

This is the Reinventing Church Podcast. I'm Derek Sanford, the pastor of Grace Church on the shores of Lake Erie in Pennsylvania. And we're chronicling our journey from a successful megachurch built on an attractional church growth model to a missional multiplication model where we're empowering every Christian to live out their calling in the world. I'm here with my co-host, Danielle Hartland.

In today's episode, we're going to cover why we sing songs that come out of churches that we might not totally agree with. How to know when it's time to reinvent your church and how to lead your church through a goal setting process if you're finding that this is your time to do that. So I thought I didn't realize I thought of today's question and then I realized, oh no, we have a thread. And I didn't mean to, but I actually want your opinion on this, and I think it'll help people know you a little bit better.

Okay.

Have you seen the NFL's promo reel?

No.

Oh, you haven't?

No.

Darn it. Shoot. I should play it. Well, some people are upset.

Okay.

Because a certain person pops up in the promo over

Taylor Swift.

Yes.

Oh, so I did hear about this. Oh, you heard about it? I haven't seen it.

Totally. I, your thoughts on it? I mean, you don't even have to know the aesthetic, just your thoughts on the fact that people are mad about it. Let's have that thought.

My question is, who's Matt? Is this faux outrage or is

This, it might be, to be fair,

Because this happens all the time, you realize this. This is the new way

Of

Drumming up

Promotional

Businesses to create a whole group of people that are outraged by it. And then you're pushing it back against the outrage. But I also saw a report that Travis Kelsey and Taylor Swift have their breakup date already scheduled to fit into the NFL schedule, so it fits the perfect promotional.

God bless 'em if they do. I'm excited to see how the whole thing shakes out.

So I'm huge. So here, I'm a huge football fan,

Right?

I'm a huge NFL fan. I'm a huge college football fan. I'm a huge fantasy football fan. And so I am in all those kind of worlds. And here's what I would say. The NFL is a business. Taylor Swift's music is a business. They are brilliantly using their cross-promotional opportunities to help one another out. And I think it's just fine.

I do too. I think it's helping both of them,

Right?

One more than the other, in my opinion. None of, but

Yeah. Wait, which one?

I think it's helping the NF NFL more than it's helping Taylor,

Do you really?

Didn't his Jersey sales and somebody else's jersey sales and somebody else's and else's go up like 5000% and stuff.

Can her sales go up anymore?

Well, that's true. I mean, I don't know if they can.

I don't think they can. And he's showing up at all these tours around the world and it's causing a TV show now. All kinds of commercial success

For her. Yeah, that's true. It's true. Yeah. Her people need the love story.

Right? Right.

Maybe his people do too. Love is real, guys. Love exists. Okay. It's with us.

Listen, we talked last time about designing love into everything, and they're designing love into the NFL.

Yeah, they are. Great. All right. That makes me feel better. Wow. Okay. Thanks for indulging that. We will not talk about Taylor Swift next week. That was a complete accident.

I'm outraged that you talk about Taylor Swift.

Not a swifty at

All. Two episodes in a row. I dunno. Danielle, are you?

No, I'm not. I appreciate either her or her team.

I mean, they're

Brilliant geniuses. I very much appreciate what they're doing just from a marketing standpoint and cultural standpoint. But I mean, I don't know if, I think she's, I'm afraid we're going to go reverse viral if I say I don't think she's that good of a singer. Okay. But if she is,

Please make us go reverse wire,

Reverse wire. But whatever you just said, that's what we're doing. We're rage baiting or whatever. Exactly. Rage bait, the swifties. Okay. Anyway. Alright. So that's another,

Because I'm sure they're big on pastor podcasts, Swifties, they're all over. I

Think they have some sort of thing that finds the word. I dunno, I, no idea. Alright, let's move on. So thanks for indulging that. So we're going to move on to from the pastor's inbox, my favorite segment.

You're right.

I just feel like it's cathartic for you, which makes me happy. And again, just a reminder, we want this to be helpful. We're not trying to dox anybody or do anything weird, but you spend time and others of us spend time crafting answers to these messages. And hopefully it'll help. It'll be helpful.

And I want to jump on that and just say, yeah, this is not to put down any of these questions. I really like questions that challenge what we do. Some of them are better than others because some of them are just angry or bitter or come out of an unhealthy place. But when they, all of the ones that we're talking about come out of a healthy place and well, we may make fun of a couple along

The way, we probably will, but it's not making em the person, it's just No,

No. Yeah, it's this whole industry of responding to difficult questions. But I've always found it super helpful in forcing me to process

That's good.

Why we do certain things or why we believe certain things. And so in that way, it's incredibly helpful. And that's what my hope is for this segment, that it'll be helpful to others as

Well. That's great. So today, here it is in a nutshell, why do we sing songs from churches that we don't agree with theologically by using their songs? Aren't we saying that we support the church or pastor who preaches Prosperity Gospel has an immoral track record, whatever it might be, believes angel feathers are floating from the ceiling, grave sucking, whatever. Yeah. So what's the deal with that? Why do we feel okay with that?

Okay.

And do we feel okay with that?

Right. So we generally do use songs from kind of across the spectrum of the Christian worship world at this point. And so the specific churches, I won't just call 'em out here, I mean the specific churches in question are churches like Hillsong or Bethel or Elevation. There's a few churches where they've had some issues along the way, either in their pastoral leadership or again, the feathers floating from the ceiling is a Bethel

Thing. Remember that?

So those are the kinds of churches that this person's talking about. And we generally do use some songs from those churches. The original email actually says Churches led by false teachers.

Oh, wow.

And so one of the things that I responded to when I respond to these kinds of emails, especially if it includes that phrase, is that this word false teacher, it kind of puts up a red flag in my mind these days because I think it's used way too broadly.

I think people use that word. I've been called a false teacher more times than I know. And the people are using that term to talk about someone that they disagree with theologically on some point of theology. And that's not how the Bible defines a false teacher. And so really the first part of my response to this particular email or these set of emails is to just define a false teacher. So in Matthew seven, Jesus talks about false teachers being someone not who is a little bit off in their theology or someone that we disagree with about a single point of doctrine or a preacher of a church that we don't

Like

Or get jealous of or whatever it may be. He described a false teacher in Matthew seven as a wolf in sheep's clothing intent on destroying the church. And so false teachers, according to Jesus, are not good people at all. They're not people who are passionate about the gospel, but mistaken on a certain point of doctrine. They're people driven by sinister motives to take down. They want the destruction of the church. And most of the churches and pastors in question here, I would not apply that criteria to,

Well, I don't want to put you on the spot. You can say no, but can you think of in recent history someone that you would, or maybe far a long time ago would be safer? What would be a historical person that did that?

Oh yeah. You're putting me on the

Spot. I can't think of anyone right now. Sorry. Best host ever.

Keep going. But I mean there certainly have been false teachers, and I would say I think like cult leaders or people,

Okay, that's a good category

Who come in and are using the language of Christianity, but are not leaning on the teachings or the ways of Jesus

That's

In any respect. And then leading a whole group of people to their destruction. So the David Koresh and the Jones, the drink, the Kool-Aid people and all that. So I think those are false teachers that are set on destruction. But I think for these where it's a gospel forward thing, but there's also these weird element, maybe it's a little bit too prosperity ish, and it would certainly be outside of our lane of theology. I think Paul faces a similar thing in Philippians one where he talks about he's in a prison cell and he's talking about these other leaders, spiritual leaders who are kind of profiting from him being in prison.

And he says it this way in Philippians one, it's true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry. So there's bad motivations. They preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing that they can stir up trouble, but then his conclusions. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives are true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. And so it's a very interesting kind of angle that Paul takes. And he's basically saying when it comes to other pastors or ministries, as long as the gospel's being preached that good will come of it and Christ will be glorified. And I almost think that should be our tact in those cases. Anyway. That's good. Let's get to the music though. The songs should we sing songs from these churches that we disagree with theologically regardless of the false teaching thing? So here's some of the responses I gave. One of them is to assure these folks that this is their concern, that we have one of our pastors who has historically screened our songs for theological accuracy. And so we still do have a person that does that on our staff.

That's right in our process.

Exactly. Before we introduce a new song, this is in there. So it's not a perfect method, but there is a check and I think people are relieved. And I would just encourage church leaders, if you don't have that person, that's a good simple step that you can take to just go to your worship folks before you introduce new songs, please run the lyrics by me or one of our people on our staff.

And I would say too, not, not trustworthy, but if it is a worship pastor, have the worship pastor give it to another pastor. It's hard when you're close to it.

Yeah, you love a song so much and sometimes you can't see it super clearly. And here's the kind of the meat of the response that I gave this person, that I really think that screening individual songs is much more important and quite frankly, doable or achievable than trying to fully evaluate the source of every song. What church did it come from? What pastor is it attached to? That sort of thing. So even if you deemed that we'll just use Hillsong as Hillsong generally, or one of the pastors there specifically was doctrinally in some sort of error on some particular subject. That doesn't mean that an individual songwriter in that church was so influenced by that place that it led them into falsehood in the song itself. So it would get so tough if you had to dig into the sources of the personal lives and the personal beliefs, beliefs of every person that wrote every song. And I think of, you asked about historical examples, Horatio staffer who famously wrote as well with my soul, toward the end of his life, he became much more of a universalist than a Christian and some other kind of unbiblical views snuck in there. And it's like, should we cancel all of those great songs that he had? Because he kind of went off the deep end on a couple of points of theology,

We could wipe out our whole hymnal.

Oh my gosh,

If we got onto that track.

Good. So really thinking about let's evaluate each song on its own biblical merit, and then regardless of where those songs came from, if that song is theologically sound, think about it. The main goal of all worship songs is just to help us to internalize the truths of the scriptures deep into our souls. And music does that in a different way than other things do that. And so whether it's Hillsong or Bethel Elevation or whatever, I think about just some songs, this, I believe that song, the Creed, it's based entirely on the Apostles creed. It communicates these essential truths of Christianity, the Trinity, the resurrection. Oh, praise the name, that great song I am who you say I am. I just think about songs that are kind of coming out of some of these places and you go, man, there's deep, spiritual biblical truth as you evaluate each song on its own merit. And so that was kind of the response that I gave to this, is that we evaluate individual songs much more than we evaluate now. Certainly if an entire church or entire whatever went off the deep end, really off the deep end,

It would probably cause us to pause and go, should we be singing the songs that have come out of that movement? But I don't think any of these qualify fall into that.

Yeah. Great. Thanks. That's awesome. So we're happy to have Steven Hay joining us today before Steven came on team here at Grace during the height of the most recent global pandemic, most recent, well, I don't know when this is going to air. We can have another one sweat already. Yeah, I know. I've been listening much stuff. Spanish flu.

I heard that's coming. Anyway,

Keep going. You're famously Puppeting our kids' ministry puppet for two years. No one knowing who you were, what your face looked like. We thought you were like a camel. Yeah. But before all that, you were a senior pastor for

What? An introduction.

I know. This is my specialty.

Before puppeteer,

Before you were a puppeteer for us

For a career

Change.

Yeah. Like a decade. You're a senior pastor of a smaller size church in upstate New York.

I was,

Yeah.

Yeah.

And you were part of our whole reinventing church process at Grace. So yeah,

The privilege of being on that team.

Yeah, it was awesome to have you.

It's good to have you.

Yeah,

Yeah. Good to be here.

Great. So great. It's like we haven't seen each other in ages.

I know. I was coming on. Are we supposed to pretend we don't know each other?

Steven's been on a journey. Blessing's. Terrible. Right. Alright, well let's start with stories. Let's start with why don't you start with your story of when you were in this process of

Knowing. Yeah. So speaking of Covid, we were kind of toward the end of 2021 and I think probably Mistily had a vision group come in and just talk about, let's think about the vision. It wasn't a great time to think about vision. We were kind of thinking about survival at that point. But so we started to think about the future, and I remember that was one of the first times that it actually came up in public where people were saying, you know what the phrase that I remember is flip the funnel. We want to flip the funnel. And so that we all know this funnel of the Attractional Church funnel that says we want to invite people in through this wide open top. And then we get them connected and then we get them serving as the funnel kind of goes down. And what if we flip to the funnel and we started smaller and then let the church multiply out. And so we're having all these conversations, I had just turned 50, I'm thinking about my own future and mortality. You think about your mortality when you turn 50, a little bit more than normal.

And I've been at Grace for almost 30 years and which is wild. And the thought of,
So you're basically dad is what I hearing,

I'm on death's doorstep, let's put it that way. Trying. And we've always operated this, Danielle. I mean, we've always operated with vision cycles where we'd go in a three to five year cycle. What's the new vision? What's the new, well, as we started talking about that, this felt like more than that, it felt like more than just a, Hey, what are the next couple of initiatives that we want to tackle as a church? And that's what we had done really my whole tenure of 30 years. This felt more like a remodel, a redo, a restructuring of how we approach church. And I still remember, because it's haunted me ever since, my exact phrase in that meeting, as we ended, I said, that's a job for the next guy.

You did say that

That's a job for the next guy. So I was like, I'm going to ride out my tenure here however many years God gives me, and the next person can figure out how to flip the funnel because all I've ever known is the church growth attractional model. That's the system I came up with. That's all what all my training is in. I would go away to the conferences every year. I was in coaching networks that this is what I know, this is how I know how I to do church. And so that's a job for the next guy was how that all expressed itself. And here we are in a podcast talking about reinventing church, which means that God did not release me to that.

No,

That was not the final word, let's put it that way.

And so I went through a lot of just wrestling with God about what do I do? Is this really a job for the next guy? And God pressed me and basically said, what if it's a job for you? And what if I'm asking you to really leverage and cash in the trust chips that you've built up in this congregation over 30 years to really do this big renovation to the church that I want you to do. And so that's the process that we're in right now. That's what we're inviting everyone into. And that's kind of my story, my angle at it, looking at a long established church. Grace has been around since 1895 with a series of vision cycles. But to go right now, it seems like this 50-year-old model of megachurch, attractional church growth model has run its cycle. It's served us well, but we need to rethink how the church operates through a missional multiplication lens. And that's the journey we're on.

That's great. Steven, same kind of question, a little bit about your background and anything you want to tell that way?

Yeah, so when I stepped into Wilson, I stepped into 30, 35 average attendance church. So much different from Grace. Average age was probably 65. So they had a vision. I originally came on as a youth pastor and they had a vision that the church would grow through youth. So they just stepped out in faith, raised \$15,000 for that youth pastor for the year, and they had a converted chicken coop, believe

it or not, that they said that the youth pastor could move it too. That's a gift. Gift. What a gift. I love you guys. If you're listed and

Now you've built your own chicken

Coop. I built my own chicken. Yes.

So you could take an intern

Basically. Yeah, high reg. Yeah, perfect. The nanny. So that youth pastor position after about a year and four months became a lead pastor position through a series of circumstances. So at that point, the youth had come, I mean, we had about 40 people in our youth group. It's a small country town of 2,500 people. So that was going well.

We had an evening service that was particularly focused at youth, and that was starting to grow as well. It was actually larger than the Sunday morning service. So there was some neat things that were happening. And then through a series of medical circumstances, the lead pastor at the time, after serving faithfully for 25 years, had to start to step back, retire, resign. He had had a number of strokes. And so they had asked me if I wanted to step in. I had no idea what I was doing. I mean, I was 22 at the time through a series of conversations. I originally said no. Then I just felt like it was where God was moving me. And so I said to the church, I said, I had no idea what I'm doing, but if we can put our hands in the middle together, we'll either know really quickly, so let's give it six months, or we'll look back in five years and have the opportunity to maybe mirror some of the stories of scripture and say, Hey, this only worked because God was in it and we had the privilege after a decade of being in that position to have a growing and most importantly healthy church.

Those are not always synonymous.

Yeah, that's great. So for both of you, whoever wants to go first is fine. How do you know when it's time to reinvent your church? How do you

Know? Yeah. So for me, as I listened to your story, Derek, obviously I've been part of that story as well as you've sort of uncovered that mine was a little bit different because I would say being a part of Grace Church, they weren't necessarily in a moment of crisis. You could, for all intents and purposes, rode off into the sunset. I'm always curious what you were going to be riding on. I think I've never asked that question, but Tesla, Tesla, Tesla, cyber truck, truck, let's go let, there's one in my neighborhood. I mean, you'd only get so fired at a Tesla. But anyway, you could have, for all intents and purposes, road, so mine wasn't necessarily we're healthy, it was a, we're unhealthy and we really need to identify that. Now when I say that that's not to excuse the beautiful people that belonged to that church. There was just a lack of vision. There was a lack of direction. And so it took a process of identifying the unhealth that existed. That's a little bit of my story. I could go further, but I dunno if you want to jump in there.

I think that's why I think there's such value in having these two different perspectives because sometime there may be church leaders listening to this going, oh man, yeah, I've had this gnawing inside me that things are dysfunctional or things are not quite healthy. Can you talk about maybe some of the things, some of the indicators of dysfunction or unhealth that you came across that made you go, we have to do, so this isn't an option, we have to do something. I have some of those for myself too, but I'd

Love to hear. Yeah, for sure. So when I came over, I mean, I grew up in church my whole life and I had an idea of what a Baptist church looked like. So it was a Baptist church that I moved into. And so the first indicator for me honestly was that they look so different. And by God's grace grew up in a very healthy church. And so it was growing, it was focused on the community, its outreach, discipleship process was fairly robust teaching on Sunday dynamic and accurate. And so there was areas that if I look back on my experience and my current reality, I'm going, there's discrepancy here. I think what's interesting about a church health situation is that sometimes it's really obvious and you're going, this thing's about to blow

up. But sometimes the analogy that I use, sometimes it's like going for a physical. So when you go to the doctors, you might think you're fine, but upon further inspection because actually you have high cholesterol that's not necessarily noticeable on the surface. And so where I was noticing things, I would say people in my congregation were not necessarily noticing those things. So there was really a journey of discovery that we had to go on

Together.

It was, okay, let's all take a step back, take some time and think through the process of are we healthy or are we not? If we can answer the question, no, then what do we need to do in order to get healthy? So there was a number of factors that we looked at in order to identify that health or not.

That's great. Yeah, and I'll talk about a couple of the indicators for me were just things like I think some of the shocking moments for me, and I unfortunately had to be shocked out of my system. You guys have heard me talk a lot about some of the metrics or the data outside in our culture

That's showing that first of all, loads of people are walking away from the Christian faith and walking away specifically of their churches. We're in an age right now called the Great de Churching. Some have titled it and some 40 million people walking away from their faith. And the statistic that got me was to say, if you put together all of the conversions or the growth in the church from the first great awakening, second great awakening, and all of Billy Graham's crusades combined, more people have left the church in the last 25 years than came into the church through all stagger of those

Things.

Staggering. That is crazy.

And so there's part of, it's just like you put up your finger and go, wait a second, what's happening in the church is not doing, even though our church was doing okay, you look around and go, this isn't going to last. Something is off, something is wrong. And so how do we need to rethink what we do? I've said it that churches like ours have gone from being the good guy to being the bad guy in the minds and hearts of lots of people in our country right now. And so it's true that things can feel like they're up and to the right and the nail is still in the

Coffin.

And I look at a couple even of just business examples of this Netflix and Kodak and these places that weren't reading the times and they thought everything was fine and that their core product was impenetrable,

And all of a sudden there were these signs that it wasn't going well that they didn't pay attention to. And it's like, I just don't want us to be that. So for me, that was a big thing. Another one thing that just got my attention was we had someone in our church who is a business leader trying to lead their business in a Christian way. So in every way trying to build it on Christian principles, trying to disciple their employees, trying to care pastor the families of those employees of this company and who came up and said, I am trying to lead this business in a Christian way, and every time I come to church I feel guilty because I'm not leading a small group. I'm like, so not only on the outside culture is the church struggling, but internally we're missing something because he's actually doing what we hope everybody does. And yet we're not counting it. He doesn't feel like it. He doesn't feel like it either. He doesn't feel like it counts. He feels like unless I'm in the church's programs, what I'm doing doesn't count. And so there was just kind of an arresting on a couple of different levels, both outside the church and inside the church that made me go, man, we need to change something. And it's more than just a tweak. It's an overhaul.

Yeah. Yeah, that's really good. So when I think about your journey, and then I think about my church health journey, we're both trying to change something. I think for any small church pastor that's listening, I feel like the most providential thing that I was able to do was first not make any changes, but get to know that congregation. So I stepped in with no relational chips, no equity.

I may have had a youth group that was growing, and so that was attractive to the older congregation that we may actually grow, but I had no relational equity. And so I see this time and time with pastors that step in with vision as they should, but they make decisions too quickly and spend that 12 months just getting to know your congregation the most. In my opinion, the most important question that you can ask in this type of situation is just help me understand why you do the things that you do. And for me, that was our journey and it began to uncover some things for us because if there wasn't a really good answer, then there's a potential that we need to actually stop what we're doing either entirely or we just need to pause for a second. And when you ask the question why, and they give you a really good answer, let's celebrate that because there's a real valid reason. But if the why has been lost along the way, that's a good sign and indicator that maybe we need to pause for a second. But you can't do that outside of the process of relationship, at least in a small church context for us. That's

Really

Great. Yeah.

Yeah, really great.

That's good. So, so if you would give somebody who's listening, you kind of started down this road, but initial tips, so wait and listen, what else can we say practically that they could do while they're trying to assess themselves as well?

Yeah, I think this goes for larger churches and smaller churches alike that I think in every church culture there are what we've called around here, informal influencers. In other words, they're people who are not, maybe they don't have a position.

Yeah, that's good.

In a small church, it's the family that's been there for generations and the grandpa was there and the dad and the mom was there and everybody, and they always had influence behind the scenes and that you don't make decisions without checking with them. I think just kind of an awareness of those folks and sometimes they're going to be slower adopters, but I think looping those folks in early is a really, really important first thing for someone to do, even just to use them as a sounding board. So before the decision is made, I'm just like, Hey, I'm feeling this. Are you feeling this? And if not, and inviting them into the conversation I think is a good early step.

And I'll tag onto that. I think that's perfect and ideal. I always want to just caution a pastor as well and let them know that, listen, your assessment is subjective,

Especially

If you've been there for any length of time. And so if you're solely relying on your own assessment of the situation, it's going to, inevitably, it's going to be a matter of time before you wander in or you start to steer off course just a little bit because you're going to want to potentially move in a direction. Someone's going to frustrate you. And there you go. There's your subjectivity already because now you're being informed by your emotional response to

How

That person said something to you. They may be, now there's a forgiveness issue that are you resolving or not. And so I think we just need to be aware of our subjective assessment. It could be accurate and it

is actually necessary, but my encouragement to your point is involve others. If you're not in a healthy church, it may be first asking a network of pastors, Hey, could you come and sit in a service for Secret shopper?

Yeah, secret shopper. Let me know if what I'm feeling is what you're discerning to. Because that multitude of counselors is so important, especially in such a fragile, and I would say that both of our situations could have been fragile because you're talking about flipping a funnel, steering a cruise ship around a corner. If you try and do that too quickly, everybody's off board. That's right. So make sure you involve people. For us, there's plenty of church health assessments out there, but for us, that wasn't really an option. We didn't have our operating budget when I was the pastor was \$120,000 a year. And that was all your salary. That was the chicken coop. That was the chicken coop. That's chicken feed. Yeah. So that's the reality for small church pastors. So church health assessments weren't like, Hey, we're going to bring in the experts. It was, Hey, we're going to tag in our network. And if you don't have a network, get a network. That's a good word for sure. It's so important for you. You can't do it without it. And I think I'll come back to one of the thing too. I know next week it's almost like a part two. We're going to talk about the personal side of this week. We're talking about how do you know if it's time to change your church's model? Next week we're really going to talk about internalizing that for an individual church leader, how do you know God is calling you to a next thing or maybe calling you out of that thing and discerning that part. So I think there's some personal questions that obviously have to be asked before you change a model of a

Church,

But I want to think about some of the church questions. And so as you think about church health, I know for us it was just like one of the questions that I was thinking about is the model we're currently using positioning us to effectively multiply disciples for the next 10 years. Is this going to carry us to the next generation or not? And that was a question that arrested my own heart because the answer was no, Absolutely not.

I don't think so. I think we're on such a fast pace as a culture that if we just keep going the way that we're going, we're actually going to start to diminish our effectiveness and our ability to make disciples. And so that was an important question to just get real specific, is the model we're currently using, positioning us to effectively multiply disciples over the next 10 years.

No, that's

Good. Was a big one for me. I don't know about you. Did you have questions that, or assessment kind of questions, church-wide that you were thinking about?

Yeah, so I mean at the time it wouldn't have been as neat and tidy as is in my brain now because it was a process of 10 years. But as I reflect on it, there were definitely, I would say five areas that I think regardless of where you're at in the life of your small church, at least my context was, and with the reality, you can't necessarily afford a church assessment. I think these were good areas for us to sit down as a leadership and not all at once, but periodically over time, just begin to ask some really healthy questions. So categorically discipleship would be one of them. Is ministry being done by others in our church? And that's not just the pastor. That's a great indicator for small churches because a lot of times the lead pastor's just owning it, even if he has the intent to hand it off, that doesn't always happen. And so what type of ministry, how many ministries? That's another important one. In a small church and in a big church too, you don't want to let go of Han. So if you've got 15 ministries, that might be a indicator of unhealth

Because you've got 25 people in your congregation. So why are we running

Around? So you're saying it is too many. You're not asking how many ministries do we have? We don't have enough. That's correct. You're saying how many ministries do we have? Because we might have too many.

We might have too many now we might not have very many or we might have too many. And the lead pastor's actually doing it, doing all of them. And so he never sees his wife, he never sees these kids or anything like that. Another one for us was community and fellowship. Our people known in our church, and for us they were, but not in the biblical sense. We weren't necessarily sharing life together. We maybe went to Thursday night choir practice for 30 years. But was there a sense in which we truly knew one another? And another big indicator for me during this process was, do I want to be known by those people? So if as your pastor I'm saying I don't want to be known by these people, that's an indicator of unhealth, maybe in myself, but maybe also in the congregante. Why don't I want to be known? Why do I feel like I need to get up on a Sunday morning and maybe put on a front because I'm afraid of being known by my

Company.

Again, an indicator of unhealth Sundays, I don't think we want to measure everything on a Sunday or by Sundays, but how would you describe your Sunday experience? Are they marked with vibrancy in awe? Is there energy on a Sunday morning and 25 person congregation? That might not always be the case, but vibrancy in awe is there, and you guys know what we're talking about. Is there a beautiful spirit there? It a

Factor.

Yeah. And again, it doesn't need to be 2,500 people. 25 people could easily provide that as well. Would you describe sun as a shared experience? I think is a great indicator. Again, this is the lead pastor doing the announcements. Is the lead pastor playing the guitar? Is the lead pastor then

Preaching? That's

Good. If it's not a shared experience, that may be an indicator that something needs to change. There's an area of unhealth and then two more reach. So what does your local reach look like? What does your global reach look like and what does the balance between those two look like? So for us in a small church, it's sometimes easier to have 30 missionaries, but no outreach. We're not volunteering on Friday night at the fish fry during lent. That's an indicator that something's off.

And then leadership for us, does your structure reflect scripture? So I stepped into a leadership structure that didn't make much sense. We had a diaa. I'd never heard of a DIB before. I had a deacons, but I'd never heard of a dib. But then we had an advisory board, but it looked like the deacons were leading, but the advisory board was also leading, but then there was a pastoral council and what's going on here? So there was leadership structure seems confusing. So that's a great indicator. And then how would you describe the unity within that structure? For us, that was a big question. Do we feel unified? And on the back of that is do I feel like I actually want to share responsibilities? If I don't feel like I want to give something to somebody, that's also an indicator that again, maybe some unhealth in me

That's very good,

But maybe unhealth, why don't we want to share responsibilities here? So those were some, I mean over 10 years, some questions that I came to ask and we worked through it as a congregation, we into health I would say in January of 2018. And it was tangible. I mean, it was beautiful. There was a sense where people could breathe. And I breathed. I hadn't felt it before.

How many years was that into your tenure?

So I was appointed the lead pastor at 2010.

So eight years, eight years of hard work. I mean, I think somebody needs to hear that this isn't an overnight.

We had a pastor come in, preach through the network that by God's grace we're able to establish. And it was about four years in out of that eight years. And he was asking me a number of questions. I think he could sense that I was struggling. And he was like, how long have you been doing this for? I said, four years. He was like, oh, you're only halfway through. Wow, there you go. Prophetically prophetic. But I remember thinking like, oh my gosh, I don't have another four years. I mean, seasons can get hard, Right?

But yeah, so I mean was in that position, I was at the church almost 12 years. I was in that position for 10 years. So it was eight years of pursuing church health and then only two years of enjoying that health. So I think it's not everybody's story, but it's a helpful perspective of the grander narrative of the kingdom of God. God might be calling you to do something that outlives your, and I think that you could say that for your story too. This is what you're doing now, your helping set up for success on the backend.

So good. Really great.

Yeah. Thank you. Thanks.

You got it.

Okay.

Let me just say something.

Yeah, go

Ahead. Just so you know, we're going to include all of those points that you just made in the show notes in. We've also created a tool around some of the questions that I was asking here at Grace. So we'll include both of those tools and lists and stuff in the show notes that people can find over at derek-sanford.com/reinventing-church.

Great. Okay. Okay. I was going to say that, but I like how you said it. You said it better. Yeah. Okay. Thanks Steven. Thanks for joining us. We'll see you next

Week. Thanks. Bye.

Yeah. Okay. So next we're going to talk about our kind of on the ground, what's happening right now with Reinventing Grace Church. There's

A lot happening.

I know it was hard to choose this week. It's a lot and end, it feels like. Yeah, with this outlet, I want to tell everybody everything, but I think this is a good choice today. It's

Consuming. And I think that's part of the learning. And this is like, it's not like you just do this on the side while you just do church the way you've always been doing it. It's like this does become

Consuming. It does. And even to hear Steven say like, oh, four years in, and then halfway there, and I'm thinking, wait, what? Like we said, and you said we're at a place of relative health,

So

There's some of the uphill climb. We're doing different uphill climbs.

That's right.

But yeah, I think the thing that we've done in the past, and we alluded to earlier too, is we've had these cycles where we'll have a vision or a goal or initiative or something, and we do it. We set up measures for the end of it. And we just march, March, March, march. And the thing that I appreciated, I mean, one

of a million things I appreciated about the process we went through with Dave and Chain is this idea of setting up measurable goals that hit every 90 days.

Yeah.

Wait, is that right?

Yeah.

Even saying it, I'm like, this is too much, but it's not too much. It's actually great.

And people probably need to hear, we've got three levels of horizon goals they call them. So there's this far horizon, which is our 10 a decade vision. There's a three year horizon. There's a one year horizon, and

Then which we're coming up to, by the way,

What we're up to. And then there are these 90 day increments that we're trying to march toward those one and three and 10 year goals, which has been a helpful construct.

Yeah. We've never done it that way before.

No, no, it's very helpful.

Very. Yeah.

So what we did this week,

Yeah,

Go ahead.

No, no, you go.

Is that this was our next round of 90 day goals.

So we had to set up, and it's four. We're trying to do four at a time. And to be completely candid, I feel like we're, I find myself at a place of a little bit of overwhelm, not like I'm not stressed out, I want to do all these little boxes. Well,

That's

Kind of my personality. So when we will be in a room and be like, well, maybe we should move that one to the next 90 days, I'm like, oh, I don't want to move it to the next 90 days. But we do.

You don't want to knock 'em out,

Want to knock 'em out. But the point is, what I'm trying to teach myself is we're doing the best of our ability in that 90 days, and then we're making pivots sticking with the focus, but we're pivoting what the goal is in that timeframe. But it's an interesting negotiation to sit at the table and be like, what are we doing next?

And the hard thing for me is that these are not the only four things

We're

Working on. No, not at all. So we're working on loads of

Things,

But one of the values of this process is that it forces you to say, what are the foremost important things to move this whole thing forward that we need to accomplish in the next 90 days? And I think that process, even if we don't always land on the right things, that process of forcing ourselves to focus on four collectively is helpful.

Yeah, I agree.

Really helpful. So you want to tell people what our next four are?

So are our next four.

Okay.

Alright. So the first one is about our assimilation strategy. So that's that normal traditional assimilation funnel. And we're that funnel through a disciple making lens.

Let me describe that for a

Second.

Yeah, go ahead. Okay. I don't know if we fully said, I talked about flipping the funnel earlier,

But

Kind of what we landed on as our strategic approach is that we're not doing away with that assimilation funnel, which is where people come into the church and connect and serve. We're calling it a funnel fusion. We're taking that funnel and we're overlapping with what we're calling our multiplication funnel. And so while people are coming in, then we also want to get them into a funnel of understanding their calling and then training them and then sending them out. And so it's two funnels. We're calling them just to give people the insider language, the assimilation funnel and the multiplication funnel and the assimilation funnel. We realized we are tweaking toward a more disciple making focus, the multiplication funnel we're inventing from scratch.

One of the things that I think got impressed upon me a very long time ago about grace is that, and I think it really leads to our longevity, is this vision of a stream. We have one foot on the bank and one foot in the stream. And that's what this is to me. It's like we're not just throwing the baby out with the bathwater and going for this whole new shiny model. We're figuring out what has God given us, where are we? And for me, so cool about this strategy is that we're tweaking the parts of that assimilation funnel that we know work and will continue to reach our community while reinventing this other side. I love that part of it. I love that

Imagery. So we're doing that. We're doing the assimilation strategy over the next 90 days, and that was one that started the last 90 days. So that was a continuation one with a little bit of a different pivot. And then launch is our new class that really brings people into the idea of what a dream disciple is and what it means to be and belong in a church together. And so we're going to successfully pilot that, kick that off, and we have a goal of taking 200 people through that. And that's above leadership, or is it 200 total? So it's our leadership plus 200 people in the congregation. And then multiplication strategy, like Derek said, we're creating the timeline and the strategy and well, we're inventing not

Reinventing

This whole multiplication thing which you're going to own.

And part of that process is just we're piloting a new experience, I'll call it that instead of even a course or a class, a new experience to help people to find their calling in the world.

And then really thinking about how do we then support those people. So if a business person comes in and says, my calling right now is to be a Christian business person who is designed by God to do X at my business, our job is to figure out how can the church then support all of those people who are outside of our walls living out there, calling in a way that's not overly overbearing, but it actually helps them to amplify what God's doing in there. So that's that multiplication funnel is go, we don't want the finish line to be inside the walls of the church. We want to extend it outside the walls, but then how is the church involved in a meaningful way and helping people to do that? So that's what we're kind of inventing from. It's huge. Putting some timelines together for what needs to happen to make that happen.

And then the last one is focusing on milestones. I'm excited about this one too. I think this is our way of building love in to the assimilation, actually probably the whole thing. But to start with the assimilation side of the funnel,

What are some milestones?

So a baptism, salvation, maybe we have one now that we're probably going to carry over where when a kid goes into kindergarten, they get a Bible from the parents and we do a little presentation with that Baby dedication,

Baby dedication. And then there's unknown things. So how do we have and train people to have antennas up for? Someone just moved, someone just lost their job, someone switched jobs. All those kind of

Loved one died.

Loved one died. Yeah, those, what's the word? Cataclysmic catalyst. Those moments that pivot your story, whether positive or negative. So we have a whole team working on that, descending on that in this 90

Days. Because the truth is people are most open spiritually during those times.

You can think of your own self, even if you're already a Christian, you are. That

Happens. So if you move to a new area, all of a sudden, man, it's really important that I make some new friends or I figure out what somebody close to you dies. It's really if you get baptized, these are milestone moments that the church can really have a meaningful impact and helping someone navigate their spiritual journey.

Yeah, that's good. I think too, for you guys, because we're going to talk about it a lot, I think we'll put a picture of the strategy map with the funnels maybe in the show notes. That'd

Be great.

Just a link to it just so you can get a visual if you're not looking at the video, because our visual even for the video is just this. So that's probably not helpful for you. Okay. So thanks for joining us today. We're going to end it here. You can go to derek-sanford.com and you can see the show notes there. And there's also a blog there that Derek's been keeping for a really long time, actually. So you could catch up on some stuff, subscribe to that blog. You can also download the tool that he talked about earlier. That'll help a little self-assessment and an assessment, light assessment for your church if you're ready to change. And that's it. So go to derek-sanford.com for all the materials you need for today's show. And that'll be it. Thanks for joining us.

Thanks everybody.

See you.