



## Leadership Resource Papers

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## Starting a Second Service – Dan Reiland

When is it time to start a second service? Should I start a second service or build a bigger building? Should the second service be the same as or different than the first service? What impacts does a second service have on the ministry and culture of the church? What times should the services be? Does a second service create a second church? What if I start a second service and it doesn't work?

I have been asked all these questions and more. And I can tell you with confidence that, in general, starting a second service is a good idea. If your primary worship space holds 500 and you average 79 in attendance, then no, you don't need a second service - at least in terms of size and space. But you may need a completely fresh approach to your style of service that a second service would afford you.

One pastor said to me; "We run one service right now with about 38 people and the church building seats 300. We don't need a second service we need a memorial service!" We laughed together for a moment, then got pretty serious about the heartache of a small church struggling to survive, and what we could do about it. In that case the answer was not starting a second service. Let me offer you a few caution flags to assess how your church may or may not connect with this idea.

### Caution Flags:

- **Starting a second service isn't a solution for bad leadership.**

A friend of mine, who is a good pastor, is leading a church that suffers from a number of problems. He was convinced that if he changed the style of worship in his three services (each service a different style) and added a fourth service, with yet another style of worship targeting a different demographic of people, that his problems would be over. His goal was to have something for everyone. But, trying to calm the turbulence by pleasing everybody is a recipe for disaster. And that's just what he got. He made the changes and his problems were not only not over, they got worse.

- **Surface level changes do not remedy systemic problems.**

If things are not going well in your church in general, starting a second service won't help solve the problem. The truth about local church ministry is that, as important as the Sunday worship experience is, it isn't everything. If a church is led by a competent leader, and people are finding Christ as Savior and maturing in their faith, a flawless and exciting worship service isn't the end all of ministry. In the churches I consult, 80% of the effort and energy, if not more, is put into the worship service. Only 20% of the effort and energy is put into everything else. In other words, if the worship service is looking good and the sanctuary is packed out, everything is great. Not a good plan! It is important to think about the big picture and build a balanced ministry.

- **Starting a second service isn't a remedy for a lack of evangelistic fervor.**

It is true that starting a new church is the best plan (dollars to conversions) for evangelistic success. However, that principle doesn't carry over for starting a second service, unless you already have a good visitor flow and evangelistic vitality.

Keep in mind that starting a second service isn't just about space and size, but really about mission and values. So, be sure to answer the question of why. Why do you want to start a second service? Is it to get more people to come to your church, or is it to reach more people who don't know Christ? The strategy for each of those answers is radically different.

- **Starting a second service isn't the answer to revive a church with power struggles.**

This happens more often than I care to admit. Small and medium size churches who are experiencing control issues and power struggles have attempted to solve the problems by the "divide and conquer" strategy.

It is unwisely believed that a church can solve power struggles by creating two places where control can be exercised and power can be wielded separately. That never works. Keep in mind this is more subtle than it appears in print. For the most part, these are good people who love God. They are passionate about their opinions of how to run a church, and they are giving of their time and money to make it happen. Unfortunately, this subtlety also allows immaturity and lack of wisdom to creep into the mix.

Similar to the first point, new programming changes will never solve leadership issues. Tend to the real issues. Then get creative on your programming.

Good reasons:

- **Your church is growing and you are out of space.**

Now we're talking! This is the common healthy reason to start a second service. Your church is focused on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and you are reaching people who are far from God. Bottom line, you want to reach more people.

If you have pews you are full at about 80% of your capacity and if you have chairs you are full at about 90% of your capacity. However, you need not wait until you get that full. Anytime you pass about 60% of your capacity (a good sense of critical mass) you are ready to start considering a second service. The reason I say consider is because there are many other factors to think about. These factors (largely related to preparation and planning) will be dealt with in Part 2 of this article.

- **Your current style of worship doesn't reach the people you want to reach.**

One of the most common scenarios is that of a small to medium size church that offers a traditional worship service experience.

Traditional worship is great and many seasoned Christians enjoy it, but if your goal is reaching the lost and reaching younger people, it may not be the most effective. Candidly, my experience says that it isn't. I will admit however, that it's not so much that "traditional" is the problem, as is "bad" traditional. Any style done well is better than any style done poorly.

It's often not a smart move to ask a long established church to completely change its known and trusted style of worship. So adding a second service with a more contemporary style is a good plan. If the second service goes well, (and grows faster than the traditional service) in time, you will gain more leverage and momentum to move the whole church in that direction.

- **Your church will likely experience a quick attendance gain simply from the additional time option you have made available.**

This is not a simple-minded "money back guaranteed" kind of promise. However, observation and experience proves that if a church is growing and starts a second service, in the right way, that in the vast majority of situations you will increase your

attendance literally overnight simply because you added another option for people to attend. Marketing has proven that people like options!

More importantly, if your options are *vision driven*, you are setting yourself up for success.

### Overcoming the resistance:

There are three main objections you will face. You may face more, but these are the most common.

- **"We will no longer be one happy family."**  
This deals with emotion and is by far the most common objection. The people want everyone to be together and that's good, however, it's not biblical and has nothing to do with achieving the Great Commission. Fellowship is biblical, but scripture never says that everyone has to be at the same place at one time. Teach your church the value of sacrificing their wants for the needs of the kingdom. The truth is that no one can be close friends with hundreds of people anyway. It's perception. Help your people see that nothing prevents them from seeing their friends anytime they want to during the week. Help your people see clearly and they will be more receptive to a second service.
- **"We won't know what is going on any more."**  
This deals with power. If you assure them that channels will be established to ensure healthy and productive communication takes place they will be more receptive to a second service. When addressing power issues deriving from immaturity, (rather than healthy communication) deal one on one with strength and candor.
- **"It will be too heavy a burden on our already overworked volunteers."**  
This deals with reality. It is true that there will be more work to be done, and that more people will be needed, therefore recruiting pressures will rise. It is true that some of the people are already overloaded. What is not true is that it is too heavy a burden. If you take the time you need to plan and prepare, you will have the volunteers you need to make a second service happen.

Remember, anything worthwhile is difficult and requires sacrifice and risk. The important thing is that it is worthwhile. Part 2 will offer a practical plan for starting a second service.