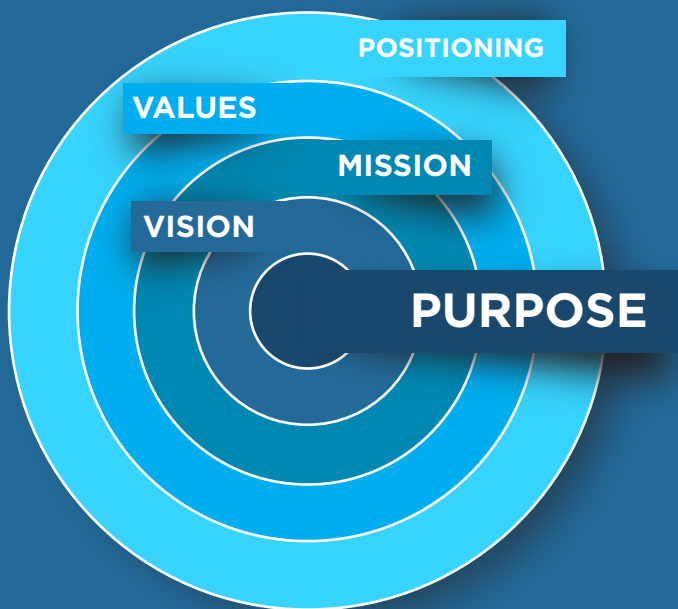


# HOW TO CREATE YOUR CHURCH'S **GROWTH** & **LEGACY** PLAN



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## ABOUT THIS EBOOK

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You want your church to grow. You want it to impact your community—and the world—on behalf of God's Kingdom. That's a given.

But how do you get there? God has given your church a unique vision, mission, and purpose that only you possess. It's time you unleashed them upon the world.

That's the journey this ebook will help you walk through. You'll discover a step-by-step process for finding and fleshing out your church's unique legacy of ministry.

## ABOUT ECHURCH

Pushpay and echurch were created in response to well-documented declines in both tithing and church attendance. By simply making giving available on your congregation's smartphones (connected in real time to your church's website and database), we help pastors address the disconnect between the church and younger, tech-savvy generations.

Engagement is the key to community. In our fast-paced culture, mobile technology is essential to staying connected with people in your church. When you are accessible from their pockets, you open up communication with your members and allow them to give you a gift or connect with you anytime. Mobile adoption is the secret to engagement, and we have the tools to ensure your success.

If you're interested in learning more about how you can keep your church engaged and giving, visit [echurch.com](http://echurch.com).

## ABOUT TOBIN PERRY

Tobin Perry has served as a writer and editor for Saddleback Church, the North American Mission Board, and the International Mission Board, where he has frequently focused on church leadership issues. He has also served as the lead pastor of a church in Southern Indiana. He has written for numerous publications, including *Christianity Today*, *HomeLife*, *ParentLife*, *Baptist Press*, and *On Mission Magazine*, and has ghostwritten for a number of leading Christian ministry leaders. A graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Tobin lives with his wife and three children in Evansville, Indiana. For more information about Tobin, visit [www.tobinperry.com](http://www.tobinperry.com).

All of the first-person pronouns in this book are his.

## YOUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY UNLEASHED

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*Letting God use your unique church in His unique way*

When I was in college, I loved a good road trip. Grab a few friends, toss a few clothes in the bag (maybe), pick up some snacks, and take off for a strange, new place. The more spontaneous, the better—until trouble came. And I have to be honest: it almost always did. You see, spontaneity sounds great, particularly when you're 20 years old. But when you find yourself out of money, out of gas, and lost on an old country road, it quickly loses its appeal. It's hard to enjoy the freedom of the wide-open road when you're broke, stuck, and wandering aimlessly. Particularly in today's culture, many confuse freedom with spontaneity. But just like on a thrill-seeking road trip, good planning always unleashes and frees us for our best future.

That's certainly true for planning for church growth and legacy. God wants every congregation to make a Kingdom-sized difference in the world around it. Your church was not meant to survive—your church was meant to thrive! Too often, when we ponder about how we want our church to thrive, we focus on what our church isn't. We figure we're too small, too monocultural, or too traditional to impact our community in a meaningful way. So we make every effort we can to change ourselves.

But what if the key to unleashing your church's ministry potential isn't in trying to be something you're not but in embracing who you are and developing a growth and legacy plan around that? What if you currently have everything you need to be the church God has called you to be? How could that change the future of your church?

Planning for the future growth and legacy of your church isn't much different than preparing for a great road trip. Most of the same steps apply.

1. **You need to know where you're at.** Every church is unique. You'll never figure out where you're going until you determine who you are. Basic discovery work on the makeup of your church and the makeup of the surrounding community is critical.
2. **You need to know where you're going.** You need to agree upon the preferred future of your church. That's the destination everyone is moving toward. That's your vision.
3. **You need to know how to get from your present location to your future destination.** This is where you answer the question of what your church will do to fulfill the vision mentioned earlier. It will include developing a mission statement and thinking through a ministry strategy.
4. **You have to determine the cost.** Every dream, every vision has a cost to fulfill it. You have to count the cost before embarking on any journey. Your church's journey to growth and a legacy that matters is no different.

The Church is God's Plan A to transform the world. And as Peter reminds us, "His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Yes, those words apply to individuals, but Peter was writing to churches when he penned them. Your church has everything it needs to be what God has called it to be.

***It's simply time to unleash what God has already provided!***

## WHY DO WE NEED A MAP?

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*Don't leave home without one!*

Over the last decade and a half, the paper map has become an artifact of history, something you'll soon see in a museum rather than your house. Sure, you can still buy them in a few places, but most people rarely use them for their original purpose—to get from point A to point B. We have smartphones and GPS units for that now.

I, for one, am glad. Being able to use a map is a skill I never obtained. Once, during college, I took a road trip from Columbia, Missouri, to Chicago with my roommate. We had a 45-minute debate on how to read a map, in which I insisted that the only proper way to read a map is to turn it as you make turns on the road. This led to disastrous results. (We ended up in Wisconsin rather than Chicago.)

Thanks to digital maps, these kinds of detours rarely happen anymore. (Yet, I'll be honest, even Siri hasn't cured my ability to get lost.) No matter what your map of choice has become in recent years—whether it's your smartphone, your laptop, a GPS unit, or the dinosaur known as a paper map—you can't take a successful road trip without one. Maps help you get where you want to go, effectively and efficiently.

For churches, developing a plan for growth is just as important. Just like you can't imagine taking off for a place you've never been without a map in your hand, a church shouldn't consider moving forward toward a future of growth without a map for how to get there.

As a leader, you have a choice. You can choose to go with the flow, serve your congregation, and try to reach your community as opportunities unveil themselves. For many Jesus-honoring ministers throughout the generations, that has been the answer.

But nothing will unleash the hidden ministry potential of your church quite like having a plan for moving forward.

“Churches can experience a level of success without a plan, but those who invest the time and resources into developing a specific strategy and plan can achieve success at a much quicker pace,” writes Patricia Lotich, who helps to walk churches through strategic planning processes.

In fact, your church needs a plan for growth much like weary travelers need a map on a long road trip. For example:

1. **A map will keep the travelers together.** Road trips can be long and frustrating even if travelers know where they are going and how they are going to get there. When they know neither, it's a disaster waiting to happen. The same is true in the church. One reason a church can struggle with unity is that no one knows where it is going. When no clear, compelling plan exists for a church, everyone will work off of their own plans. Disunity is then inevitable. With a plan, the church can move forward together. Does a plan guarantee unity? Of course not. Plans—even good, well-thought-out, Jesus-honoring plans—can cause disunity for a time. But, as a general rule, plans (particularly well-communicated ones) lead to unity.
2. **A map provides hope during the long, frustrating parts of the journey.** Every experienced traveler knows tough times will come along the road. Tires go flat in less-than-desirable places. Kids vomit without warning. Long stretches without potty stops are likely inevitable. But if you know where you are, where you're going, and how you'll get there, the stress is easier to bear. The same is true with a ministry plan. Every church has rough spots that come along the way. A pastor resigns unexpectedly. A key giver moves away. A new ministry venture flops. Being able to look at a plan during these times and make necessary adjustments helps remind the congregation how to move forward even when it's tough.
3. **A map provides a quick view of how far you've come.** At the end of a long, hard day of traveling, a map is a great reminder of where you've been and provides a great opportunity to celebrate your success. Any difficult journey can be made easier with a healthy dose of celebration. Any good growth plan will allow you to measure your church's movement toward your objectives. That will allow you opportunities to celebrate “wins” with your congregation on a regular basis.

So you need a map? But how do you make one? That's what the rest of this ebook explains.

## WHERE ARE WE?

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*Determining the starting point for achieving your vision*

Few things disorient you more than not knowing where you're at. It's really the definition of being lost, right? I get lost often when I drive. In fact, I get lost so often that when I'm driving my eldest son somewhere and am taking longer than he expects, he invariably asks, "Dad, do you know where you're at?"

As frustrating as it is to be a driver and not know where you're at, it's even more difficult to be a passenger. That's what it's like for many in our churches. You can't have a good idea of where you're going until you know where you're coming from.

Every church starts from somewhere unique. God doesn't do anything on a conveyor belt. No two snowflakes are alike. No two people are alike. No two churches are alike. Uniformity isn't how God works.

That's why the starting point for discovering your church's unique growth and legacy plan begins by discovering who you are.

You'll find tons of great ministry models for your church to embrace. Ministry models aren't bad. As long as you don't let go of what makes your church unique, learning from other models will only enhance what God wants to do through your church.

I'll never forget a pastor I met about 10 years ago named Tommy. He lived and breathed hip-hop culture. He was a hip-hop artist along with being a pastor. Multiple other leaders in the church also came out of that culture. Yet the church had adopted Saddleback Church's Purpose Driven ministry model. They organized the church around Saddleback's five purposes. The church even went through the 40 Days of Purpose spiritual growth campaign. Yet they unmistakably put their own stamp on the purposes and the campaign.

Pastor Tommy understood where his church was—and he let that impact everything from how it does ministry to its worship style to how it makes disciples for Jesus.



Here are some of the key questions to ask yourself as you determine where you are now.

- 1. What's the general makeup of your church body?** Look at everything from racial makeup to primary language makeup to generational makeup. Demographics will be your friend in this process. The larger your church, the more difficult this will be. Your numbers don't have to be perfect. Good educated guesses will work. Just be honest. This isn't a study in what you hope your church looks like. It's a study in what your church really is. You may want your church to be multicultural, but if 95 percent of your church body comes from one racial group, you're not. The more accurate you are in this part of the process, the more helpful it will be to creating a vision statement.
- 2. What kinds of spiritual gifts, talents, and experiences do the people of your congregation have?** It's highly likely your church has more ministry potential than you can imagine. If your church uses any kind of spiritual gifts assessment that the church tracks (and I hope you do), this shouldn't be hard. If not, maybe this is time to start doing so. Make sure you're looking at more than spiritual gifts, though. You want to catalog talents, experience, and professions as well. If you notice a higher proportion than expected of something, take note of it. For example, an abundance of teachers in your church may show untapped potential for your children's ministry or outreach into your local public schools.
- 3. Historically, how has your church described itself to the community—or more importantly, how has the community described you?** Most churches that have been around awhile are known for something in their communities—internally and externally. Are you a friendly church? Are you a church that cares about the homeless? Are you an evangelistic church?

How your church has historically understood itself may or may not be accurate, but it's critical to understand. Your church's understanding of itself is hard to change. Even if the view is inaccurate, you need to put it on the table as you're thinking through your mission, vision, and strategy. Your community's understanding of your church is also critical. It's equally tough to change.

- 4. Who is your pastor?** Like it or not, a church's pastor determines much about who the church is likely to reach. Generally speaking, pastors best reach people their age or 10 years younger. Your pastor's ethnic, racial, and educational backgrounds also play a part in who your church will best reach. Also, factor in (to a lesser degree) the background of other members of your pastoral team, particularly those with public roles like teaching pastors and worship leaders.
- 5. What are some of your church's signature ministries?** Signature ministries are ones that your church is known for and that have been particularly fruitful for you in the past. Maybe it's your Sunday School or small group ministry. Maybe it's your children's ministry or youth ministry. Maybe it's an outreach ministry to the homeless in your community. Maybe it's an after-school ministry. Ask yourself this question: "If we

were to close down every ministry in our church, which one would be the last (or the last few) to go?” Those are probably your church’s signature ministries. Clearly understanding what these ministries are will tell you much about how your church generally makes disciples. As you’ll see, that’s an important part of this process.

6. **What has your church done that has been fruitful (particularly in recent years)?** This is connected to the previous question. The answer may be the same, but this will broaden your view. As you look into your church’s fruitfulness, you may notice that preaching pops up over and over again. You may notice a specific event, like a Thanksgiving outreach or a Christmas cantata. Fruitfulness can be measured in many ways, but it will generally be connected in some way to the making of disciples.
7. **What is the general makeup of your community?** These demographics should be much easier to find than ones on your church body. You’ll certainly want to know the basics that can be found in a U.S. Census search—such as racial/ethnic breakdown, age breakdown, socio-economic status, etc. It’ll be nice to know the most significant industries and employers in the community, too. Knowing key historical markers and understanding historical trends will also be helpful.

Try to write down as much of this information as possible. You want this available for whatever team you have that’s going to think through your vision and mission statement. Spend some time prayerfully thinking through what all of this means for your church moving forward.

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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*Developing God's vision for your church's future*

Let's face it. When it comes to road trips, destinations are the key. It's why, when you're headed to some sunny paradise, you can deal with getting stranded on the side of the road, a few wrong turns, and boring stretches of cornfields in the middle of nowhere. You can endure just about anything if you know you're getting closer to a prime destination.

That's the power of vision. Your vision for your church's future should empower your congregation to push past troubles. You've heard the often-quoted verse, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). But the opposite is also true: *where there is vision, people thrive.*

George Barna once surveyed a group of pastors and discovered that while 90 percent could articulate a basic definition of ministry, only two percent could describe their own vision for their church.

*If most pastors don't know where God is leading the church, why are we surprised that most lay people don't know either?*

## WHAT IS VISION?

Simply put, vision is God's dream for your church. It's what you believe God wants to do through your church. In [\*Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders\*](#), Aubrey Malphurs calls vision the "clear, challenging picture of the future of the ministry, as you believe that it can and must be."

Your vision presents a different reality of your church and all it touches—and boldly declares that by God's grace, it will happen.

A vision statement, for example, can't simply describe the current reality of a church. *Instead, your vision describes the destination. It's what you believe God will bring to pass.*

Your vision statement should describe the future with a picture of where the church is going. *Show, don't just tell.* Think of Revelation 21–22, where God provides a vision of humanity's future. It's full of images, particularly the crystal-clear image of the City of God, the new Jerusalem. Those two chapters are full of colorful descriptions. Whether you're listening to the passage or reading it, you can't help but see the City of God. For example, the Apostle John writes: "The City shimmered like a precious gem, light-filled, pulsing light" (Rev. 21:11, MSG). That's showing rather than telling! The entire passage reeks of vision—from the description of God wiping away tears, to the description of God "moving into the neighborhood" (MSG). The Apostle John is telling generations of Jesus-followers what their future destiny is. He doesn't just want you to read it. He wants the words to jump off the page and grab you.

And, boy, do they! *That's what real, compelling vision does.*

## HOW DO YOU PUT TOGETHER A VISION STATEMENT?

- 1. Take an honest look at the current state of your church and community.** This goes back to what was mentioned in the "Where Are We?" section. You need to take into consideration everything you learned about your church and your community. Above every other piece of this process, your vision must be your own. No two churches have the same history, same people, or same leaders. They can't have the same vision either. Spend some time thinking and praying through the information you've gathered.
- 2. Spend time in prayer.** Since only God can impart vision to church leaders, you must spend time with Him to hear what He is saying to you. Ask God to reveal to you His vision for the church's future. Ask Him to let you see the community as He sees it.
- 3. Let the pastor draft the vision statement.** The church's lead pastor must take primary responsibility for establishing the vision of the church, even though other leaders—and even the congregation as a whole—should speak into it at a later time. Vision is a leadership function and a leadership tool. Unless the pastor leads the vision, he cannot lead the way to its completion.

Presbyterian clergyman Theodore Hesburgh described the need for leaders to articulate vision: "The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet."

- 4. Gather key leaders of the church.** Who participates in forming the vision of the church will depend largely on your church's view of leadership—and ultimately its ecclesiology. Nothing will divide a church faster than competing visions of its future. Discuss the pastor's draft together in a spirit of humility. Make suggestions. Let the pastor drive the vision, but let him seek the counsel of other church leaders. All of the leaders need to get on the same page. Again, depending upon your ecclesiology and

your own specific situation, you'll want to get feedback from the broader congregation as well.

5. **Share the vision. Preach the vision.** Live the vision. The church leaders must then own the vision. You need to know it backwards and forwards and be ready to share it frequently. Teach it. Preach it. But most of all, live it. Show your congregation what happens when God works the vision out for your life. Your vision will be caught far more easily than it is taught.

Here's the hard part about pastoral vision. If you don't own this, it's hard to believe the rest of this growth plan will work. Spend some time. Seek God. Talk to your people. Live in this stage for as long as necessary. Then, when you've got your vision down, bring it to life by developing a mission statement and strategy.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

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*Creating a mission statement and strategy  
that moves your church forward*

I'll never forget Walnut Ridge, Arkansas. But then again, I've never been to Walnut Ridge, Arkansas. Regardless, the town still haunts me to this day—18 years after I first passed it on the highway. During a college road trip from Columbia, Missouri, to Searcy, Arkansas, a friend and I stopped off at a gas station along the way late in the evening. We were deep into a very serious discussion that mattered very little. We were so focused on our topic that neither of us noticed that when he left the gas station parking lot, my friend turned back and went the same direction we had come. It took us 45 minutes to realize what we had done. And who knows how long it would have taken us if we had not noticed a sign for Walnut Ridge? You see, we had seen the sign two hours earlier. At first, it was creepy. Why were we now seeing signs for a town we had driven through two hours earlier?

Then it hit us: We were going the wrong way.

Destinations are great. They can give you hope in the midst of a tough journey. Yet you have to know how to get to your destination. For church leaders developing a growth and legacy plan, that means you need a mission statement and a strategy to get there.

## THE EASY PART

The best part about brainstorming a mission statement for your church is Jesus already gives us the outline. For much of its history, the Great Commission has been the marching orders of the Church. In Matthew 28:19–20, in his last words before going back to the Father, Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV).

Jesus gives us the mission of the Church right here. We're called to *make disciples* and teach them what it means to be Jesus-followers. Despite the universal nature of Jesus' Great Commission, every local church does it differently. We may all *make disciples*. But what a disciple looks like means something different to all of us.

## HOW DO YOU DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT?

- 1. Start by reviewing where you've been.** The steps I've outlined previously have been in a particular order for a reason. Some will disagree with that order. Many like to create a mission statement before a vision statement. I want to consider where a church is going before describing how they'll get there. Take a look back at what makes your church unique (*Where Are We?*) and your vision statement (*Where Are We Going?*). Your mission statement and strategy is meant to bridge the gap between the two.
- 2. Define what it means to be a disciple in your church tradition and your ministry context.** You'll want to do this as a ministry or leadership team. Unlike the vision, which has to be owned so completely by the leader, the mission of the church should be a group project from beginning to end. This is a terrific whiteboard project. Read the vision aloud. Have your team discuss and name the characteristics of a disciple.
- 3. Describe what the church needs to do to make the kind of disciples that will lead to the fulfillment of your vision.** Do this in a general manner. This isn't a place to name every ministry of your church. Think through the generally accepted functions of the church—worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. What part do they have to play in making disciples in your context?
- 4. Write down a succinct statement of what it means to make disciples for your church.** Write the statement as tightly as possible. Use active (and usually imperative) verbs—*make disciples, share Christ, serve our community, love people*, etc. You're trying to describe what the church does, not what it believes. Make sure the statement reflects the uniqueness of your church. Keep editing it until you've described your mission as well as you can in as few words as possible.
- 5. Make sure anyone who serves in leadership—including yourself—understands and attempts to live out the mission of the church.** The number one job description for every leader in your church is to model the mission. If the mission isn't important enough to your leaders, there's no way it is important enough for the rest of your congregation. Make sure your leaders understand this. Don't become legalistic about it, but be clear that it's an expectation for everyone.
- 6. Measure your mission. You measure what matters to your church.** To make your mission a critical part of the life of your church, find some metrics that will measure it. They can be as simple as the percentage of people in small groups, or the number of people coming to faith in Christ,

etc. Once you determine your metrics, regularly update your church on how you're doing on them. Let them know how well you're doing in fulfilling your mission. Celebrate milestones. Put a scoreboard up in your church office. Do whatever it takes to make sure everyone knows that what's in your mission is important enough to measure.

## DEVELOP A STRATEGY

I won't go into as much detail with this, because it requires more explanation. But if you're going to get from where you are at now to where you believe God is calling your church, you'll need more than a mission statement. You'll need a strategy. You need to take the individual pieces of your mission statement—*share Christ, love the community, etc.*— and describe exactly how you'll do that. Think in terms of process. When someone comes into your church, becomes a follower of Jesus, and is ready to grow as a disciple, how do you help them get there?

Books like [\*The Purpose Driven Church\*](#) by Rick Warren, [\*Advanced Strategic Planning\*](#) by Aubrey Malphurs, and [\*Simple Church\*](#) by Thom Rainer can give you a good start.



## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

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*Counting your cost and helping your church to do the same*

Your vision isn't cheap. It shouldn't be cheap. Everything that matters in life costs something—whether it's time, money, or talent. Ministry is no exception. Bill Hybels writes in *Courageous Leadership*, “Be as theological as you want to be, but the church will never reach her full redemptive potential until a river of financial sources starts flowing in her direction. . . . it is the leader's job to create that river.”

How do you create this river of financial sources?

- 1. Determine how much your vision will cost.** Be bold with your numbers. Don't start with how much budget you have. Start with where God wants to lead your church. Expect generosity from your people—not stinginess. As you built your strategy out, you should have been specific in describing what it will take to complete your vision. It's time to connect the activities, ministries, and strategies you've developed to financial costs (and frankly, to human and time costs as well).
- 2. Connect the long-term completion of your mission to the generosity of the church body.** Even before the church fully agrees to go along with the vision and mission that leadership has developed, let them know there is a price tag to it. If it's going to cost significantly more than your current level of giving, give the congregation some general numbers. Your church deserves to know the cost beforehand. Then, on a regular basis, help them see the connection between their generosity and the completion of the church's vision.
- 3. Help your people give in a way that is both culturally appropriate and readily available at all times.** Do you know any other organization or business that asks people regularly to drop money in a plate? Of course not. It's not just a 1950s model for giving—it's an 1850s model! Most of your congregation no longer sits down and fills out a check when paying their water bill or their mortgage. And they most certainly don't have to hand deliver their money to the water company.

*Inspiring generosity starts with simplicity.* The easier you make giving for your congregation, the more likely people will be to give. For today's churchgoers, mobile giving is the way to do this. Your members manage most of their finances on their mobile phones. Their ability to express generosity toward the church—and help you achieve your vision for the church—shouldn't be any different.

Mobile giving through options such as [custom mobile apps from echurch](#), which are powered by Pushpay's mobile giving platform, can provide this kind of solution for your congregation. It can help to remove some of the most significant barriers to generosity in your church, like not having cash or checks on hand.

- 4. Teach regularly about the biblical priority of giving.** Your congregation needs to know that generosity isn't just something they do to fulfill the spending needs of the church. The Bible teaches us to be generous—and, more specifically, generous through our local church. Several times a year, make sure you're communicating the need for generosity from the pulpit. Ask small group leaders and Sunday School teachers to do the same.

## BE PREPARED FOR GOD'S SPIRIT

God stands ready and willing to unleash the growth and legacy of your church. But let's be clear: planning for growth won't make it happen. You can have the best vision statement, the best mission statement, and the most airtight strategy possible, but you can't make people come to your church. If you can make your vision come true on your own, toss it out. It's not worth the paper it's printed on.

The Church will always need the Spirit of God to go before her and to move within her in order to unleash her best upon the world. Jesus reminds us in John 3:8, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (NIV).

You can't predict God's Spirit. You can't plan when the Spirit will come your way. You can only be prepared when He does. You can't predict the coming of wind, but if you put a sail on your boat, you'll be ready when it comes. That's what planning does. It won't make growth happen. But good, biblical planning will help you be prepared when the Holy Spirit comes.

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