



5 FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT **CHURCH HEALTH**

**The Essential Framework You Need
to Avoid Barriers and Become a Thriving Church**

WRITTEN BY

SCOTT BALL, LEAD GUIDE

THEMALPHURSGROUP

It's frustrating to serve as a pastor of a church that's not reaching its full potential. Every congregation deserves to be healthy and experience sustainable growth. Most of us jump into ministry with a desire to be faithful to a call. Rarely in seminary, or anywhere else for that matter, is the topic of revitalization broached.

As a church leader, you've likely noticed a culture today that leans with a heavy excitement toward church planting and steady megachurches. And while we actively root for their success, there's an internal stirring as an organization to serve churches that have seen growth, but for whatever reason seem to have stalled.

Time and time again in the Gospels, Jesus answered a question with a story. Much in the same way, families in our communities are looking for answers today. Whether we know it or not, everything we communicate as a congregation is telling a story.

If you find yourself looking to lead your church to a new level of health and vitality, you have come to the right place. Your journey toward church health is a narrative that will resonate with the people in your church. A story that has transformation is gripping. Healthy churches aren't a pipedream reserved for a select few.

Let's write the next chapter in the life of your church and start you down a path with a plan you feel confident in.



WRITEN BY

SCOTT BALL, LEAD GUIDE

THE MALPHURS GROUP

Barriers to Church Health

"We feel like we're at the end of our rope..."

We hear regularly from pastors who share sentiments just like this. They are frustrated with the lack of progress their church is making and don't feel equipped to fix it.

Churches face a number of common barriers when pursuing better health, and churches must confront these obstacles head-on.

Making progress isn't a pipe dream, but it does require knowing what the most common challenges are and how to overcome them. Often these barriers are root causes of a variety of organizational dysfunctions.

If you feel at the end of your rope too, **there's hope**. You are not alone. Other church leaders in the exact same spot have walked through our framework and are healthier today than ever before.

Let's tackle the three most common barriers together so you feel equipped to take another step forward. There's a self-assessment we provide at the end of this section that illuminates each of these barriers in your context.

Barrier #1: Lack of Unity

**"You'll never do ministry that matters until
you define what matters."**

Aubrey Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning

Church Health Barrier #1: Lack of Unity

Some churches lack unity and know it. The constant fighting over everything is dangerous. But more commonly, churches avoid conflict entirely. Embracing healthy conflict will unlock new levels of unity when channeled in a productive manner.

It's easy to confuse camaraderie with unity. Getting along, and even a shared doctrinal statement, does not mean your church is unified.

True unity is achieved by creating a shared dream and plan for the future.

When we start working with a church, we often ask casually, "what is your church's vision?" Declining churches usually give dozens of different responses to the question. Most people have no answer, while others intermix personal ambitions, or copy an outdated statement from an old bulletin.

Until everyone in the church is headed in the same direction, your church won't be fully unified or healthy. And the path forward must always be defined by leadership.

Churches that lack a shared plan benefit from an impartial outside voice. This allows for accountability, encouragement, and guidance to navigate the common pitfalls and struggles of experiencing breakthrough.

Barrier #2:

Lack of Momentum

**"We are frustrated because we've tried
so many new things,
but we still aren't making a difference."**

Church Health Barrier #2: Lack of Momentum

This is a common statement we hear. The unfortunate reality is it's entirely possible for your church to have lots of ministries, spend lots of money, and work really hard without having much to show for it in the end.

Maximizing church health is hard work. Building sustainable momentum takes concentrated effort. Too many church families are plagued with programs, events, and ministries that do not work toward the common goals they have set. It's frustrating to see lots of activity, but little momentum.

A common misstep here is to think that by changing the window dressing, that you achieve deep change. Churches will do things like update their website, hire a new staff member, or give their facility a facelift. When these things don't deliver real results, churches feel frustrated.

The real solution to a lack of momentum? Alignment.

The key to alignment is replacing programmatic thinking with integrated thinking. Struggling churches often fall into the trap of viewing their church through the lens of a patchwork of individual ministries. They have Sunday School, a Men's Breakfast, Women's Knitting Circle, and more. These ministries aren't bad, as long as they work in concert with each other to achieve the church's big picture vision.

Being aligned means knowing the difference between a good idea and the right idea. If your church is lacking momentum, seek alignment.

You can increase effectiveness and build momentum by intentionally aligning the five components of church health through our unified Strategic Envisioning framework. You need to know how your core values drive ministry decisions, and how your ministry structure impacts your vision, goals, and even your daily tasks. If the plans you have today cannot prove alignment at the most granular level, chances are your church isn't gaining much momentum.

Barrier #3:
Lack of Manpower

"An effective strategy is only as good as the leadership you have to implement it."

Church Health Barrier #3: Lack of Manpower

Even when you have clearly aligned plans, your church can still be dysfunctional. This occurs because of a lack of manpower. Churches struggle to make an impact without effective leadership and teams to facilitate the vision.

Make no mistake, the Holy Spirit brings power. But, over-extended leaders teetering on the edge of burnout are of little good to their churches. Doing everything as the pastor is the equivalent of trying to light a large auditorium with a single 75-watt light bulb. You need more leaders to make the room brighter!

Don't make the deadly mistake of powering through a strategic planning process all by yourself. Be honest about the strength and vitality of your team so you can continue making progress.

The solution to a lack of manpower? Empower more leaders.

Building a leadership pipeline is one of our core passions. It's the pathway to empowered leadership. Investing in the habit of empowering leaders and teams is a vital practice central to the success of your church.

Our group's founder, Aubrey Malphurs, defined empowerment as, *"the intentional transfer of authority to an emerging leader within specified boundaries from an established leader who maintains responsibility for the ministry."*

In other words, empowering leaders in your church is about giving them the freedom to dream and permission to lead.

To truly break through this barrier, empowered leadership has to extend beyond the same twenty percent of your congregation who already pull most of the ministry load. The Strategic Envisioning framework is intentionally built to activate more leaders in your church to accomplish a shared dream and plan for the future.



Which Barriers Are Holding Your Church Back?

We created this free, team-friendly exercise to help you identify which of these three barriers are plaguing your congregation.

Strategic Envisioning

A Framework For Church Health

Almost any pastor with a seminary education was taught the art of writing and delivering sermons. Rarely do those courses touch on leading through change. Strategic Envisioning provides a framework for church health every pastor should know. It will impact every area of your leadership and influence.

The Strategic Envisioning Framework is a well-worn tool that's empowered thousands of congregations to maximize church health over the last twenty years.

Strategic Envisioning is built upon the five components of church health. Let's walk you through the five components so that whether you work with us or not, your church has one more instrument added to your toolkit.

The Five Critical Church Health Questions

We have found that the best way to build-out the five elements of church health is to orient them around five central questions. When the terms Mission, Values, Discipleship Pathway, Vision, and Strategy stand alone, leaders tend to have built-in assumptions. They think they know what they mean, and that their church is already in good shape.

But when we start with questions rather than the terms, pastors tend to wrestle more and engage more deeply with the concepts. As you read through the five questions, consider your own church. How well can you answer all five? Would everyone on your staff answer them the same way? What about your elders or board members?

If all of the key leaders at your church cannot answer these five questions with the same answers, your church isn't fully healthy.

Being able to answer one or two isn't good enough.

If you want to be healthy, your church leadership needs clear and shared answers to all five questions.

THE MISSION QUESTION:

What is our mandate?

Put simply, what is your church here to do? Most struggling churches have drifted away from the Great Commission. When this happens, your church becomes internally focused and irrelevant to your neighbors. Conversely, when your church rallies around a Great Commission mission, you begin to experience a sense of unity and urgency that empowers everything you do. If your church feels lethargic, or even boring, there's a good chance you have drifted from the Great Commission.

In the Strategic Envisioning process, we walk your church through the steps to crafting a unique expression of the Great Commission that works for your congregation and context.

THE VALUES QUESTION:

What motivates us?

Churches live out what they value. We all do. Unfortunately, many motives in your church lie beneath the surface. It's important to articulate your motives and align them with healthy, Biblical values. If you look around your church and see mostly immature Christians, this is a reflection of unhealthy discipleship DNA. Your church is designed to get the results you're getting. A church that lacks healthy core values, or is having their healthy core values crowded out by hidden, destructive values, will fail at making disciples.

When we guide churches through the Strategic Envisioning process, we help churches dig deep and discover what they truly value--even the things they wish weren't true. But more importantly, we give a clear on-ramp to building and living out biblical, actionable values that will drive better discipleship outcomes.

THE DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY QUESTION: How will we structure ministry?

Declining churches often lack intentionality when planning events and programs. Even larger churches can be driven by tradition or staying busy because with the things that have always been done. Healthy churches need to leverage a clear discipleship pathway. A discipleship pathway is a clear set of next best steps that leads a believer into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

In the Strategic Envisioning process, we guide you through proven workshops to evaluate your programs with clarity, so you can know how to restructure ministries. Churches have a hard time letting go of programs; we give you tools to streamline your ministries without wasting relational capital.

THE VISION QUESTION:

Where are we going?

Churches that are struggling to grow often have a vague picture of their desired future. Any organization lacking a shared dream will face difficulty gaining momentum. It's critical that we identify the impact we want to make. We also have to clearly understand how your church culture has to change in order to make your desired impact. A clear vision is complete once we establish benchmarks for evaluating progress.

Finding the right words and setting the right benchmarks can be overwhelming. That's why we use a proven three-step process for vision development in the Strategic Envisioning process. Your church can feel confident in your dream for the future and the steps you'll need to take to get there.

THE STRATEGY QUESTION: **What will we do this year?**

The strategy question is either asked too early or not at all. If you ask the strategy question without fully answering the previous four questions, you'll end up wasting time on projects that don't matter. But if you invest time and energy in the first four questions, but never ask this one, you'll never actually change. Strategy objectives are where the rubber meets the road. Identify 3-5 specific projects to address this next year that will move you closer toward your vision and great commission mission.

Your team could focus on dozens of things over the next twelve months. What is the right thing for you to go after? Going through the Strategic Envisioning process ensures that you aren't just focusing on good strategies, you're focusing on the right good strategies. The difference isn't inconsequential.

The Strategic Envisioning Difference

This approach may feel overly ambitious, but it's possible. We take churches through it regularly. Your church can have clarity, alignment, and an empowered leadership team ready to do the work.

Committing to this process with an external guide signals to the entire church family that this is different.

You get a once-per-decade run at deep lasting change. The process of Strategic Envisioning works. Be sure to maximize the opportunity.

Healthy churches aren't a pipe dream.

We want to see your church become healthier than it's ever been. Begin the process of building your Strategic Leadership Team using this framework.

We want to partner with you on this journey. That's why we offer an initial consultation with your church for free. Schedule a meeting with one of our guides today.

Your community needs what you have to offer. Implement this framework and ensure they get the life change you exist to provide.

[**Click Here To Schedule Your Meeting**](#)

Maximizing Your Church Health by Scott Ball

Published by The Malphurs Group

4101 Green Oaks Blvd #305-130

Arlington, TX 76016

malphursgroup.com © 2020 Scott Ball

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

For permissions contact: **leadership@malphursgroup.com**