

How to come back from a decline in church giving

By Joe Park



An increasing number of church leaders are reporting a slow decline in church giving — both in total dollars and in the number of people giving. Over time, this decline could have a devastating effect on a church's capacity to fund ministry.

Yet many churches are experiencing strong growth in giving. And this increase is not just limited to fast-growing churches in suburban areas.

If your giving isn't where you hoped it would be, you might be wondering what to do differently. You could just keep trying to do what you've always done. But it's likely you'll just end up experiencing more of the same.

There are three keystone focal points that you will need to leverage to embrace God's preferred future for your church or ministry: strategy, communications, and funding. You can't address one without accounting for the other two. All three must be working in harmony to grow into your God-inspired ministry potential.

To this end, there are nine questions you need to ask yourself and your leaders:

Strategy

#1: Can you clearly connect your ministry vision with life change? Life change is the measurable evidence of ministry impact. In addition to the ability to measure success, it's critical that your plans are actionable so you can empower people to play their parts in God's plans.

#2: Can you clearly connect your activity with impact? It's not about being busy; it's about being effective in making disciples. You must have a healthy leadership team and staff structure that is aligned with your ministry strategy.

#3: How are you inviting your financial leaders into the vision and strategy development process? If you aren't collaborating with your financial leaders, they're missing an opportunity for personal growth and to have a ministry impact. You're missing their wisdom and the additional financial investment this collaboration would bring.

Communications

#4: Have you converted your church budget into a ministry plan that will inspire others through story? Few people are inspired by a spreadsheet. The people in your church want to hear your budget through the lens of story.

#5: Are you sharing your ministry impact and life change consistently across all relevant channels? An untold story has no impact.

Be careful not to project your personal communication habits onto others. Share life change and impact often and over a wide variety of communication channels, including social media.

#6: Are you leveraging your offering talks each week to point back to impact and life change? A weekly offering talk is a built-in opportunity to champion the impact your church is making and to help worshipers experience the impact their generosity is having on others.

Funding

#7: Have you made generosity a core discipline championed in your disciple-making strategy? The most generous churches include generosity as part of their discipleship path and core values.

#8: Are you actively promoting recurring giving methods such as ACH bank drafts and other forms of electronic giving? As church attendance patterns shift, you can help your congregation be faithful in giving whether they're present for worship or not.

Be sure the focus is on automatically recurring giving rather than the particular method of giving selected by a donor.

#9: Do you have a plan to challenge your current givers to take the next step in their generosity journey? Encouraging people to grow as disciples includes challenging them to grow in their giving.

Be specific in what you're asking from individuals and use only percentage of income as a unit of measure. For example, "Will you prayerfully consider increasing your giving by one or more percent of your income as you grow to a tithe (10%) and beyond?"

Make disciples and fund ministry

If you can give a positive response to each of the nine questions above, you'll have a greater degree of confidence in your ability to make a lasting impact on your church, your community and the world.

Resolve today to do things differently. If you find the courage to try new things, your capacity to do more ministry will multiply as you become more effective at making disciples and funding ministry. **CE**

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