

# FIRST PERSON: 10 reasons why churches get stuck, stop growing

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We often call it a “plateaued church,” and we define it as a church that is neither growing nor declining. The attendance numbers just seem to be “stuck.” Here are some reasons a church gets “stuck” in plateau:

**1. Nobody is paying much attention to the numbers.** Some church leaders question whether asking numerical numbers borders on the idolatry of numbers. Others simply don't worry about attendance numbers. In either case, the church may grow to its limit, but it *will* hit a limit.

**2. The church has outgrown the pastor's leadership style.** Pastors who want to be involved in every member's life tend to limit the growth of a congregation to about 200 people. The church supports the beloved pastor, but the growth seldom moves forward.

**3. The church is out of space.** Whether in the parking lot, the education space, or the worship area, a lack of space for growth will limit the church at its parking and facility capacity. Continual plateau at the same level is often a reminder to check space availability.

**4. The church's small groups have hit their maximum.** The groups may have previously grown, but now they have no more room for growth. Group members love their group and see little need to do much outreach.

**5. Church leaders are not raising up new leaders.** The current leaders are generally doing their jobs well; so, members continue to come – but no one is raising up, encouraging and strengthening a new crop of leaders for the future.

**6. The pastor may be feeling a tug toward some other opportunity.** Once that happens, it's tough for any of us to stay focused on the present-tense needs of the church.

**7. The church is comfortable where it is.** When members love the current size and direction of their church, they may work hard to keep the people they have – but growing larger is undesirable.

**8. The community is changing.** The congregation maintains its status quo, but it does not reach out to the transitioning community around them. The church becomes a “safe” place for its members, but not an outreach post.

**9. The church operates in maintenance mode.** They love each other, but no one has a growth vision for the future. The family of God enjoys a maintenance mode that doesn't require change.

**10. The church doesn't pray much together anymore.** Moving beyond a revitalization state to genuine, God-centered growth takes God's help. Churches that don't pray much together aren't likely to get there (and, by the way, that's one reason I wrote, “The Potential and Power of Prayer”).

What reasons would you add to this list?

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