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GROUP

# My Church Health: A Self-Assessment

a 20-point  
checklist assessment

Ed Underwood

## Dear church leader,

**The biggest mistake we as leaders of the body of Christ can make is to leave underlying problems unaddressed.** This is especially dangerous when the trust and community of a leadership team is at stake - because through the leadership team, the entire church is impacted.

Most symptoms, if left unattended, will fester, **often leading to pastors suddenly quitting or churches splitting.** I have seen this repeatedly play out in churches across the nation.

**More than that, I've lived it. I've experienced it.** That is why I am so passionate about restoring church health - and it all starts with the leaders.

So I am elated that you have opened this resource as it will help you gauge the health of your leadership team, and provide you with the necessary next steps based on the severity of your situation.

**I can help you move from a toxic environment that devours leaders to a church that maintains an environment of grace, where everyone, leaders and followers, can get back to what matters most.**

While I can't rewrite your church's history, I can help your church write a new story, starting now.

**As you take the self-assessment below, I encourage you to honestly answer the statements.** This could be the beginning of redemption for your team and church.

I'm eager to support you however I can. Please contact me - the sooner, the better.

God bless you,

*Ed Underwood*

# Church Health Self-Assessment

In my forty-plus years working in and with churches, I've learned to identify the twenty most common symptoms and indicators of church health. I've separated these common symptoms into two categories: **General Health Indicators** and **Critical Health Indicators**.

It's not uncommon for one or two of these symptoms listed in the **General Health Indicators** to be present in a church. However, they can still be damaging and should be addressed. If there are too many of these symptoms, a snowball effect will occur and havoc will ensue. Do not make light of these.

**Critical Health Indicators**, simply put, point to a serious, underlying health crises in your church or ministry. Even if you were only experiencing one symptom of a Critical Health Indicator, you would be in big trouble. These are ticking time bombs that need immediate intervention.

**Instructions:** *Check each box you feel is true about your leadership team, tally them up, and refer to the health assessment gauge in the next section.*

## General Health Indicators:

- Leaders and staff are often not on the same page.
- Leaders and staff seem more concerned with being right than building true reconciliation.
- Leaders and staff aren't fully trusting God or each other with themselves and their ministry.
- Leaders feel guarded rather than appreciated.
- Leaders are often prideful instead of vulnerable.
- Spouses of leaders or staff are not considered, respected, or have a voice in decision making.
- Leaders seldom have fun together or enjoy time together outside of meetings.
- Leaders have not given permission to trusted friends to speak honestly into their lives.
- The church is run like a business. Instead of a board of elders, as equals, there is a CEO or one man leading the ship.
- The culture of the church is performance-driven.

- Churches address relational/character issues by isolating the member in order to minimize damage, rather than coming alongside that person so they can get better together.
- Leaders avoid risk, and consistently play it safe.
- Leaders rarely express or experience affirmation of their strengths, capabilities, and uniqueness.
- The leadership team behaves more like managers and less like shepherds.

**Number of General Health Indicators:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Critical Health Indicators

*If any of these apply to your church, there are gravely serious issues at play. If these are left unresolved, significant breakdown is inevitable. Urgent intervention is required! Please reach out to me immediately.*

- Leaders don't trust each other or those they lead.
- There is a constant undercurrent of unresolved issues that are consistently avoided. Meetings are serious and burdened because participants dread gathering together.
- Staff are afraid to raise issues or concerns to the elders or leaders.
- Individuals are often shut down when they try to express themselves.
- Gossip is an ongoing problem. Leaders and staff talk about others behind their backs, rather than following Matthew 18:15-20.
- Leaders respond to pressure by attempting to control others, not protect them.

**Number of Critical Health Indicators:** \_\_\_\_\_

Tally up the amount of checked boxes and refer to the diagnosis below that matches your number. **Note:** if you have checked *any* of the Critical Health Indicator statements, there are immediate and toxic issues threatening your church.

# Evaluating Your Church Health

**Thank you for investing in your church by taking this self assessment.** I know from experience that this sort of introspection can be difficult and painful. However, I also know that the challenge of becoming healthy is dwarfed by the pain and havoc that a broken church culture can wreak in the lives of those we are called to shepherd.

For each of the colored zones below, I make some general comments, as well as some suggested next steps for you. At the end of this section, you'll also find an additional resource, designed to help you think differently about Trust and the role Trust must play in your church community.

**Ultimately, I pray you reach out to the Recentered Group for help. Too much is at stake to allow the problems to fester.**

## The Church Health Spectrum



### **Green Zone: Your church is doing well.**

**0-3 Indicators:** *your church has very few unhealthy patterns, though there may be some early warning signs.*

You are the type of church or ministry I love working with because we can do a lot of preventive “medicine” to ensure that your health will not be threatened by the inevitable crises in your future. Decide to strengthen your team now so you can withstand any future conflict or discourse, be more effective as a team, and be more representative of what it actually means to be a unified body of Christ. Be proactive, not reactive.

#### **Your Next Steps:**

1. Reach out for a free 30 minute conversation. I'd love to hear more about your church, and celebrate your health with you!

2. Consider exploring whether or not Recentered Group's foundational Intensive Course might be a good fit for your leadership team. This course will get you started by building the biblical basis for our Recentered processes and help you establish high trust relationships with your fellow leaders. Through discussions led by Ed (online or onsite), face-to-face tools, and teaching videos, you will be equipped, challenged, and encouraged to develop a Recentered Community and Leadership Team.
3. Contact me at [ed@recenteredgroup.com](mailto:ed@recenteredgroup.com).

## **Yellow Zone: You have an unhealthy church culture.**

**4-8 Indicators:** *destructive patterns are rampant and will, if not dealt with soon, lead to relational and community break down.*

You may want to dismiss this analysis, but that will be to your peril. There's no way your leaders will get healthy in your unhealthy leadership culture without outside intervention. Time and time again, I have personally seen leaders disregard outside help and assume things will magically resolve themselves. Not too long afterwards, calamity occurs - leaders are fired or resign, a painful turnover in staff occurs, or a church splits. God wants so much more for you and your church. Take action now, before it's too late.

### **Your Next Steps:**

1. Reach out to the Recentered Group, and inquire about a free 30 min diagnostic call. Together, we'll unpack your situation and I'll suggest several specific tools tailored to your church community.
2. Consider having your leadership team work through the *Recentered Diagnosis and Project Overview*. I will spend time with you and your team as I put together a more specific and distinct diagnosis, highlighting blindspots and key areas of concern. Afterwards, I will provide you with the Project Overview, my tailored recommendation of next steps for you and your leadership team.
3. Contact me at [ed@recenteredgroup.com](mailto:ed@recenteredgroup.com).

## **Red Zone: Your church culture is toxic, and in immediate peril.**

**9-20 indicators (or any critical indicators).** *There is an imminent disaster looming, due to toxic patterns and environments. You need immediate attention.*

You are on the verge of a church split or a painful turnover in staff, probably including the lead pastor.

If you don't feel the urgency of your need, you probably have lived in this toxic leadership culture so long that you're unaware that you are near death, like an undiagnosed cancer.

If you're aware of the urgency of your need, please fight the temptation of the "quick fix" of making organizational or staffing changes. You need help - right now. Schedule an emergency call or zoom meeting with Ed.

### **Your Next steps:**

1. Choose to take a deep dive into the un-health of your leadership culture. Decide to *address* the underlying causes that got you where you are today. Unresolved, these issues and habits will continue to infect any new staff and leadership.
2. Explore the possibility of bringing the Recentered Group in to come alongside your leadership team and provide critical support and direction. We will mentor selected leaders, take your team through the *Recentered Triage Process*, and deliver a clear, actionable diagnosis.
3. Contact me at [ed@recenteredgroup.com](mailto:ed@recenteredgroup.com).

## **Thank you for investing in your church by taking this self assessment!**

I strongly recommend you take action now, regardless of how dire your situation may be. Effective churches are proactive and not unaware of the plans of the enemy.

Attached below is an exclusive resource taken from my larger and foundational course, The Recentered Intensive Course. I pray that this also helps you and your team start the journey of redemption.

# Character and Capacity:

## Sanctification Mercies and the Trust Gap

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

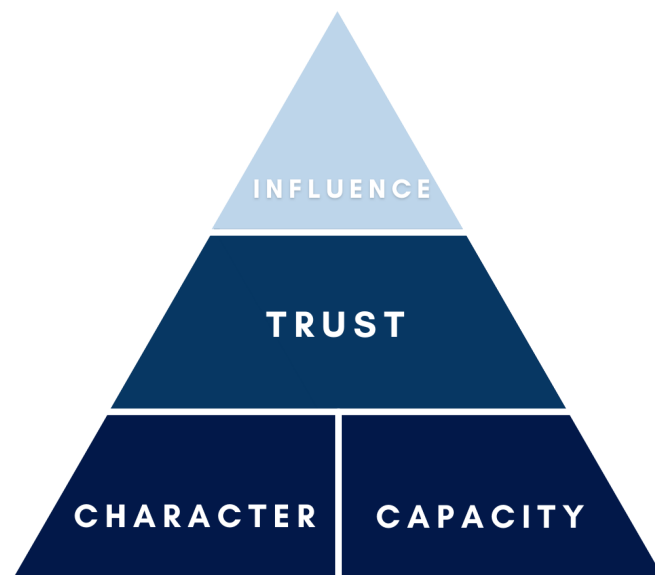
### The Trust Gap

Are you the kind of person who others **want to follow** or **have to follow**?

Roles are essential in organizations, but the ultimate influence of your life will come more from who you are than what you do or what you know.

Leading from influence requires a special quality that leading from position or power does not: Trust.

Influence is based on trust and this trust is anchored in two components: Character and Capacity.



*(diagram used with permission from TrueFace)*

Surveys from business, education, government and military indicate that the quality with the greatest gap between what followers most want in their leaders and what they actually receive is **Trust**.



## Remember this Trust Gap.

Most formal training, even in Bible colleges and seminaries, focuses on capacity. **Emphasizing capacity and ignoring character elevates the most gifted to positions of leadership.** As these leaders move up the ladder their character flaws become increasingly evident.

Inevitably, trust erodes and fellow leaders and followers begin strategizing how to live around the flaws and weaknesses of the leader. The tragedy is that all involved are settling for the safety of “corralled” leaders. Their potential is never realized and the entire organization suffers.

**It's here that secular organizations struggle to reach into unredeemed hearts to develop character through behavior modification. And it's here that we as believers have the advantage of grace.**

The sanctifying mercies of God in Christ teach plainly that we have been changed. The moment we trusted in Christ we were made new—regenerated. His life was implanted in us. We received the Holy Spirit.

## We're not who we used to be. And neither are those who serve with us on our team!

Before we can think about the power of love in a healing community and building a high trust culture, we need to correctly identify the members in that community.

If we misdiagnose the source of our problems, friction, and disunity, we surely won't be able to heal. **It's this misdiagnosis that leads to most of the hopelessness** in the struggles of a community trying to heal and the lack of trust in Christian cultures.

**Maturity in the Christian life is not changing myself through discipline and sinning less. It is learning to live as a new creation in Christ. High trust cultures relate as new creations in Christ.**

## God isn't interested in changing me (or them) because He already has!

1. The edifice of spirituality by works is our only choice **if we equate spiritual maturity with sinning less.**
  - a. **It denies what God says about our flesh** in Romans 7: “in me, that is in my flesh, there is no good thing.”
  - b. **It teaches Christians to misuse the law.** The law was never a “way to holiness” but a two-thousand- year lesson proving that we couldn't follow it (Galatians 3:19-29).
  - c. Many leaders and followers who would shout “amen” to that truth **revert to community by works rather than trusting God** with the truth that their leaders and followers are regenerate.
2. In the community of grace, **trusting in who we are in Christ is our only hope!**
  - a. **It affirms what God says about Christians in Galatians:** “it was for freedom that Christ set you free” (Galatians 5:1ff). We weren't simply set free from something, but also *to* something.
  - b. **It teaches the Christian to use her or his resources in Christ:** new Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), new power (Ephesians 5:18), and a new community (Ephesians 4:24). What was our state when we were recreated? What are we supposed to concentrate on—reforming the “old me” or putting on the “new me in Christ”?
  - c. **This dynamic has profound implications in building a high trust culture.**

The **mature** are careful never to be tempted by the power that can be inherent in position.

The **immature** leaders will move to the power in their position because they do not have confidence in the influence of their person.

**Influence is in our person, not in our position. Mature leaders learn how to receive power; they do not pursue it.**

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. What do you risk if you engage in an environment of grace that actually views Christians as they really are?
2. What do you risk if you don't?
3. Why is the old way not working for us, and the next generation?
4. What kind of "therapy" shift is required?