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# Creating a Strategic Ministry Annual Plan for Your Church

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Starting a new year won't necessarily solve any of the problems or challenges your church is facing.

Even with the natural sense of optimism people have in January, your church, programs, ministries, financial situation, lack of leaders, and questions about engagement are still there.

It might be a new ministry year. But chances are you've got the same problems.

Let's change that.

You can head into the new year with a renewed sense of purpose. You can move forward with focus.

It will take some intentionality and good leadership on your part, but you can create a plan that doesn't just rely on hope.

## ***This Will Help Every Church***

When you ask any question, one of the most common answers is, "it depends."

- How much does a website cost? *It depends.*
- Who should we hire next? *It depends.*
- Should we try this new product or service? *It depends.*

“It depends” is an accurate but frustrating answer. You know that it depends, but you were hoping for a little more clarity.

I’m ready to make a pretty bold statement.

**You need to create a Strategic Ministry Plan.**

*This* is exactly what you should do. And it DOESN’T depend.

Regardless of your denomination, church size, budget, or staff makeup, this is your next step.

It will help you get to where you want to go...*no matter what*.

### ***There’s a Biblical Reason to Plan***

Whenever I talk about planning, I get pushback from pastors who would rather trust the Holy Spirit.

After all, strategic planning, pro formas, and KPIs don’t sound very spiritual.

It’s not like a 17-point plan is needed to pray for people. A complicated planning spreadsheet won’t help you spread the gospel.

Of course, there is some truth here.

We’re not advocating for planning *instead* of faith. Planning that does not account for the supernatural blessings of God aren’t good plans.

But God isn’t against planning. And plans aren’t the opposite of faith.

You’ll find principles of planning throughout the pages of Scripture. Here’s an example from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

Proverbs 21:5 says, “The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.”

Luke 14:28 says, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

Hopefully, Mr. Tower Builder prayed, got good advice, and had a vision for the tower. But the reason he failed was a lack of planning, not a lack of faith.

The Bible is pro-planning. Your church should be, too.

### *There’s a Practical Reason to Plan*

[Jenni Catron](#) says, “There is nothing more frustrating as a leader than to have a God-given vision burning in your heart but the inability to see that vision become reality.”

When there’s a disconnect, leaders usually try harder to cast that God-given vision, leveraging all of their communication skills and passion to get people to buy into the vision.

But vision can be overrated.

For too long, people have been lifting vision up as the holy grail to get people on the same page. Experts constantly say things like:

- People give to vision.
- Casting vision is how you get volunteers.
- You need a big vision to experience growth.

Blah, blah, blah.

Vision is an important piece, but it’s not going to get your church to where you want to go.

Vision isn't how you get people on the same page.

You and I can agree on the vision to go to Mexico, but if you want to take a boat and I want to fly a plane, we're not aligned. We agree on the destination, but we're not on the same page about the process.

Throwing more vision at people won't help them get on the same page. People need to align around the plan, not just the destination.

If you've never created or clarified a strategic ministry plan, this should be the year. Even if you've created one in the past, it's in need of a major overhaul. Here are a few reasons why you need this document this year.

### ***Don't Skip This Step***

Because planning doesn't sound very spiritual, and because most pastors would rather preach than plan, the tendency is to skip over this step and get right to the "real" ministry.

But don't do it.

Don't decide to start a new ministry, hire a staff member, raise money, conduct a campaign, hold a leadership retreat, make an important ministry decision, or head into this next year without first creating a ministry plan.

There's a lot at stake here and I've seen too many churches leave ministry on the table or get in over their heads in complexity all because they didn't plan.

Without a good plan...

### ***#1 – Everything seems like a good idea or a God-given opportunity.***

I know you've been in meetings where someone said, "We just can't let this pass by." Without prayerfully putting a strategic plan in place, you'll say yes to

every good idea. That will lead to ineffectiveness. A good strategic plan is permission to say no to what doesn't fit.

***#2 – People get tired of bumping around from ministry to ministry and program to program.***

If your volunteer base is burned out, you have a strategic problem, not a people problem. A good plan will keep you from wearing out your people on things that are off-mission or not happening at the right time.

As a quick aside, our [Volunteer Course](#) will give you a good strategy for recruiting, training and pastoring all of your volunteers. It's a proven system to help you keep people engaged.

***#3 – Your people will keep drifting.***

Staff members, leaders, and volunteers all naturally drift from what is most important, shifting focus to what is urgent.

It's not that bad things are distracting them, it's that disconnected, off-strategy ideas are pulling them away from what is most important. A strong strategic plan that's simple to understand and follow will keep people centered.

Ultimately, your strategic plan will solve problems BEFORE they come up.

***Two Reasons Ministry Plans Don't Work for You***

At this point, you might be convinced. Or you might still be skeptical that a plan will really help.

Maybe you feel like the work and effort won't be worth it, considering most strategic plans end up in a filing cabinet or an outdated Google Drive folder. You're wondering if the work is worth the reward. It's understandable.

***Reason #1: Too Complicated***

Most church strategic plans don't work because they are far too complicated. Most of the examples that I find online are way too long. One was 67 pages!

People can't follow a 67-page plan. Heck, they probably won't even read a 67-page plan.

Churches are actually complex ecosystems...you're not a business but you do business-like things. You're a local organization that is a part of a global movement. You don't sell products but you do raise money. You have staff, but most work is done by volunteers. It can get very complicated.

Where there is great complexity, simple plans are needed to provide clarity—not complicated plans created with the help of an expensive consultant.

That's why the template I'm going to show you is just two pages.

***Reason #2: Too Generic***

The second reason strategic plans don't work is that they are too generic. With grandiose purpose statements or cute, alliterated phrases pretending to be a strategy, they fill up pages and pages but don't answer any concrete questions.

I've read dozens of strategic plans that don't answer the questions people are really asking and provide no clear direction to anyone in leadership.

That kind of plan isn't helpful at all.

Your ministry plan doesn't need to live in the clouds. It needs to be very specific, abandoning flowery language in lieu of actionable lists.

- This is what we're doing.
- This is how we're measuring success.

- This is who is in charge.

Those are the types of specific questions you need to answer with your annual ministry plan.

### *Introducing the Two Page Plan*

To cut through the complication and help you create something that is both useful and actionable, we've created a template for you.

It's just two pages but everything has a purpose.

The first page helps you clarify who you are. It's all about getting crystal clear about your identity as an organization.

The second page helps you clarify what you do. It's all about getting clear on your programs, ministries, and activities.

Since it's just two pages, there's no room for fancy fluff or meaningless phrases. Everything matters. Everything is focused.

All in all, the Two Page Plan has 13 boxes you fill in. They are....

1. **Purpose.** You've probably already got this written, but we'll help you make it clearer and show you where to use it.
2. **Mission.** This will likely be one of your biggest "AHA" moments. It will be a big game-changer and, unlike most mission statements, it will rally your people toward specific actions.
3. **Vision.** This is a sentence or phrase that paints a picture of where you're going.
4. **Values.** More than just fancy words, we'll help you clarify and actually use your values to make actual ministry decisions.
5. **Strategy.** Big plans will never be accomplished without a corresponding strategy.

6. **Profile.** Who are you really trying to reach? Spoiler: The answer can't be "everyone" and we'll show you why.
7. **Distinctives.** What makes you truly unique? Once churches clarify these, we'll help you lean in and leverage them.
8. **Keystone Ministries.** What are the most important ministries in your church? And yes, this means some things you do aren't as important.
9. **Annual Events.** What are the big church-wide events that need everyone dialed in?
10. **Key Metrics.** Which numbers are most important for you to measure? Every church is a little different but every church needs to be crystal clear.
11. **Key Processes.** There are a handful of systems and processes in your church that will help you solve problems once and for all.
12. **Annual Goals.** Goals inspire us toward a better future, and there's a way to set them so people are inspired, not annoyed.
13. **Three-Year Outlook.** Imagine what your church will look like and feel like three years from now.

The Two Page Plan is like a business plan for your church. It will help you clarify who you are and what you're doing. It will help you get all your people on the same page. It will give you an easy-to-follow plan.

### *Where to Get It*

First, it's a PDF download from the Church Fuel member site.

Don't ever mistake something that's simple for something simplistic. The Two Page Plan is a simple tool, but it's effective. You can print copies of the plan, talk through it in meetings, and work to get it right.

The Two Page Plan comes with a premium course called Building Your Ministry Plan. In this course, we walk through each box on the plan and give the principles and examples you need to complete each section.



The course and the plan go hand in hand and they will set you up for success. Of course, each year you can update your plan and let it guide you for years to come.

You get the course, the plan, and the resource immediately when you join [Church Fuel](#).