GENERAL

deep and wide creating churches unchurched people love to attend by andy stanley

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Introduction

For decades, churches have struggled to reach the people who are most in need of community, hope, and meaning—those who have never stepped inside a church building, the unchurched. In recent years, a new paradigm has emerged that promises to change that narrative. This paradigm is embodied in the concept of **deep and wide creating churches unchurched people love to attend by Andy Stanley**. It is a vision that blends profound theological depth with expansive outreach, creating spaces where the unchurched can find belonging and transformation.

In this article, we will unpack the principles behind this movement, explore the practical steps for building such churches, and examine real-life examples that demonstrate the impact of deep and wide churches. Whether you are a pastor, a church planter, a volunteer, or simply someone curious about how faith can be made accessible to everyone, this guide will equip you with the insights you need to help the unchurched find a place to belong.

Understanding the Need for Deep and Wide Church Creation

The world has shifted dramatically in the last few decades. Urbanization, secularization, and technological change have reshaped how people connect, learn, and seek purpose. As a result, the traditional church model—often rooted in a fixed building, a single sermon, and a hierarchical structure—has struggled to resonate with many.

Deep and wide churches aim to address this disconnect by creating worship experiences that are both *deep*—meaningologically rich, spiritually transformative—and *wide*—reaching a broad spectrum of people, especially those who have never attended a church before. The goal is not merely to increase attendance numbers but to foster authentic relationships, cultivate spiritual growth, and spark a sense of belonging among the unchurched.

Who Are Unchurched People?

The term "unchurched" refers to individuals who have not participated in organized religious worship in the past year. This group is diverse, spanning all ages, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and belief systems. Some are skeptical of religion, others are disillusioned, and many simply have never had a positive experience with a church community.

Common barriers that keep people from attending church include:

- Perceived judgment or exclusion
- Lack of relevance to everyday life
- Negative past experiences
- Time constraints and competing priorities
- Fear of the unknown

Deep and wide churches recognize these obstacles and design their ministries to lower the threshold for entry, offering a welcoming environment that speaks to the human experience.

Andy Stanley's Vision: Deep and Wide Churches

Andy Stanley, a renowned pastor and author, has long championed the idea that churches must be both spiritually profound and outwardly expansive. His teachings emphasize that faith should be lived out in everyday contexts, not confined to the walls of a sanctuary.

According to Stanley, a **deep and wide creating churches unchurched people love to attend**is built on three foundational principles:

1. Depth of Teaching: Scripture should be unpacked in ways that illuminate everyday challenges and decisions.
2. Widening Outreach: Churches must actively engage with the community, meeting people where they are.
3. Authentic Community: Relationships should be genuine, supportive, and inclusive.

These principles guide the creation of churches that are not only intellectually stimulating but also emotionally and socially resonant.

Core Principles of Deep and Wide Churches

Authentic Community

At the heart of any deep and wide church is a community that feels real, safe, and supportive. This means moving beyond the “church” label and fostering a sense of belonging that transcends denominational boundaries.

- Small groups that meet regularly for discussion and support.
- Mentorship programs that pair newcomers with seasoned members.
- Community service projects that create tangible impact.

Relevant Teaching

Teaching should address the questions that people actually face. Rather than abstract theological debates, sermons and lessons tackle practical issues such as relationships, career choices, mental health, and financial stewardship.

- Use contemporary language that resonates with younger audiences.
- Incorporate real-life testimonies that illustrate biblical principles.
- Invite guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to broaden perspectives.

Inclusive Worship

Worship experiences must be open and welcoming to all. This includes thoughtful music selection, culturally diverse liturgies, and a respectful environment for people of all ages and backgrounds.

- Blend traditional hymns with contemporary worship songs.
- Offer worship in multiple languages where possible.
- Provide accommodations for people with disabilities.

Outreach and Mission

Deep and wide churches actively seek out the unchurched, recognizing that ministry extends beyond the church’s physical boundaries.

- Host community events such as health fairs, job workshops, and family picnics.
- Partner with local schools, businesses, and non-profits to address community needs.
- Use digital platforms—social media, podcasts, and livestreams—to reach people who cannot attend in person.

Creating a Deep and Wide Church that Unchurched People Love to Attend

Step 1: Start with a Clear Purpose

A compelling mission statement is the backbone of any successful church. It should articulate why the church exists, whom it serves, and how it intends to make a difference.

1. Draft a mission that emphasizes transformation and community.
2. Share this vision with all stakeholders—pastors, board members, volunteers, and the congregation.
3. Revisit and refine the mission as the church evolves.

Step 2: Build an Engaging Culture

Culture is the invisible force that shapes every interaction. To attract the unchurched, the culture must be inviting, curious, and inclusive.

- Encourage casual conversations before and after services.
- Celebrate diversity in all its forms—race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- Promote a “no judgment” policy, focusing on growth and learning.

Step 3: Develop Relatable Messages

Teachings should be grounded in Scripture yet framed in contemporary contexts.

1. Identify the pressing questions that your community faces.
2. Use storytelling techniques to weave biblical truths into everyday life.
3. Invite feedback and adjust messaging to remain relevant.

Step 4: Foster Authentic Relationships

People need connection to feel safe and valued. Building authentic relationships is essential for deep and wide churches.

- Create small groups that meet in homes or community spaces.
- Use technology—apps, messaging groups—to keep in touch between gatherings.
- Offer mentorship and discipleship programs that guide newcomers through their faith journey.

Step 5: Embrace Digital and Physical Spaces

In today’s hybrid world, churches must be accessible both online and offline.

1. Live stream services with interactive features such as chat and prayer requests.
2. Maintain an engaging website with resources, event calendars, and testimonies.
3. Design physical spaces that are flexible, welcoming, and conducive to community building.

Step 6: Encourage Continuous Growth

Growth is a lifelong process, not a one time event. Encourage continuous learning and development.

- Offer workshops on topics like financial stewardship, parenting, and mental health.
- Encourage members to serve in various roles—leadership, hospitality, outreach.
- Celebrate milestones—graduations, baptisms, and community achievements—to reinforce a sense of purpose.

Case Studies: Successful Deep and Wide Churches

Example 1: The Lighthouse Church

The Lighthouse Church, founded in 2012, began as a small group in a rented storefront. Over a decade, it grew to over 5,000 members, largely thanks to its focus on “deep and wide creating churches unchurched people love to attend.” Key strategies included:

- Hosting a weekly “Coffee & Conversation” event that invites people to discuss life topics over coffee.
- Partnering with local universities to host study groups for students.
- Implementing a digital “Faith Journey” app that tracks personal growth and offers daily devotionals.

Example 2: The Bridge Community

The Bridge Community, located in a culturally diverse urban neighborhood, emphasizes outreach to immigrant populations. Their success lies in:

- Offering worship services in multiple languages.
- Providing free language classes and job readiness workshops.
- Creating a “Community Kitchen” that serves meals and facilitates intergenerational interaction.

Example 3: The Harvest Fellowship

Harvest Fellowship focuses on agricultural communities, blending faith with sustainable farming practices. Their unique approach includes:

- Hosting seasonal festivals that celebrate harvests and community contributions.
- Offering “Faith & Food” workshops that teach biblical stewardship through cooking.
- Establishing a mentorship program where experienced farmers guide newcomers.

Overcoming Challenges

Cultural Barriers

Many unchurched individuals come from backgrounds that view organized religion skeptically. To bridge this gap:

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