



Transform Your Community Forever in 6 Months

**5 Steps to Turn Even a Single, Small
Church into a Game Changer for Christ...**

Jim Morgan



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Introduction...

Is your church having a substantial impact in your community? Is your voice being heard and influence being felt across your city? If not, read on to see how to change that!

Today, churches in America have a tremendous opportunity. It doesn't matter if you're a church of 10,000 or 75. The door is wide open. The ups-and-downs of the U.S. economy, a decaying moral fabric, and an educational system that teaches children that they're random "accidents" has left more in desperate need of help and hope. Slashed government budgets have left counties and schools far more willing to work with churches today. There's no better time for churches to engage actively and integrally with their communities.

Yet as we discuss on our [Blog](http://blog.meettheneed.org) (blog.meettheneed.org) and in our eBook [The 5 Steps to Revitalize Your Church](#), few churches are taking advantage of this opportunity. Few are integrally involved in addressing the issues facing their cities. While people do life, churches do church.

As a result, at no point in American history have churches had less of a voice in the affairs of day-to-day-life. They haven't shown a genuine interest in society so society assumes churches aren't interested in them. That perception severely inhibits the ability of churches and all Christians to reach the lost. People don't care what you know unless they know you care, right?

How can churches regain their voices? – by convincing their communities they care.

That sounds like a daunting task. Where do you begin? It has to start with church leaders. If they don't push and challenge members to devote more time to caring and sharing, they most likely won't. And if they don't disciple, members probably won't fully understand or adopt Jesus' model of demonstrating love and compassion before telling them who He is. That model grew the Church exponentially for centuries, but has largely been abandoned in recent decades. Today, we separate words from actions – trying in effect to "outreach" Jesus.

Instead, imagine a church producing a sanctuary full of not just disciples but disciple-makers, traveling to heaven in the HOV lane, car-pooling with others they've each served and brought to Christ. Yes, your church would grow exponentially – with love and compassion as the goals yet with growth and revitalization the welcomed side effects.

How can churches regain their voices? - by convincing their communities they care.

Your church CAN transform your community. Just follow these 5 steps...

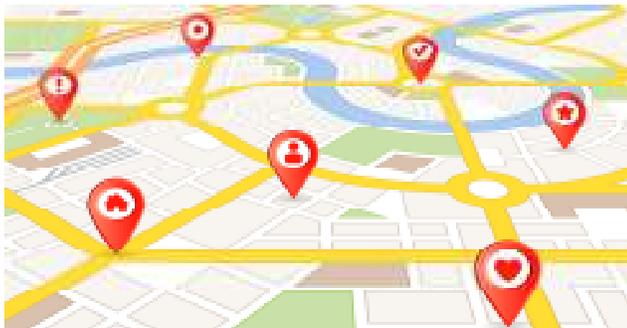
Step #1 – Pray & Network

The goal of the church – not just pastors and staff but members as well – should be to pray and work together to be a light in the darkness for the lost.

Nothing meaningful happens without prayer. Certainly a goal as large as reversing the powerful megatrends in America toward a secular world view and away from the Lord has absolutely no chance unless He intervenes. We can ask and receive anything in line with God's will – and there's no doubt restoring the impact and influence of His Church falls into that category.

Alongside prayer, transforming a community means closing two key gaps:

- 1) **Relationship Gap** – When the church was the center of town, as it was for centuries, pastors knew other community leaders. Pastors didn't have to form relationships with local homeless shelters and food banks because churches were the homeless shelter and the food bank. Today few pastors and staff members have broad, solid networks with local ministries, school principals, city council members, and pastors of other churches. Relationship-building takes time and most pastors and staff are too busy running their church and being there for members.
- 2) **Knowledge Gap** – For that same reason, most pastors and staff don't know the social issues in their communities well, nor its critical needs. As our [blog](#) and [eBooks](#) unpack, since few pastors see the community as the church's "customer", they don't make studying those issues a priority. Why would a church investigate local homelessness, hunger, and foster care if it doesn't intend to or believe it can play a meaningful role in resolving them?



How will this transform your community?

- Local leaders will view you, Christians and your church differently if:
 - o pastors, staff and members invest time in building relationships and asking questions that show sincere concern
 - o your church offers itself as a resource

Action Items

- Pray – for the Father to work within the hearts of your pastors, staff, members and local leaders
- Change your Mental Picture – of your church from a warehouse to a factory and of the congregation from volunteers to be “fed” to “employees” to be trained (discipled) and sent out
- Be Intentional – make a list of school, government, local businesses and charity leaders
- Connect – build relationships with those leaders and show up at community meetings to demonstrate an interest in community affairs and a willingness to help

Step #2 – Rally around Cause(s)

Even a small church can become a powerful laser drilling a hole of light through a highly resistant surface if it focuses. Imagine what a large church can do with that same laser focus.

As you close the relationship and knowledge gaps, be careful not to violate 4 principles:

1. No one church can do it all – narrow down to a 2-3 key issues your church can help address
2. Approach the community with an attitude of “what do you need” rather than “we want to do this, do you need it?” to uncover the most pressing local causes
3. Don’t jump back to an event mindset – engage year-round or you’ll give the impression that your compassion was really promotion and not genuine interest in solving a problem
4. Always remember, building trust is about prolonged relational contact with the community

How many churches have led development of tangible programs to address big-picture social ills in their cities? Again, because churches don’t recognize the community as the “customer”, they are often guilty of making themselves (the institution and their members) the “cause”. Leaders in business, politics and all other venues know that an outside cause unites and motivates much better than an internal one. If a church rallies around a compelling external cause, cohesion and action will naturally and necessarily increase.



How will this transform your community?

- Many people won’t dare darken the door of a church. Transactional interactions like occasional events and flyers aren’t going to bring them in. You have to go to them and convince them you care, year-round.
- Addressing key causes outside of the church engages members to serve, enabling you to make a material dent that the city will notice

Action Items

- Select 2-3 key social issue(s) to tackle and decide (corporately and each as individuals) how the church should respond – e.g. partnering with organizations already working on that issue
- Excite everyone about the cause via the pulpit, small groups, discipleship, and related events
- Ensure members understand that signing up for an occasional service event or mailing out a check is not the full extent of their responsibility to act – people need help and hope year-round
- Develop ongoing service programs (on and off campus) benefitting non-member families
- Gear discipleship toward “growing” and “going”, preparing all members to do their parts
- Teach members Jesus’ model for evangelism – showing them how powerful loving acts of service are in opening doors to share who He is

Step #3 – Assess Interests/Skills

The church's power is in the vast number and diverse giftings in the body – fueled by the Holy Spirit. For centuries those countless parts of the body of Christ – each recognizing their individual roles in expanding the Kingdom – created an unstoppable, irresistible movement.

Why does identifying a cause come before assessing your church's passions, skills and interests? Because it's about "them" and not about us. We should coalesce around the areas of greatest need, not what we would like to do. That's part of what it means to treat the community, and not church members, as the "customer".

Only after we know where the vast resources within our "4 walls" can be best utilized should we take a full inventory of what we have to offer. Some may not have an interest or gifting in the area of greatest social need. The Bible does speak of a variety of roles within the church. That's true of any organization, but successful companies take employees with different skill sets and ensure all hands are on deck pointing toward the overall goal of pursuing and serving their "customers". To maximize the church's impact in the community, pastors should encourage nearly everyone in the church to consider:

1. What role they can play in advancing the church's mission around the key cause(s)
2. How they can develop greater skills and passion for the cause of reaching the community
3. The Great Commission as an obligation of great urgency, not an option

As that process unfolds, the Lord will show your church how so many latent capabilities lying dormant in your pews align perfectly with the most pressing concerns in your community.



How will this transform your community?

- Impact comes from every congregant seeing:
 - o themselves as a critical "body" part
 - o how they weaken the "body" if they don't carry out their intended functions
- Power in numbers – if too many members have competing or varied interests such that few apply themselves to the selected causes, impact will be minimal and unremarkable

Action Items

1. Unite – Use the pulpit, small groups, and discipleship to get leaders and members on board
2. Inventory – Once all understand they're expected to play a role, find out what each can do
3. Align – Determine your strategy for addressing the cause(s) based on your skills assessment
4. Build – Continue training and discipleship to sustain momentum, enhance skills and ensure ongoing deployment into ministry

Step #4 – Empower & Equip

No organization can succeed unless all the departments are adequately staffed, aligned around the interests of the target “customers” and trained to perform their distinct functions well.

Knowing what resources you have at your disposal isn't enough. You have to also put them in a position to be effective. That means setting members up for success in living up to their intended standing as critical parts of the church “body” – charged with exceeding “customer” expectations, not their own. Pastors and staff alone can't network or work hard enough to make significant progress reversing society's perception of churches as more judgmental and hypocritical than caring and compassionate. Leaders have to empower members to lead, likely requiring alternative organizational structures such as those mentioned in Action Items below.

Far too often, pastors rely on sermons as the primary forum to convince entire congregations to serve and evangelize. And too many pastors rely on small groups as their discipleship vehicle and instruct group leaders to find a service project every few months. However, members are “insiders”, much more like employees of a company than its customers (“outsiders”). When a company hires a new employee, training is the first priority. Would a company consider a 30 minute presentation each week to be adequate training? What if it added weekly group discussions with fellow employees for a few months each year? Would the combination of those two be enough? Of course not. Companies know that proper training happens through 1-on-1 mentorship, group classes and in the “field” (OJT).



How will this transform your community?

- There is tremendous leverage in entrusting members with greater responsibility to BE the church in the community
- The number of “touches” and relationships will increase exponentially as churches disciple, empower leaders and decentralize

Action Items

- Flatten the hierarchy in the respective roles of pastors versus members, diminishing the status of pastors and elevating the standing of all others by comparison
- Turn Small Groups into Neighborhood Groups, responsible for praying, caring and sharing
- Form teams assigned to work with particular local ministries and/or cause(s)
- Facilitate “planting” of ministries by members to fill cause-related gaps in the city
- Consider restructuring into semi-autonomous, medium-sized subgroups around geographic or cause lines (since entire congregations are hard to mobilize and small groups lack the scale to make a significant impact)
- Reallocate budget to generously fund member-led and external local ministries

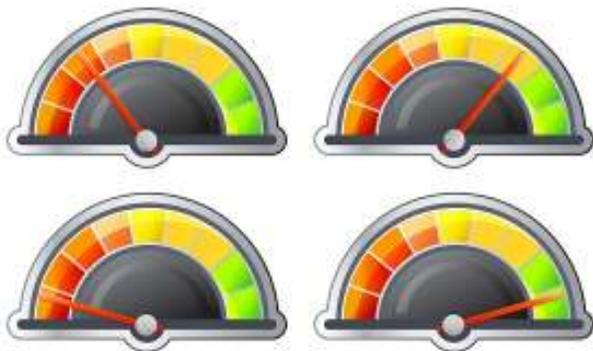
Step #5 – Deploy & Track

Members aren't customers, so pastors shouldn't hesitate to challenge and hold them accountable to live up to the Lord's expectations – to become disciples and disciple makers – even if that would severely disrupt their comfortable lives or risk them "shopping" for another church.

With the first 4 steps in place, your church is on the cusp of transforming what people in your city think when someone mentions the name of your church. Members are now trained and positioned to assume their Biblical responsibility to "go and make disciples" as Jesus modeled and commanded. People aren't accustomed to seeing churches and members actively engaged in their city – particularly alongside secular leaders or on the front lines of resolving issues that may have even stemmed from behaviors and decisions churches wouldn't condone.

Building and deploying disciples should be the primary job of pastors and staff. The Great Commission is a far more effective and Biblical church growth model than the arms-length attraction and retention approach used by most churches today. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." As soon as visitors become believers, they should be disciplined and deployed into service, not just inside the "4 walls" but to bring more people into the "4 walls".

Organizations rarely succeed at what they don't measure. Churches should trade in internally-focused performance metrics that track attendance and dollars for "customer"-oriented measures that gauge how effective members are after they walk out of the building on Sunday.



How will this transform your community?

- Change how people see your church and maybe as a result, how they view God
- A small rebel band of Spirit-filled followers can change a community – Jesus' disciples altered the course of history
- People are not attracted to churches but to disciples – so hold disciples accountable

Action Items

- Adopt a platform (like Meet The Need) to share cause-related and other needs year-round
- Develop a new set of metrics that rally all parts of your church "body" around exceeding expectations of your real "customer" – the community (e.g. % of Members Engaged in Local Missions; % Involved in Discipleship; # of Total Lives in the Community Changed/Impacted)
- Measure your generosity as a church (e.g. % of church budget allocated to internal and external local missions efforts) and whether those investments are producing a solid "ROI" (e.g. making neighborhoods safer, stabilizing families, and improving school systems)

Call to Action...

You may be wondering – how does diving into a couple causes in the community transform my community? Let's ask, what's the alternative? What does the typical church do now, at best?

- A food drive in the fall
- A fall fest event on church property
- Pulpit financial ask for a charity or family a couple times a year
- Sponsorship opportunity for a child overseas
- A few members with a heart for a particular charity volunteer there on a monthly basis
- Adopt a school, which typically only lasts a short time because it's difficult to manage

How are those going to transform your community? Were they really more for the members or for the community? Did they allow your church or your members to “check the box”? Jesus healed and fed, the disciples did likewise, and the church was the food bank and homeless shelter for 1900 years. We know we should be there year-round. However, most churches only run occasional “drives” or a small fraction of the members serve somewhere in the community.

However, asking local leaders sincerely what your church can do, rallying members around those causes, and empowering your whole church to act will transform your community by:

- Forever altering how the community views your church as you engage and involve in issues they care about
- Convincing other churches to come alongside your cause(s) or other causes by example
- Showing more of your members and attenders the power of loving acts of service in sharing their faith
- Compelling your entire church to consider ways to become better “equipped” to minister

Isn't it time we turned our attention to the church's true “customer” – the community where your church is planted? Challenging and preparing your entire congregation to pursue your target “customer” is not only an organizational best practice but also a Biblical imperative. Our failure to commit to treating members as the “church” and the community as the “customer” is why:

- 93% of churches in America today are not growing
- The Church in the U.S. is declining rapidly in influence, impact and perception

No organization that ignores its customer can succeed. As you refocus on the community:

- Your church will grow and your footprint will expand by building a solid base of disciple-makers, empowering them to become the hands and feet of Christ to the lost and hurting
- The health and culture of your church will vastly improve as members unite around a common “customer” and cause(s), focusing less on their own interests and “needs”
- Evidence shows members are more generous with churches that are (in turn) generous

Learn More...

Check out our [Blog](http://blog.meettheneed.org) for more details and ideas at blog.meettheneed.org

...and read our blog posts coming to you via email each week

There are 30+ posts in the blog series, covering each of the steps and topics in this eBook



NEED HELP?

Personalized support is available for your church's Strategic Planning efforts

Ask about our Assessment and Roadmap to put your church back on the path to growth

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SPOTLIGHT



About Jim Morgan

For years I was on the “fast track” – management consulting for Fortune 500 companies, investment banking on Wall Street, legislative aid on Capitol Hill, and MBA from the nation’s top business school. But all along I knew something was off. As a Christian, I wasn’t doing anything to serve God and others. My prayers for a mission and purpose grew more and more frequent.

Then, in 2000, it came – and be careful what you pray for. The Lord showed me that the same solutions I was bringing to large corporations were badly needed by the body of Christ. There were significant communication gaps in cities across the country between those in need and those who could help. So we invested the next decade and millions bringing the first comprehensive solution from the business world to local missions - empowering churches to reach out to families desperately in need of help and hope.

Throughout that process, I wondered why the Church in America seemed to be struggling - in growth, impact and perception. Being a consultant, I couldn’t help but look closer – and what I discovered was shocking. The modern American church model doesn’t align with the most fundamental principle of successful organizations – nor Biblical mandates. There is a flawed assumption underlying nearly every decision churches make today and we believe it’s the root cause for the Church’s decline...

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