

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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Is a Church Restart Possible?

YES

There is no question.

And there are some good stories of restart—sometimes by adoption or friendly takeover by a strong and healthy church, often by good changes suggested by a renewal ministry coach with fresh eyes, and always by the prayers and unselfish commitment of people.

And active, productive ministry gets to be strong again.

It is not good to stand by and watch a church stagger and maybe even die. There is help from coaches of restarts and rejuvenation, and from other churches who care.

And some of you are with churches which clearly should be one of those churches offering help and life support.

Let's talk about this.

Knute, with Jeff and Jim

Is a church restart possible?

Jeff Bogue

- Yes, if they are willing to die to themselves. Many churches that are struggling think if they have more people and more resources, their problems will go away. They don't understand that the lack of those people and those resources is actually the real problem.

Jim Brown

- Absolutely yes, if people are truly willing to hand over the past and surrender control to the Holy Spirit's guidance. There must be a sense of urgency too!
- Old traditions must be let go of and fresh vision and an infusion of new leadership must surface.
- It won't happen if there is an unwillingness to do whatever it takes to make it happen.
- In some cases, a church must die for it to live again.

Knute Larson

- Yes, and it is better than death. The stats about death or total cessations of local churches are real, and sometimes it is because its leaders will not admit need and seek help.

Who would ever admit to the need?

Jeff Bogue

- Good leaders will admit to it—that sometimes they just need to let somebody else come in and lead. I've had that experience.
- Others who need to admit their need:
 - People who are stakeholders... People who are passionate about the next generation... People who are kingdom-minded instead of the people who are historically anchored... People who are passionate about winning the lost (sometimes we need to admit that need).

Jim Brown

- The senior leader must humbly make this decision or move on if he is unwilling to make change.
- Every person that longs to see a relevant, thriving, hope-giving church, must make his or her intentions known through the proper channels.

Knute Larson

- Leaders should, starting with the pastor and the board of oversight. But it has to be very difficult to admit you cannot make it work, to use very human terms, at least from our perspective.

- Strong and good leaders face reality, and if they have tried everything they can, including sincere prayer, they may be willing to admit need, seek help, and start over. There could be strong hope restored.

Can outside help be very helpful?

Jeff Bogue

- Outside help can be extremely helpful, but I found that a church has to be in a CPR moment to really see change. Or they have to be very honest and open to what's going on.

Jim Brown

- Yes it can, but it must be from people who have a track record of rescuing churches that have been placed on CPR.
- People often say they want change, but their view of change looks different than what needs to take place.
- Ours is a restart, and many people had no real clue what change really meant to them. So, when the church began to grow, they left because it was too big, too different, or too complex for them.
- There must be a willingness to give up whatever you want for what is best; otherwise you will never experience real life change.

Knute Larson

- Yes, for sure. People who specialize in restarts can see needs the stagnant church has missed, and also have the step-by-step wisdom for the restart. It is, as they say, *what they do*.
- If you need a doctor, you call a doctor. And very often it can be done before a total restart is needed. There are many experienced and successful pastors and pastoral coaches who can help with new vision and methods. Could it be that some leaders of sputtering churches are too *something* (which word would you use?) to seek help.

How would you explain this to your people?

Jeff Bogue

- I would talk about a farm field: how we grow a crop, we till it under, and the life of the old crop is in the new one.
- I would talk about a passion for the young and what it would look like if your grandkids came to the church.

Jim Brown

- Be very honest and share how bleak your present situation is!
- Paint a picture of what could happen if they were willing to change.

- Ask them how much they would sacrifice to see their own children or grandchildren trust in Jesus as their own Savior, and tell them someone's child needs Jesus!
- Share your own desires in a loving and passionate way.
- Let them see the benefits of their own sacrifice.

Knute Larson

- With a prayerful and humble and honest spirit. Usually the only people who would be surprised by such admission of need would be the proud or people living in the past, and not facing reality.
- People hate changes and surprises, so we should not surprise people with a change. Surely the board of oversight would be in on the initial call for help, and the whole church would need to know the church is getting outside counsel which could lead to major changes or even adoption by a strong, caring church, or another kind of restart.
- Point to facts and figures, comparing the request to any of us needing a medical specialist for physical needs.

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