

## Overcoming European Growth Barriers

How do you help a church transition from home group to public meetings, to multiple leaders, to establishing an online presence and beyond? This session will share practical lessons learned at a church plant in Rome, Italy, about leadership and church size dynamics.

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### Biblical convictions

- Matthew 13: The seed and the yeast of the gospel grow and produce life
- Mark 4: There are various types of soil, and we should sow wherever we are
- Matthew 13: The devil sows weeds among the seeds of the gospel
- John 15: God prunes us so we will bear more fruit

### European challenges to gospel work

- Secular environment
- Longer journey toward faith
- Relationally intense work
- Limited evangelical ecosystem
- Various and faulty expectations of what a church should be
- Lack of hope
- Human frailty and sin

### Three North-American Paradigms

*Tony Morgan, The Unstuck Church*



*Timothy Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics"*

"The small church crosses the 200 barrier through (1) multiplying options, (2) going to multiple staff, (3) shifting decision-making power away from the whole membership, (4) becoming more formal and deliberate in assimilation, and (5) moving the pastor away from shepherding everyone to being more of an organizer/administrator."

Principles of size dynamics:

- Increasing complexity
- Shifting lay-staff responsibilities
- Increasing intentionality
- Increasing redundancy of communication
- Increasing quality of production
- Increasing openness to change
- Shifting role of the ministers
- Structuring smaller
- Emphasis on vision and strengths

*Carey Nieuwhof, 6 Keys to Breaking the 200, 400 and 800 Attendance Barriers*

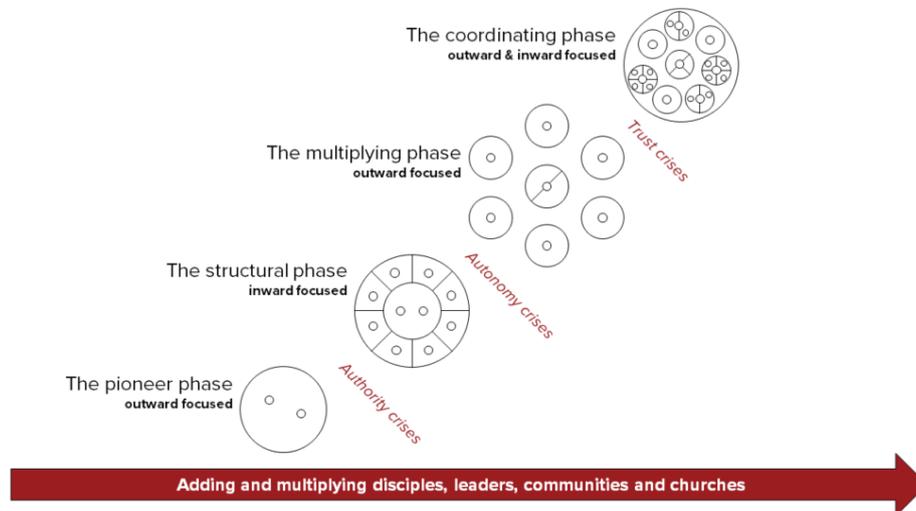
1. Push down decision making
2. A willingness to let others take the credit
3. Scalable pastoral care
4. Governing boards that focus on oversight, not micromanagement
5. An outward focused vision
6. A bias toward what is possible

*The Top 8 Reasons Most Churches Never Break the 200 Attendance Mark*

1. Small churches are structured to stay small
2. The pastor does everything
3. The pastor is the primary caregiver
4. You don't have the right people
5. Too many doers, not enough leaders
6. The team is not aligned
7. Micro-management
8. The leaders make too many excuses

## Two European Paradigms

*Øivind Augland, Exponential*



*Some of my additional considerations on breaking European growth barriers*

1. Reimagined ministry and culture
2. Personal reinvention
3. Forming and empowering leaders
4. Experimenting ministry in a new way
5. Adjustment, confirmation and/or backlash

### Practices

1. Visit churches 1-2 phases ahead of you
2. Learn from peers and from mentors
3. Study the literature on growth barriers
  - Timothy Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics"
  - Carl George, *How to Break Growth Barriers*
  - Carey Nieuwhof's blog and podcast
  - Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church*, blog, and podcast
  - Ed Stezter, *Comeback Churches*
  - Beth Gaede, *Size Transitions in Congregations*
  - Gary McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know*
  - Lyle Schaller, *The Middle Sized Church: Problems and Prescriptions*
  - Lyle Schaller, *The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church*
  - Bill Sullivan, *New Perspectives on Breaking the 200 Barrier*
  - Gary McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth*
  - Gary McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All*
  - Bill Easum and Bill Tenny-Brittian, *Effective Staffing for Vital Churches*