

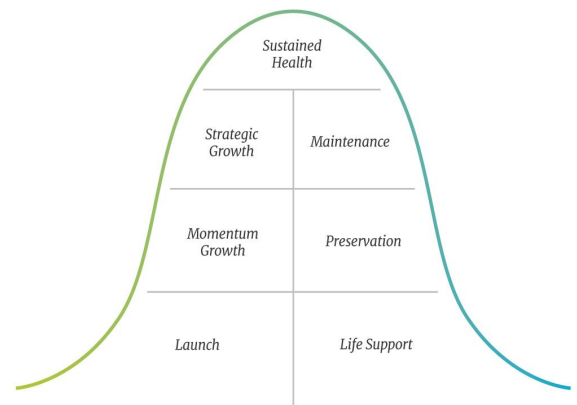
LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# The Declining Side of the Church Lifecycle - Episode 201

## *Ask This, Not That (Part 3)*

In Part 1 of our series, we explored the growing side of the church lifecycle: launch, momentum growth, and strategic growth. In Part 2, we defined the pinnacle of the lifecycle, sustained health, and broke down why even churches in this phase need to be focused on change. Now in Part 3, we're discussing the declining side of the lifecycle: maintenance, preservation, and life support.

Of the more than 15,000 churches who've taken our Unstuck Church Assessment, about 85% of them self-assessed as being on the declining side. Here are the characteristics of each phase and the question leaders in these phases should be asking.



## *Phase 5: Maintenance*

The characteristics:

- Attendance growth plateaus or begins to decline
- The church becomes insider-focused
- The vision stales
- Ministry silos begin to form
- The church becomes overstaffed
- They remain financially health

**Ask This:** Where are we going?

**Not That:** How can we keep people happy so we can maintain what we have?

## *Phase 6: Preservation*

The characteristics:

- Attendance and finances are both declining

- Methods become more important than the mission
- There's a prevailing pull to go back to the way things used to be
- The strong leaders and visionaries have left the church
- Power shifts from the pastor and staff to the lay leadership
- The focus shifts to keeping people from leaving

**Ask This:** Are we prepared to lead significant, and likely difficult, change?

**Not That:** How do I keep people from leaving?

## *Phase 7: Life Support*

The characteristics:

- The church is unwilling to change
- There is no fruit
- The church is being led by one key family or one key donor
- The church is typically experiencing a financial crisis
- The church is aging
- The blame game takes root

**Ask This:** Why do we exist?

**Not That:** How do we reach new people?

## *Next Steps*

### *Unstuck Church Assessment*

Regardless of uniqueness, every church has the potential to go through a very similar life cycle.

[Take the Unstuck Church Assessment](#) and receive a free comprehensive report to better understand where your church sits today and **get clear next steps towards sustained health.**

### *RE-ENGAGE: An Unstuck Roundtable on Carrying the Mission Forward in the New Normal*

Sign up to join us on July 20 for a [FREE Webinar](#) on the best practices and learnings from churches who are leading the way in reopening and re-engaging their people. We can't promise you all the answers, but it's our hope that you will leave this event re-energized and empowered to lead well in the Fall 2021 season.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode201](https://theunstuckgroup.com/episode201).