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# 5 Ways Pastors Can Stunt Church Growth

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There are many barriers that can prevent a church from growing.

From a shortage of leaders to a congregation that doesn't invite others, church growth can stall for a number of reasons.

And sometimes, there are even people in the church [who don't want it to grow](#).

But there's one more barrier that can keep a church from experiencing healthy growth and it comes from an unexpected place: the pastor.

Many pastors want to reach more people in the community and see their church's weekly attendance numbers grow, but are unknowingly standing in their own way.

Here are 6 ways pastors can be the ones hurting their church's growth.

But be encouraged—if you're doing any of these “don'ts,” there's grace for you and practical ways to turn it around today.

## ***#1 – They don't raise up other leaders.***

When all of the responsibility from [congregational care](#) to staff development falls on one person, it's a recipe for [burnout](#) and it can block pathways for growth.

But when you take the time to develop leaders in your church, it pays off in more ways than one. With more leaders sharing ministry work, the church is able to recruit more volunteers and leverage each leader's unique leadership style to reach new people.

## **#2 – *They resist good changes.***

It's important to remain diligent and guard against changes that could hurt the church and aren't biblical or on-mission. And as the lead pastor, it's your responsibility to help filter the changes that are presented in your church.

That includes deciding which changes are good and which ones are bad. But too often, things that are new and different for churches end up in the "bad" category.

When trying something new is written off immediately, it can unnecessarily keep the church from growing. For example, even if [digital ministry](#) isn't something you've considered in the past, fighting against it doesn't protect the church—it only holds the church back while the people you're trying to reach float off in that direction.

Not every idea is a good idea for your church. But take time to consider new methods, try new strategies, and embrace good changes. There might be a change right under your nose that would help the church grow but it's being met with resistance.

Hold a meeting with key leaders and some of the sharpest minds on your volunteer teams and ask what they think needs to change to help the church [reach new people](#).

**[Free Download: The Senior Pastor's Guide to Breaking Barriers](#)**

### ***#3 – They don't emphasize discipleship and inviting.***

Many pastors watch the same pattern unfold in their church year after year. They look out into the congregation and see the same faces each week. Those faces come to service, but they don't do anything else. They don't grow, they don't serve, and they don't invite anyone to come with them.

Eventually, without any intentional discipleship helping them grow spiritually and recognize the importance of being connected to the church, they drift away. And soon, there are fewer and fewer people in the seats on Sundays.

Pastors can prevent this by creating a discipleship model that nurtures the people they have and [equips those people to invite](#) the people they're trying to reach.

People don't often naturally think to invite others to church or they don't know how to extend that invitation. Pastors and church leaders can provide resources—such as invite cards, social media posts, and templates for conversation starters—that mobilize their people to invite.

This is crucial. A startling (and encouraging) number of people would tell you that they came to church after being invited by someone. While there are many ways to get people through the door, there's nothing quite like a personal invitation.

### ***#4 – They create a culture that turns off unchurched people.***

It's easy to get used to the way things are. From the way the church has inside jokes and a sea of familiar faces, pastors and congregations get comfortable with each other. And that's a good thing. The church is a family, after all.

But if you want the church to grow, it's time to strike a balance. New guests might even appreciate seeing how the pastor seems to know everyone in the

congregation on a personal level, but too much insider language only makes them feel excluded.

Instead of only speaking to the people you know from the pulpit, start to include references to new people. Explain things that might be unfamiliar to people who are unchurched or unbelievers. Extend a welcome, even if you're not sure that there are any new people present. It sets the expectation that there should be new faces and makes sure that they're recognized when there are guests.

Evaluate whether your church's current culture might not be welcoming to unchurched people by considering the following questions.

- If someone new comes to our church, do we have people and processes in place to welcome them and follow up with them?
- Are we using any language that would confuse or exclude someone who hasn't been to our church before? (Hint: Children's ministry names are common culprits.)
- Is there any part of our church service that speaks directly to new people and gives them clear next steps? If not, where and how can we build that in?

### *#5 – They try to satisfy everyone.*

It can show up differently for every pastor, but many church leaders share a common struggle that keeps their church from growing: people-pleasing.

Satisfying the personal preferences of everyone in the church is not only impossible, but it can also steal attention and resources from relevant areas that help the church move forward.

For example, there might be a ministry or event that is under-performing and off-mission in every way, but one church member wants to keep it because it's been on the calendar for 20 years.

But in order for growth to happen, sometimes we have to shift resources in a different direction. And more important than satisfying everyone is reaching more people for Christ and keeping the church on mission.

As the pastor, your job title is also “Chief Clarity Officer.” This includes making sure volunteers and staff are in the right roles, providing clear direction, having a key role in shaping the church’s strategy and goals.

It might seem unrelated at first, but clarity in strategy is essential for church growth. A firm focus on the strategy and mission might disappoint some people, but it helps everyone in the end.

If you’ve recognized that some parts of your leadership might be keeping your church from growing, don’t dismay. You’re not alone in struggling to delegate, wanting to please everyone, and needing a solid plan to put in place.

You are called by God and equipped with the grace you need to live out that calling and pursue the mission of your church. And there are also resources available that provide the guidance you need to clarify key areas in your ministry and see your church grow in a healthy way.

As we’ve seen, pastors can hurt church growth, but they can also contribute to it greatly. Excellent leadership can break down barriers to growth and bring people in. With a few changes (and openness to change), you can drive your church in the direction of growth.

### ***What’s Next?***

Building Your Ministry Plan is an insanely practical course to guide you and your team through the process of creating a two-page “business plan” for your ministry.

The course will guide you through what to put in each box of the Two-Page Plan®, show you examples from other churches, and help you use your plan in real-world ministry settings.