

# FREE CHURCH GROWTH ASSESSMENT

The 10 Reasons Your Church  
Isn't Growing (or isn't growing  
as quickly as you'd like)

THE ART OF   
**CHURCH GROWTH**

## Introduction

94% of churches today either aren't growing or aren't growing as fast as their communities. If your community is growing by 3% a year, then theoretically your church should also grow by 3% a year.

But this isn't happening in most churches. Most of them are either plateaued or declining.

In this PDF, I'll show you what some of the barriers to growth are. I promise you, it's not the message. If you are preaching the gospel, (and I will assume you are) then it's not a message problem.

Most churches actually have a METHOD problem.

Let me give a disclaimer though. I can't make your church grow, and you can't make your church grow; however, we can position our churches in a place where we can grow.

I'll tell you two things that really helped me.

1. Get a solid diagnosis. If you don't know what the problem is, you won't know how to solve it.
2. Get some clarity on the solution.

The bottom line? I'll share with you principles that helped us grow from those roughly 40 people to 200, then 500, then over 1,000, and now to over 1,500 that attend on the weekends, plus four to six thousand who watch online. The part that really makes me happy, is that most of the people who call our church home used to be unchurched! That's the ultimate goal, right?

Let's dive into the 10 possible reasons your church may not be growing and see which of these fit you.

## 1. YOU ARE IN CONFLICT

“Conflict just isn’t attractive to people who aren’t involved in the conflict.” Here are some common examples of arguments churches get into:

- Over the music
- About the leadership (who should be in leadership or who shouldn’t)
- The future: whether the church is heading in the right direction
- If the preaching is good or not good.

Imagine going to a friend’s house for dinner. You get there, and your friends are in the middle of an argument. What do you want to do when that happens? I know what I would want to do! I want to get back in the car and go home. I don’t want to step into the middle of an argument. I am sure you don’t either. So, if you are in conflict, that’s a deal-killer to new people who show up at your church.

## 2. YOUR CHURCH IS MORE IN LOVE WITH THE PAST THAN YOU ARE THE FUTURE

“There’s a world of difference between learning from the past and living in the past.”

When you talk to church leaders or attendees, do you make comments like...

- “Oh, I remember when this place was full.”
- “I remember when I liked the music.”
- “I remember when we had Pastor so-and-so.”

The older your church is, or the more successful your church was at some point, the more likely it is some of your leaders will get stuck in the past. Churches that live in the past never have much of a future.

## 3. YOU’RE NOT THAT AWESOME TO BE AROUND

Christians have become fairly good at focusing on the moral failings of others while ignoring their own. As hard as this can be, It’s a great idea to check your church’s attitudes.

- Are you grumpy and surly all the time?
- Are you judgmental, arrogant or self-righteous?
- Is there gossip, divisiveness and quarrelling?

## 4. YOU ARE FOCUSED ON YOURSELF

“The church should be the most selfless organization out there in the world.”

Let’s be honest—a lot of our churches are a bit selfish.

Declining churches focus on themselves.

- It’s all about your preferences (what you like, what you don’t like)
- You might be interested in outreach because you want people to contribute to the bottom line.

Our mission should be to reach the world. If we are honest, a lot of churches are selfish. If that’s your church, it will be hard for people to spend time with you. Most people don’t like to spend their time with selfish people.

When we see selfish people, we will categorize them as a bit dysfunctional. Unfortunately, “selfishness” often passes as normal in the church. Selfish people almost always end up alone. A life devoted to self ultimately leaves you alone. That’s also true for selfish churches.

If you’re becoming smaller and smaller, is it because you’re selfish?

## 5. YOU ARE AFRAID TO RISK WHAT IS, FOR THE SAKE OF WHAT MIGHT BE

The more successful your church has been, the truer this statement becomes. Maybe you have a building or you have money in the bank and the thought process is “if we change for the sake of what could be, we could lose what is.”

Is that true? Yes, it is!

But, when we read the Bible, this seems to be what God specializes in. Never be afraid to risk what is for the sake of what might be. Everything belongs to God anyway.

## 6. YOU CAN’T MAKE A DECISION

Often, you read books, listen to podcasts, go to conferences and you know you should do something with what you’re learning, but you don’t know where to start—so you don’t do anything.

- Do you struggle with analysis paralysis?
- Do you have complex bureaucracy or require congregational approval for every major change?

It's knowing the problem and just not acting on the solution that leads into the next reason.

## **7. YOU TALK MORE THAN YOU ACT**

“Effective leaders add one more component. They act.”

I have been in churches where people say we have to reach more people or baptize more people. But unfortunately, week after week, it's the same thing again and again. If you are talking more than acting, this could be a reason why your church isn't growing faster than it is or as fast as it should be.

## **8. YOU DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYTHING WRONG WITH YOUR CHURCH**

“If you don't think there's anything wrong with your church, you are not going to reach new people.”

It's incredibly easy to love the way your church is. When I was in those small churches 24 years ago, those six people loved the way the church was. Unfortunately, there were only six people in the entire community who liked the church the way it was!

If you don't think there is anything wrong with your church, you will not reach new people.

## **9. YOU'RE MORE FOCUSED ON GROWTH THAN YOU ARE ON GOD**

This one is a real challenge for those of us who are driven. Growth can become an idol very easily. It's easy to constantly push the message of, “We have to grow. We have to grow. We have to grow.” But what we really need is to focus on God. Yes, you need to grow and make changes, but don't focus more on growth than you are on God.

## **10. YOU THINK CULTURE IS THE ENEMY**

If you're always angry at the surrounding culture, you won't be able to reach people in that culture. Christians who consistently expect non-Christians to act like Christians baffle me (I wrote about that here.) If you treat your unchurched neighbors like enemies, why would they want to be a part of your church?

## EXERCISE

What are the above reason(s) that most apply to your church?  
Write them down below!