Strategic Planning in the Church

Part 2 of 2: Implementing Change and Making it Stick
with Darrell Bock, Aubrey Malphurs
Release Date: November 2013
Darrell Bock: Let’s move on to values, and values are – well let me ask it this way. Are values distinctives, distinctives only, or is there more to values than distinctives?

Aubrey Malphurs: There’s more to value than distinctives.

Darrell Bock: Okay. Distinctives might be how you flesh out your values or?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well I look at values as values are distinctives in and of themselves.

Darrell Bock: Okay. That’s what actually caused me to ask the question, so.

Aubrey Malphurs: Okay. Yeah, they are distinctives but they are – it’s so interesting to do this because you can sit down and we’ll have a church work through its values, and they come up with values. We know what they are, but they generate that list of values.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Aubrey Malphurs: And then we’ll have them evaluate it and we’ll say hey what’s missing here and we’ll use Acts 2 where I think there are a number of values that come out there. But what’s missing here and then we’ll also now say are all of these inward or outward focused, and what do you think? They’re usually inward focused, and it gets real quiet.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Aubrey Malphurs: You can hear the pin drop. And then again what’s missing? You can say well – and we’re after actual values. We don’t want aspirational. We do go after aspirational values, but we’re after what are your actual values. We want to discover those and then we ask what’s missing, and then they may say evangelism and so that becomes an aspirational value of the church.

Darrell Bock: So you get at this by asking the question what makes First Baptist First Baptist in your view? Is that kind of how you get there?
The Table Podcast  Strategic Planning in the Church

*Aubrey Malphurs*: Yeah, yeah, what’s unique? But we do have them take a values exercise I’ve come up and I’ve created a list of values. There are oh gosh over 20 values on there, and what they do is they take that and they mark what they think is and is not. They work off the sheet so we kind of prompt them. It’s a what we call a prime-the-pump exercise, and they take this values inventory, and the question is which of these are your values. And so once they come up with that then we have some recorders and the people call them out and they write them down; they put them up on a white board. And then we go through those and say now take off the values that aren’t really your values, and we try to get down to what their actual values are.

*Darrell Bock*: Now I’ll tell you a gut reaction I had in reading this section and actually different parts of the book, and that is your lists are very, very thorough. They’re comprehensive. You go in there and you say you know here are 25 verbs to choose from in doing your mission’s statement. Here are 30 values you could be discussing, that kind of thing. Your goal in doing that is to I take it not overwhelm someone, which you might get the feeling when you read the list.

*Aubrey Malphurs*: Yeah, and it happens sometimes. It happens sometimes.

*Darrell Bock*: Yeah. But the flip side is to get you to say here is a large sample of possibilities, now I want you to figure out what you are out of this. Is that kind of it?

*Aubrey Malphurs*: Yes, yes, exactly. And then they call those out and there will be different ones, and then they come back and we discuss those in a group. And this is wonderful because you see these people talking like they’ve never talked before about their church and what they think is important.

*Darrell Bock*: Because you’ve given them categories to work with.

*Aubrey Malphurs*: We’ve given them categories to work with, see. And they will disagree with one another, but I give them a one to two minutes to debate it, no longer that. I’ll cut them off because we can be there all week.

*Darrell Bock*: That’s right, that’s right. Plus you want everyone walking out of the meeting alive.
Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. Mary Lou says – she’s raised her hand. She said that evangelism is a value of our church, and right away somebody will challenge that, especially if it’s not the case.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Aubrey Malphurs: And I’ll say well Mary Lou why do you think it is, and then Charlie why do you think it’s not, within a one- or two-minute debate. But they get to interacting, and they don’t get upset with one another. It’s a marvelous time where they get to know one another and they discover a little bit about themselves and their church.

Darrell Bock: And then when they’re done when they’ve said these are the five or six things that characterize who we are, now you step back and you look back and you say all right what’s in there, I see that that’s in there but are there things that are not in there that ought to be in there?

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, exactly.

Darrell Bock: Is that then another step?

Aubrey Malphurs: So we give them certain key values such as evangelism, worship, biblical instruction, some of those things, and we ask should that be reflected in your values. Is that aspirational or not?

Darrell Bock: Yeah.

Aubrey Malphurs: And so they will respond to that, and for a while I wouldn’t let them have any aspirational values. And I had one group that just pleaded with me, please let our… So I said okay two of them can be aspirational, but you’ve gotta work on them, because if it’s aspirational we want it to be actional. And that’s where some of the strategy focuses on where they’re typically weak, which should be in most of them evangelism and ministry.

Darrell Bock: So in one sense the question might be who are you? That’s an assessment of where you actually are, and what is it that you would like to be?

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes, yeah, or should be.

Darrell Bock: Or should be, fair enough. And then the question becomes all right, now how do we get from A to B.
The Table Podcast  Strategic Planning in the Church

*Aubrey Malphurs:* Exactly. And that’s where the strategy kicks in. And we’ve found in working with these churches over and over that when they do a ministry analysis, when they evaluate themselves, they come up short on evangelism and ministry or service. And so we pick up on that and our evangelism is community outreach, and then our service is mobilization, and we go through that with them. This is how you share the faith and this is how you get involved in the ministry of your church.

*Darrell Bock:* Now I know that Acts 2:41–47 is a very important passage in thinking through this, that what you are asking people to do is to think through, how much biblical instruction do they have, how much prayer do they have, how much community do they have, how much outreach do they have, how much worship do they have.

*Aubrey Malphurs:* Now you’re making me nervous because your book is on Acts. You’re a scholar.

*Darrell Bock:* Yeah, that’s okay. That’s okay. Okay, because this is the practical application of it so you’re in good shape. But basically those are the five things you’re looking to balance.

*Aubrey Malphurs:* Yes.

*Darrell Bock:* And when you do that, you can see some churches are very, very good in instruction. In fact most of the churches I would imagine that you’re working with are very good in instruction; they are well on the way of trying to encourage people to discipleship, but the mission part of what they do is generally where the weaknesses show up.

*Aubrey Malphurs:* It is, it is.

*Darrell Bock:* So how do you encourage a church? Let’s just assume that that’s the model that we’re normally dealing with, and I suspect that there could be lots of people listening to us who are pastors or are leaders in churches where they go you know, our people are growing, they’re walking with God, they’re doing okay in that regard, but this mission thing just seems to be like this hurdle that we just can’t get over.

*Aubrey Malphurs:* You mean the mission of the church?

*Darrell Bock:* The evangelism in particular.
Aubrey Malphurs: Oh oh evangelism.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, let’s talk evangelism in particular, the outreach part of this. What do you encourage churches to think about to get over that wall?

Aubrey Malphurs: Over the mission wall? One of the things I like to do, and this is in the community outreach section, is one of the things I’ll do is I said self-identify. You need to really self-identify, and in most of our churches we call you members, and that really doesn’t do a lot. So you’re a member, so what? Why don’t we self-identify and call ourselves missionaries, because we look at ourselves completely different when we do. Disney World caught onto this; they don’t have employees. They don’t have personnel. They have a cast. And they self-identify as cast members. I’m not one who picks up trash off the ground; I’m a part of the cast. I’m a part of the show.

And so that’s one thing if you’re asking for little ideas about how we do this, that’s the one thing we ask them to self-identify as missionaries. The pastor and the staff are trainers of missionaries, and we are missionaries; we are the one to share our faith. And so if we begin to think of ourselves as missionary, if we’re going over the Landry Center to work out over there and I’m looking at this person that’s taking my card and giving me a key for my locker but I’m a missionary, I’m gonna look for an opportunity the next time to share faith with them. And so that’s one little trick that we do.

Darrell Bock: That’s good. I have a similar picture when I talk about this in the church. I like to use the picture of the ambassador. An ambassador lives in an embassy, but I guarantee you he doesn’t live and spend all his time in the embassy you know. You know he’s getting to know that culture. He’s getting to know the country. He’s getting to know the people that he’s living with. And actually I think the picture is biblical because obviously Christians are said to be citizens of heaven; in one sense we’re said to be aliens in a strange land.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, yes.

Darrell Bock: We’re portrayed as being ambassadors, that kind of thing. And so if you think of it in that way where you’re – I’ll make a metaphor out of this. Your life as an individual is an outpost of the presence of God. And so that means that I don’t do my job when I’m just hanging out with other outposts.
Aubrey Malphurs: Right, right, right. Well we ask them to take and put their mission statement of their church on a card and keep it in their wallet so that, for example, every time I go to the Landry Center I have to open my wallet to get my Landry Center card out and there’s my mission statement there, right, reminding me that I’m a missionary statement and the mission of my church, which is to reach people, to reach this person on the other side of the desk.

Darrell Bock: Hmm. That’s great. Well let’s come to the last phase here that we’re gonna talk about, and that is the whole strategy part of this. So we’ve been in a room, we’ve met, we’ve talked, we’ve come to encourage one another, this is where we want to go, this is what we’re doing, this is where we want to go, this is what it’s going to look like, here’s what drives us that makes us who we are, but we aren’t where we want to be. Now what?

Aubrey Malphurs: Okay. Well are you talking about implementation?

Darrell Bock: Yeah, I’m talking about the strategy section, the section on the actual development of strategy.
Aubrey Malphurs: Well again the strategy is there to answer the question how. Our mission tells us what. Our vision gives us an idea of what it’s going to look like, whereas our strategy talks about how we’re going to do this. And so what I’ve come up with are five steps of strategy, the first one we’ve talked about, which is community outreach, which is basically evangelism. The second one is disciple making. The third one is mobilization, how do we get people involved in ministry, and in each one of those we’re trying to hit key areas where there’s scripture behind them.

I’ve tried to organize strategy and the whole strategic planning process around certain key passages, and I’m trying to give them organization and form is what I’m trying to do here with the strategy and as well as the mission and the vision. But then we have the mobilization, as I mentioned, and we follow that up with we look at their facilities and their location.

And we talk about are you strategically located to reach people in your community. I like to hit them with the sovereignty of God here and say there’s no accidents some of these people live in your community where you are. You may have never thought of that but God is behind their moving into the community where your church can reach them.

And so we do a little bit of that with them and we talk a little bit about the size of their church and/or the grounds and how many people they can get involved there. Parking, we do a little bit of work on that because some of them are growing wonderfully, and they have not thought about those things and they have outgrown their property, their situation. They don’t have parking; people are turning around and going elsewhere. And then the final area that we look at are finances, how are we gonna fund this.

And I find that this is where a lot of pastors come up short. This is where our students come up a little short, so I spend some time with them on the funding side, who’s responsible for raising funds, how much, what does that look like, and then how do we go about fundraising – pastors, I found they need to be fundraisers.

The congregation looks to them. Whether it’s biblical or cultural, they look to them to raise money, and so here at Dallas we train them and then we train pastors out there to know how to do that.
Darrell Bock: So part of actually successfully getting a vision implemented is the ability to understand what it’s actually gonna take practically to financially pull it off?

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes, exactly. And again, we don’t think about those kinds of things, but that’s right in there.

Darrell Bock: Let me give you a scenario of a church that I’m pretty familiar with that I think is caught in kind of a catch 22. It’s a church that probably was planted in the 1960s. It’s located in a suburban neighborhood of an average-size American city. It can hold probably about 200, 250 people. It’s located in a corner tucked away in a neighborhood not very visible; it’s not on a major corner. You’d have to drive in to find it. It’s land-locked, okay. There’s no place to grow. And the demographics of their community has changed significantly from the time when they planted the church so that now the community that lives around them is very different than the community that moved into those homes originally. And they’re kind of stuck; I don’t know how else to say it. And the location assessment asking the question can we do our mission given where we’re located and what our facilities are?

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, that has to be dealt with, and that was prime property probably when they planted the church and eventually moved there. But as you’re right, things have changed, and they have to evaluate that. One of the challenges is do we move, do we stay here, what do we do, and why not stay here and try to reach the new community, but in reality they are probably not going to do that. So another challenge for them would be to take someone who is of the same ethnicity as the people in the new community, have that person become the pastor or at least reflect those people on your staff or whatever, and then the people in the community might be more open to coming. Of course I like to ask the question why would somebody come to your church in the first place.

Darrell Bock: Right, right.
Aubrey Malphurs: Based on all that’s taking place out there, all the entertainment that is available to people on Sundays or Saturday nights, why would they want to come to your church to begin with, and I think you’ve gotta ask that. And they might say well the pastor is like us, or you have people on the staff that are like us. A lot of these churches though are relocating into suburbia where their people have moved. And I’m not saying – I don’t think that’s necessarily wrong; I think that’s realistic. And then sometimes they will take off again.

Another option is to plant churches. That church can stay there, gradually adjust to the new community culturally and then sponsor church plants and its Jerusalem. The area, this geographical area for spiritual responsibility, and they can plant churches out there as well.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, it’s interesting because that church that I’m thinking about, the specific church that I’m thinking about actually took probably about ten years to make a decision to move because they had tried you know fresh a demographic outreach in the new area with the change, etc., and it just hadn’t taken them anywhere. It’s not an unusual scenario by any means.

Aubrey Malphurs: Well it’s not all that different from a young person versus an elderly person, two different worlds. The same thing here socially, two different worlds. I mean some people are interested in some things. Other social groups are interested in other things.

Darrell Bock: Now so when we put this all together, okay, we’ve done the mission, we’ve looked at the vision, we’ve taken a hard look at the values, and now we’ve got a strategy for putting this all together. The way we distinguish between what we’re doing, and you did this earlier but I’d like to go back over it because I think it’s important, is mission is what we’re supposed to be doing. Vision is what will it look like, what are we aiming at, where are we going, and why is it worth going.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah. That motivates me to want to go there.

Darrell Bock: Why is it worth going there, okay. The values are why are we doing it and what will we use to drive it, and we didn’t really talk about this enough. And that is values really are the – maybe this is a good metaphor, maybe this isn’t. I’ll let you evaluate it. Values are kind of like the gasoline that drives –

Aubrey Malphurs: Or the engine.
Darrell Bock: Okay, the engine, okay.

Aubrey Malphurs: That both drives and guides. So for example, is evangelism a value or not? If it’s not a value, it will not happen. If it is a value, it will happen. Is worship a value? If it’s not, it won’t happen. It’s that simple. That’s why the values identification exercise is so important. This is who you are. It strips you naked.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, yeah. And it’s more than this is what I’m comfortable with or this is what I like. It’s actually asking the question what should we value.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. Yeah. And their beliefs, their beliefs that become functional, but we don’t need to go there. That gets into my culture book and my culture apple.

Darrell Bock: That’s another podcast. So then when we come to strategy we’re actually asking all right now, this is how we’re gonna do this, this is how we’re gonna pay for it, these are the kinds – it might be that our facilities are such that they don’t make certain things that we want to do possible.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, yeah. May not be room or it may be there – I’ve worked with a number of churches where they had large facilities, invested a lot at one time in their facilities, and now that they’re smaller and older they can’t afford those facilities anymore. They can’t keep them up. And so people come and it’s they think oh boy is this what they think of their church, they’re gonna let it fall apart basically. The front door doesn’t work or the bathrooms don’t work, that kind of thing.

Darrell Bock: Yeah. Now here’s another thing that I appreciate in the book, and it doesn’t fit in entirely these four topics but I thought it was worth talking about. And that is you have something in here called the seeker matrix. What exactly is that and why is it important?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well the matrix, if I’m – I’m trying to remember what I said.

Darrell Bock: I think it’s in four blocks.
Aubrey Malphurs: Oh, oh, that’s where we categorize people. Not been over that in a long time, but are they seekers? We like to look at the church and see which one they fit into. And so we have our Willow Creeks and our Saddlebacks that will fit into that, and they are a seeker-type church. Others I call them seeker resistant. They’re resistant to people like that; they’re not interested in them. We’re here to teach them the Word of God, and where they are really doesn’t matter.

Darrell Bock: And a lot of the churches we’ve been talking about in terms of where they are versus perhaps where they need to move tend to be seeker-resistant churches.

Aubrey Malphurs: Right, or seeker tolerant.

Darrell Bock: Okay, seeker tolerant. Now that sounds a little softer.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah. That would be where I think, can I say this, some of your Bible churches are. Cut me, I believe Bible church, okay. But I think some of them are seeker tolerant. It’s okay for lost people to come here but boy, again, we’re teaching scripture and we want them to get what the Bible has to say.

Darrell Bock: So you’re gonna fit into who we are.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, exactly. You’re joining us. We’re not joining you; you’re joining us.

Darrell Bock: Right. Now some people might sit back and say well I mean that’s a church, of course, these are believers. So part of the mentality that you’re dealing with is dealing with what the church does for its members, but the equipping them for the mission of the church is a different deal.

Aubrey Malphurs: It is.

Darrell Bock: But some people have mixed those two so tightly together that they don’t see the distinction between the two.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, that’s true, yes.
**The Table Podcast**  
**Strategic Planning in the Church**

**Darrell Bock:** So part of what you’re trying to do is get them to appreciate yes when they come to church they’re there to be instructed and to worship and to be encouraged and to be nurtured, all those things are something a church is supposed to do. But if you ask why the church exists, the church doesn’t exist just to do that.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Right, yeah, yeah. See the mission for some people is take care of me. I’m up in the years now, I’m not as spry as I used to be, the mission of our church is to take care of me. And we’re saying well not really; we want to take care of you, but the mission is much broader than that.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah, this in fact gets into a core thing that I think churches have to wrestle with in relationship to their members or their missionaries, whatever you’re gonna call them, their attendees in one way or another, and that is how do people assess what the church is and what they give to the church. It’s one thing to go to church and say I like the worship, I like the way the pastor preaches, etc.. All of that is about how they church ministers to them as an individual. The church has got to do some of that; there’s no doubt about it. But if that’s primarily how a person evaluates their church community, then the church is already on the road to being insular.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Oh yeah, you’ve gotta that nailed down exactly. Take care of me, here I am, take care of me, what are you gonna do for me. It’s this typical thing that we see out here in the world, and that is it’s me and I –

**Darrell Bock:** The church is treated as a consumer would treat a product.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Exactly, yeah, yeah. Rather than what can I do for the church, what can the church do for me.

**Darrell Bock:** That’s right. So the person sits down, they either like or they don’t like the worship because they like or don’t like the music.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** This is convicting because I travel a long way to go to church and I probably pass 200 or 300 churches on my way to my church. And we were talking about this the other day in class and I was convicted and they were too, and so why are you doing that? Well this church meets my needs. Oh it does? Well you ever thought about meeting the church’s needs?
Darrell Bock: And so that’s actually one of the major switches that need to flip oftentimes in strategic planning is getting your congregation, the person who’s sitting there, many of whom are sitting there and saying how is the church meeting my needs. And actually a church that has turned completely inward is often operating on that basis.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, yeah.

Darrell Bock: Even though the needs might be very biblically defined and might involve very biblical things, it doesn’t involve the entirety of the biblical vision. And so you flip that switch and now the question becomes rather than – it’s the old John Kennedy quote, what is it?

Aubrey Malphurs: It’s not what you do for your country but what your country can do for you.

Darrell Bock: You reversed it. But that’s the way some people think about it. And so but the point is ask what I can do for my church. What is it that I can do that helps the church accomplish what we are here to do and be.

Aubrey Malphurs: The mission.

Darrell Bock: That’s right. So the goal of the strategic planning ultimately is to help people almost switch the way – let me back up and say it this way. We train people in our culture to be consumers. We go there instantly.

Aubrey Malphurs: We being businesses.

Darrell Bock: Everybody, everything about our culture trains us to be consumers and the customer is king, you know that kind of thing. So then the consumer has the right to evaluate whether this service or this business is meeting his needs. We go there so naturally that we’re trained to go there, so the church is in a sense countercultural in one way by asking people to evaluate and come in and be a part of the church in a way that everything else that the society has trained them to do and be does not train them to do and be.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, yeah, exactly, yeah.

Darrell Bock: So part of what you do in your strategic planning it seems to me is to help your leadership understand that, help people think about how to flip that switch, and then ask how to get that switch flipped.
Aubrey Malphurs: And yes, encouraging them to go there. We can talk about it ‘til we’re blue in the face. Everybody likes to talk about it. But when will we get involved? When will it happen?

Darrell Bock: And so in the end when you’re assessing whether or not a strategic plan is actually being executed, which is kind of the last step I probably should be talking about. What kinds of things are you looking for in that area, and a side question perhaps is you will be adjusting as you go along. I mean this vision and planning isn’t static.

Aubrey Malphurs: Right, yeah. You are developing it, and what we do, as I mentioned earlier, probably the number one thing we’ve got to understand that execution and implementation is probably the greatest obstacle, because again people can get excited about what they’ve done and they’ve done most of the work on this and they can charge the community out there, but time wears away. And so how can we keep them excited, how can this become a part of who they are for the future? And so what we have done is again we have divided them up into teams.

We have a strategic leadership team that basically works through the envisioning process, that does all that, and then we also create an implementation team and/or an execution team, whatever term you want to use, and they take responsibility for each of these. And they meet on a regular basis and we have accountability built into that, and really I guess the bottom line, Darrell, we can go straight to the bottom line. It all gets back to leadership. It all gets back to the pastor. He’s got to be behind it so that he’s holding them accountable. He’s constantly reminding them of what they’re all about. He’s got to cast the vision. He’s got to remind them of the vision. Rick Warren says they’ve got to be reminded of the mission at least once a month, and that’s right.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, that’s an important point because I think that some people might think well we’ve done the meeting, we’ve done the planning, here’s the plan, we present it in a congregational meeting, we’ve done our pitch.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, yeah, yeah can we go home now.

Darrell Bock: Exactly, now we’re done. No, that’s actually just the launching point.
Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. Now we’re launching, and they’ve got to understand that. They’ve got to be encouraged. They’ve got to be challenged over and over. You’ve got to make heroes out of your people that are doing it. You say “Darrell Bock, come up here please, Darrell. Darrell, would you tell the church this morning about last weekend you were over at the elementary school, the public school, and what did you guys do over there? Now tell us about it.” Well you come up and you tell them, we went in and we painted the teachers’ workroom and the teachers had a party for us. They’re in love with us now. And some of them are coming to church next week. That makes heroes out of Darrell Bock.

Darrell Bock: That’s right. And if you have services that are very traditional in terms of what they normally have for you, you don’t have places for that kind of individual testimony, which some pastors will step back and say well that’s kind of like advertising you know.

Aubrey Malphurs: Whatever you want to call it.

Darrell Bock: Well the point is no it may be modeling you know, so how you frame it will determine how you value it.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, yeah, exactly. And you’re hoping that some of these people look around and say well gosh other people are involved in this and they’re involved in that, maybe I should be involved.

Darrell Bock: That’s right, that’s right. That’s what you’re hoping to get out of it.

Aubrey Malphurs: We’re hoping that enough people start getting involved and we celebrate that and we’ll have times of celebration. And again, we’ve got to keep this in front of them. It’s got to be positive. It’s got to be encouraging.

Darrell Bock: Yeah. Well, Aubrey, I appreciate you taking the time to kind of walk us through elements of this. Obviously we’ve moved very quickly. There’s a lot more there to look at, but I think we’ve given people an overview of kind of what this is about. Just really appreciate the ministry that you’ve had in writing in what you’ve been doing. And hopefully this will be useful to people as they think about either leading a church and they’ve listened to us, or maybe they’re in a church and they’re one of these people who have thought through well my church could be doing more or something better.
Aubrey Malphurs:  Yeah.

Darrell Bock:  And hopefully this will encourage people in that regard. So we thank you for being a part of The Table today where we discuss issues of God and culture, and our topic today has been strategic planning in your church. Thank you.