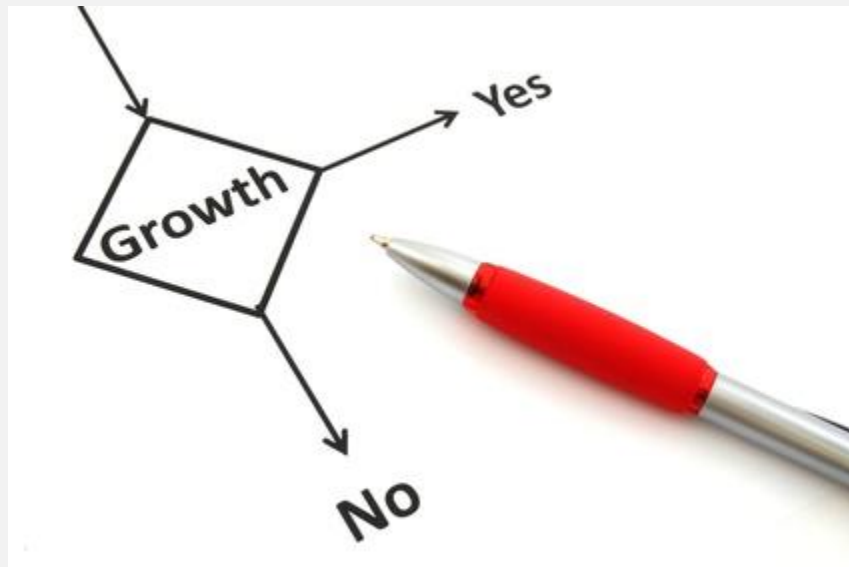


21 Ways to Stop a Church from Growing

By [Ron Edmondson](#)

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I was once asked to help a church process how to get younger people to attend. After we discussed some change recommendations a man pulled me aside and said, "*Son, we don't need no fancy ideas around here. We like being a small church.*"

I soon learned he represented the feelings of the church as a whole. They thought they wanted to reach younger people, but the truth was — when faced with change — they were really satisfied with the church as it had been for many years.

There's nothing wrong with being a small church.

Let me say that again — There is nothing wrong with being a small church. In fact, in some communities, what is considered small is actually large by comparison to churches in larger cities. I am seeing trends where small churches are actually being preferred by some younger generations. So, I'm not at all opposed to small churches, but I do have a problem with some small church mentalities.

And I think there is a difference.

As long as there are lost people nearby, I believe the church has much work to do. Any organization, Christian or not, that refuses to accept some changes will stop growing and eventually die.

The fact is that growing a church is hard work. It's relatively easy to keep things small or stop a church from growing. We could almost do nothing and achieve it. In fact, I can come up with lots of ways I've seen that stop a church from growing.

21 ways to keep a church from growing:

1. Make the entry to serving in the church lengthy or complicated (Serving is often the new front door)
2. Develop followers not leaders
3. Squelch any new ideas except the pastor's (and squelch some of those too)
4. Refuse new people a voice at the table (and don't greet them in the parking lot either)
5. Make sure everyone knows who is in charge (especially when it is not Jesus)
6. Cast a fancy vision statement — but only once, then get bored with sharing it
7. Only do "church" inside the building – don't attempt to reach your community
8. Demand that "it" be done the way it's always been done – protect tradition at all costs.
9. Give up when change is resisted – don't push through towards doing the right thing
10. Make excuses when things go wrong – pretend it is never your fault
11. Quit dreaming – or allowing others to do so
12. Resist any organized system, strategy or plans to grow the church
13. Stop praying – pretend you've "got this"
14. Insist you have all answers before you attempt to "walk by faith"
15. Never stretch people to walk by faith – let them chill on the sidelines
16. Treat new people like outsiders and let them wonder if they'll ever fit in

17. Always refer to the past as the good times and fail to recognize the ideas of the next generation
18. Put more energy and resources into maintaining structures and programs than into loving and serving others
19. Let gossip and passive aggression prevail and never be challenged
20. Make sure the ministerial staff does everything and "normal" people are never empowered or given permission to live on mission
21. Be stingy investing in the next generation favoring those who write the "bigger checks"