

THE ART OF   
**CHURCH GROWTH**

COURSE  
APPLICATION  
GUIDE

Lasting Impact

## The Art of Church Growth - Lasting Impact

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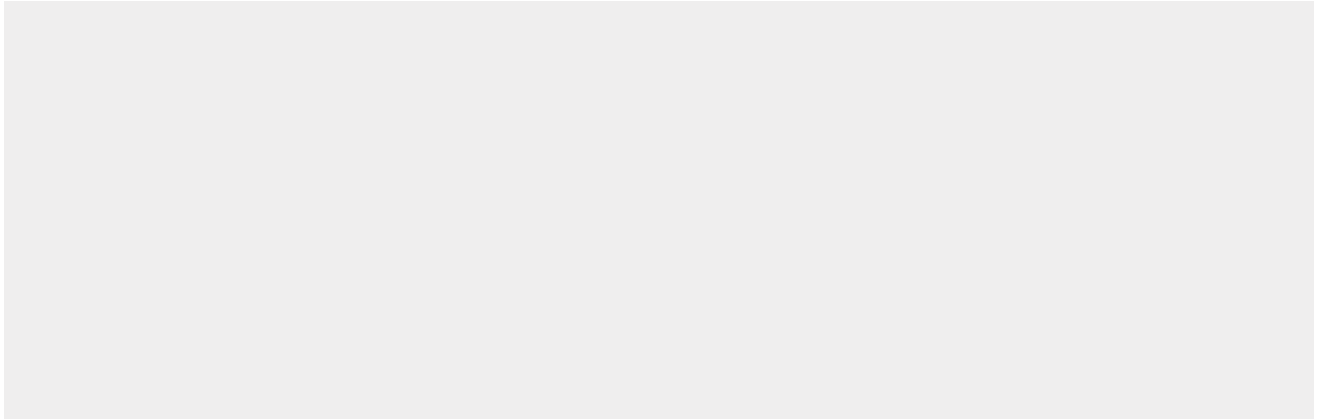
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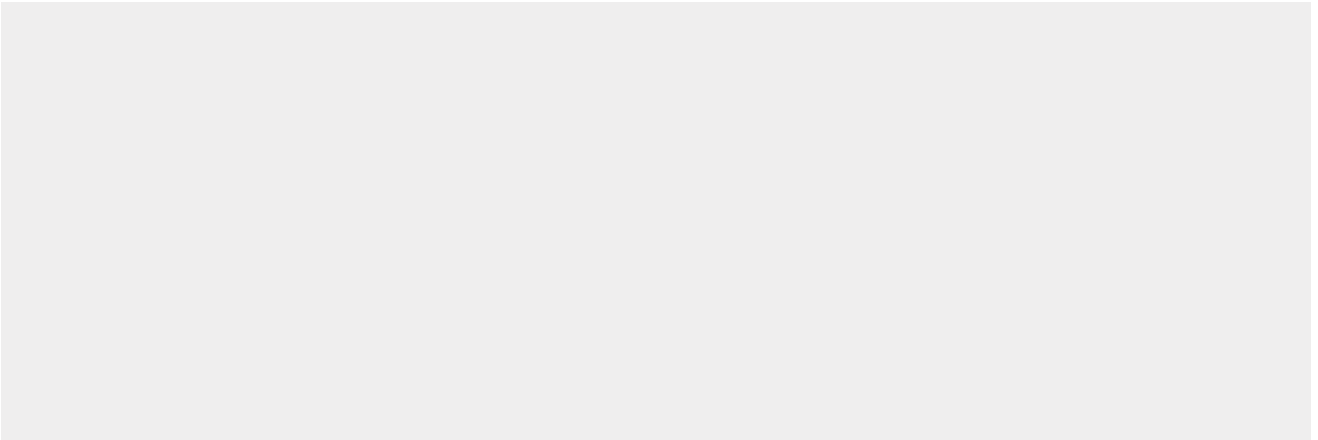
# Conversation 1

# Discussion Questions

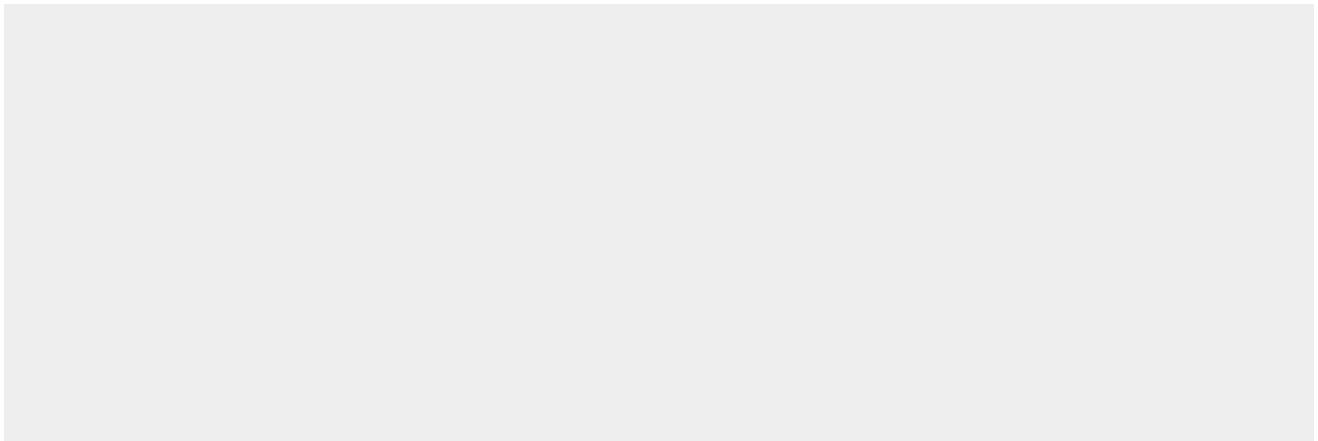
1. Has the subject of why churches grow seemed mysterious to you? Why or why not?



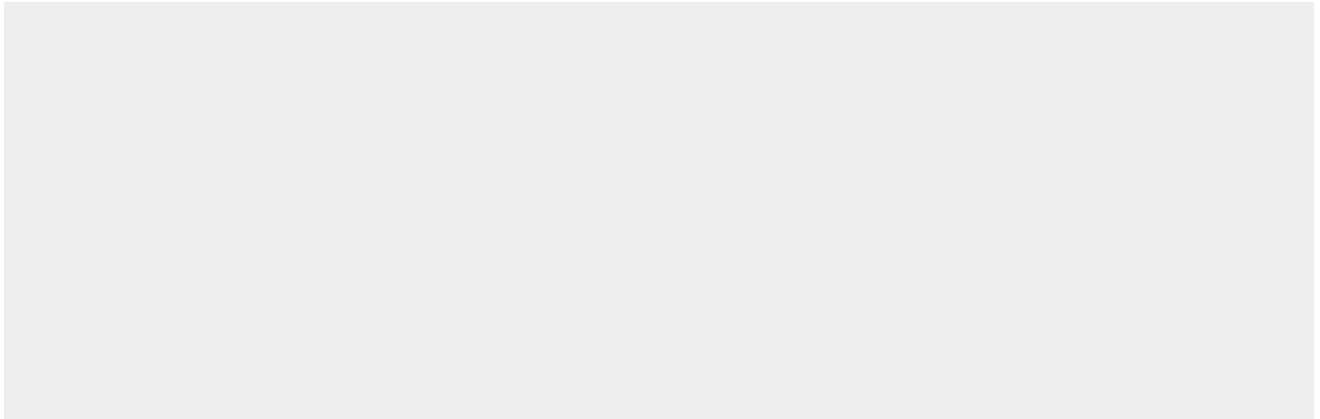
2. Of the ten reasons churches don't grow listed on pages 6–10, which (if any) resonate as being true in your context?



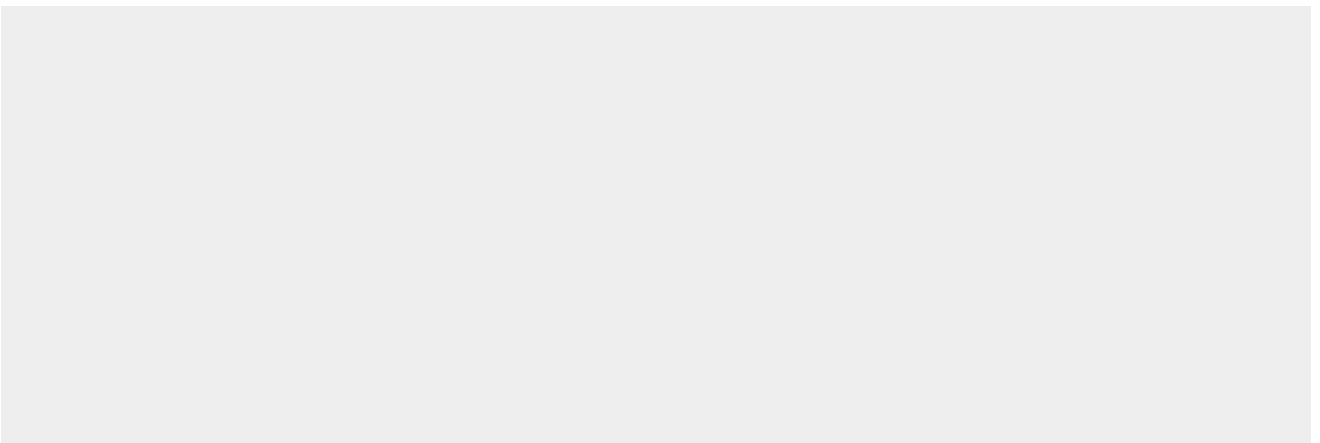
3. Is your church restructuring to grow bigger, or is it run more like a “mom-and-pop” operation?



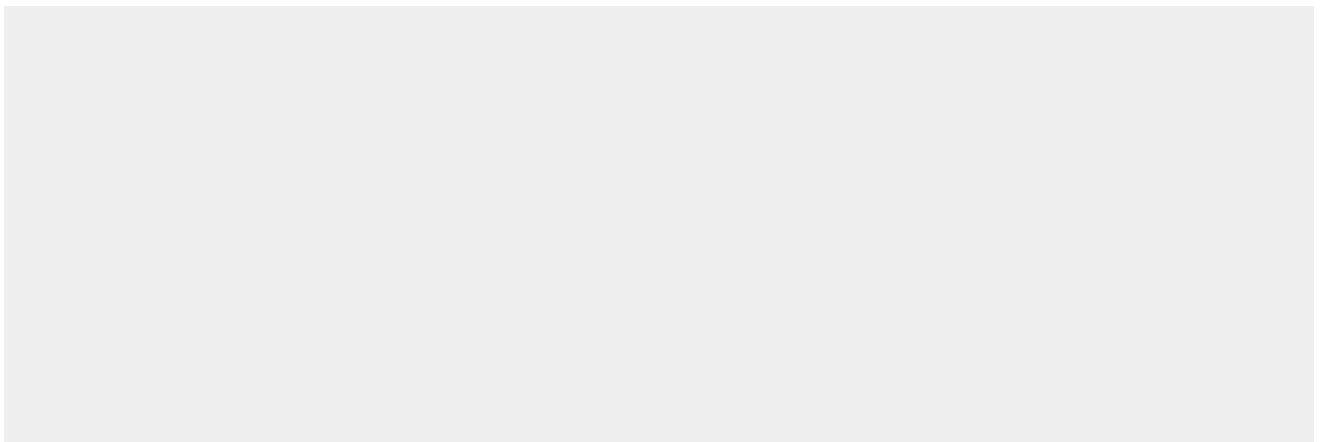
4. To what extent do you think the pastor's role needs to be redefined in your church?  
How would you redefine it?



5. Has your church or leadership team ever fallen into “silver-bullet” thinking about church growth? How can silver-bullet thinking harm a church team?

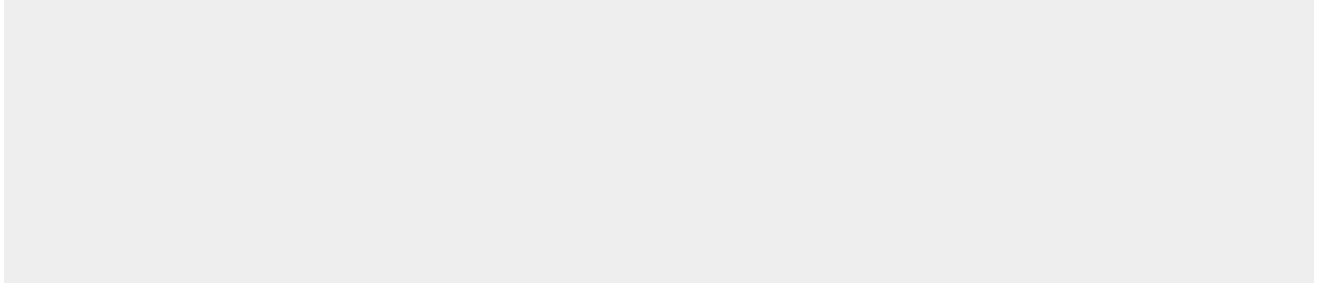


6. Is your sense of mission white-hot? If so, how have you kept it that way? If not, what would it take to ignite your sense of mission?

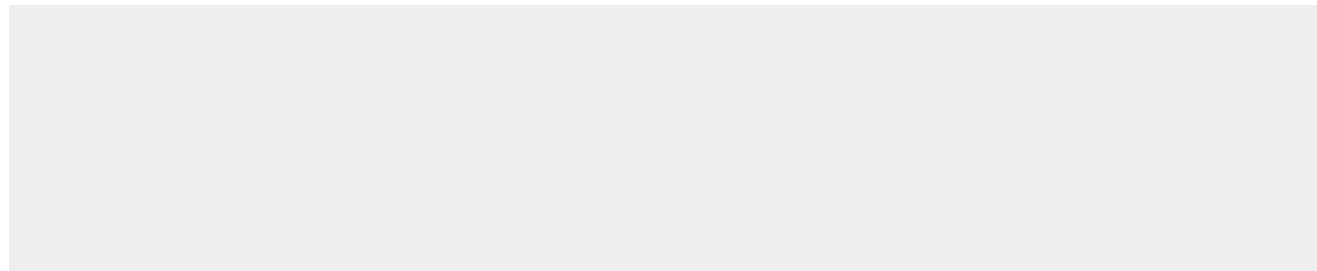


## Get Practical

1. What specific structural changes does your team need to make this year to grow bigger? What changes should you make next year?

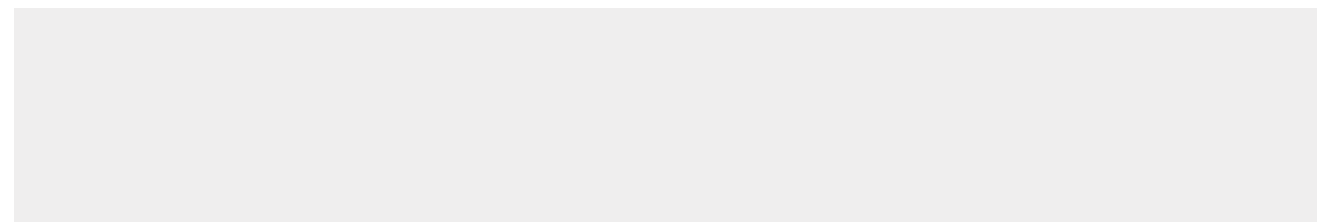


2. Read through the key points on pages 25 through 27 “Now You’re Ready to Reach the Unchurched.” How many of the seven characteristics listed accurately describe you? Make a list of what needs to change.



## Make it Happen

- Identify your single biggest obstacle to growth as a church. Once you’ve identified it, create a six-month plan to remove it.
- In addition, identify two to five other key obstacles to growth. Now design a one- to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles.
- Make sure you assign responsibilities and accountability and meet periodically to evaluate progress.



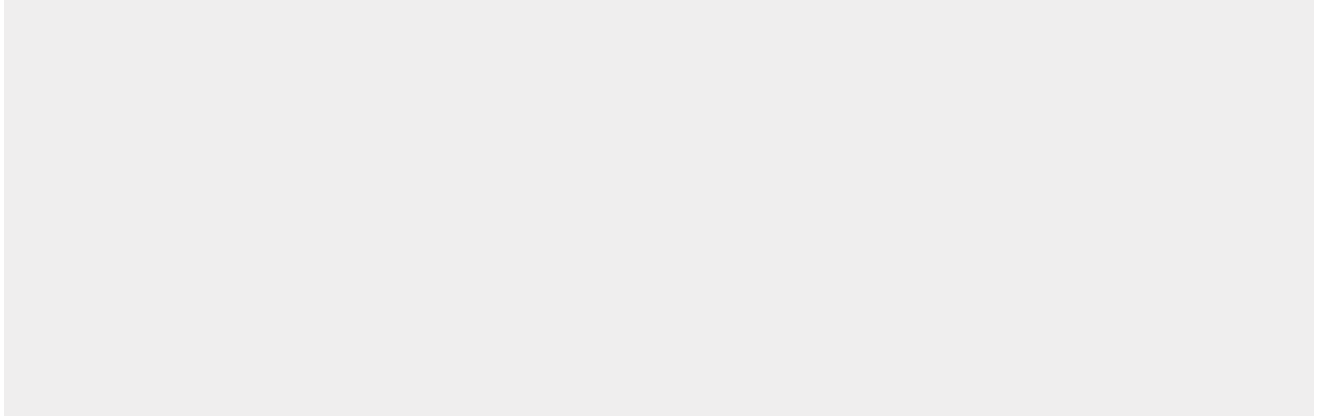


# Conversation 2

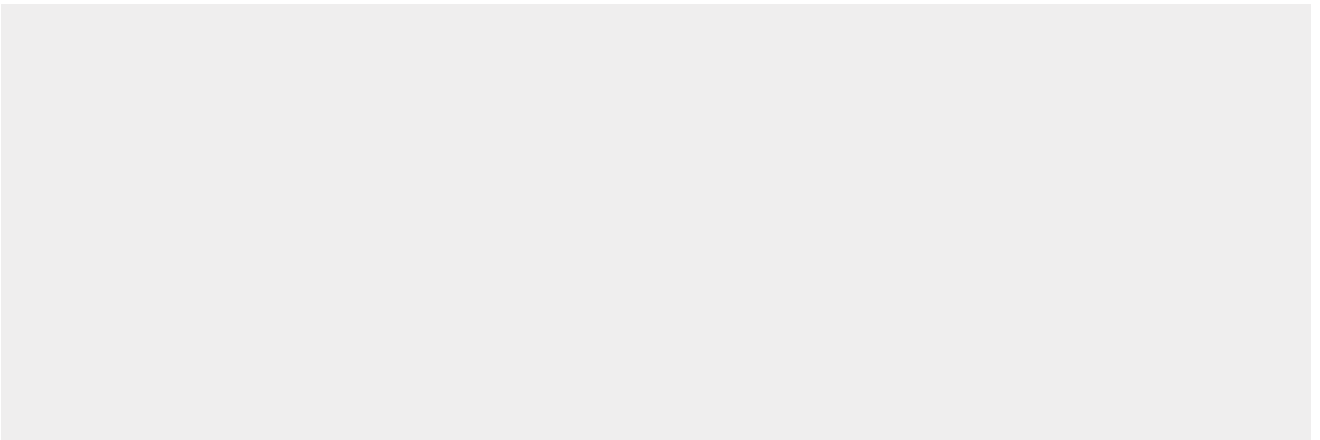


# Discussion Questions

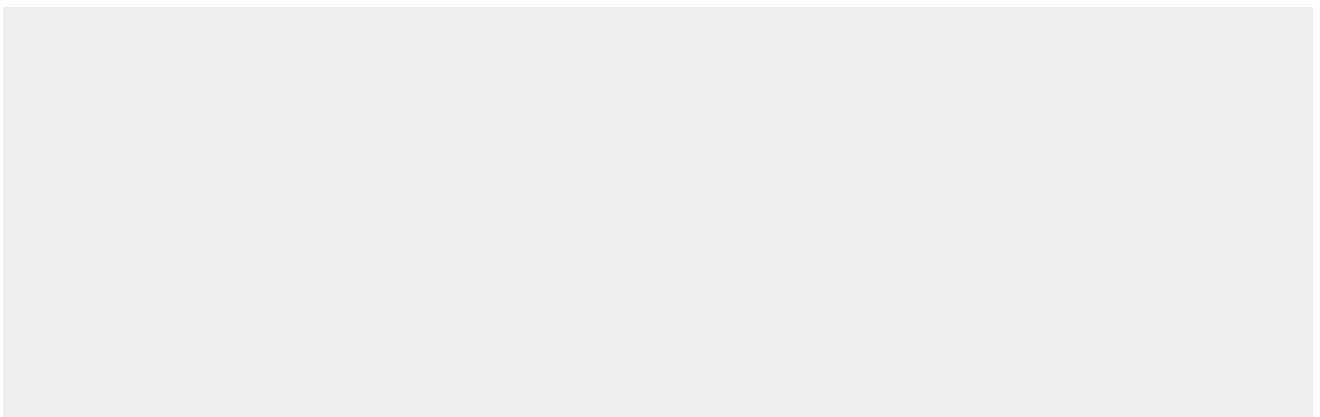
1. Of the eleven reasons given for even committed church attenders attending less often, which are you seeing in your community and church?



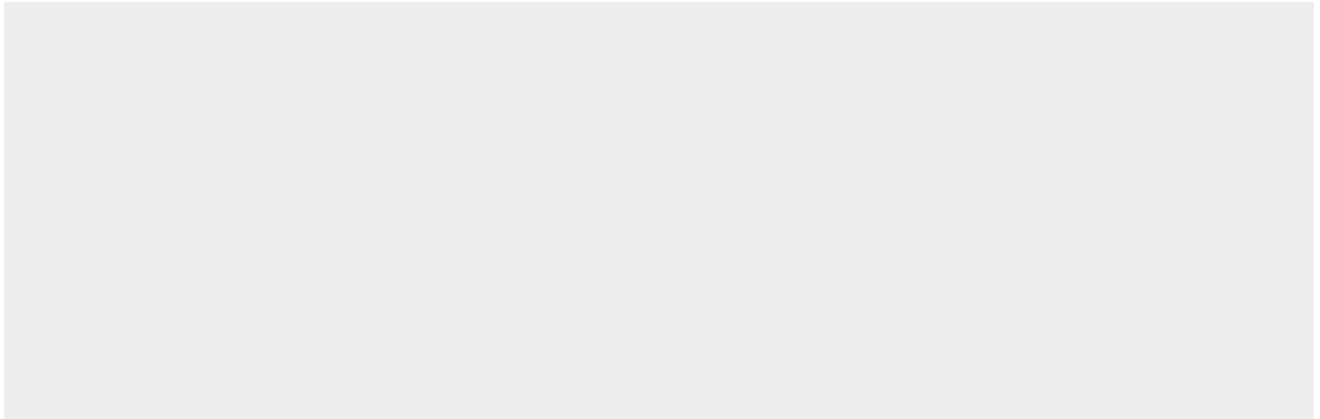
2. To what extent has the trend of people attending church less often impacted your ministry over the last decade?



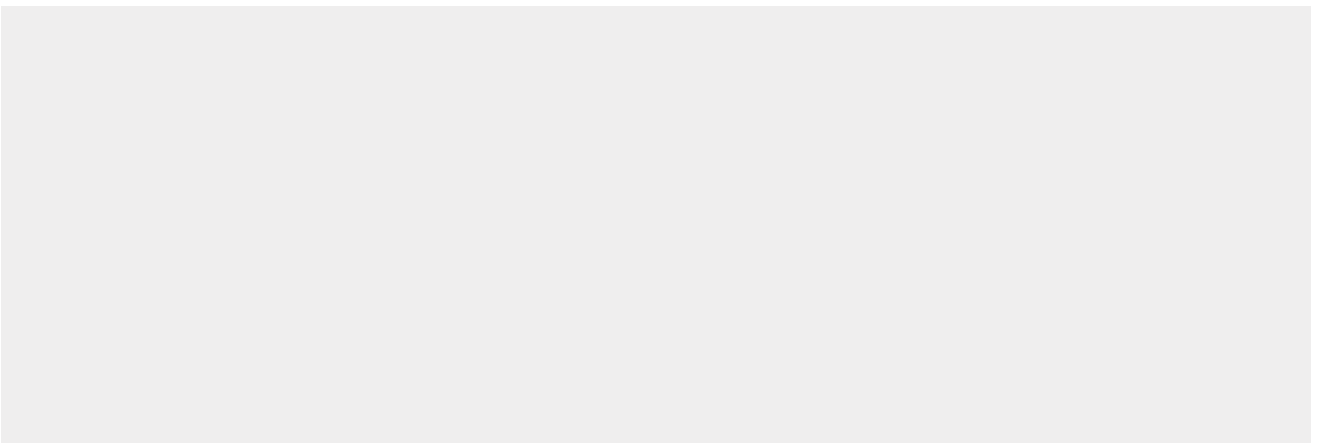
3. The characteristics of today's unchurched people are often indicative of a post-Christian generation. To what extent do they describe the people who live in your community?



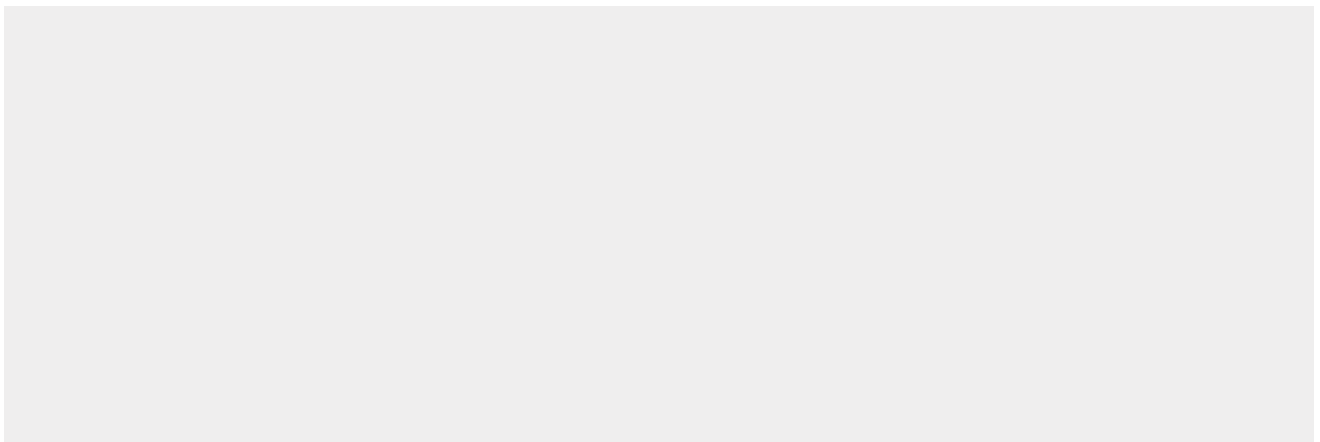
4. What word best describes your church's attitude toward infrequent church attenders? Be honest.



5. Would you describe your church as being truly loving toward unchurched people? Why or why not?



6. Is your attitude toward infrequent attenders and unchurched people helping or hindering your mission?



## Get Practical

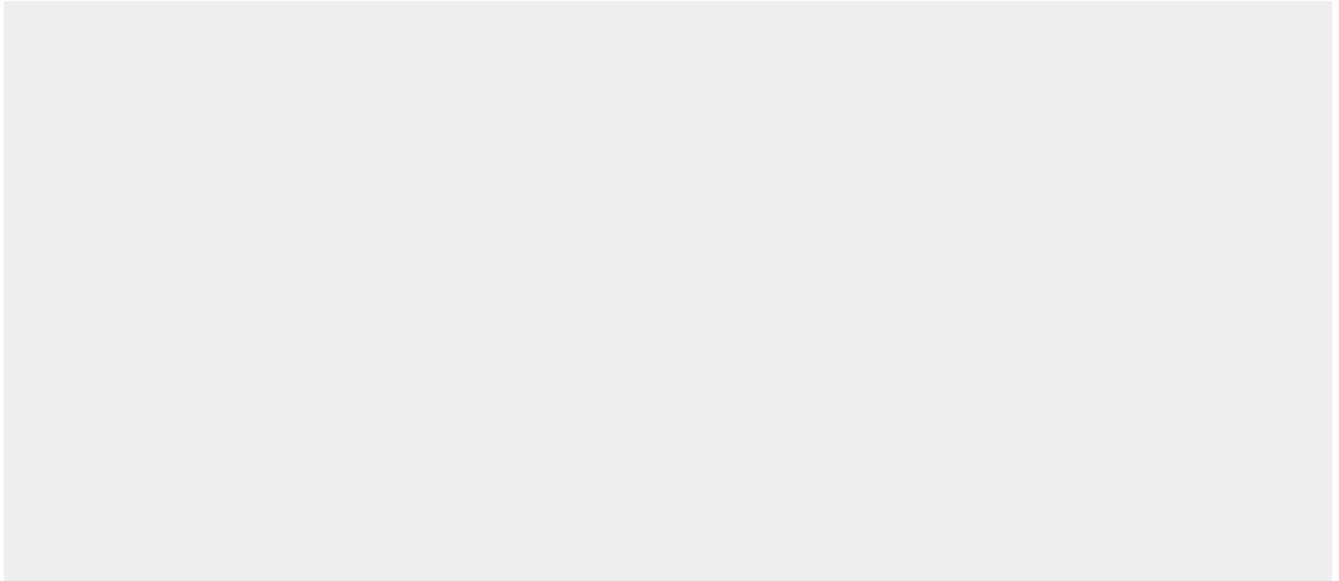
1. Following are the eleven strategies we have discussed in this chapter to help you engage infrequent church attenders and the unchurched. As a team, make notes on each approach, using these questions as a guide:

- Which holds promise for you?
- Which doesn't?
- Which are you already doing?
- Which seems completely foreign to you or too much of a stretch?
- Which approaches would be easy for your church to adopt?
- Which would be a challenge?
- Which could you implement right away?
- Which would take time?

1. Show empathy.
2. Separate the mission from the method.
3. Celebrate wins.
4. Elevate personal relationships.
5. Love people.
6. Create a culture of serving.
7. Prioritize kids and teens.
8. Create an irresistible experience.
9. Create an awesome online presence.
10. Offer offline surprises.
11. Start measuring outputs.

## Make it Happen

Identify your single biggest obstacle to coming alongside infrequent church attenders and unchurched people. Once you've identified it, create a six-month plan to remove it. In addition, identify two to five other key obstacles to growth. Now design a one- to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles. Make sure you assign responsibilities and accountability and meet periodically to evaluate progress.



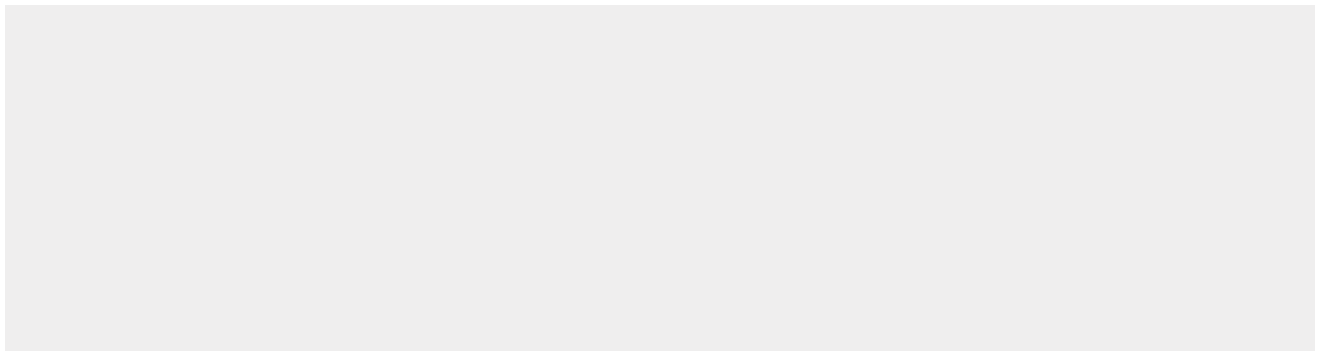


# Conversation 3

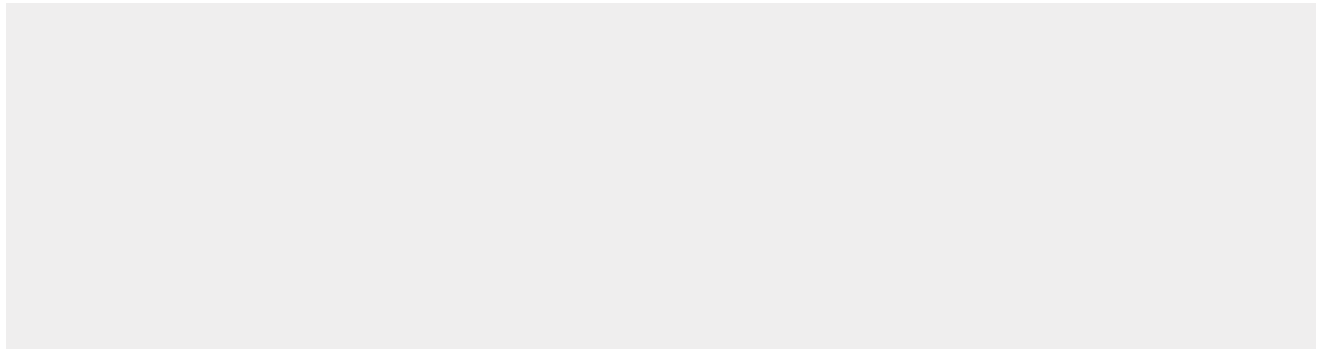
# Discussion Questions

This conversation will be a little more difficult than the others in this book because the subject is inherently personal. If you have someone on your team or in leadership who you suspect is burning out, it might be a good idea to have one-on-one conversation with them rather than singling them out in a group or dropping “hints” in a meeting. Nonetheless, teams are wise to talk about burnout as a way of ensuring they stay healthy. Please realize that the group questions, though, are no substitute for well-motivated, loving, and honest conversations that happen one-on-one.

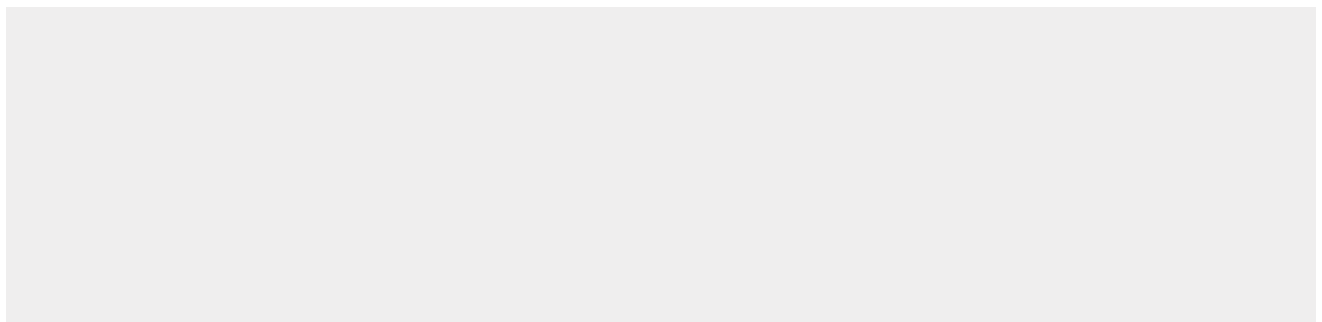
1. Have you been in an organization where a leader has burned out? What was it like?



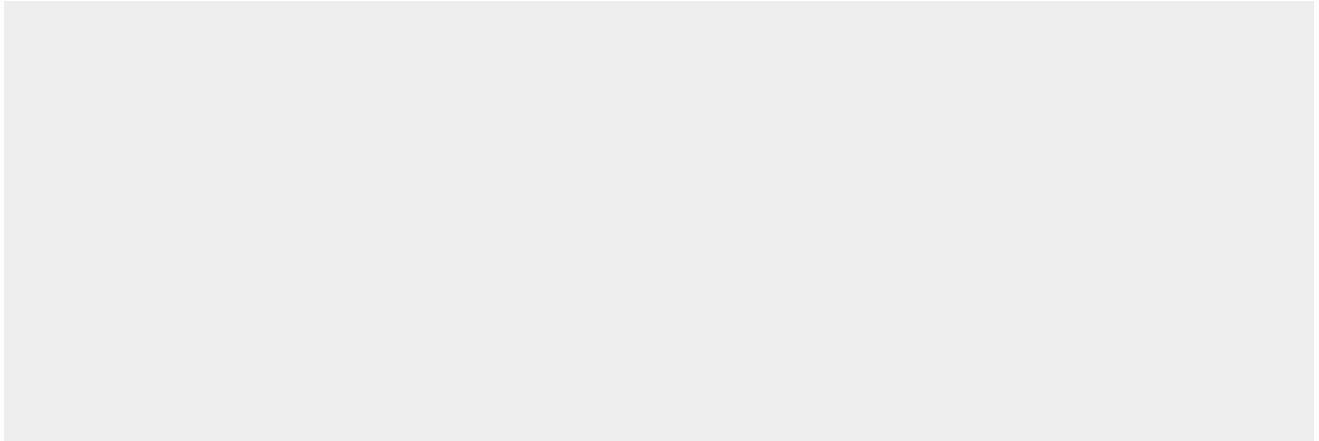
2. Is the health of your leaders a goal your church actively pursues?



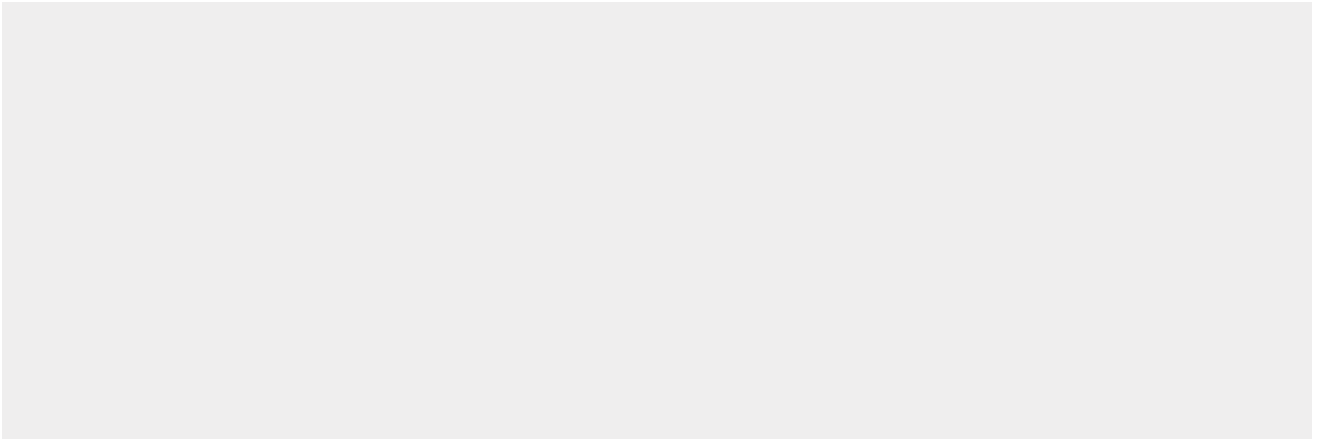
3. What could you do to ensure your leaders stay healthy?



4. Workaholism is the most rewarded addiction in our country. To what extent does your church culture reward workaholism?

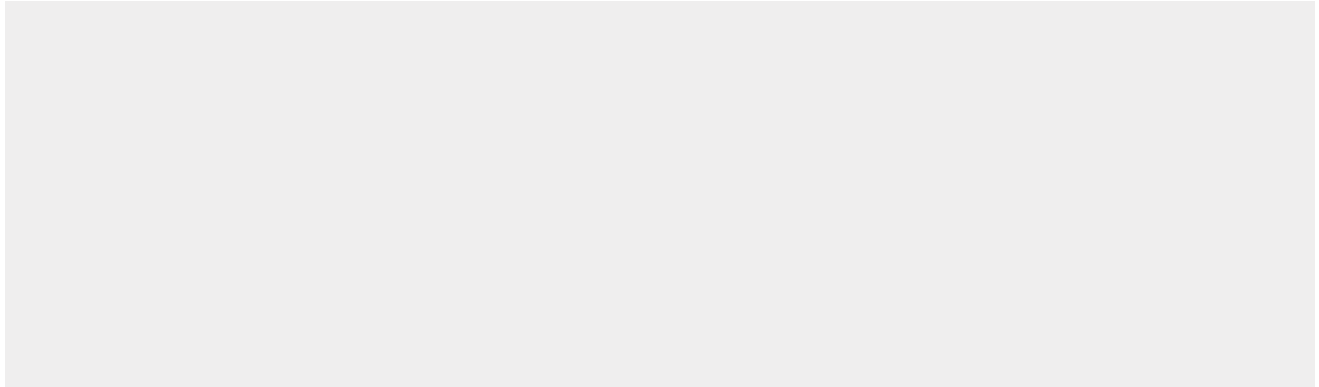


5. Of the different ways that leaders self-medicate, which are most prevalent in your church?

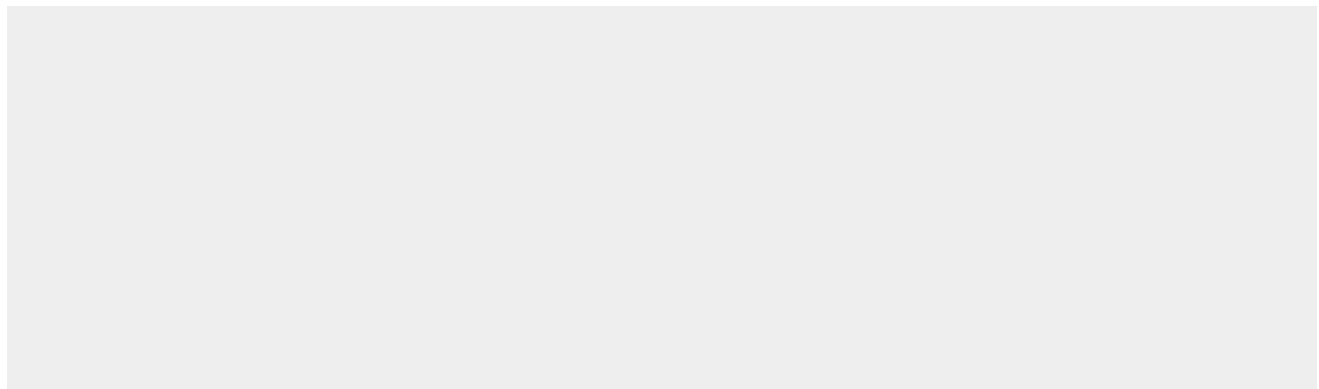


## Get Practical

1. Does your church have a network of trusted Christian counselors to whom you can refer your leaders and members? If not, what will you do to put one in place?

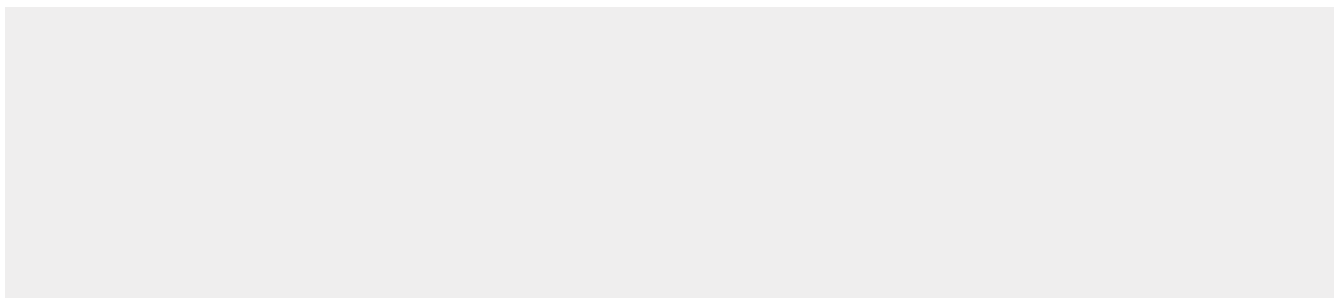


2. In addition to checking in on leadership issues with staff and key volunteers, many healthy churches will also check in with leaders on a personal level. What do you need to do to create the kind of culture in which these conversations can happen regularly?



## Make it Happen

Is there anyone on your team who is showing more than a few signs of burnout? Are they aware they might be burning out? What will you do to help them?



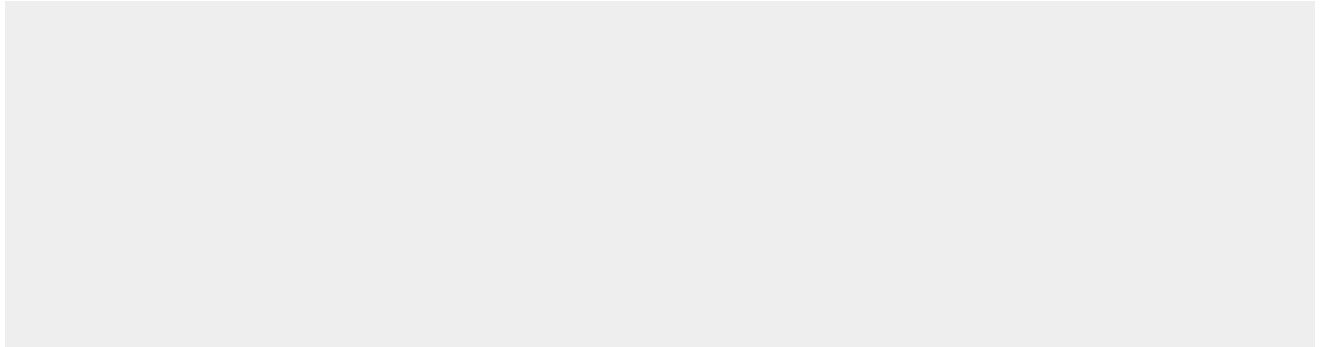




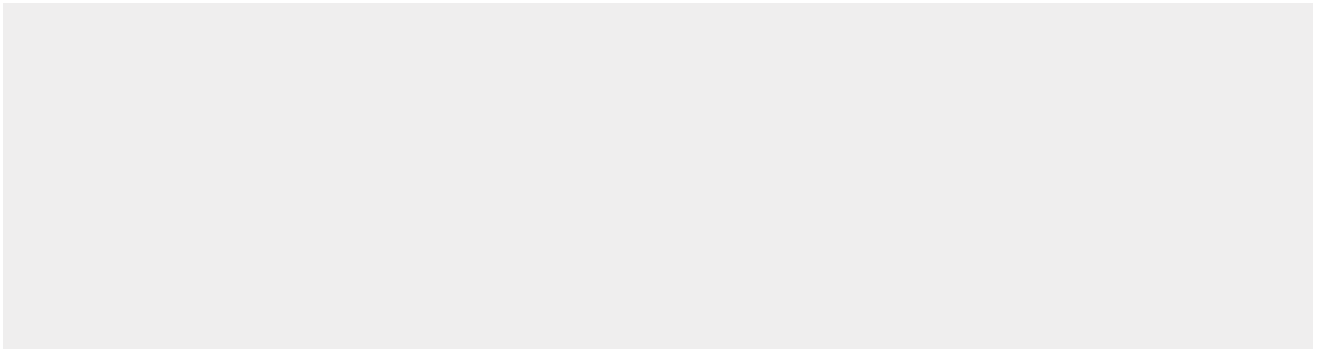
# Conversation 4

# Discussion Questions

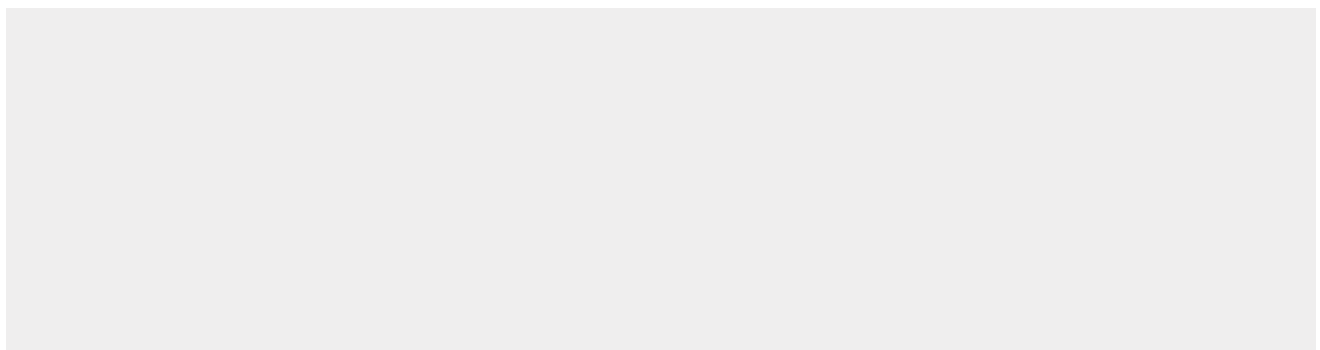
1. Have you ever asked any of the five questions volunteers ask but never say out loud? Which questions do you ask most frequently?



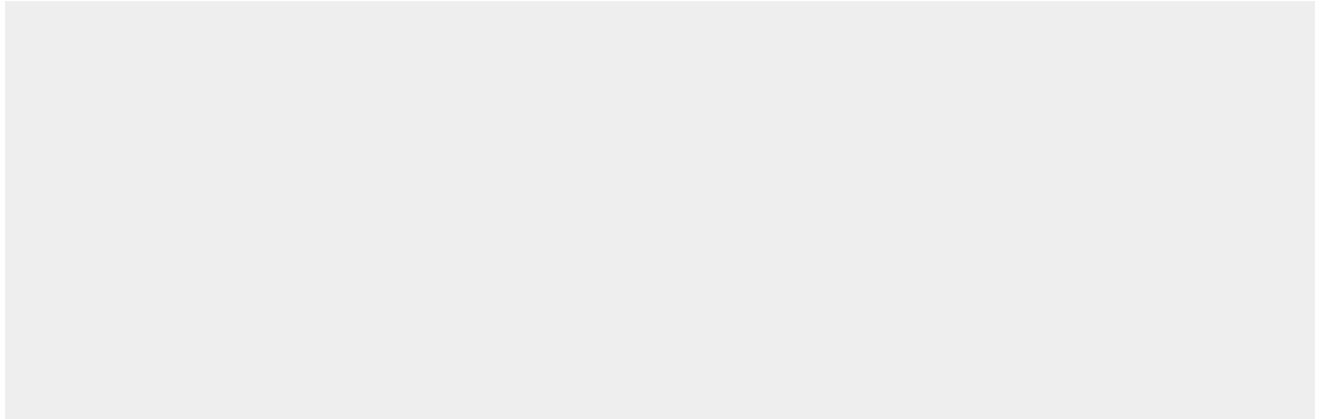
2. How healthy would you say your volunteer culture is on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very unhealthy and 10 being extremely healthy? Discuss the reasons for your answer.



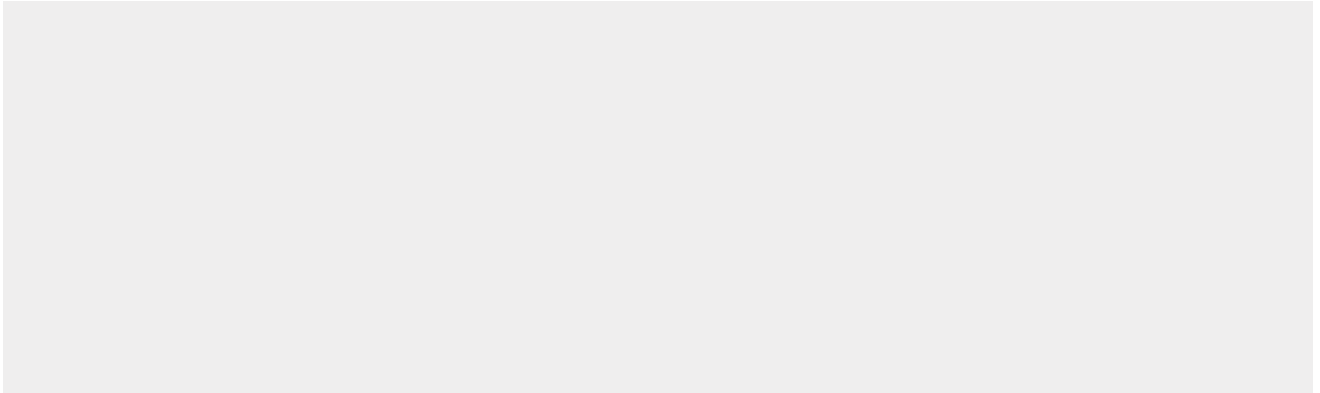
3. Do you think your church currently does a good job engaging high-capacity volunteers? Why or why not?



4. Is the sense of challenge at your church high enough to attract high-capacity people? What could you do to challenge people at a higher level?

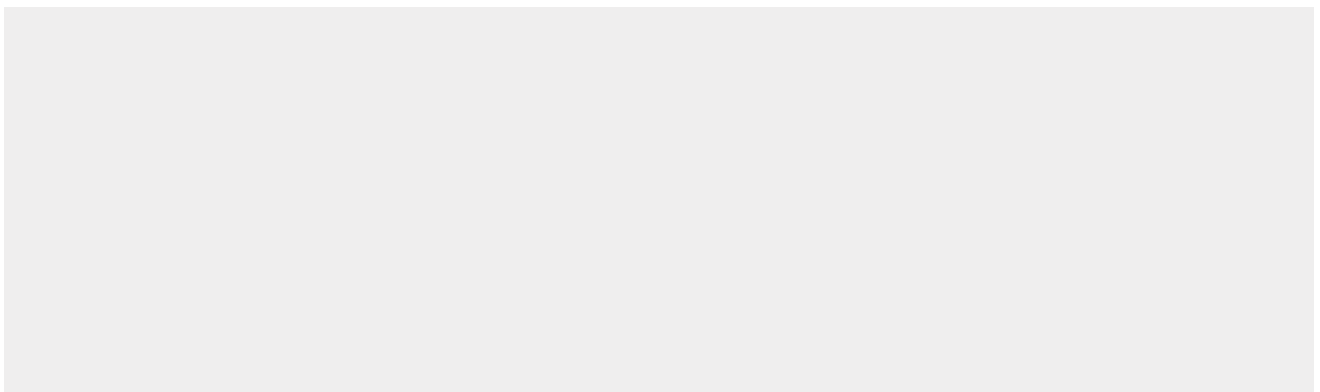


5. What do you think would happen to your mission if your volunteer culture became significantly healthier? What could you accomplish that you're currently not accomplishing?



## Get Practical

1. Would your volunteers describe your staff or senior leadership as well organized? What impact do you think your level of organization/disorganization is having on your volunteers?



2. Discuss creating end dates on the terms of service for your volunteers. With which teams could you start this practice? Remember that when you give your volunteers an out (and have a healthy culture), many lean in.

3. Do an honest analysis of your training and ongoing support for your volunteers. Do you do a great job of preparing and supporting volunteers? If not, what will it take you to do a better job in these areas?

## **Make it Happen**

Identify your single biggest obstacle to creating a great culture for volunteers. Once you've identified it, create a six-month plan to remove it.

In addition, identify two to five other key obstacles to creating a great volunteer culture. Now design a one to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles.

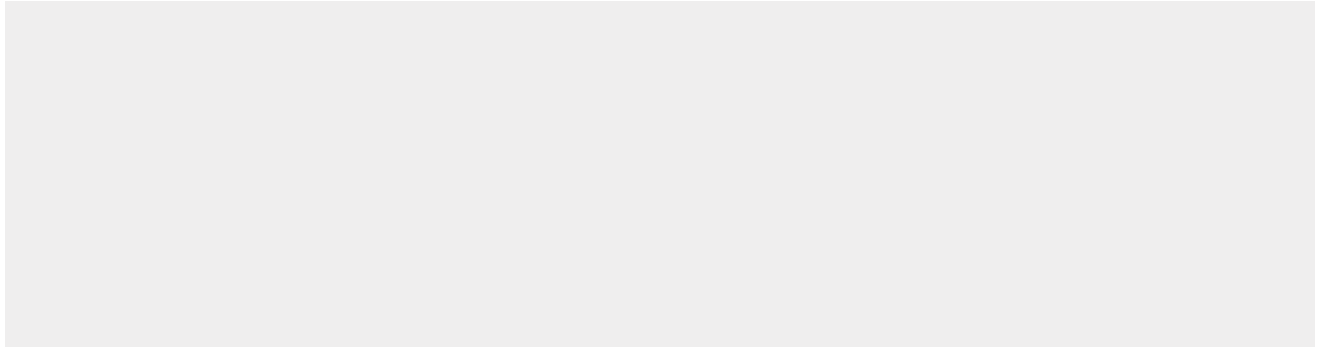
Make sure you assign responsibilities and accountability and meet periodically to evaluate progress.



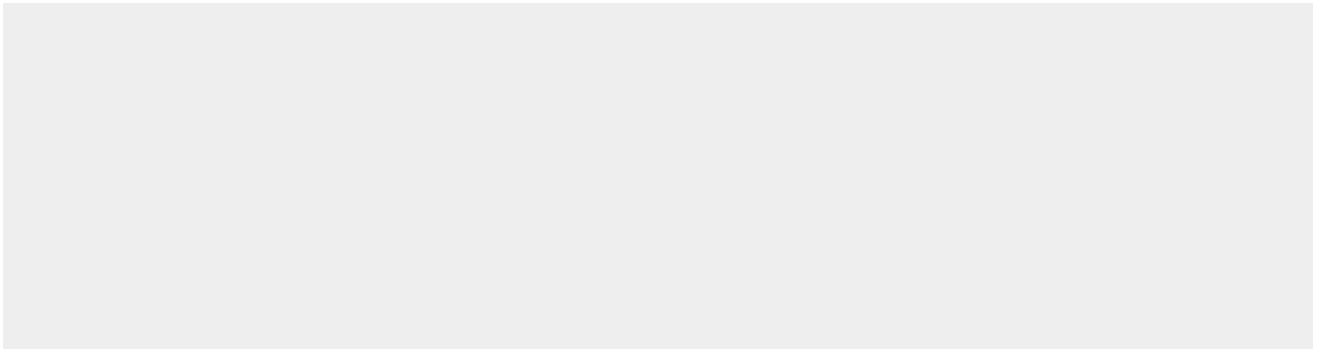
# Conversation 5

# Discussion Questions

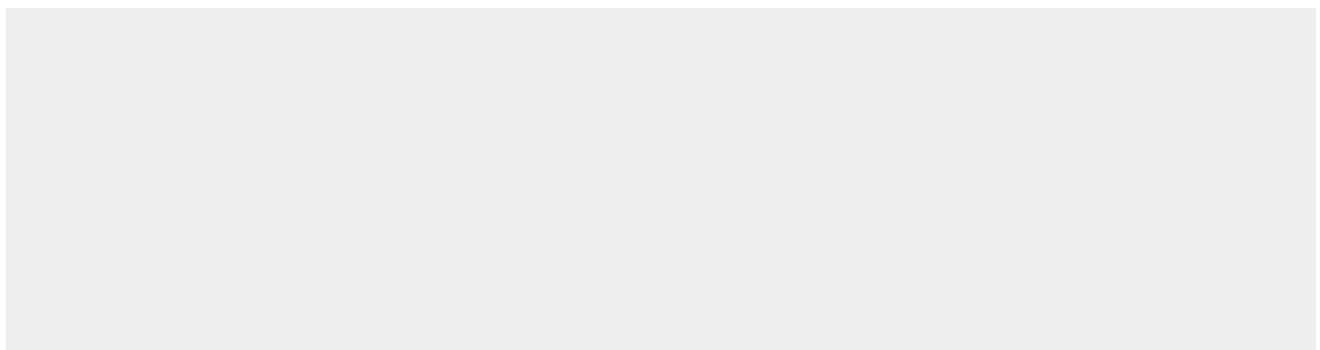
1. Would you say that kids walking away from their faith in their teen or young adult years is an issue in your church? To what extent? How do you know?



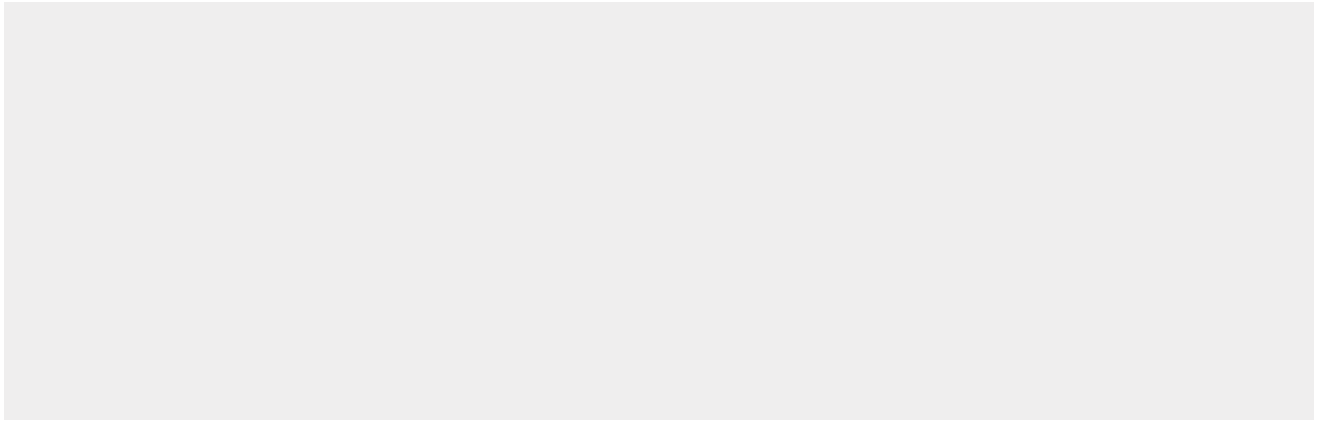
2. If teens and young adults have expressed reasons why they're walking away, what are they? Make a list.



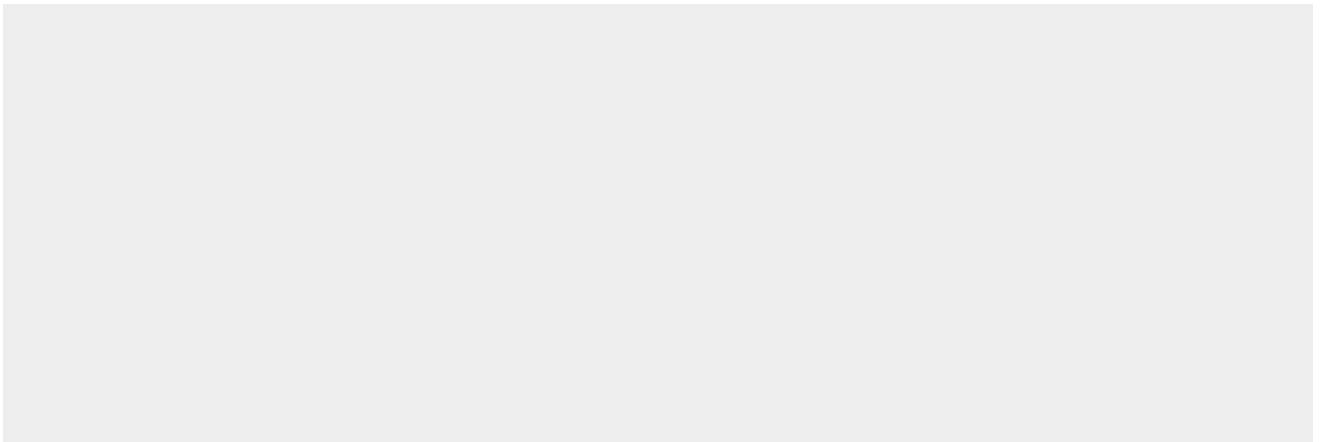
3. Is your church a safe church in which a person can express doubt about what they believe? Why or why not?



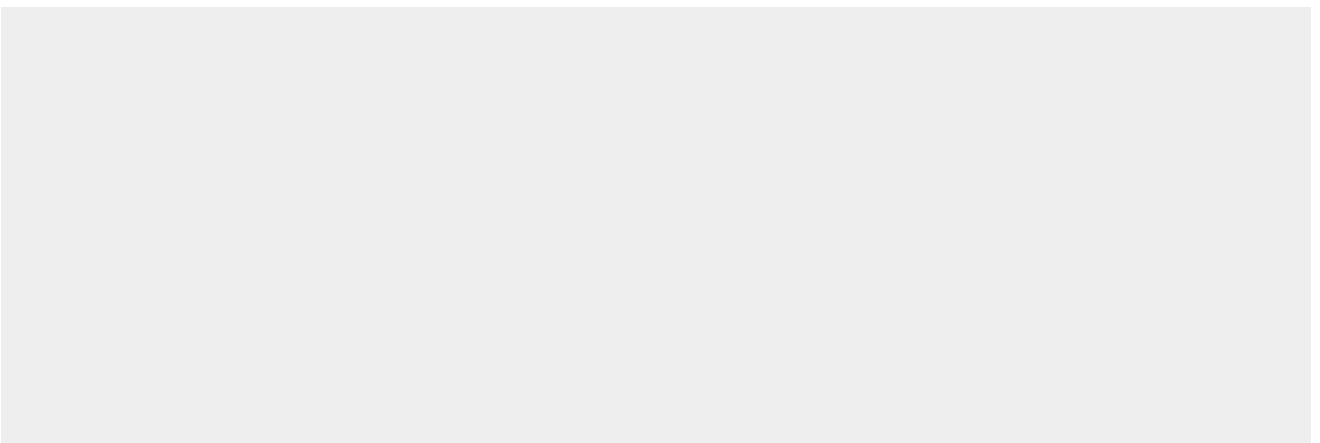
4. Do you have any environments in your church in which adults can interact alongside kids and teens in a meaningful way (beyond being their Sunday school teacher or group leader)?



5. Workaholism is the most rewarded addiction in our country. To what extent does your church culture reward workaholism?

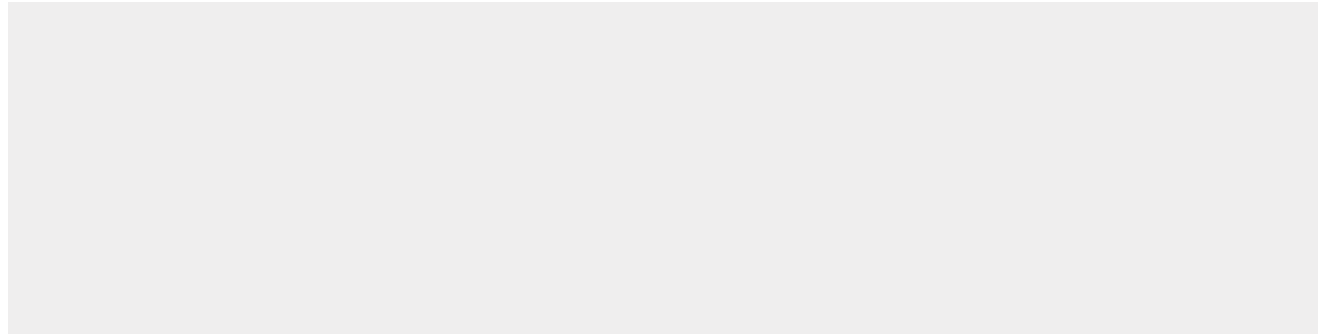


6. Of the different ways that leaders self-medicate, which are most prevalent in your church?

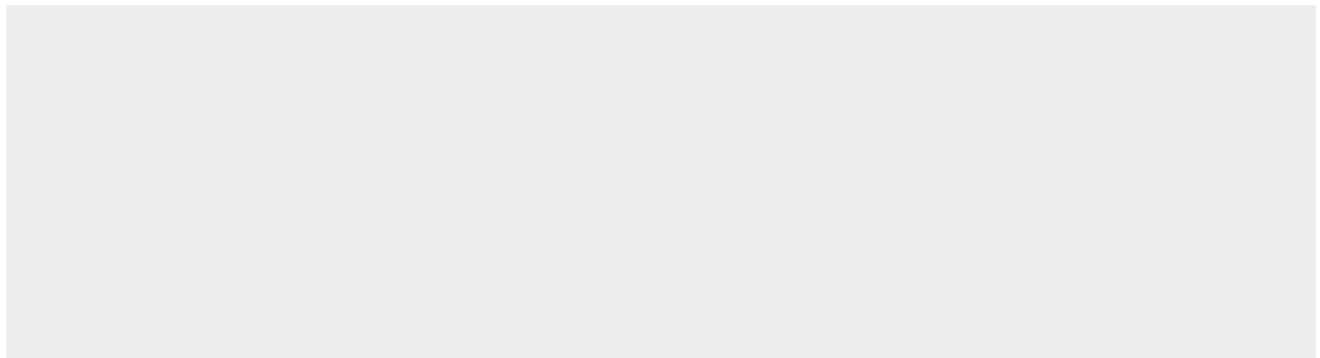


## Get Practical

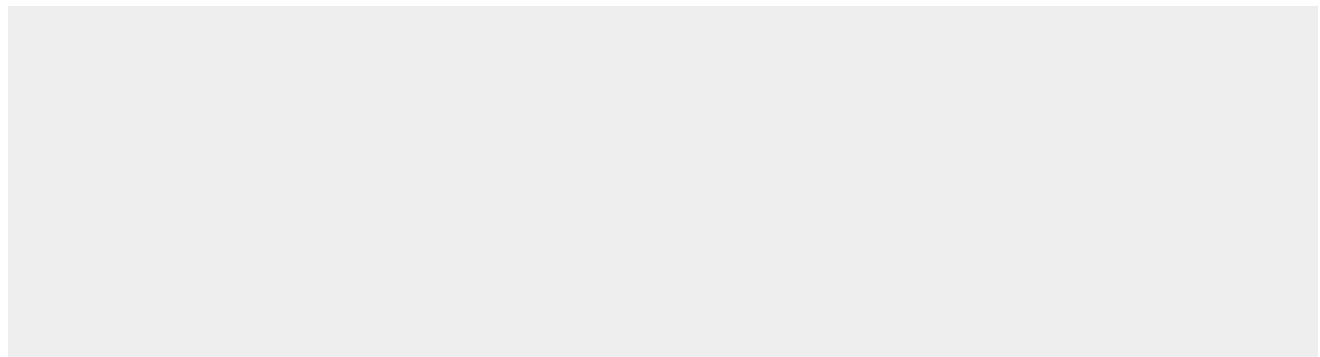
1. Convene a focus group of teens or young adults who are walking away from your church or who have walked away from your church, maybe over dinner or coffee. Ask them why they're making the decision to walk away, and then don't judge; just listen. Listen and take notes. Discuss what you've learned with your team afterward.



2. Create a plan to intentionally pair adults with kids and teens so they can serve together. Prepare those adults to do more than simply “use” the kids and teens as extra hands. Prepare the adults to become mentors to those kids.



3. Do a serious assessment of how well your church is prepared to handle conversations with those who doubt, both formally and informally. Talk to your group leaders or Bible study leaders about allowing people to express their doubt without others rushing to quick or easy answers.

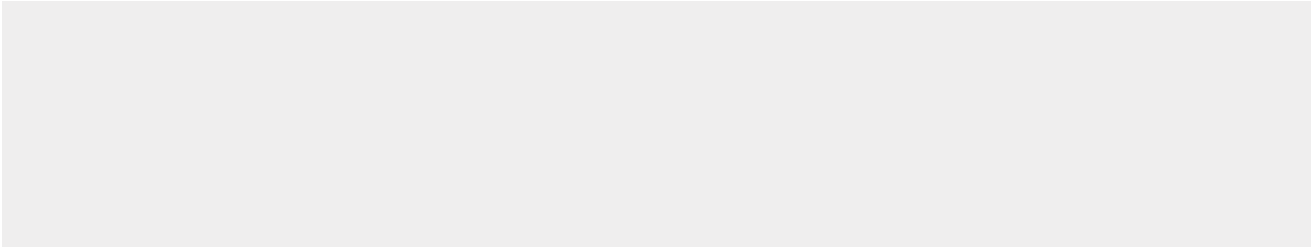




# Make it Happen

Identify your single biggest obstacle to creating a great culture for volunteers. Once you've identified it, create a six-month plan to remove it.

In addition, identify two to five other key obstacles that are driving teens and young adults away. Now design a one to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles.

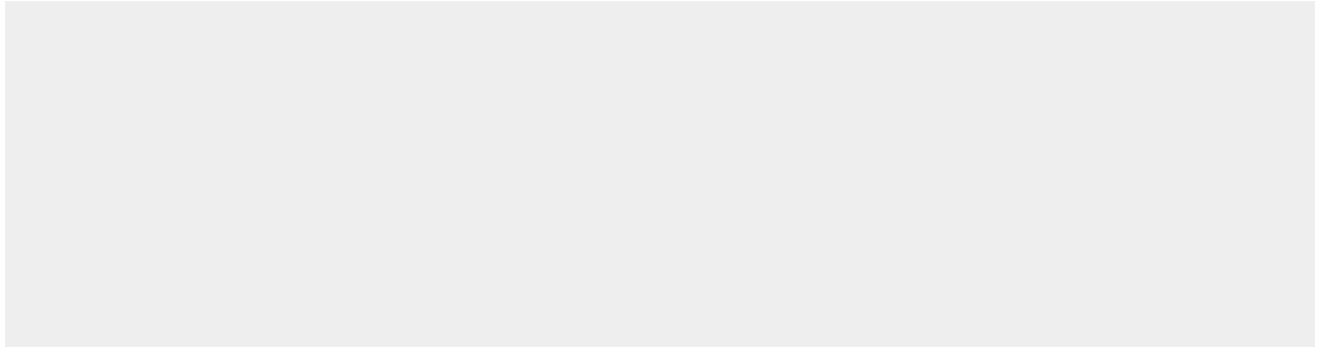




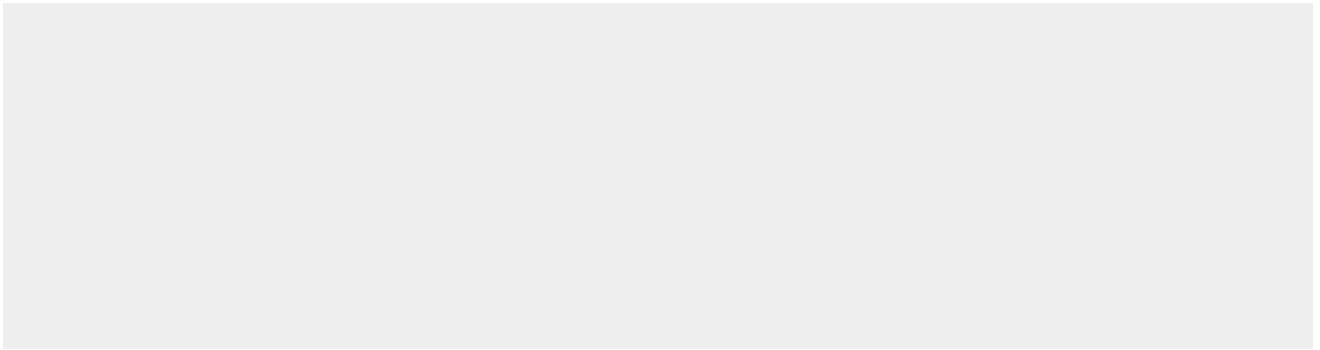
# Conversation 6

# Discussion Questions

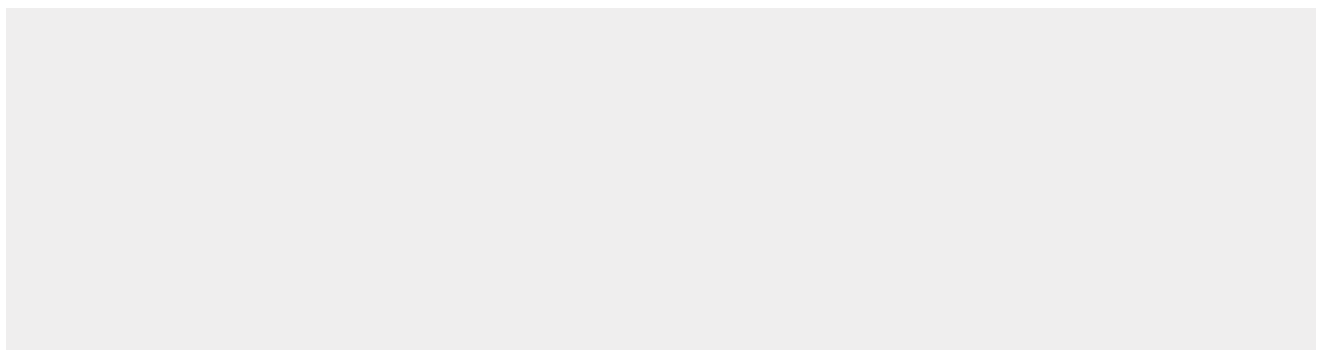
1. How has the world you grew up in changed? Which changes do you like the most? Which do you like the least?



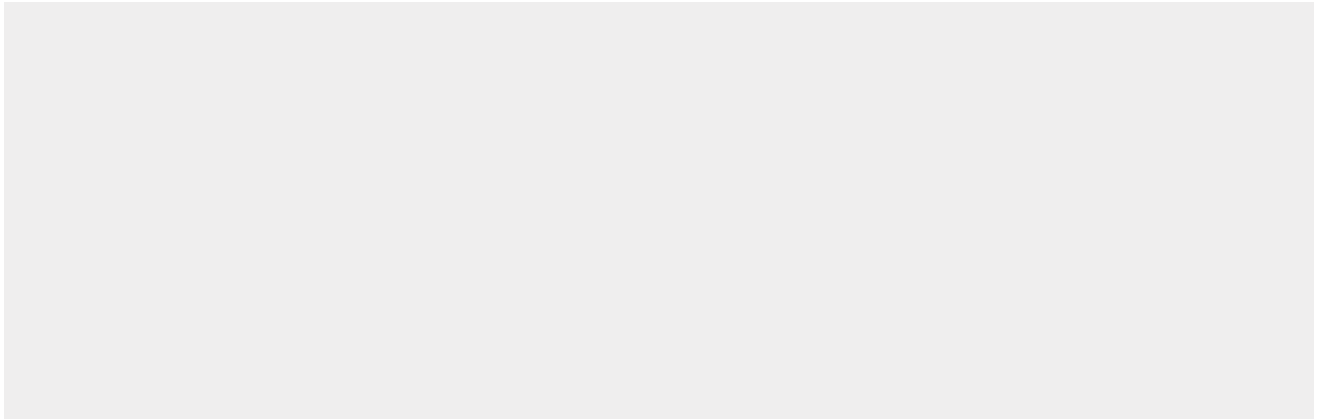
2. As you read through the twelve trends listed on pages 113–117, which surprise you the most?



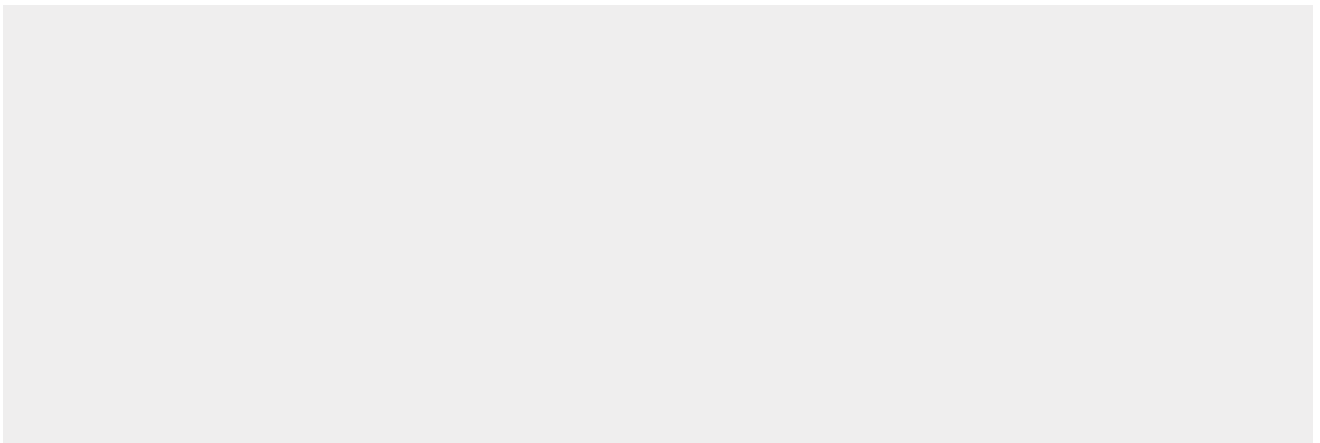
3. Which of the twelve trends has your church addressed? Which trend appears to be the one you are least ready to deal with?



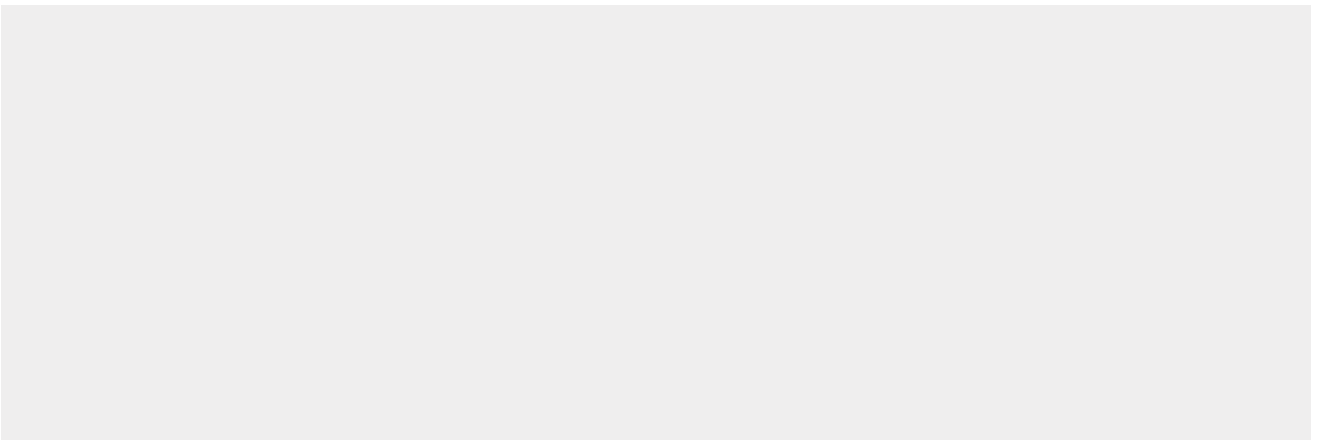
4. How have you seen the content consumption patterns created by companies like Netflix influence the way people interact with your church?



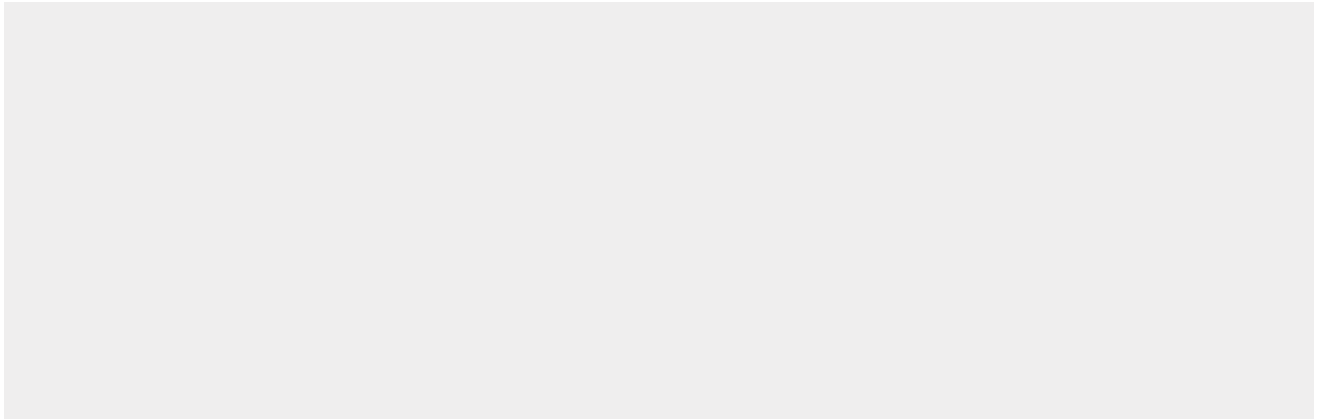
5. Are Sundays at your church more about what people get or more about what people give? In what ways is that distinction important?



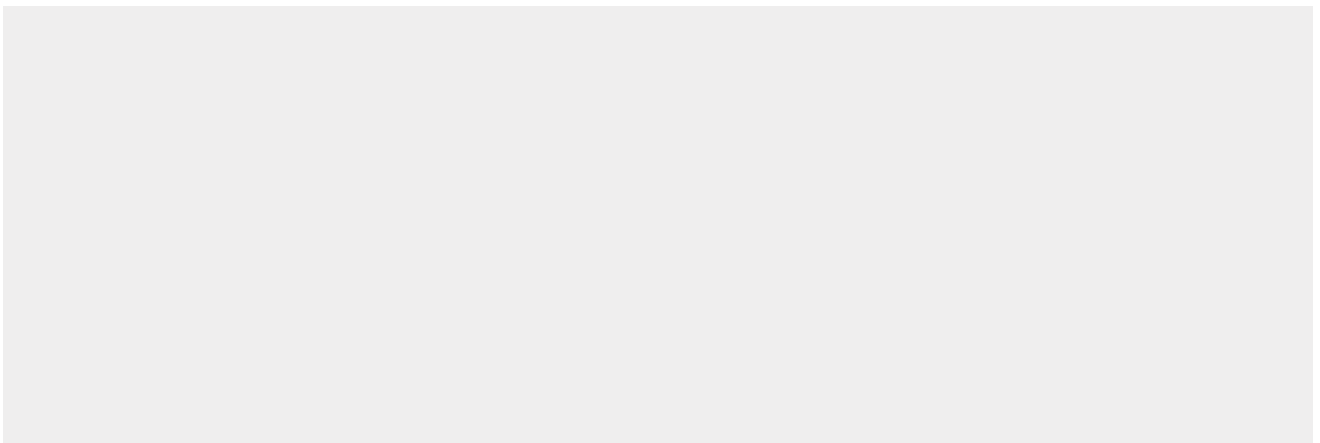
6. Of the eleven predictions about what the church will look like in the future, which are you most ready to embrace? Which are you least ready to embrace? Why?



7. Does what's happening with online church and social media feel more like a threat to you or an opportunity to you? Why?

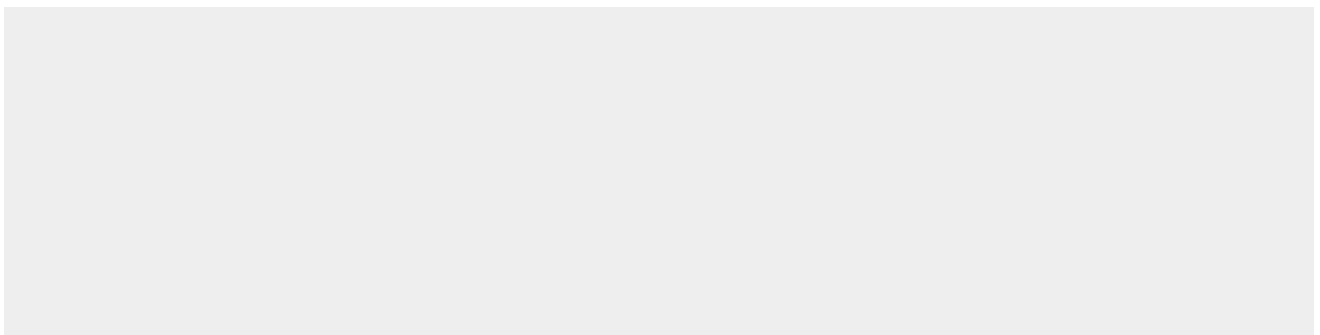


8. What do you think will happen to your church if you ignore these trends?



## Get Practical

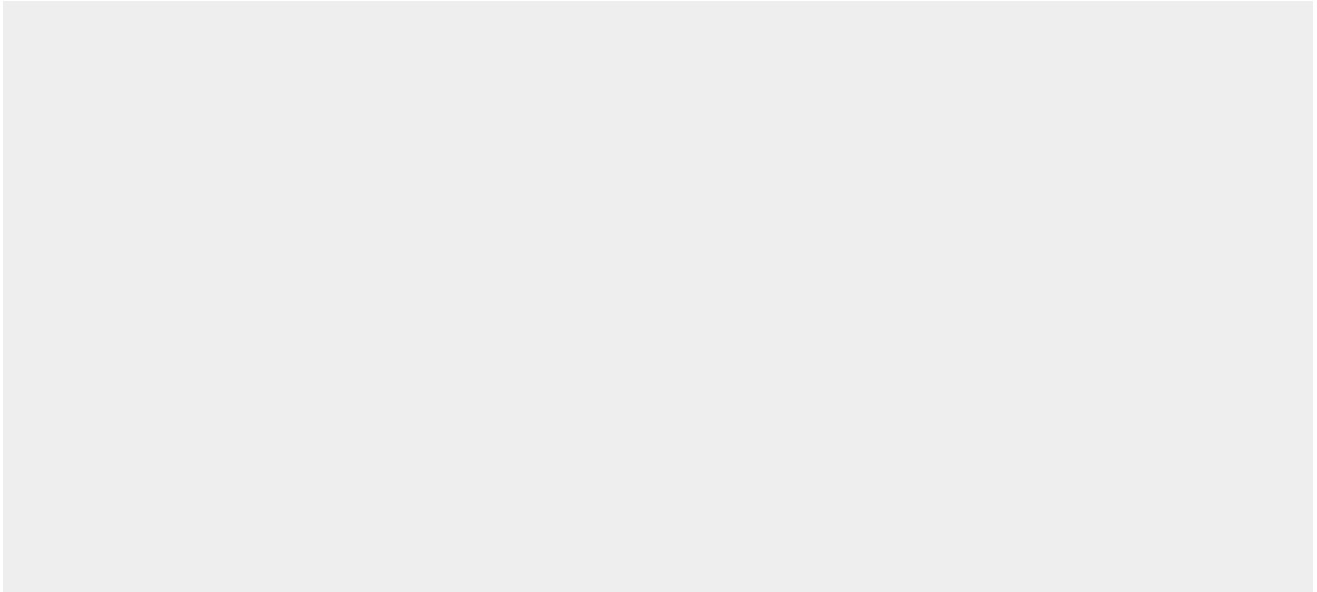
So much is changing in our culture, it's hard to know where to start. Re-read the chapter and select between two and five trends that you think you are best prepared to respond to. Which is most prevalent in your area? Which is most prevalent in the age group you're trying to reach?



## Make it Happen

Identify the single best opportunity you have to respond to a cultural trend that's impacting your ministry. Once you've identified it, create a six-month plan to deal with it.

Then, examine the other trends you short-listed in the "Get Practical" section above and design a one to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles.

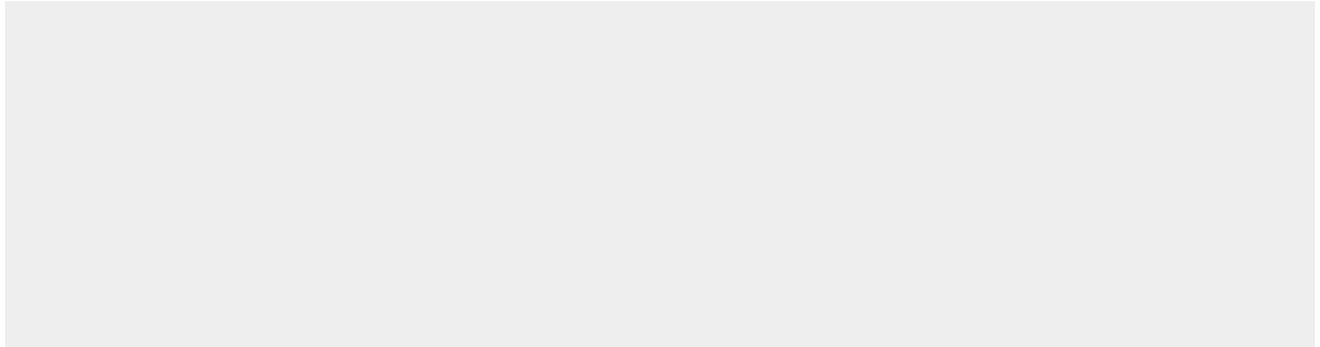




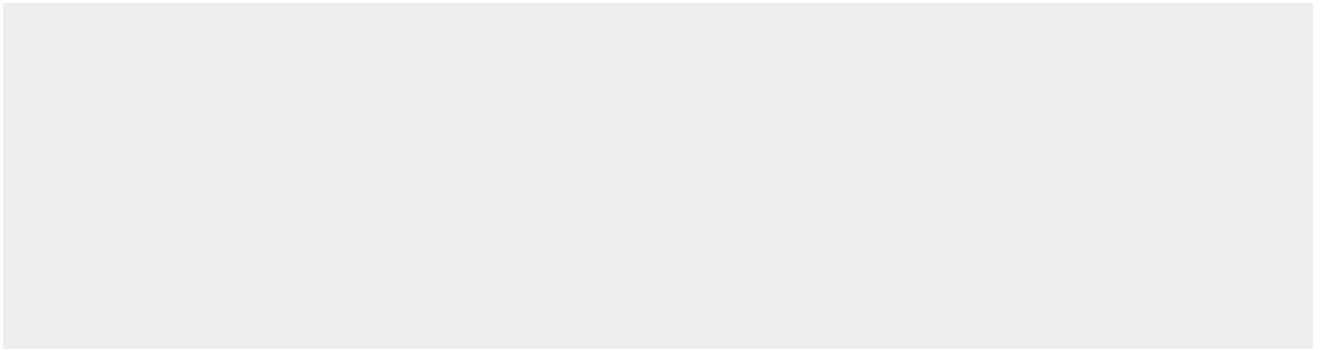
# Conversation 7

# Discussion Questions

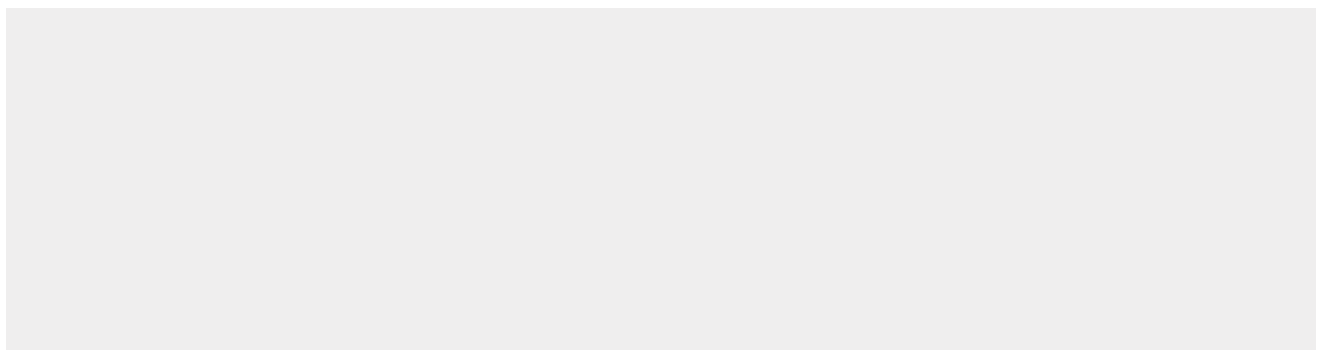
1. Does your church easily embrace change? If so, why? If not, why not? What keeps you from seeing change as a friend rather than an enemy?



2. As you read through Ron Edmondson's and Dom Ruso's stories, what encourages you? Does anything frighten you about the pace of change adopted by both leaders?

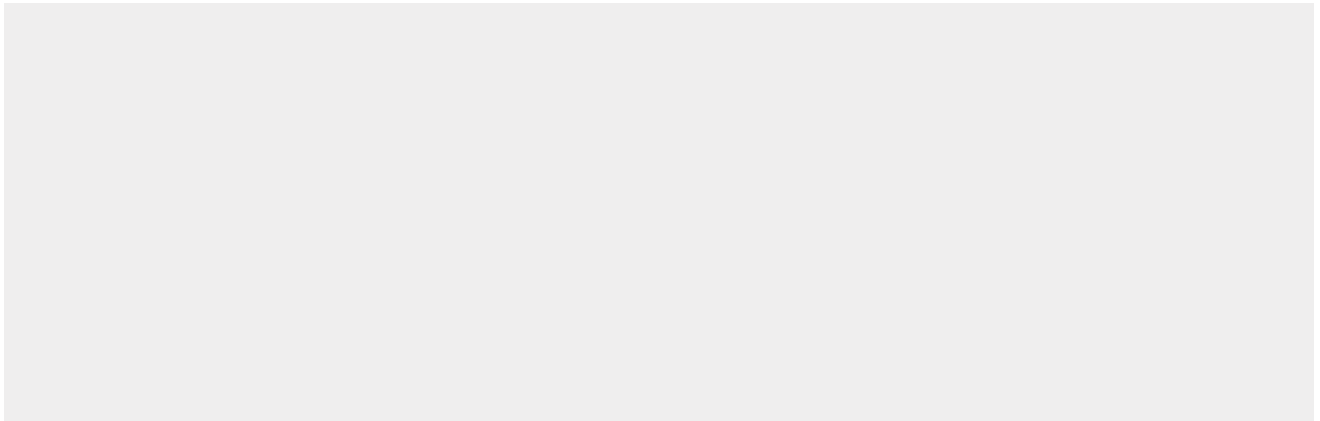


3. Of all the things associated with change, which frightens you the most?

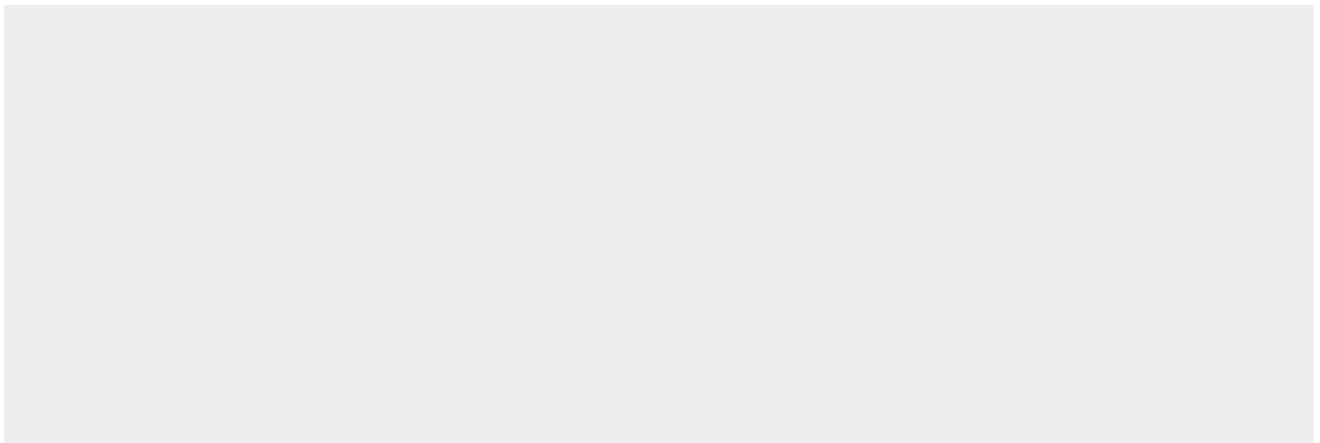




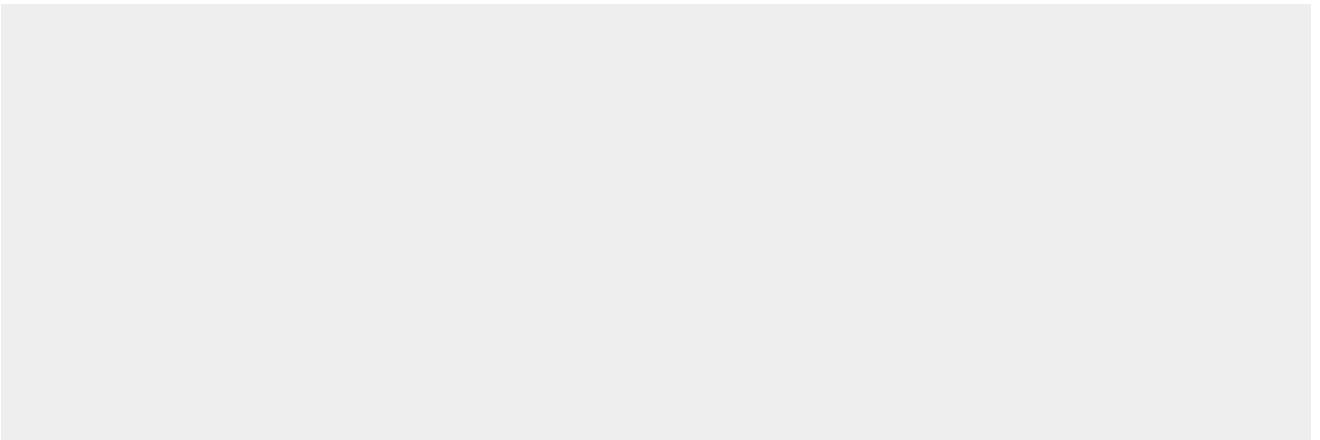
4. Has your church ever tolerated “delusional talk”? What makes you tolerate it?



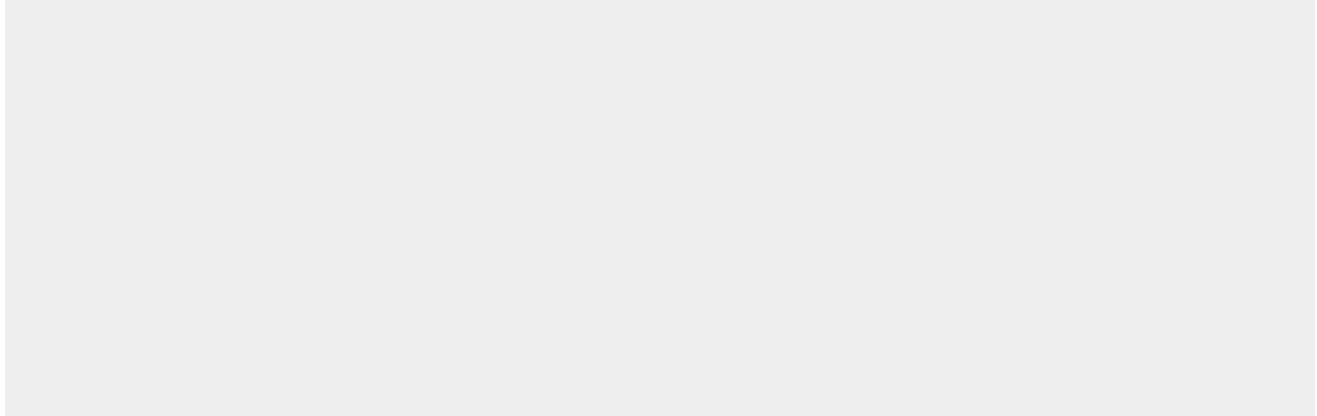
5. What’s the trajectory of your church within five years if you don’t change? What is it if you do change? Ask the same questions again but using a ten-year timeline.



6. In your conversations about change, do you tend to focus on the why, or more on the what or the how? Are your conversations working for you



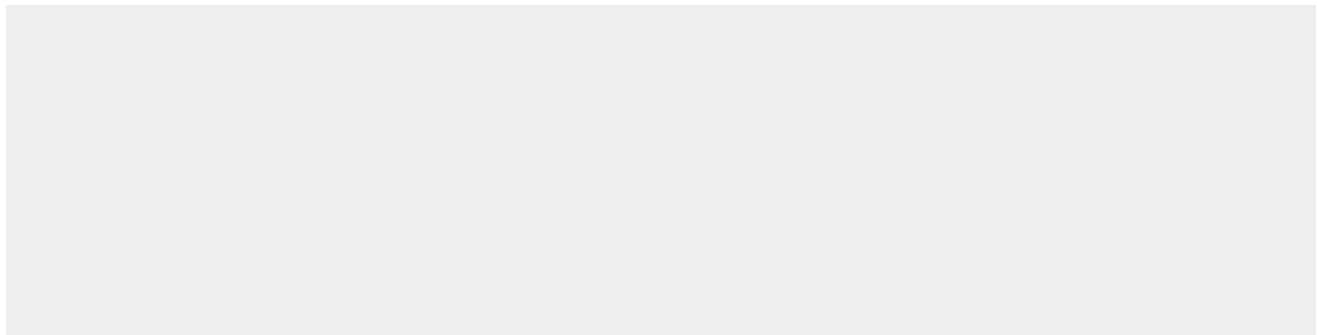
7. If you're reading this book and you're not the senior leader, what was the biggest insight you read that can help you lead change more effectively within your organization?



## Get Practical

Work through this list of six things a leader can do when people want their church to grow but not change. Create an honest assessment of how your church is doing in each area. Some of the things listed below describe a culture and some are action steps, but each should give you a gauge of where your church truly is when it comes to having an honest conversation and action plan around change.

1. Tell the truth.
2. Plot trajectory.
3. Ban delusional talk.
4. Get an outside view.
5. Offer constant feedback.
6. Draw a line and call it what it is.



## Make it Happen

Identify the single biggest obstacle to change in your church. Once you've identified it, create a six-month plan to remove it. In addition, identify two to five other key obstacles to change. Now design a one- to two-year plan to address each of the obstacles.

For further information on leading change, see my book *Leading Change Without Losing It: Five Strategies That Can Revolutionize How You Lead Change When Facing Opposition* (reThink, 2012)

