



# The 5 Steps to Revitalize Your Church

**The Proven Path to Increase Your Church's Growth and Impact**

**Jim Morgan**



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# A Huge Discovery...

**M**y background prior to founding Meet The Need was in management consulting, solving strategic problems for Fortune 1000 companies. Over the past decade I've turned my consulting attention to the Church, doing extensive research trying to find out if there is a correlation between two disturbing trends:

- 1) the role of the church in communities across America has fundamentally changed over the past 100 years
- 2) the Church today in the U.S. is not succeeding in terms of any significant metric – growth, impact, influence, or perception

## **We've made a huge discovery...**

After all that digging, it turns out that organizational behavior best practices, which align very well with Biblical principles, held the key all along to why the Church has been struggling. There is a fundamental, flawed assumption underlying nearly every decision most churches make. The prevailing church growth model in America violates the guiding principle of successful organizations, including the early Church. Only recognizing and rectifying this faulty premise can reverse the decline. Treating symptoms won't do it. Turning the tide requires uncovering and dealing with the core, underlying issue...

## **The Church in America today is pursuing the wrong "customer"!**

Little did I know that the Lord was preparing me throughout my business career as a specialist in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to one day discover and unveil the "root cause" issue behind the Church's decline. This "root cause" is extraordinarily simple – yet profound. The logic is straightforward – yet compelling.

Our blog ([blog.meettheneed.org](http://blog.meettheneed.org)) has much more information about the 5 steps we present here. However, this brief overview will give you enough information to see why so many churches are closing their doors – and how to revitalize your church. You'll see why the perception of the Church and Christians is on the downslide in the U.S. – and how to increase your impact and influence.

# Laying the Foundation...

*Is your church growing as fast as you'd like? Is it having a substantial impact in your community? Is your voice being heard and influence being felt across your city? If not, read on to see how to change that!*

**B**efore we jump into solutions, let's agree on a few key concepts:

## **Baseline assumptions:**

1. A church is not defined as its pastor, staff and buildings. That's how we define companies – as its executives, employees and assets. Instead, in a church, the members and attenders **ARE** the church.
2. Who an organization seeks to attract and retain and where it invests the bulk of its time, resources and dollars define who it considers to be its “customer”.
3. Studies show that nearly all churches today invest the vast majority of their time, resources and dollars on organizational management, facilities, programs, services and marketing to attract and retain members and attenders.

## **If you agree with those assumptions, the following must be true:**

4. According to our definition, churches today treat congregants as their primary “customer”.
5. However, if members **ARE** the Church, they **CANNOT** also be the Church's “customer”.
6. Therefore, churches are investing the vast majority of their time, resources and dollars in the wrong “customer”.

## **Further:**

8. Any organization that is not focused on its “customers” or focused on the wrong “customers” is unlikely to succeed.
9. Customers are always outside of, not internal to, an organization. Because the Church today treats “insiders” (members, who **ARE** the Church) as its “customer”, the Church is by definition internally focused. Internally-focused entities of any kind rarely grow.
10. Because churches treat congregants as “customers” they tend to cater to them and hesitate to challenge them (to be disciplined, to disciple, and to serve the Church's true, intended “customer”) for fear of losing them to a church down the road (who won't challenge them).
11. As a result, churchgoers have adopted a consumer mentality. As evidence, most churches growing today are those who can afford to provide better facilities and “customer” experiences than smaller churches – appealing to those consumers.

# Laying the Foundation...

12. Jesus and His disciples spent the vast majority of their time going out into the community to reach the lost and hopeless. And although Jesus had the perfect words, He nearly always healed and fed to demonstrate His power and love before He said who He was.
13. Therefore, Jesus, His disciples and the early Church considered the community to be the “customer”, continually engaging and serving those around them.
14. The Church followed Jesus’ model for centuries, serving as the food bank and homeless shelter, allocating a significant percentage of its time, resources and dollars to serving the community.
15. However, the Church today allocates a very small fraction of its total budget and time to engaging and serving the community – its true “customer”. The Church can’t possibly “outreach” Jesus, yet it has largely separated words from action.
16. Other religions understand the importance of spreading out and “taking ground”, infiltrating all facets of society; yet Christian churches continue pulling inward.

## **So, it stands to reason:**

17. The Church is not succeeding – in terms of overall growth, number of churches closing, perception in society, or degree of community impact.
18. Since churches are not focused on the right “customers” (i.e. the communities where those churches are planted), those “customers” do not feel the Church cares about them.
19. People don’t “care what you know until they know you care”. The Church’s intended “customers” aren’t listening as much today to what the Church has to say. No longer seeing the Church actively engaged, interacting in relationship with them, most unchurched do not feel the Church has earned the right to speak into culture. As a result, too many of them now believe Christians are more about judgment than justice, condemnation than compassion, self-righteousness than selflessness, and hypocrisy than humility.

## **Ok, I’m convinced. Now what?:**

20. With proof of the misdefinition of the Church’s “customer”, a flawed assumption driving most decisions churches make, pastors have little grounds for maintaining the status quo.
21. If churches keep treating members as “customers”, the Church’s influence and reputation will continue to decline.

***If we accept the assumptions above that churches have adopted a definition of “customers” inconsistent with Biblical mandates and organizational best practices, then the question is not whether we need to change, but how and when?***

# The 5 Steps in Brief...

*Reversing the rapid decline of the Church in America depends on whether pastors embrace or resist a proper definition of their churches' "customer". The trajectory of your church also hinges on whether your leadership chooses to respond to this imperative.*

**T**he following 5 steps are the keys to realigning your church's leaders, strategies, programs and principles around the reality that your members are your church and the community is your "customer". Keep in mind that the 5 steps are meant to be implemented sequentially – once all are fully in place the 5 steps run in parallel from that point forward.

**Step #1 – CONVINC**e...leaders and members that: 1) They are the Church – there to serve, not to be served, and 2) As the Church, reaching the lost and poor outside the "4 walls" is in their job description, not just the pastor's

**Step #2 – EQUIP**...members to be effective in the "marketplace" through discipleship that extends well beyond small groups. Because members are the church, they are "insiders", more like employees than "customers".

No company would send out employees unprepared for a job as big as the Great Commission.

**Step #3 – CHALLENGE**...members to be the church, investing much more heavily in being disciplined, leading others to Christ, and serving the church's true "customer". A church that's afraid of losing members wouldn't dare challenge them to be all that the Lord wants them to be.

**Step #4 – EMPOWER**...flatten the prevailing hierarchy in the respective roles of pastors versus members. As "insiders", members should no longer leave the heavy lifting to the "professionals". They should be given greater authority and accountability for being the Church outside the "4 walls".

**Step #5 – MEASURE**...not numbers of attendees or dollars, but lives touched and changed, regardless of whether they show up or give. Hold members to a higher standard of performance more in line with the Lord's expectations of disciples.

*☞☞ Your church's growth, impact and influence will increase dramatically as you implement each of these 5 steps, although it won't happen overnight. ☞☞*

# Step #1 – Convince

*The entire church – pastors, staff, facilities, deacons, elders, assets AND members (all “insiders”) – should be working together to reach the real “customer” (“outsiders”).*

## **C**onvince leaders and members that:

- They ARE the Church – critical parts of the “body” with unique, God-given skills and passions
- As the Church, they have a responsibility to pursue the church’s “customer”, the hurting and hopeless in the community where the church is planted
- The Great Commission is an obligation of great urgency, not an option



## **How will this increase my church’s growth and impact?**

- The health and vitality of any organization depends on focusing on something outside of itself
- Radically shifts the mindsets of everyone about their intended roles in the church and the importance of winning over the community for Christ
- Taps into and releases the latent leverage lying dormant in the pews, disrupting the comfort and complacency of lay leaders and members, engaging them with more people

## **Action Items**

- Pray for the courage to continue down this new path despite certain resistance
- First secure buy-in of all leadership
- Determine the implications of adopting this new definition of your “customer” on your church’s strategic plan, activities and responsibilities
- Develop and implement a communication strategy around these changes. Consider a phased roll-out approach to ease the transition.
- To facilitate the “attitude adjustment” that will have to occur, rally members around common cause(s). Identify pressing social issue(s) to redirect attention away from internal focus (i.e. the institution and members) and unite the entire church around the goal of alleviating the issue(s).

# Step #2 – Equip

*Does defining the community as the church's "customer" mean I ignore my member/attenders? No, in fact it's the opposite.*

**B**ecause members ARE the church, you train them as "insiders", much like a company trains its employees. Seeing your members as your church and your community as the "customer" fundamentally alters the level of training (discipleship) required and its emphasis.

Step 1 provided the impetus to change. Step 2 provides the means to change. Both steps are necessary to revitalize your church.



## **How will this increase my church's growth and impact?**

- Discipleship prepares members to be far more effective in their new role as the church personified, maximizing their potential as they pursue your real "customer"
- Building and sending disciples, the Great Commission, is the ultimate church growth model. Jesus and his disciples built a rebel band of Spirit-filled followers fully committed to changing the world for Christ. And they did. The church grew dramatically, not because people were attracted to the institution but because they were attracted to disciples.

## **Action Items**

- Determine if your church is filled with disciples, possessing the attributes of Jesus
- Adopt a more rigorous training program than sermons and small groups – no company serious about training employees would rely solely on lectures and group discussions led by "untrained" coworkers
- Implement a 1-on-1 or triad discipleship model, beginning with leaders and filtering to members
- Gear discipleship toward "growing" and "going", preparing them to do their jobs as "insiders" pursuing "outsiders"
- Teach Jesus' model for evangelism – demonstrating God's love before telling them who He is. We can't "outreach" Jesus.

# Step #3 – Challenge

*Successful companies would never dare challenge its customers (“outsiders”). However, they aggressively challenge employees (“insiders”) daily.*

If you truly see members as your church and the community as your "customer" you'll be:

1. far less inclined to cater to members and attenders with programs designed to attract and retain them
2. much more willing to challenge them to make the sacrifices necessary to become a disciple, to disciple others and follow Jesus' model of evangelizing through service

At the height of His popularity, Jesus did the unthinkable. He preached His most controversial, challenging sermon. In fact, He knew few would be left standing beside Him after telling the crowd of followers to drink His blood and eat His flesh. Imagine the pastor of a large church in the midst of rapid growth laying out the full picture of discipleship costs and expectations, knowing it was a pill few of the members could swallow. That's exactly what Jesus did. He preached it down to a select few. Yet that set the stage for the most explosive period of growth in the history of the Church.



## How will this increase my church's growth and impact?

- Yes, challenging your members risks losing some. Those in it for “cheap grace”, belief without life change, will go to another church that still caters. However, those eager to grow deeper in their faith will likely be inspired and excited, creating a foundation for growth and breathing life into your church's culture.
- Not all growth is healthy growth. Healthy, exponential expansion comes from Spirit-filled disciples who've experienced genuine life change.

## Action Items

- Challenge members, attenders and visitors alike, to varying degrees, with the:
  - o hard message of the gospel, realizing people are hungry for truth and personal growth. They're looking for redemption more than life lessons.
  - o Lord's expectation of them to become disciples of Jesus Christ
  - o Great Commission, possibly severely disrupting their comfortable lives
  - o model of evangelism used by Jesus and His disciples, serving in love before sharing who He is

# Step #4 – Empower

*No organization can succeed unless all the departments are adequately staffed, aligned around the interests of the target customers and perform their distinct functions well.*

**W**hat the Bible says about the church is no different. Set members up for success in living up to their new standing as key parts of the church “body”, charged with exceeding “customer” expectations, not their own. Empowering entails:

- Reorganizing
- Reallocating
- Connecting
- Deploying



## **How will this increase my church's growth and impact?**

- Motivating, discipling and challenging are great starts, but your church must be willing to restructure and invest to make members effective in carrying out their “jobs”
- Great organizations know that people retain what they live out better than what they hear or read. Best practices and Biblical mandates point to the power of On-the-Job Training to fully leverage all resources to maximize growth.

## **Action Items**

- Flatten the hierarchy in the respective roles of pastors versus members, diminishing the status of pastors and elevating the standing of all others by comparison
- Entrust members with greater responsibilities for evangelism, conversions and discipleship; not as “customers” who’ve done their part when they’ve secured the “referral” (i.e. inviting someone to church)
- Consider new organizational structures to decentralize and empower lay leaders (e.g. neighborhood groups, ministry “planting”, Mission Shaped Communities)
- Reallocate budget to generously fund member-led and external local ministry efforts
- Network regularly, relationally with other leaders in the city to learn about pressing local issues your church could help alleviate
- Put local needs in front of members on a real-time, year-round basis (e.g. through Meet The Need), helping them see where their skills and passions are best utilized
- Consider the role your church plays in the larger body of Christ in your city

# Step #5 – Measure

*A new definition of your church’s “customer”, rethinking how you treat and invest in members versus the community, calls for a new set of performance metrics.*

**T**he most successful organizations use performance metrics to incent and track behaviors of all “insiders”. They trade in internally-focused objectives that cause “insiders” to look out for their own interests for customer-oriented measures that coalesce everyone around assessing and meeting customer needs.

What if rather than measuring people and dollars you measured lives changed and impacted regardless of whether they show up at your church? If you truly believe members ARE your church, you would also feel at liberty to hold them to a higher standard of performance, raising expectations of members rather than striving to meet the expectations of members.



## **How will this increase my church’s growth and impact?**

- Organizations of all types know their success depends on “insiders” being held accountable for carrying out their role in pursuing and serving the customer
- Tracking lives changed and impacted as your primary metrics will lead you to make decisions based on the optimal strategies for empowering members and attenders to bring as many people to Christ as possible (not simply invite them to church).

## **Action Items**

- Develop a new set of metrics that rally all parts of your church “body” around exceeding expectations of your real “customer” – the community (e.g. % of Members Engaged in Local Missions, % Involved in 1 on 1 Discipleship, # of Visitors Who Didn’t Come from Another Church, # of Local Ministries Launched)
- Deemphasize member retention, satisfaction and giving. Those are only appropriate if you view members as “customers” and will make you reluctant to challenge them.
- Don’t consider professions and baptisms reliable measures– count disciples made
- Measure your generosity as a church, not member generosity with the church (e.g. % of church budget allocated to internal and external local missions efforts)
- Track whether those investments are having their intended impact. Assess whether neighborhoods are safer, families are stabilizing, and school systems have improved.

# Call to Action...

Change is never easy. There are risks in adopting the appropriate definition of your “customer” – truly treating members as your “church” and the community as your “customer”. However, when several key facts and trends so clearly converge, there is little choice but to begin following this organizational best practice and Biblical imperative:

- 93% of churches in America today are not growing
- The Church in the U.S. is declining rapidly in influence, impact and perception – fewer care what we know because they’re not sure we care
- Jesus, His disciples and the early church modeled evangelism through service, yet the average church allocates a negligible fraction of its budget to local missions and does only occasional service events
- Fewer doubted the Church’s love and compassion, and the Church grew, when it was the food bank and the homeless shelter, serving and loving its communities

While there are risks, there are also rewards:

- The Lord is glorified by your courageous obedience to Biblical mandates. When planting a church, pastors have a laser focus on community needs, resulting in their initial growth. Why do so many allow themselves to fall into the “entrepreneur trap” of getting caught up in the internal strains of managing growth and take their eyes off the evolving needs of their intended “customers”?
- Your church will grow and your footprint will quickly expand once you’ve built a solid base of true disciples
- The community will be changed forever as you empower those disciples to become the hands and feet of Christ
- The health and culture of your church will vastly improve as members unite around a common “customer” and causes, focusing less on their own “needs”
- Evidence shows members are more generous with generous churches

*QQ We pray all pastors come to realize what it truly means to view members, not the institution, as the church – no longer seeing church as the end, but as the means. QQ*

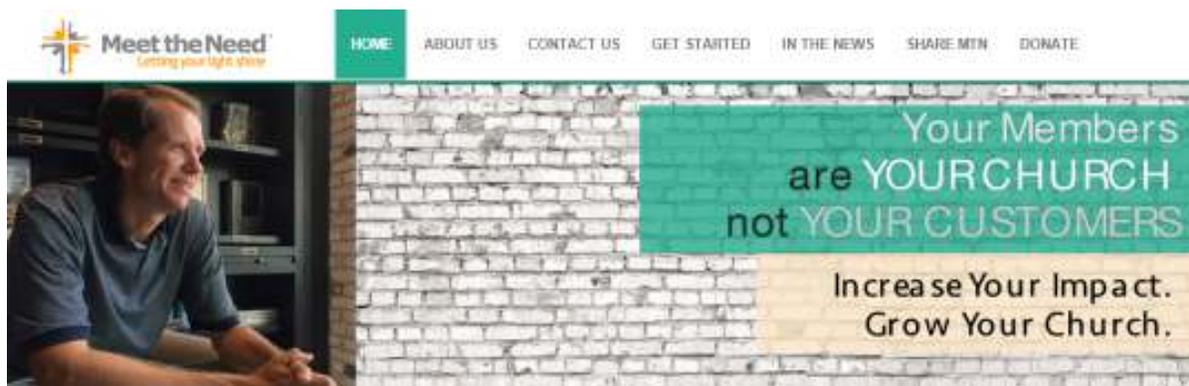
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...and read our blog posts coming to you via email each week

There are 30+ posts in the blog series, covering each of the steps and topics in this eBook



## NEED HELP?

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SPOTLIGHT



## About Jim Morgan

For years I was on the “fast track” – management consulting for Fortune 500 companies, investment banking on Wall Street, legislative aid on Capitol Hill, and MBA from the nation’s top business school. But all along I knew something was off. As a Christian, I wasn’t doing anything to serve God and others. My prayers for a mission and purpose grew more and more frequent.

Then, in 2000, it came – and be careful what you pray for. The Lord showed me that the same solutions I was bringing to large corporations were badly needed by the body of Christ. There were significant communication gaps in cities across the country between those in need and those who could help. So we invested the next decade and millions bringing the first comprehensive solution from the business world to local missions - empowering churches to reach out to families desperately in need of help and hope.

Throughout that process, I wondered why the Church in America seemed to be struggling - in growth, impact and perception. Being a consultant, I couldn’t help but look closer – and what I discovered was shocking. The modern American church model doesn’t align with the most fundamental principle of successful organizations – nor Biblical mandates. There is a flawed assumption underlying nearly every decision churches make today and we believe it’s the root cause for the Church’s decline...

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