

9 Things You Can Learn from Skipping Out on Your Church This Sunday

When was the last time you took team members from your church to visit another church? Whether it's across town or across the country, a well-planned visit to another church can make an impact on your team like nothing else. Here are some reasons I think you should "get outta here!" and go to another church soon!

- **Conference Speakers Oversimplify //** I coach and speak at conferences, and I'm confessing that everyone who speaks in those contexts makes it sound way easier than it actually is. The reality is that leading a growing, thriving church is a lot of hard work. Church leadership conferences present a sanitized and safe version of what it's like to lead. When you see a church on a "normal" Sunday, it breeds hope because everything won't be as perfect as when they host the leadership conference. An average weekend at a thriving church is what your team needs to benchmark against.
- **New Contexts Give You New Insights //** Just going to somewhere new gives you insights into what it's like to lead at home. Sometimes this isn't even at the church ... just "getting out of Dodge" can help your team gain fresh insights on new directions for your church.
- **Peer Relationships //** Leading in a local church can be a lonely task at times. It's true that relationships are at the core of what we do, but often we're building relationships with people who we need something from, such as donors or volunteers. It's a strange dynamic. Church leaders need peer relationships with people who serve in similar roles. Having someone to call when you face an issue could be the factor that accelerates your leadership. A person to talk with when you're bummed about something at your church could help you keep pushing through until breakthrough.
- **Life Goes on At Home //** A few years ago, our leadership team had the privilege of visiting one of the fastest growing churches in the country. It was a great weekend of visiting campuses and interacting with inspiring leaders ... but if I was honest, I was a little nervous about what would happen with all of us of gone. It turned out to be a smooth weekend and everything went off without a hitch! Going away means handing off tasks to other people, forcing staff to prepare their teams and release the ministry. It also shows them that the ministry is larger than they are.
- **Things Are Kind of the Same //** Over the years I've had the privilege of visiting dozens of churches across North America. In each of these contexts leaders are proud to tell you what's unique about the community they are reaching. They are clear on how their community is unlike any other in the country, maybe the world! Although it may be true, one of the things I've noticed is how similar the communities we serve are. The global dominant culture means that all of our communities have the same stores and restaurants ... people listen to similar music ... and they are talking about similar issues. This should be an encouragement for church leaders to borrow and adapt ideas from

churches in other communities. I sometimes think we over-emphasize our ability to dissect our local culture and that hinders us from applying lessons from other churches.

- **The Journey is Half the Fun //** Friendships form during shared experiences. Your closest friends are people who you have had a bunch of experiences with. When you travel with other people, you are building a bunch of shared experiences ... you're having fun together! So many times on these trips it's been the late-night conversations over a plate of nachos that have stuck with me. There's something about team members seeing leaders in a casual setting that draws the whole team together. The process of getting there isn't a hassle ... it's the point!
- **Distance Makes The Heart Grow Fonder //** Even when I've visited the most compelling "name brand" churches, I still come home thankful that I get to serve where I do. There are always aspects of other ministries that I wish we could just "copy and paste," but on the whole I come home to our community with a deep thankfulness that I get to do this ... with these people. The grass is green where you water it. Visiting other churches gives me a deeper sense of the mission God has called our church to.
- **Dig into the Details //** You can read about the "big concepts" and "strategies" of thriving churches. In fact, you will probably understand them before you arrive. But the difference between reality and what's written in a book or on a blog is a series of very small details. The vision is in the details. It's how the church you're visiting executes its vision that creates traction. Look for the details.
- **Worship ... Without Run Sheets! //** Finally, as church leaders we spend a lot of time serving other people. When you are visiting another church, you can participate ... like a normal person, not having to worry about what's coming up next or if the video fired correctly or any other details. It's sad, but sometimes we have to get far away from our context to get this opportunity.

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