

The following ideas were derived from *The UNSTUCK Group* led by Tony Morgan and merged with some ideas of my own.

In *The UNSTUCK Group* research below were the five most common issues churches face today.

1. **Discipleship Pathway:** Churches often do not have or they have an inadequate discipleship path for regular church members, as well as new people. What are the next steps for people who want to follow Jesus Christ? There should always be a next step. This is an ongoing problem for most churches and requires intentional work to correct if churches want to grow. Even when churches and pastors are busy doing church stuff, this must not be neglected.
2. **Leadership Development:** For a church to keep growing beyond the ability of just one or just a few senior clergy and staff leaders, there must be a way to develop and deploy lay leadership. Finding the right people, training the right people and giving them the leeway to lead beyond the walls is critical if a church is to step up to the next level or get off a plateau in church attendance. This is often the major reason a church stops growing. The talent alone of a senior leader will put a lid on church growth if that is the only asset of a church.
3. **Mission/Vision:** Agreeing on a clear vision empowers a church to carry out its mission. When leaders don't have and don't communicate a clear, consistent vision and mission, then something else will become the core value of the church. And, it typically won't be one that is faithful to the core vision of Christ's Church. Mission and vision should be unique to a church, its leaders and the mission field in which the church is. Here one size does not fit all. Vision is personal, mission is passionate and the strategy to implement it is everything.
4. **Communications:** This may be the most difficult thing to do in any church – communicating the church, opportunities and life to the members and the community in an effective way. If people don't know what's happening, not much is going to happen. Creating a clear and consistent communication strategy using all the tools available is non-negotiable for a church that wants to grow. This includes a strategy for both internal and external communication. Churches that don't communicate effectively will cripple their vision.

5. **Lack of Volunteers:** Having volunteers is a result of building a volunteer culture. Do we celebrate our volunteers? Do we support our volunteers? Do we train our volunteers? Do we appreciate our volunteers? Do we expect members to volunteer? Do we rely on staff for everything? Do we have too many staff? Do we have many well-communicated opportunities for volunteers with clear expectations, results and even rewards? A shift to volunteers doing ministry almost always equates to health in a church.

I would also like to add a few quick thoughts:

- New places bring in new people, i.e. services, groups, ministries, etc.
- When decline happens even a little, alert, effective leaders address it immediately.
- Keeping prayer, the Bible and Christ at the center holds values and direction in place without which churches typically are going to get lost in the culture rather than bringing the lost to Christ.