

breaking the

**NEXT
GROWTH**

BARRIER



BREAKING THE NEXT GROWTH BARRIER

Most pastors want to reach more people with the gospel. And while the goal isn't necessarily to have a "big church," we do want to see the church grow in a healthy way.

In fact, there's a tension between growth and health that should never be resolved. If you act like it's all about growth, you'll cross lines to push up attendance. If you resolve that it's all about health, you'll leave God-given ministry opportunities on the table. Great leaders hold growth and health in balance.

We've worked with hundreds of pastors from churches of all shapes and sizes. We all get stuck and we all plateau. No matter the size of your church, there are cultural, spiritual or organizational factors that can limit your impact. There are barriers you're facing and we want to help you break them.



10 THINGS PASTORS CAN DO TO BREAK DOWN GROWTH BARRIERS

1

PREPARE FOR GUESTS

If you want to lead your church to healthy growth, prepare for guests. You must do more than say you have a welcoming environment, you must intentionally craft steps for people to take.


Hospitality is Biblical.

There's a Biblical mandate to show hospitality. 1 Peter 4:9 says we should show hospitality to all people. Hebrews 13:2 says some of us have actually entertained angels without knowing.


A church that's friendly to guests is a church that takes the Bible seriously.

You have at least four great opportunities to show hospitality to guests.

- ▶ Your website should set expectations.
- ▶ Your first impressions team should say hello.



Your church service should explain everything.



Your follow up process should create conversations.

You get to design an effective process.

Pastors that lead their church through the next growth barrier create intentional processes. What happens when someone visits? The best time to answer that question is now. Put a process in place and use the same steps every time.

Would phone calls, note cards, or text messages help people get connected? Could you provide a personal guide to help new people make friends? Are you leading people to one, super-clear next step? Have you written down or sketched out your process?

2

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT SPOTS

What got you here won't get you there.

Those are the words of Marshall Goldsmith. And, while his excellent book isn't about the church, all church leaders should take note. There's a good chance the leadership structure of your church will actually **hinder** growth and keep you stuck.



4

In a growing church, the pastor's role must change.

You must make the shift from the one who does the ministry and makes all the decisions to the one who leads a team of people who lead ministry at a high level. If you don't have enough leaders around you, make this a top priority.

Instead of a genius with a dozen helpers, create a leadership team.

Pastors who break through often empower more people to lead and make decisions.

Rather than oversee all of the full-time, part-time, and

volunteer staff, create a leadership team of three or four committed leaders to lead the church. You lead the leaders and let them lead the ministries. Leadership teams are not just effective for mega churches. Normal-sized churches will benefit greatly.



Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Empower more people to lead.

You are the Chief Clarity Officer.

Churches do not drift into clarity and people do not fight to stay in the place where they can do the most good. Senior Pastors of growing churches must clarify roles and goals for each person on the team. You've got to clarify the win for the church but also for the people serving in the church. Help them stay focused on what is mission critical.

CAST A BIG VISION BUT DON'T LEAVE OUT THE SPECIFICS

Mission and vision are two distinct things.

Pastors who lead growing churches must work hard to clarify and communicate a deep sense of purpose and also a very specific mission.

Your mission is why your church exists. It's your answer to the question "Why are we here?" It's your God-given reason for being. In a way, your mission is never really accomplished. It's something you will always strive to for, but you'll never truly check it off the list.

Vision, on the other hand, should be specific and concrete. It needs a deadline and you should be able to accomplish it in a set amount of time. While your mission will be the same 100 years from now, your vision will change as your church grows.

Communicate BOTH.

You need to communicate your mission and your vision using short, powerful statements. Some people aren't motivated by the big picture; they need to know what's now and what's urgent. That's why communicating a big picture purpose in addition to a shorter-term vision can help you connect with the entire congregation.

PUT SYSTEMS IN PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

“Actual disciples are not made through sermons, but through process,” writes J.D. Greear.


Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Disciples are not made through sermons, but through process.

For churches to grow beyond their current size, it's absolutely imperative to put healthy systems, processes, and procedures in place.

A system is simply something you do more than once. It's a way in which a repetitive but important task is accomplished without big decisions or lots of meetings.

Here are some systems you need:

- ▶ A **preaching system** to make sure you cover the most important topics at the right times.
- ▶ A **giving system** to make sure you're raising money throughout the year and tapping into key moments.
- ▶ A **volunteer system** to ensure you're recruiting, training, and leading volunteers.
- ▶ An **assimilation system** to make sure people don't fall through the cracks or leave through the back door.

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- ▶ A **leadership system** to make sure you're intentionally developing leaders so everything doesn't depend on you.
 - ▶ A **communication system** so you know when to talk about what and everyone knows what they need to know.
 - ▶ A follow up system so you can effectively thank guests for visiting, donors for giving and inviters for inviting.


If you're like most pastors, you recognize that several of these systems need a tune up. You can't fix them all at once, so just choose one and camp out there until it's working well.

5 **FOCUS ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS**

All ministries are not created equal.

There are ministries in your church that need to be treated unfairly. They need an unfair amount of your time. They need an unfair amount of the budget.

Because they are more important than others.



That's why you don't need to be fair across the board. You need to look at what is the most effective and move resources there.

For some, this means honest evaluation of all the regular programs and ministry is in order. For others, it means you need to stop doing something that worked long ago but doesn't work well anymore.

Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Honest evaluation of all the regular programs and ministries is in order.

The key word in evaluation is...

When you evaluate programs, ministries and special events, the key word is not “good” or “bad.” It's effective.

Pastors and church leaders must ask, “How effective is this at helping us accomplish our mission and fulfill our vision?” There are a lot of good programs keeping us back from doing great ministry. Stewardship is about allocating time, money, and energy into what works best.

You must find your ministry hedgehog.

In Good to Great, Jim Collins reintroduced the idea of the hedgehog concept. While the fox knows many things, the hedgehog is focused on one thing. Churches need to find their ministry hedgehog.

The key to growth might not be what you start, but what you stop.

RAISE AND RELEASE

Know the numbers.

A good shepherd knows the condition of the flock. And a good pastor knows a few key numbers that provide inside to the health of the church. You don't have to be a spreadsheet-loving, number-crunching, accountant-like person to know what's happening in your church. Make sure you look at a key report every week and have a basic understanding of how things are working.

Talk about money every week.

Every week you can speak on money without really preaching on money. If your church receives an offering, plan that moment with intentionality and creativity.

Use videos, testimonies, and stories to connect the mission of the church to the passing of the plate.

Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Connect the mission of the church to the passing of the plate.

Help people win with money.

A healthy approach to church finances doesn't start with the church. It starts with the people. An event like The Financial Learning Experience or a tool like the I Was Broke Group study can help your people adopt a healthy approach to personal finances.

Make a plan.

One of the best things you can do to ensure healthy finances is to make an yearly funding plan. This is a snapshot look at when you're going to talk about what. You can schedule a money message series, decide when to communicate with donors, plan for a special offering, and more. Put everything on a calendar and then execute the plan.

7

CREATE A QUALITY CHURCH SERVICE


First of all, stewardship is about doing your best with what you have. So don't let a lack of resources keep you back. Evaluation, planning, and hard work are free. Loving people and creating a welcoming environment will take lots of focus but little money. Growth has more to do with your mindset than your budget.

No matter how big your church service, you can plan great services that help people connect with God.

Pay attention to key moments.

Most traffic accidents occur at intersections. And, transitions in your service are one of the most important times to focus on quality.

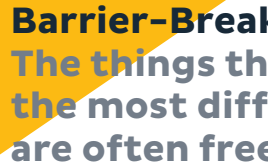
Pay attention to what you say before you receive the offering, before you stand to worship, and how you begin and end the



church service. Key moments in your service provide clarity and improve quality.

Evaluate everything.

While small churches may not have the resources of larger churches, the things that often make the most difference are free.




Barrier-Breaking Tip:
The things that make the most difference are often free.

It's free to evaluate your welcome, offering, musicians, sermon, order of service, and invitation. Ask tough questions and give people a place to provide honest feedback. When you get better, the church gets better.

Involve others.

Pastors, you don't have to do it all. You can involve others in the planning and review process. Try sending your message notes to people a few days before Sunday and ask for feedback in advance. Ask volunteers or creative people to give input on the service. When you involve other people, your church service will get better.



Barrier-Breaking Tip:
You don't have to do it all.

Practice.

Rehearsals, run through, and preaching to yourself are more free ways you can dramatically improve your service. There's nothing like practice to lead to improved performance.

Plan ahead.

Someone once said, “The call to ministry is the call to prepare.” Most problems, in fact, can be solved with proper planning. Plan your year in advance. Plan your service a few weeks ahead. Put everything on a simple spreadsheet.

If you struggle to get ahead, just sacrifice a few weeks and start planning a Sunday service a few weeks from now.

8

LEAD YOUR CHURCH TO INVITE

It might sound overly simple, but if you want your church to grow, your people must invite their friends.

Equip your church to invite.

It’s not enough to ask your church to invite. You’ve got to give them the tools they need.

Print invite cards and make them available. Write a Facebook post and ask them to share on a specific day. Create graphics they can share with their friends and co-workers.

Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Print invite cards and make them available.



Always talk to guests.

If there are 27 people in your church service and you know all of them because they are related to you, still speak to first-time guests during your welcome, announcements, and service. You're setting the tone that Sunday morning is appropriate for guests and communicating an expectation that guests should be there.

Create an experience worthy of an invite.

Instead of asking people to invite, some churches would do well to work on the overall experience. Make sure you've got a quality experience where people are hearing messages of hope and experiencing the love of Jesus, and people will naturally invite their friends.

9

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS AND LEADERS

If you want your church to have a greater ministry impact, focus on involving more people in ministry.

The pastor is not the only pastor.

The structure of your church is perfectly designed to reach the people you are currently reaching. If you've got a top-down culture, where a select few group of professional Christians do all the ministry, you're going to struggle to make maximum impact.

When the pastor and staff have to do all the ministry, ministry is limited by a few people's time. Instead, develop leaders to lead ministry and release control at the appropriate pace.

There's a big difference between a volunteer and a leader.

Your church needs both.

Your job as a pastor is to equip people to do the work of the ministry, not to do all the ministry yourself. This requires a steadfast commitment and an intentional plan to recruit and invite people to participate.

Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Your job as a pastor is to equip people to do the work of the ministry.


Inspire people to serve and lead.

Churches that break growth barriers inspire people to serve and lead in a way that also helps them follow Jesus. Use sermons and clear communication to invite a large group of people to serve at one time. Or, turn your existing volunteers into recruitment specialists by changing their job description.

10

GET A COACH


There's a reason professional athletes, who are at the very top of their profession, pay big bucks to have coaches. And the best athletes do whatever it takes to get the best coaches.



Coaches see things you don't see and offer a different perspective than the one you have. That's why pastors who want to lead well invite people into their lives to help them think, lead, and grow.

The best coaches don't just focus on the church; they focus on the people in the church, starting with the leaders. A great coach is in **your** corner.

We all need coaches in our lives because we can't do this alone.



Barrier-Breaking Tip:
Pastors who want to lead well invite people into their lives to help them think, lead, and grow.

