



## ***Church Jumpstart:***

### ***A 10-Week Journey Towards Reviving Our Church***

#### ***Session 5: Look Back***

### ***Devotional: Broken Window or Broken Vision?***

*“The board of a certain congregation decided that reaching teenagers in the neighborhood would be part of its vision for a new commitment to outward-focused mission. So they initiated a recreation program at the church on Friday nights.*

*Volunteers were trained not only to keep the fun and refreshments flowing but also to pursue conversations with any of the students who were willing to open up about their lives and spiritual journeys.*

*Six weeks into the new program, the board met again to evaluate and learned that three things had happened: 1) a young woman had become a Christian, 2) a young man had agreed to meet regularly with the youth pastor to explore Christianity, and 3) a window in the church had been broken.*

*The board concluded...*

*Kaiser, John. Winning On Purpose (Convergence Ebook Series) (pp. 27-28). Abingdon Press.*

If you were on this board, what would *you* say?

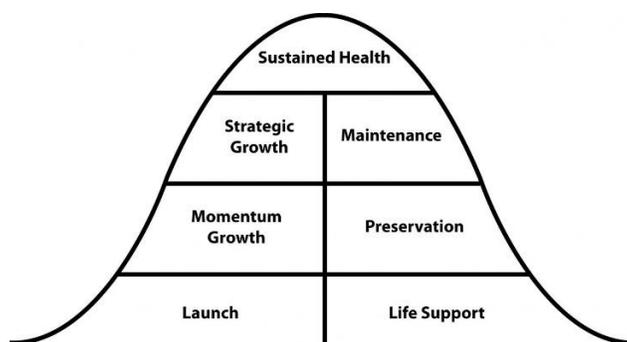
Here's how the board responded:

*"That recreation night was such a great idea! Too bad it didn't work. Obviously we can't have windows being broken, so let's phase out the program and send more money to Young Life. They are better equipped to deal with these kids. "*

Chances are good that this was a church in the preservation mode.

## Discussion of *The Unstuck Church*

### Chapter 6: *Preservation – The Church Must Change To Survive*



According to Tony Morgan in *“The Unstuck Church”*, what are some characteristics of this phase?

- Attendance and finances are both **declining**.
- **Methods** become more important than the mission.

*“This is when the real worship wars occur as people prioritize their own stylistic preferences above those the church is trying to reach. People dig in their heels regarding service times, Sunday school classes, programs, and events that have been around for years. Turf wars become the norm as ministries stake their claims on budget, space, staff, volunteers, and other resources. The ministry silos become entrenched.”*

- There's a prevailing pull to go back to **the way things used to be**.
- The strong leaders and visionaries have left the church. And probably been gone a long time.
- Power shifts from the pastor and staff to the **lay leaders**.
- The focus shifts to keeping people from **leaving**.

*How does a church in the preservation stage return to health?*

Change Demands **Intentional** Leadership: You Can't Keep Everyone Happy and Experience the Change That Produces Health

Let's read the story on pages 149-151 that Morgan tells of Piedmont Church near Atlanta on how Pastor Ike Reighard led a church out of the preservation mode. See if you can identify some of the specific steps Pastor Ike took with the church.

*So what were some of the specific things that Pastor Ike and the church did?*

He created a sense of **urgency**.

He cast a **vision** for a **better** future.

He worked with key **influencers** of the church.

They began to implement **key changes**.

They addressed pressing **internal challenges**.

They celebrated the **wins** along the way.

Address The **Warning** Signs First. You Can't Ignore Problems And Expect Them To Go Away.

Morgan in his work discovered there were 5 KEY CHARACTERISTICS of churches that are stuck (pp.161-163). Here are the places to make your highest priority in bringing a church back to life:

1. They lack a focused, compelling **vision** for the future.
2. They don't have a clear **discipleship path**.
3. They have an **inward** focus.
4. They are **complex**.  
*"Healthy churches reduce the programming clutter, focus communications, and streamline structure and decision-making."*
5. They don't have strong **leadership**.

*“The first [problem] is where people, including senior pastors, who don’t have the leadership gift, are in leadership positions. The second situation I see is when people with leadership gifts aren’t empowered to use them, because the structure and systems constrain them.*

*For example, I’ve run into instances when a church board sees it as their responsibility to keep the senior pastor in line. That’s not the role of the board. Among other things, the board should be equipping and empowering the pastor to use his leadership gifts. God designed leaders to lead.”*

Look **Backward** To Move **Forward**: The Key To Health May Be In The Rear-View Mirror

*“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?”*

*“There’s a lot that can be learned from the church’s past. History is important. As we map out what happened in the past, **we try to identify the key moments** that shifted the direction of the ministry. We look for trends and common themes. We look for how these critical points impacted the church’s health.”*

Let’s listen to a voice from more than 25 years ago. Pastor Mike Adam conducted a lengthy study of FBC which had been in decline for nearly 20 years. Here are his observations of the church. Take note of anything from his 1993 report that contains echoes of themes we’ve encountered in *The Unstuck Church*.

*The Church Government*

“There are 4 boards that conduct month to month business of the church. These boards then form the overarching Advisory Board that make recommendations to the congregation for action. This government requires 51 officers. That is 20% of the worship attendance for 1992. The two strong boards are trustees and the male Deacon board of the joint diaconate board. These 2 boards have been under the same leadership for 20 years.” (2-3)

“A...reason for the lack of church growth...is with the pastor in the leadership of the church. The first vital sign of a growing church is *“a pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth, and the second is mobilized laity”* (Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*). The church has had a number of excellent pastors. However one of the descriptions of the church is that it is a “lay-led church”. The

pastor's position is significantly weakened in this church. This leadership is played out in a lack of trust in the pastor and his position. His direction and motives are brought into question...Lay leaders then are not doing the job they were called to do, ministry to the people, because they are spending all of their time deciding and checking on the pastor...The literature is very clear that churches do not grow under strong lay leadership." (7)

### *Outreach & Growth*

"The chief programs for expansion growth in the past were crusades and inviting programs. The Crusades in the 60s and 70s reportedly produce many converts the records from this time do not record any dramatic increase in worship attendance. "(3)

"A great deal of discussion and guilt is shared about how we are not reaching the lost. The lay leadership is listening to evangelism and church growth ideas but not always with receptivity." (3)

"Whenever there is growth you will hear people say, *"There are so many new people in church I just don't know anyone anymore."* One of the key arguments against starting a second service was that, *"We will not know these people."*" (6)

### *Membership & Assimilation*

"Upon further study...we discover why the membership numbers are so inflated and the church is declining. It cannot keep its new members active." (5)

"The church has a variety of age groups but a significant number of the church is older. The leadership core of the church is an has been those over 60 years of age. If the decline continues, the church in the next decade faces a significant loss from death and a leadership crisis as well." (6)

"There is some value and lifestyle difference between generations that cause both groups concern. The older leadership is concerned about the younger generation's commitment and ability to lead. The younger see the older is too dogmatic and unable to change." (6)

"Those who come into the church who are not like the group are subtly rejected. If they cannot find a place to become a part of the group, they're not included. There is a lack of sensitivity to new members once they have gone through the pastor's class. There is no program to assimilate them into the church. New members and visitors are left to try to fit in on their own." (6-7)

### *Training & Discipleship*

"There are currently now no training programs to teach leadership and deeper commitment or a willingness to change the church in significant ways to meet the new challenges of new generations." (6)

“Because of the pastor/lay-leadership struggle, no clear direction is given to the church. This causes negative feeling to all sides and very few programs can be a success.” (8)

“The church has some very gifted people. Some are working in ministry. However, central focus is not on individuals using their gifts and talents to win people to Christ and build up the church. A great deal of time and energy is put into leadership and keeping the Body together. With so many leaders, it is difficult for people to see the vision or direction of the church. The leadership tends to focus on the negative, so at times it is difficult to keep the Body together. Complaints are the norm and are always listened to which encourages more. If the church wants to grow, the boards must change from critical decision-making bodies to work and ministry.” (9)

*Pastor Mike's Recommendations For Growth (p.10)*

1. “There must be an assessment by the pastoral staff, current leadership and the church to decide whether we really want to grow.”
2. “If the church agrees to the need to grow, there must be a shift of leadership and power from the laity to the pastor.”
3. “Under the direction of the pastor, and with the help of the staff and people, there needs to be a clearly thought out philosophy of ministry, membership, evangelism, discipleship and church growth. This philosophy must be agreed on by the pastor, staff, and the people of the church. It must be easily and often articulated by the pastor, staff and people. This philosophy must include how someone comes to Christ, enters the church, and is established in the local body.”
4. “Consistent and regular prayer must be scheduled and undertaken to seek the Lord for revival in the church and the community.”

*“I hope you are praying for your church. I hope you are praying for your leaders. I hope you are praying for your community. Prayer is foundational in every season of the church's journey but maybe more so in this season. Why do I say that? Because it's really not possible for us to change someone else's heart. Only God can produce heart change. That's what, ultimately, is required for churches in preservation.” ~ Tony Morgan*

5. “Spiritual gift instruments [i.e. assessments] should be given to as many in the church as possible.”
6. “The laity must be mobilized for ministry by taking over ministries that they find themselves gifted in or starting new ones that do not exist already. Discipleship, small group leading, and ministry training should abound.

“After this starting point, the leadership of the church is only responsibility would be to assess needs in the church and community, develop new ministries, train leaders for these ministries,

see that these ministries have the proper materials and support to accomplish their task and assess their success or failure...The church should consider reducing the number of People on boards and in offices. There are too many Chiefs and not enough Indians. It has been difficult for some time to find committed, competent, and cooperative leaders. I suggest that for the next calendar year that each board be reduced by 20%. Those who have not been committed in their attendance or work in the mission of the board should be asked to resign by the pastor or the current chairman. They would not be replaced unless absolutely necessary."

Michael Adam should sue Tony Morgan for stealing his ideas! Morgan's next key for a church in preservation to come to health is this:

Structure Boards For Health And Impact: Move More People Into **Ministry** Over **Meetings**.

How a church governs itself is *absolutely critical* for the church fulfilling its mission.

"Any fixing of broken congregations **must start with mission and vision**...However, many leaders have led those following them to adopt a new mission and embrace a new vision only to see both die like beautiful roses denied water. **The reason new life died is that the structure of the congregation or denomination was broken, remains broken, and cannot be made to work.**" ~ John Kaiser, *Winning On Purpose*

Tony Morgan offers some suggestions:

***It begins with having only one lay leadership board, which should be made up of five to nine people, depending on the size of the church. Eliminate all other boards and committees. This board sticks to the big picture, and it doesn't get involved in the day-to-day ministry decisions, which are the pastor's and the staff's responsibility.***

***The board's primary responsibilities include modeling spiritual leadership for the rest of the congregation and providing encouragement to the senior pastor. In that role, it should be more about empowerment than accountability; however, the board and the pastor should work together to establish healthy boundaries for the pastor's soul, marriage, family, and leadership.***

***The board should also be engaged in big-picture decisions that shape the church's mission, vision, and values. When it comes to defining ministry strategy, though, that responsibility belongs to the pastor and staff. If there's a healthy relationship established with trust and unity, it won't be unusual for the pastor to seek guidance and wisdom from the board on big strategic shifts.***

***The board should focus on decisions that are significant in scope, like approving the annual budget, setting the pastor’s salary, purchasing land, or building new facilities. The pastor and staff should be responsible for day-to-day operations.***

***The board should oversee only one person—the senior pastor. That means the senior pastor has the responsibility of hiring, managing, coaching, directing, and, if needed, firing anyone in a staff role. If a senior pastor demonstrates an inability to handle these responsibilities, the board’s recourse is to find another pastor.***

Now that your mind is whirring like a pinwheel, we know that this brings up all sorts of questions. Some of you are wishing, *“Boy if only Pastors Ray and Bob could come and guide us through some of these questions I have.”*

Well...it just so happens...as if all this was planned out...that next Saturday, Pastor Ray and Bob will be with us from 2:00 to 5:00 to share a critical seminar – *The Accountable Leadership Model* – about how a church can adapt its governance to spur it on toward new growth.

So consider this seminar a continuation of this conversation.

### For next week:

- Move heaven and earth to attend the Saturday seminar.
- Read chapter 7, *“Life Support”* in *“The Unstuck Church”*.
- Read through the Church Constitution if you have time.