” stage of the lifecycle.

What were some characteristics of churches in the maintenance mode?

What are steps a church can take to return to health?

Priority 1: Renew the Vision: Embrace The Change Before The Emergency Forces The Change

But capturing a new vision won't happen overnight, anymore than spring can replace winter overnight. A journey of “thawing” has to take place inside our hearts. Once we wake up to the trouble we are in as a church (how “frozen” we are), the steps of this journey look like this:

- We first must look up and fall in love with Jesus all over again, rediscovering why he saved us, and why we exist as a church.
- We then must look back at what we were like when we were white-hot for the gospel, and what happened to bring on the winter.
- We then look around us at how desperately people need Jesus.
- We then look within us at the difference we can make as a church.
- We finally look ahead at the path (or strategy) God will have us take in the next season of ministry.

One of the major steps we've now completed in our recovery is the rediscovery of our *mission* as a church. We've reconnected with *why we exist as a church*.

After a weeks-long study of the mission and vision that propelled Jesus forward, and then at what motivated the first generation of Christians in their lives, we have defined together a new mission statement for our church.

Drum roll, please!!!!

**Empower and Encourage our Community
with the Love of Christ.**

With 27 responses turned in the past two Sundays, here are the results of our new Church Mission Statement selection.

Each person was asked to select their top five responses of a list of 17 possible statements, and rank their top five from 5 (most favorite) down to 1 (least favorite).

Empower and encourage our community with the love of Christ.	47
Our mission is to love God, love others, and magnify the name of Jesus.	42
To connect with people, equip them with the truth, and set them free in Christ Jesus.	40
It is our mission to lead people to the Lord Jesus Christ through his love.	38
Bring people to Christ, by sharing the love of Jesus.	36
Our mission is to help Christ bring people to him, allow our community to love Christ, and love people as themselves.	32
Love people the way Jesus loves us.	25
We are a church that reaches our world one person at a time.	25
To spread God's love through our community and the world.	23
Help everyone know Jesus, love Jesus, and to disciple others.	21



How can a mission statement be helpful to us? What do we do with this statement now?

What other steps should a church in maintenance-mode take to return to health?

Priority 2: Prioritize Reaching **New People**: Reconfirm The **Primary** Person You're Trying To Reach Who Is Outside The Church



Morgan writes:

“If I had to identify only one key factor distinguishing churches on the left side of the life cycle and those on the right side, it would be this one...The churches on the upswing will do just about anything short of sin to reach new people. If what they're doing today doesn't accomplish that goal, they'll embrace changes as they move forward toward accomplishing that goal.” ~ p.128

Sounds like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23. Remember this?

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jew...To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all possible means I might save some.”

And we should not just be about reaching new people. We have to decide who the *primary person* is we're trying to reach, Morgan says. **Why? Shouldn't we try to reach everybody?**

*“When a church tries to reach everyone, it ceases to reach anyone adequately....Every church, whether they believe it or not, has a target consumer. **When I walk into a church, it doesn't take long to determine who the church is trying to reach....**A Nielsen study showed that ads targeting 21-34 reached consumers 62% of the time. 35-54 reached consumers 41% of the time. So if you target young adults, you will reach more of the total audience. Why? Because older adults usually want to be younger.” ~ pp.20-23*

Hypothetically, if our target audience were young families, then immediately a number of changes should come to mind that we would be willing to make to draw young families. *“To the young families, I become young, to win the young...”*. What might these changes include?

Finally, a church in maintenance-mode would do the following two things to return to health:

Priority 3: Curtail The **Complexity** Creep: Shift From Adding **Programs** To Clarifying A [Growth/Discipleship] **Path**.

&

Stop **Low-Impact** Programs And Events: Reprioritize Resources Around **New** Initiatives To Accomplish Your Renewed Vision

Points To Ponder (pp.132-133):

*“With very few exceptions, the vast majority of churches I've served have concluded that they are too complex. **For some the complexity has more to do with their governance and how decisions are made.** The more common form of complexity I see though has to do with ministry programming.”*

“The research is clear that more church activity does not produce spiritual growth.”

“Complexity develops over time, and it's hard to rein in. It begins with the challenge that exists when a church doesn't have a strategy, it only has a mission statement...They know why they exist...What they don't have is a strategy...Without a clearly defined strategy, churches gravitate toward what they've always done...With every iteration of the vision, more things are added, but nothing is ever subtracted.”

*“Churches that are reaching many young adults aren't doing so through a young adults program. They aren't hiring a young adults director and starting a separate young adults gathering. Instead they are reaching a lot of young adults **because their strategy – their weekend services, small groups, serving opportunities, family ministries, and everything in between – is done with young adults in mind.**”*

“To combat the complexity creep you need a unified ministry strategy so everyone begins to pull in the same direction. That helps to prioritize how to use space, invest money, leverage leaders, engage volunteers, and promote the next steps.”

As you think of FBC, do you find any of these quotes helpful or insightful?

Let's now *LOOK BACK* and listen to some voices from our past. Jot down any notes & observations as we survey 2 reports:

1. "Report Of The Church Growth Committee", written back in 1986 by a small team of FBC leaders, commissioned to study a serious decade-long decline in church attendance.

2. "An Accurate Picture Of The First Baptist Church" by Michael Adam, written in 1993.

For next week:

- Continue your work on your "I Love Jesus Because..." and 30-Second Testimony projects.
- Read chapter 6, "*Preservation*" in "The Unstuck Church".
- Read the handout, "We Are Growing" – the original brochure used for fundraising for the 1959 construction of our present sanctuary.